

## **ABOUT MICHAEL KOWALSKI**

Composer and pianist Michael Kowalski was a pioneer in the field of computer music in the 1970s. He wrote extensively for percussion and mixed chamber ensembles before turning fulltime to operatic composition in 1995, when he founded his ensemble, The Postindustrial Players.

Kowalski studied piano and music history at the Oberlin Conservatory. His "Program Etude" (1971), synthesized by a program of his own design, was the first totally digital electronic work produced and performed at Oberlin's pioneering computer music lab. He began his formal composition studies with Richard Hervig at the University of Iowa, where he also continued independent work in the field of computer-aided composition. In 1975 he was a University Fellow at the University of Illinois, where he studied in the music, computer science, and linguistics departments and worked with composers Herbert Brün, Ben Johnston, and Salvatore Martirano. In 1976 Kowalski was a Margaret Lee Crofts Fellow in Composition at the Berkshire Music Center (Tanglewood), where he studied with the French composer Betsy Jolas.

Kowalski's chamber music and electronic works have been performed throughout Europe and Japan, at dozens of university venues in the USA and Canada, at the 1975 and 1978 International Computer Music Conferences, Percussive Arts Society National Conferences, American Society of University Composers Conferences, and the 1982 and 1983 SIGGRAPH (international computer graphics) Conferences. Since moving to New York in 1980, he has appeared as a composer, pianist, and actor at numerous uptown and downtown spaces, including Roulette, Symphony Space, P.S. One, Emanu-El Midtown Y, and Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors. He has produced work for Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI), Home Box Office, percussionist Steve Schick and pianist James Avery (Freiburg), soprano Candace Natvig and trombonist Jon English (Amsterdam), The United Mime Workers (Urbana, Ill.), tap dance choreographer Anita Feldman (NYC), Equilibrium Dance (Ann Arbor), and sculptor Sonja Visser (Rotterdam). He has been guest composer and lecturer at colleges and universities across the US and has held residencies at Yaddo, the Millay Colony for the Arts, and Art Awareness.

Since 1978 Kowalski has pursued a parallel career in the computer and finance industries. In the late 1970s he worked in the fledgling computer graphics industry at the Computervision Corporation in Boston. Between 1984 and 1995 he worked as a software consultant in the retail banking and brokerage industries. Since 1995 he has worked in the field of financial risk management in addition to pursuing his career in opera.

## **MICHAEL KOWALSKI — SELECTED WORKS**

**A Ascensão e a Queda do Primeiro Mundo** (The Rise and Fall of the First World) (2008) - chamber opera: soprano, mezzo, tenor, bass; chamber orchestra (18 players)

