

the fire program note

the fire is a setting of a poem I wrote in 1988 entitled Walking at Night. The poem explores the subtle world of a love relationship with all of its unspoken communications, assurances and perennial sensuality. The setting of the poem is somewhat more overt in all of these respects. The soprano voice takes up the text sometimes as continuant fricatives and front vowels and others as more traditionally sung words. Further coloring of the vocal line is achieved through a liberal use of microtonally shifted pitches and microtonal glissandi as well as closed lip singing or humming which is taken up also by the unamplified violinist's voice. More extensive coloration of particular words of the text is achieved through digital processing of the vocal line through the microphone feed.

The singers words and some violin fragments have also been taken into the computer for digital audio processing, synthesis and filtering. These pre-designed digital audio "soundbites" are then loaded into the computer and triggered, along with the vocal and MIDI violin effects via Max.

Although all of the technology involved may imply a sort of "sonic overload" I have tried to be sensitive always to the text and to the instrumentalists in my awareness of allowing them the space in which to be natural, albeit "wired," musicians. Thus the work conjures a dreamy and sensual yet passionate and dramatic world that the text implied to me.

© Copyright 2004 by Douglas Knehans, World Rights Reserved