



BMOP
sound

ERIC MOE: KICK & RIDE
SUPERHERO | EIGHT POINT TURN

ERIC MOE b. 1954

SUPERHERO

EIGHT POINT TURN

KICK & RIDE

ROBERT SCHULZ drum set

BOSTON MODERN ORCHESTRA PROJECT

GIL ROSE, CONDUCTOR

SUPERHERO (2006)

- [1] I. leaning to fly 2:22
- [2] II. early loss 1:20
- [3] III. rescuing a planet in distress 3:07
- [4] IV. existential crisis (what's it all for?) 2:50
- [5] V. showdown with evil twin 4:18

[6] **EIGHT POINT TURN** (2001) 12:30

KICK & RIDE (2008)

- [7] I. The Cracked Tune That Chronos Sings 15:29
- [8] II. Slipstream 13:30

TOTAL 55:29

By Eric Moe

The three pieces recorded here are cantankerous sisters. Embedded in their common DNA is a gene for dramatic narrative—the creation of suspense, the frustration and fulfillment of expectations. The trio also shows my fascination with the musical shape-shifting made possible by drum set percussion, which can utterly transform the character of a piece at the drop of a hat. All three pieces are obsessive, stubbornly pursuing their *idées fixes*. The listener will note the footprints marking evolutionary trails leading from *Eight Point Turn* through *SUPERHERO* to *Kick & Ride*. But the individual qualities of these self-assertive pieces are probably of greater interest.

In *SUPERHERO*, a generic comic book superhero biography provides the scaffolding for an *Ein (Über-)Heldenleben* programmatic tone-poem. I've been consciously interested in and inspired by so-called universal narratives for some time, and I find heroic narratives to be particularly suggestive. The way these narratives have been appropriated and condensed by comic book writers adds an extra layer of meaning and relevance to contemporary concerns. My invocation of the genre is affectionate and serious, not ironic. The two slower, reflective sections hold the saddest music on the CD; these harmonically static plateaus are surrounded by propulsive, highly dynamic sections of derring-do.

Eight Point Turn also alternates sections, but here the oppositions are of continuity and discontinuity, of accretion and interruption. The three big continuous districts of the piece, sited at the beginning, middle, and end, share similar material and a similar strategy of accumulation. Beginning with the simplest marking of pulse by sand blocks in the first,

the percussionist helps ramp up the tension level in the second, and in the third uncorks a virtuosic display of drum set fireworks.

Kick & Ride, a fiery concerto for drum set and orchestra, is the toughest cookie of the three. Its two craggy, strenuous, fast movements—evil twins of one another—take divergent roads. The first movement, “The Cracked Tune That Chronos Sings,” begins with a call and response between drum set and orchestra. At the end of the following ritornello, drums and orchestra start to spin away from each other, and continue to do so through their varied recurrences. At the apogee of this process, the drums are found muttering an energetic version of the ritornello (in the original fast tempo) beneath the orchestra's most lyrical music (in a slower tempo). In “Slipstream,” the second movement, the drums elbow the orchestra aside with an invocation of the infamous solo that kicks off the Surfaris's *Wipeout*, and the orchestra skims along in the percussive wake.

SUPERHERO (2006) was commissioned by the New York New Music Ensemble and is scored for flute/piccolo, B-flat clarinet, violin, cello, percussion, and piano.

EIGHT POINT TURN (2001) was commissioned by the Philadelphia Music Project and the National Endowment for the Arts for Relâche chamber ensemble. The work is scored for flute, oboe, B-flat clarinet, bassoon, viola, double bass, percussion, and piano.

KICK & RIDE (2008) was commissioned by the Barlow Endowment and received its world premiere in 2009 by BMOP and Robert Schulz, drum set, and conducted by Gil Rose. The work is scored for drum set and orchestra.

By Andrew Druckenbrod

To listen to the output of Eric Moe is to reaffirm one's faith in the future of art music. This is not to say Moe is here to save that world. It's that he has managed to compose in his own idiomatic language while still engaging listeners beyond a niche group of admirers. No conscious nods to accessibility or complexity for their own sake here. Just strong, sincere writing that makes its essence known even as it plays with convention as much as continues it.

On the other hand, Moe is able to write about contemporary trends in literary and pop culture without having to turn in his academic badge. He straddles high and low like he has straddled the coasts, studying at the University of California at Berkeley and Princeton University. And his work as a professor of composition and theory at the University of Pittsburgh has

not hampered his irreverent sense of humor or risk-taking. In fact, the colorful compositions on this recording were all written in the last decade.

Moe's vibrant, fluid, and largely diatonic music often is inspired by a subject (describing its effects or its underpinning psychology more than depicting it literally), and there are aspects of this in every piece on the album. Years ago, we might have called this programmatic, but Moe's output is more integrated, with substantive material driving works as much as anything extra-musical.

His musical language is informed by major compositional trends, but he's in no camp, not even the big ones such as post-minimalism, neo-tonal, indie-classical, or eclectic. No, Moe sleeps in his own tent off in the nearby woods, but the glow from his campfire often lights up the entire valley.

After millions of comic book issues and countless films, by now we've realized that it's not so easy being a superhero. Perhaps the greatest gift that many writers and illustrators have given us—other than cherished hours of reading each frame of our favorite comic series—is the modern example of how no one, no matter how powerful, is above problems. It's our mythology and it reminds us that the lives of us mere mortals aren't so bad after all. The concept of a deeply flawed superbeing is a narrative found in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and other lore, and Moe delights in combining the two here. But *SUPERHERO* is not an ironic look at the costumed hero, but, in his words, an affectionate one. Written for a Pierrot ensemble of violin, cello, flute, clarinet, piano, and percussion, the piece seeks to retell the universal narrative and revisit the “deep psychological resonances” that abound in comic books and graphic novels.

Modeled loosely on Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*, we join the action shortly after whatever catastrophe or awakening gave superpowers to the likely square-jawed fellow. As the piece opens, “learning to fly,” the hero is trying to master the basics [1]. The disjointed groupings

of six notes capture missteps and likely crashing into buildings (without getting hurt, of course), and a pedal point in the piano soon emerges symbolizing the hero's frustrated attempts at lift-off. But as the piece progresses, it becomes clear that the pedal point is more than that—it's the defining symbol in the piece. Each of the five movements uses the technique or has some aspect of harmonic or rhythmic stasis concealed under the surface. It's as if this is Moe's way of expressing that the comic book hero is rooted in and limited by the human condition.

Sure enough, a pedal point continues in the piano as the budding crusader deals with that clichéd personal blow of an "early loss" [2]. Above it, clarinet and flute spin out poignant lines capturing the ache and regret that will haunt the hero forever, such as how Spiderman rues the fact that he didn't stop a petty criminal who later kills his uncle.

Mettle tested, the hero now fights the good fight, "rescuing a planet in distress," over and over again, symbolized by repetitive eighth-note groupings primarily in the violin [3]. One can imagine a glorious fight scene amid the skyscrapers of New York City when syncopation envelops the climax of the movement. That leads to yet another tried-and-true element of the comic genre, the "existential crisis (what's it all for)," brilliantly captured by another thoughtful duo, this time violin and cello, above fleeting piano accompaniment in a high register [4].

The hero can't mope for long, as next up is that classic "showdown with evil twin" [5]. The two tussle, but eventually the hero calls on the strength garnered from being the good guy. The syncopated music from "rescuing a planet in distress" returns to usher in victory (E-flat major), and many more issues.

Many composers today adorn their works with clever names, but Moe truly has made an art form out of it. His are not just witty or creative, but also capture something essential about both the music's programmatic nature and its inner working. *Eight Point Turn* is a salient

example [6]. Named "after an experience on a forest road near Jack Mountain in Montana," the title stirs the mind to imagine a driver of a Jeep full of friends miscalculating the severity of a hairpin curve, or something equally embarrassing and dangerous. Yet it describes the back-and-forth nature of the work's musical phrases even more wonderfully, phrases that "re-examine the same obsessive material, each time taking it in a new direction."

Actually, obsessive doesn't say enough. The main thematic material here is more obsessive-compulsive—a slow stepwise motion that reminds one a little of the wailing opening to Silvestre Revueltas's *La Noche de los Mayas*. It is explored through various permutations of flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, viola, bass, percussion, and piano. But *Eight Point Turn* is no piece of minimalism. Rather, it is more akin to an energetic version of a rotating Morton Feldman composition. Only instead of bringing calm, *Eight Point Turn* tends to make one anxious—which is exactly what the brilliant score said it would do in the title.

Red flags are often raised when a "learned" composer incorporates popular music. But in the case of Moe, who is conversant in many genres, *Kick & Ride* is an homage to percussion music he has loved. The result is a source transformed into something equally compelling.

From the casual entrance of the drum set at the beginning of "The Cracked Tune That Chronos Sings" to furious combinations later in the work, one is amazed by how unaffected the drum set sounds, considering it is precisely notated for about ninety-nine percent of the score [7]. Of course, it doesn't hurt that the excellent percussionist, Robert Schulz, is painting the notes with flair onto his drumheads and cymbals, but it is the mark of superb composing to mimic an instrument's natural language.

While the homage to historic drum styles and beats is sincere, Moe can't help subverting concerto form. There's a ritornello theme (the "Cracked Theme") and two cadenzas in the two-movement work, but the solo/tutti opposition here is defined more in terms of when the svelte orchestra and drum set are in sync and when they are utterly independent. They

range from finding the drum set and orchestra fully engaged—mimicking big band jazz hits and African call and response—to long stretches of hypnotic counterpoint. After a thundering cadenza ends the first movement he presents quiet, atmospheric, almost wilting strains, perhaps having fun with the scattered applause that sometimes follows even brilliant drum solos in bebop and the like. Drummers can't catch a break.

The second movement, "Slipstream," begins with a quote of the famed "Wipeout" rhythm from the Surfaris's iconic song [8]. Here again, Moe is sincere in his fascination for how a simple accent can change everything (not unlike Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*). That pattern flows throughout the movement, capturing the hypnotizing nature of a good drum beat, until another cadenza ushers in the ritornello and a crescendo to the end.

Andrew Druckenbrod is an award-winning writer who covers classical music new and old in Pittsburgh for the *Post-Gazette*.
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MARARAGO

Eric Moe, composer of what *The New York Times* calls "music of winning exuberance," has received numerous grants and awards for his work, including a Wladimir and Rhoda Lakond Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a Guggenheim Fellowship; commissions from the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Fromm Music Foundation, the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation, the

Barlow Endowment, and Meet the Composer; fellowships from the Wellesley Composer's Conference and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts; and residencies at the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, Bellagio, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the UCross Foundation, the Camargo Foundation, the Millay Colony, the Ragdale Foundation, the Montana Artists Refuge, the Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians, and the American Dance Festival, among others.

His sit-trag/one-woman opera *Tri-Stan* was hailed by *The New York Times* in 2005 as "a blockbuster" and "a tour de force," a work of "inspired weight" that "subversively inscribe[s] classical music into pop culture." In its review of the piece, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* concluded, "it is one of those rare works that transcends the cultural divide while still being rooted in both sides." The work is now available on a Koch International Classics recording. Other all-Moe CDs are available on Albany Records (*Kicking and Screaming*, *Up & At 'Em*, and *Siren Songs*) and Centaur (*On the Tip of My Tongue*). *The Sieneese Shredder*, a fine arts journal, includes an all-Moe CD as part of its third issue. *Strange Exclaiming Music*, a CD featuring Moe's chamber music, was released by Naxos in July 2009 as part of their American Classics series; *Fanfare* magazine described it as "wonderfully inventive, often

joyful, occasionally melancholy, highly rhythmic, frequently irreverent, absolutely eclectic, and always high-octane music.”

As a pianist and keyboardist, Moe has premiered and performed works by a wide variety of composers. His playing can be heard on the Koch, CRI, Mode, Albany, and AK/Coburg labels in the music of John Cage, Roger Zahab, Marc–Antonio Consoli, Mathew Rosenblum, Jay Reise, and Felix Draeseke, in addition to his own. His solo recording *The Waltz Project Revisited: New Waltzes for Piano*, a CD of waltzes for piano by two generations of American composers, was released in 2004 on Albany. *Gramophone* magazine said of the CD, “Moe’s command of the varied styles is nothing short of remarkable.” A founding member of the San Francisco–based Earplay ensemble, he currently co-directs the *Music on the Edge* new music concert series in Pittsburgh.

Moe studied composition at Princeton University (AB) and at the University of California at Berkeley (MA, PhD). He is currently Professor of Composition and Theory at the University of Pittsburgh and has held visiting professorships at Princeton University and the University of Pennsylvania.



JING CHEN

Robert Schulz, drum set, serves as principal percussionist for the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Boston Landmarks Orchestra, Boston Musica Viva, Dinosaur Annex Music Ensemble, and Opera Boston Orchestra. He has worked with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops, Boston Ballet Orchestra, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, and the Boston Chamber Music Society. As a timpanist, mallet specialist, and multi-percussionist, he has been a featured soloist with the Celebrity Series of Boston on numerous occasions. In 2004, Mr. Schulz received a Grammy Award nomination for Best Small Ensemble Performance on Yehudi

Wyner’s *The Mirror* (Naxos). That year he also gave the Boston premiere of Tan Dun’s *Water Concerto* with BMOP. He has led his own group, the BeatCity Art Ensemble, in performances for the Celebrity Series, Lincoln Center, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. He has toured nationally and internationally with pipa virtuoso Wu Man and was the featured recitalist for the 2006 CrossSound Festival in Juneau, Alaska.

An experienced drummer in virtually all contemporary styles, Mr. Schulz has performed with Dave Brubeck at the Newport Jazz Festival, jazz violinist Leroy Jenkins, guitar legend Jim Hall, the San Antonio Symphony, and countless jazz combos, cover bands, and original music groups over the last 30 years.



Gil Rose is a conductor helping to shape the future of classical music. His dynamic performances and many recordings have garnered international critical praise.

In 1996, Mr. Rose founded the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), the foremost professional orchestra dedicated exclusively to performing and recording symphonic music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Under his leadership, BMOP's unique programming and high performance standards have attracted critical acclaim and earned the orchestra eleven ASCAP awards for adventurous

programming as well as the John S. Edwards Award for Strongest Commitment to New American Music.

Mr. Rose maintains a busy schedule as a guest conductor on both the opera and symphonic platforms. He made his Tanglewood debut in 2002 and in 2003 he debuted with the Netherlands Radio Symphony as part of the Holland Festival. He has led the American Composers Orchestra, the Warsaw Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra of the Ukraine, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana and the National Orchestra of Porto.

Mr. Rose recently partnered with the American Repertory Theatre, Chicago Opera Theatre and the MIT Media Lab to create the world premiere of composer Tod Machover's *Death and the Powers*. He conducted this seminal multi-media work at its World Premiere at the Opera Garnier in Monte Carlo, Monaco in September 2010 and also led its United States premiere in Boston and a subsequent performance at Chicago Opera Theatre.

An active recording artist, Gil Rose serves as the Executive Producer of the BMOP/sound recording label. His extensive discography includes world premiere recordings of music by John Cage, Lukas Foss, Charles Fussell, Michael Gandolfi, Tod Machover, Steven Mackey, Evan Ziporyn and many others on such labels as Albany, Arsis, Chandos, ECM, Naxos, New World, and BMOP/sound.