**Fraternity of Deceit** (1998) - chamber opera: soprano, baritone, bass; cello and multi-keyboards

**Still in Love** (1995) - chamber opera: soprano, bass; cello and multi-keyboards

**Piano Bar #1: How to Compose Yourself** (1995) - monologue for lounge organist

**Lekcja gry na fortepianie, akord Chopin** (Piano Lesson, after Chopin) (1992) - piano

**City/Riffle** (1985/1987/1992) - text and two-channel tape for tap dancer

**Gringo Blaster** (1989) - percussion trio, synthesizer, rapper

**Silhouettes** (1977/1986) - marimba

**Salad Bar Blues** (1983) - monologue with hip-hop and blues synthesizer tracks

**Blue Period** (1983) - one-act play

**Point of Departure** (1982) - dramatic quartet

**Hot Air** (1980) - monologue with two-channel tape

**Vapor Trails** (1975/1981) - four saxophones, four drumsets, congas

**Double-Time** (1980) - piano and percussion

**Rebus** (1980) - choreographed percussion trio

**The Moral of the Story** (1977) - two-channel tape and text for dancer

**Tempting Fate** (1977) - monologue

**Daydreams** (1978) - violin and percussion

**Hotsy-totsy** (1977) - two-channel tape

**Traveling Music** (1976) - dancer and percussion; choreography notated in score

**Fakebook** (1976) - piano

**Jeu de Gestes** (1975) - mime quartet; movement notated in score

**No More Modesty** (1975) - monologue

**Bringing in the Sheaves** (1975) - flute

**hors d'oeuvres** (1975) - soprano and trombone

**Tracks** (1974) - xylophone, vibraphone, marimba, piano, and percussion

**Small Talk** (1974) - four-channel tape

**The Entrance of the Queen of Sheba** (1973) - chamber orchestra

**Balonie** (1973) - four-channel tape

**in memoriam Sydney Toler** (1973) - two-channel tape

**Program Etude** (1971) - two-channel digitally-synthesized tape

## MICHAEL KOWALSKI — RECORDINGS

**Gringo Blaster** — selected instrumental work, 1974-92 Einstein Records (Einstein 008)

**Still in Love** a chamber music drama - Equilibrium (EQ6)

Music by Michael Kowalski. Text by Kier Peters. Directed by Constance McCord

Gregory Purnhagen, baritone

Karen Grahn, soprano

Yari Bond, cello

Michael Kowalski, synthesizer

**Fraternity of Deceit** a chamber music drama - Equilibrium (EQ36)

Music and text by Michael Kowalski. Directed by Jeffrey Johnson.

Peter Stewart, baritone

Gregory Purnhagen, baritone

Karen Grahn, soprano

Francesca Vanasco, cello

Michael Kowalski, synthesizer

**Equilibrium Dance & Percussion Duo: Nancy & Michael Udow** (includes Kowalski's "Traveling Music"  
Equilibrium (DVD04)

**Border Crossings: Percussion Music** (includes Kowalski's "Vapor Trails") - Equilibrium (EQ2)

**City/Riffle**, synthesizer with tap dancer Anita Feldman

Tellus Audio Cassette Magazine, #12 (out of print)

## PUBLICATIONS

**"The Exhaustion of Western Art Music"**

*Perspectives of New Music* Vol. 21, Nos. 1-2 (Fall-Winter, 1982, Spring-Summer, 1983)

**"Why We Refuse to Listen"**

*Perspectives of New Music* Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer, 2006)

**"Sancho Panza's Politics of Self-Deception"**

*Critical Review* Vol. 19, No. 4 (2007)

**"The Quiet Force of Gracious Paradox: Photo-Etchings by Phillip Chen,"**

in *Phillip Chen: Origins & Destinations: Photo-Etchings*

(Beijing: Three Shadows Photography Art Centre, 2009)

**"The Curatorial Muse"**

*Contemporary Aesthetics* Vol. 8, (2010)

**"A Cybernetic Critique of Enterprise Risk Management"**

*Cybernetics & Human Knowing* Vol. 17, Nos. 1-2 (2010)

*As translator:*

Paulo Costa Lima. "Review: **"The Rest Is Noise — Listening to the 20th Century, by Alex Ross"**

ART Music Review 024 (Jan., 2013) Universidade Federal da Bahia (Brazil)

## **MICHAEL KOWALSKI — GUEST LECTURES**

### **"The Exhaustion of Western Art Music"**

March, 1983, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign composers' seminar

### **"Back to the Future of an American Music Theatre"**

November, 1994, Oberlin College Conservatory of Music composers' seminar

### **"The Music and Graphics of Herbert Brün"** (symposium organizer and moderator)

September, 2004, Kentler International Drawing Space, Brooklyn, NY

### **"Where Has All the *dolce* Gone?"**

February, 2007, Wesleyan University Chopin seminar

### **"Why We Refuse to Listen"**

February, 2007, Wesleyan University composers' seminar

### **"A Cybernetic Critique of Enterprise Risk Management"**

March, 2009, American Society of Cybernetics International Conference, Olympia, Washington

### **"How to Rescue a Cliché without Reviving It"**

March, 2009, American Society of Cybernetics International Conference, Olympia, Washington

### **"Anxiety in the Arena of Improvisation"**

October, 2010, *And Now* writers conference, State University of NY at Buffalo

### **"Musical Mushrooms, or: *Beware of What You Sample*"**

January, 2012, conference on Appropriation in the Arts, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa