

Horologium and K. Meizter – ‘Eight Studies In Transition’ CD

(Old Europa Cafe)

Written by Simon Collins

Time – it’s like one of those moving walkways at the airport, impelling you down life’s corridor towards the vanishing point. Sometimes the walkway slows down, sometimes it speeds up, but it never quite stops, no matter how much you might like it to, and Dr Who aside, we’re all moving in the same direction towards the same inevitable destination. *Eight Studies In Transition* is a collaboration between Polish musician Grzegorz Siedlecki (a.k.a. Horologium) and Swedish musician K. Meizter, who also records with Drakh as Beyond Sensory Experience, which ambitiously takes as its theme the human experience of the passage of time. This theme is not new to either artist – Beyond Sensory Experience recorded *The Dull Routine Of Existence* in 2005, and of course, the very name Horologium means ‘clock’. In a recent interview I conducted with Horologium for *Zero Tolerance* magazine, Grzegorz stated:

“The passage of time is a great inspiration. It gives us the essential lesson: remain indifferent to stupid politics, daily problems which are not problems at all in retrospect, the pursuit of money, welfare and all that trivia.”

The eight tracks of the album occupy 56 minutes of precious time, and Horologium and K. Meizter worked on four tracks apiece. The album opens with two tracks from K. Meizter. ‘Succession’, which at 13 minutes is the longest track on the album, blends industrial ambient background noises with a steady, plodding bassline, distant chimes and a looped vocal sample consisting of the words “Looking straight ahead” – remember what I was just saying about the inexorable forward march of time? The gloomy, futile atmosphere of this opening track is reminiscent of *The Dull Routine Of Existence*, as well as the Catalan project Ô Paradis. ‘The Transient Domain’ follows, another long track at over 11 minutes (it’s noticeable, in fact, that all the tracks on *Eight Studies...* are arranged in descending order of length). It opens with a slow, dreamy orchestral passage overlaid on crackling static, before moving into strangely clipped, backtracked guitar, vocal samples, and bleak industrial ambient, the track finally fading away into crackle and hiss.

‘Human Endeavours’ is the first track from Horologium, and it opens with a swelling horn overture, which could very well be a sample from Wagner (I can’t quite place it). There’s a clanking industrial rhythm in the background, like a train going over points. A looped piano line begins, accompanied by echoing drones, sounds of splashing water and a complex assemblage of vocal, choral and musical samples – a good example of Horologium’s ‘industrial nostalgia’. The track is less martial in tone than much of Horologium’s work, but this always seems to be the way when Grzegorz works in collaboration with other artists rather than solo – his *Kaukasus* album with Moljebka Pvlse is also more ambient and drone-based than solo Horologium works such as *The Fire Sermon* and *Songs For*

Hunters. 'Progress / Regress' is also by Horologium, and it continues in the same vein (the break between the tracks is almost imperceptible), with a looped orchestral sample backed with sound effects giving way to a hypnotic, pulsating metallic drone, and a piano playing a looped phrase from Prokofiev's *Peter And The Wolf*.

With 'Memorabilia', we return to the work of K. Meizter, for a hesitant, shuffling composition of broken, desultory beats and distant, indistinct whispering. Horologium's 'The Life Sentence' changes the tone, sampling crackly old marching tunes and dramatic classical music to epic and bombastic effect, much more like what I think of as the archetypal Horologium sound. The relentless beat gets steadily stronger and ever more insistent. 'Reconstructing The Past' is K. Meizter's final contribution, and this too is fairly martial in tone, structured around a crisp snare drum beat, overlaid with lush, warm keyboards. Horologium's 'Advance' closes the album, a whimsical collage of swooping strings, fairy-tale chimes and orchestral drama and shouting, which reminded me of the similarly eclectic work of Italian project Division S.

The *Eight Studies...* album as a whole is a very intelligent and provocative examination of the nature of time. Whilst titles like 'Sucession' and 'Advance' refer to the unidirectional nature of our subjective experience of time passing, this is seemingly contradicted by other titles such as 'Progress / Regress' and 'Reconstructing The Past'. The methods of sampling and looping used by these musicians can be argued to subvert the linear nature of music, and of course the whole idea of using anachronistic, nostalgic samples from eras long since past is in itself a way of defying the passage of time – as is the whole act of recording and replaying music, when you stop to think about it. The very existence of sound recording technology has fundamentally changed our relationship to music, which used to be the most transitory and ephemeral of all art forms, ceasing to exist the instant a musician stopped playing. Now we can rewind, pause, loop, play a piece again and again – we may not be able to get off time's moving walkway altogether, but we can hop backwards a step or two every now and then.

Eight Studies In Transition comes very nicely packaged in a matt finish triple gatefold sleeve with two card inserts. The album is also available in a special limited (150 copies) edition, which includes a bonus 3" CD-R with two exclusive tracks.

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