

STELCO

for piano and percussion

Situated in Hamilton Ontario, Stelco Steel was founded in 1900 by the amalgamation of the Hamilton Steel and Iron Company with the Canada Screw Company, Montreal Rolling Mills, the Dominion Wire Manufacturing Company and the Canada Bolt and Nut Company. Their employees formed a union under the umbrella of the United Steelworkers of America in 1946. Stelco Steel was sold to U.S. Steel in 2007, and in 2013 steel was no longer being produced at the Hamilton Works location.

Industrial machinery is noisy, intimidating, and can be legitimately dangerous to be close to. But, my nostalgia for the seemingly endless sound-landscape produced by foundries, steam locomotives, mills and factories is real, as is my disappointment for the one sound that has seemingly replaced them: the computer keyboard.

The seduction of the sound of industry has inspired many composers (Verdi, Wagner, Antheil, Varese, Ruttman, Andriessen, etc). But, one of the great 'instruments' of urban life is now getting harder and harder to experience first-hand. It has been years since I first experienced the sound of a steam locomotive (Tallinn, Estonia), Hydro-Electric Generator (Niagara Falls) and steel forge (Hamilton), but I remember each of them vividly. To celebrate Canada's 150th year, my piece will be an homage to these places and the people in Canada who risk life and limb to manipulate and assemble the heavy materials that have created our urban world.

My previous compositions for percussion and piano have all had a connection to industrialism. *Changes* (pc.pf.: 1987) used rhythmic patterns transcribed from the sounds of a tanning factory near my home. For *Good Machine* (4pc.pf: 1991) I invented a musical machine using four percussionists and a pianist. *Strategies Against Architecture Book II* (2pc.2pf: 1996) used musical quotations from industrial music pioneers Einstürzende Neubauten, and includes found objects in its instrumentation. *STELCO* continues this tradition: sounds of struck metal in collaboration with a piano, which is in essence a 'struck metal' instrument.

This project has developed from a highly successful collaboration with LE last year. I had the pleasure of writing a piano trio for LE, and when their artistic director Vincent Ho approached me to write a piece for pianist Susanne Ruberg Gordon and Dame Evelyn Glennie, to celebrate both LE's 20th anniversary and Canada's 150th, I jumped at the chance. My respect and admiration for Susanne's musicianship developed over the last year, as she worked on and performed both my commissioned trio and the exceptionally difficult *Strategies Against Architecture Book II*. Evelyn Glennie and I met during the Winnipeg New Music Festival in 1999, and we talked at that time about a collaboration. It has taken a while, but I am excited to now have the opportunity to work with and compose for one of the world's finest musicians.

O. Daniel