Over the past decade, Maestro Rose has also built a reputation as one of the country's most inventive and versatile opera conductors. The conductor joined Opera Boston as its Music Director in 2003. In 2010, he was appointed the company's first Artistic Director. Mr. Rose has led Opera Boston in several American and New England premieres including: Shostakovich's *The Nose*, Weber's *Der Freischütz* and Hindemith's *Cardillac*. In 2009, Mr. Rose led the world premiere of Zhou Long's *Madame White Snake*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2011.

Mr. Rose has also served as the Artistic Director of Opera Unlimited, a contemporary opera festival associated with Opera Boston. With Opera Unlimited, he has led the world premiere of Elena Ruehr's *Toussaint Before the Spirits*, the New England premiere of Thomas Ades' *Powder Her Face*, as well as the revival of John Harbison's *Full Moon in March* and the North American premiere of Peter Eötvös' *Angels in America*.

In 2007, Mr. Rose was awarded Columbia University's prestigious Ditson Award as well as an ASCAP Concert Music award for his exemplary commitment to new American music. He is a three time Grammy Award nominee.



The **Boston Modern Orchestra Project** (BMOP) is widely recognized as the leading orchestra in the United States dedicated exclusively to performing new music, and its signature record label, BMOP/sound, is the nation's foremost label launched by an orchestra and solely devoted to new music recordings.

Founded in 1996 by Artistic Director Gil Rose, BMOP affirms its mission to illuminate the connections that exist naturally between contemporary music and contemporary society by reuniting composers and audiences in a shared concert experience. In its first twelve seasons, BMOP established a track record that includes more than 80 performances, over 70 world premieres (including 30 commissioned works), two Opera Unlimited festivals with Opera Boston, the inaugural Ditson Festival of Contemporary Music with the ICA/Boston, and 32 commercial recordings, including 12 CDs from BMOP/sound.

In March 2008, BMOP launched its signature record label, BMOP/sound, with the release of John Harbison's ballet *Ulysses*. Its composer-centric releases focus on orchestral works that are otherwise unavailable in recorded form. The response to the label was immediate

and celebratory; its five inaugural releases appeared on the "Best of 2008" lists of *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, National Public Radio, *Downbeat*, and *American Record Guide*, among others. BMOP/sound is the recipient of five Grammy Award nominations: in 2009 for *Charles Fussell: Wilde*; in 2010 for *Derek Bermel: Voices*; and three nominations in 2011 for its recording of *Steven Mackey: Dreamhouse* (including Best Classical Album). *The New York Times* proclaimed, "BMOP/sound is an example of everything done right." Additional BMOP recordings are available from Albany, Arsiv, Cantaloupe, Centaur, Chandos, ECM, Innova, Naxos, New World, and Oxingale.

In Boston, BMOP performs at Jordan Hall and Symphony Hall, and the orchestra has also performed in New York at Miller Theater, the Winter Garden, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, and The Lyceum in Brooklyn. A perennial winner of the ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming of Orchestral Music and 2006 winner of the John S. Edwards Award for Strongest Commitment to New American Music, BMOP has appeared at the Bank of America Celebrity Series (Boston, MA), Tanglewood, the Boston Cyberarts Festival, the Festival of New American Music (Sacramento, CA), and Music on the Edge (Pittsburgh, PA). In April 2008, BMOP headlined the 10th Annual MATA Festival in New York.

