

Fugue States

Music by Dennis Báthory-Kitsz (b. 1949)

Text by Jane Boxall

(Length: 7 minutes 20 seconds)

Emily Searles (voice), Laurel Ann Maurer (flute), Jane Boxall (percussion).

As part of the post-Fluxus generation of independent artists, Dennis Báthory-Kitsz composes, writes about, and advocates for non-pop. He has created more than a thousand works for orchestras, bands, sound sculptures, soloists, chamber groups, electronics, theater, opera, installations, dancers, interactive media, and performance events. His music includes traditional and graphic scores, his own electronic and acoustic instruments, computer software and hardware, synthesizers and e-boxes, electronic costumes, the Rhythmatron, and extended vocal performances.

Fugue States is a nonpop song for voice with looper, flute, and metallophones. The text is a multi-level exploration of travel, discrimination, power, and the poet's psychic reaction to all of them. The music uses the color of the metallophones—vibraphone, glockenspiel, triangles, Chinese opera cymbals, mixing bowls, suspended cymbal, and thud drum—to paint both a counterpoint and underscore to the impression of the text. With raindrops, bumblebees, puddles, and pollen, the text first creates a shimmering atmosphere of natural comfort, before becoming tense with police cruisers, cellphones, a Dollar General, and a dirty UPS truck.

The percussion's triplets stretch and contract against the meter, while the voice flexibly sings the melodic lines. Both come together eight times, along with the flute in some verses, in a precise 5/4 measure that layers the voices using a looping pedal to create a building chorus. A flute/vibraphone duet relieves the stress briefly. Then the music accelerates with the tension of the piece, and ends with a defeated shrug and drum slice reminiscent of a guillotine. The text leaves the reader unsure if the traveler was ever released.