



# Taking Time

Ann Southam's *Simple Lines of Enquiry* & David Rokeby's *Machine for Taking Time*



This presentation is the meeting of two independent works of art; the music and video are not explicitly synchronized, but move through time in compatible ways that enliven each other. Both works involve a process of unfolding - a camera pans across a city and across time; the music explores the emotional possibilities of a twelve-interval row. Each embraces extreme detail and timeless expansiveness. The held sonorities of the piano link seamlessly to the subtle pan/shift of images through time. They are both gently emotional contemplations of transience; places of remembering and letting go.

## ***Simple Lines of Enquiry*** (2007) by Ann Southam

Ann Southam and I worked extensively together, sharing a friendship as well as a musical connection. This began when I recorded Ann's *Remembering Schubert* in 1999 and continued right up until her death in 2010. The fact that she wrote several works for me during this intensely creative (though sadly shortened) period of time is a great honour to me. These pieces include *Figures: Music for Piano and String Orchestra* (which I premiered with the Toronto Symphony at Massey Hall), *In Retrospect*, *Qualities of Consonance*, and numerous pieces in her *Returns* set which were her final works for piano.

*Simple Lines of Enquiry* is another of such pieces and it's an eloquent and quietly emotional work whose slow unraveling evokes a magically suspended, weightless soundworld. Its stillness and intimacy invite listeners into an environment of deep listening and contemplation.

*Simple Lines of Enquiry* is an enquiry into the emotional possibilities of a twelve-tone row. It is also an attempt to rationalize the irrational, for which the twelve-tone row serves as a metaphor. Through simple minimalist processes the row is spun out, note by note allowing time for the changes to register and the shifting emotional terrain, which those small changes produce, to make itself known.

The *New Yorker's* Alex Ross included my interpretation of it in his list of 2009's Ten Exceptional Recordings, remarking that "the test of a great recording is whether you find yourself temporarily unable to live without it. For certain overlapping periods this year, I couldn't stop listening to... Ann Southam's immense, mysterious piano piece *Simple Lines of Enquiry*."

## ***Machine for Taking Time (boul. Saint-Laurent)*** by David Rokeby (pictured above)

To create *Machine for Taking Time (Boul. Saint-Laurent)*, David Rokeby positioned cameras high on a building in Montreal and recorded 750,000 images over the course of a year, capturing a broad swath of the city in every season, in every angle of light, and in every weather condition. The resulting database of images is explored by a computer, which stitches together leisurely continuous pans across the city, staying true to the spatial trajectory but shifting unpredictably through time.

APPROXIMATE DURATION: *one hour*

PRESENTER PROVIDES: *grand piano (in good condition), cabling to run from the laptop to the projector, power (on stage), projector (1080p preferred, 3000-4000 lumens), projection screen*

RESOURCES:

[VIDEO LINK](#) | [EVE EGOYAN](#) | [ANN SOUTHAM](#) | [DAVID ROKEBY](#)