

THE WHIMSICAL NATURE OF SMALL PARTICLE PHYSICS

In the fall of 2006 a dear family friend gave me a tour of his workplace – the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab). This is the home to an atomic particle accelerator where atoms are violently slammed into each other at indescribable speeds and a collision detection center takes “pictures” of the results. Among the many results recorded at Fermilab are a type of subatomic particle known as “quarks” and scientists refer to them as one of six “flavors”- top, bottom, up, down, strange, and charm. This helps the scientists at this facility and others understand the nature of matter, anti-matter, space in general, and even the most fundamental components of time itself. I was moved at this visit by how their work was so reverent in one way, but playful in another. With names like “strange”, “charm”, and the term “flavors” I was reminded of the musical giants I have come to revere who also walked this fine line between playing God and being a child.

This work is presented as a suite of the six flavors of quark, with a seventh dance entitled “collision”. Accompanying the snare drum is a recording entirely made of sounds I recorded some time after that in the Collision Detection Center at Fermilab expressly for a soundscape in this work. There are no other sounds involved, though a significant amount of liberties have been taken to present this as a technically and intellectually challenging experience, while at the same time visceral, playful and organic. –Not much unlike the work of Fermilab’s scientists themselves.

Musically this work is inspired by the contributions of Masson and Delecluse, while at the same time humbly trying to give respect to the likes of Pratt and Wilcoxon.

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