BMOP's greatest strength is the artistic distinction of its musicians and performances. Each season, Gil Rose, recipient of Columbia University's prestigious Ditson Conductor's Award as well as an ASCAP Concert Music award for his extraordinary contribution to new music, gathers together an outstanding orchestra of dynamic and talented young performers, and presents some of the world's top vocal and instrumental soloists. *The Boston Globe* claims, "Gil Rose is some kind of genius; his concerts are wildly entertaining, intellectually rigorous, and meaningful." Of BMOP performances, *The New York Times* says: "Mr. Rose and his team filled the music with rich, decisive ensemble colors and magnificent solos. These musicians were rapturous—superb instrumentalists at work and play."

FLUTE

Sarah Brady* [1, 2, 3]
Rachel Braude (piccolo) [1]

OBOE

Barbara LaFitte* [1]
Jennifer Slowik
(English horn) [1, 2]

CLARINET

Michael Norsworthy [1, 2, 3]

BASS CLARINET

Gary Gorczyca [1]

BASSOON

Ronald Haroutunian* [1]
Greg Newton [1, 2]

HORN

Alyssa Daly [1]
Whitacre Hill* [1]

TRUMPET

Eric Berlin [1]
Terry Everson* [1]

TROMBONE

Hans Bohn [1]

PERCUSSION

Craig McNutt [1, 2]

PIANO

Linda Osborn-Blaschke [1]
Sarah Bob [2, 3]

VIOLIN

Elizabeth Abbate [1]
Melanie Auclair-Fortier [1]
Piotr Buczek [1]
Sasha Callahan [1]
Julia Cash [1]

Gabriela Diaz [1, 3]

Charles Dimmick* [1]

Lois Finkel [1]

Rohan Gregory [1]

Annegret Klaua [1]

Oana Lacatus [1]

Krista Buckland Reisner* [1]

Sarita Uranovsky [1]

Brenda van der Merwe [1]

Katherine Winterstein [1]

Edward Wu [1]

VIOLA

Mark Berger [1]

Abigail Cross [1]

Stephen Dyball [1]

Nathaniel Farny [1]

Dimitar Petkov [1]

Kate Vincent* [1, 2]

CELLO

Holgen Gjoni [1]
Marc Moskowitz [1]
Rafael Popper-Keizer* [1]
David Russell [1, 3]

BASS

Pascale Delache-Feldman [1]

Scot Fitzsimmons* [1]

Susan Hagen [2]

KEY:

- [1] Kick & Ride
- [2] Eight Point Turn
- [3] Superhero

*Principals

Eric Moe

Superhero
Eight Point Turn
Kick & Ride

Producer

Gil Rose

Recording and postproduction

Joel Gordon and David Corcoran

SUPERHERO was recorded on March 12, 2008, at Merrimack College (North Andover, MA). *Eight Point Turn* was recorded on February 7, 2008, at Merrimack College. *Kick & Ride* was recorded on May 23, 2009, at Merrimack College.



This recording was made possible in part by the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the Alice M. Ditson Fund at Columbia University, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Office of Research of the University of Pittsburgh, and Jim Barnett.

For the gift of time, space, and mountains, I owe a great debt to the Montana Artists Refuge, where all three pieces were composed. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Philadelphia Music Project, which commissioned *Eight Point Turn* for Relâche; the New York New Music Ensemble, which commissioned *SUPERHERO*; and the Barlow Endowment, which commissioned *Kick & Ride* for BMOP.

As for the recordings, let me begin by thanking the incomparable Gil Rose, without whom there would be nothing. And heartfelt thanks to percussionist Robert Schulz, who made a super heroic contribution to all the works on this recording. I can't possibly thank the other musicians of BMOP adequately, the many individuals playing as one who made outstanding contributions; you know who you are (I hope) and how grateful I am for your incredibly skillful, hard work. In the control room, I was most fortunate to be able to rely on the mastery of Joel Gordon and the invaluable assistance of Hannah Field, among others. Thanks also to Sissie Siu Cohen, Catherine Stephan, and Dorothy Shallenberger for their many and various amazing feats of administration. Finally, I thank my partner, Barbara Weissberger, for the innumerable ways she helped me to bring this project to fruition.

— Eric Moe



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