

Neil B. Rolnick

<http://www.neilrolnick.com>

Since he moved to New York City in 2002, Neil Rolnick's music has been receiving increasingly wide recognition and numerous performances both in the US and abroad. A pioneer in the use of computers in performance, beginning in the late 1970s, Rolnick has often included unexpected and unusual combinations of materials and media in his music. He has performed around the world, and his music has appeared on 13 CD's.

Though much of Rolnick's work has been in areas which connect music and technology, and is therefore considered in the realm of "experimental" music, his music has always been highly melodic and accessible. Whether working with electronic sounds, improvisation, or multimedia, his music has been characterized by critics as "sophisticated," "hummable and engaging," and as having "good senses of showmanship and humor."

Works completed in 2007 include *Hammer & Hair* for violinist Todd Reynolds and pianist Kathleen Supové; *Love Songs* for the Albany Symphony, with soloists Theo Bleckmann and Todd Reynolds; and *The Bridge* for the Albany Symphony's Dogs of Desire ensemble. In 2006 Rolnick completed the *iFiddle Concerto* for the American Composers Orchestra, with soloist Todd Reynolds, which was premiered in Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall in New York. In 2006 he also wrote *Uptown Jump* for the trio MAYA, and *Segal's Billboard* for harpist Jacqueline Kerrod, and Innova Recordings released his 13th CD, *Digits*, which received enthusiastic reviews in the *New York Times* and in *Time Out New York*.

Rolnick teaches at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY, where he was founding director of the iEAR Studios.

REVIEWS

"I was ... riveted by Mr. Rolnick's teeming piece [*Digits*] and Ms. Chow's brilliant playing. ... It all made for an exhilarating interactive piece."
– Anthony Tommasini, *New York Times* (April 13, 2007)

"Rolnick's computer echoes and multiplies certain notes and phrases, producing an ivory current that whips and swirls around the performer ... *Digits* is one of the most effective items in [Kathleen Supové's] repertoire."
– Steve Smith, *Time Out New York* (November 9, 2006)

"Visceral, sophisticated, electro-acoustic collection with a sense of humor"
– Ken Smith, *Gramophone*, June 2005

"... ethereal bell-like tones under beautifully lyrical solos and an ostinato of plucked strings."
– Gail Wein, *Washington Post*, January 20, 2005

"Wit, fun and the most delightful virtuosity ... [Rolnick] is a wonderfully sly musician, laid back, easy, but sharply rhythmic, with an ear for just the right sound at just the right time."
– Greg Sandow, *The American Music Center's NewMusicBox* www.newmusicbox.org (April 1, 2003)

"In their final duet [in *The Technophobe and the Madman*] ... their song rang true and clear, but isolated in the framework of their separate worlds, they each seemed utterly, untouchably alone."
– Tresca Weinstein, [Albany, NY] *Times Union* (March 4, 2001)

"Rolnick's 'Calypso,' ... had a freewheeling, slightly circussy character his 'Hush,' by contrast, was built on pianissimo sustained sounds, and his 'Ratchet' combined attractive melodic lines, energetic rhythmic grooves and sustained chordal sections that were backdrops for improvisation."
– Allan Kozinn, *New York Times* (January 14, 1998)

"Although 'Rico Songs & Interludes' is compositionally sophisticated and boasts equally smart lyrics, the work captivates mostly because of how much fun it is. Hummable and engaging, the hourlong piece leaves you wanting more."
– Steve Barnes, [Albany, NY] *Times Union* (September 15, 1997)

"His music is state-of-the-art computer stuff, but Rolnick has good senses of humor and showmanship, and he's never cold or inhuman."
-- Kyle Gann, *Village Voice* (June 4, 1991)

"Rolnick's *Heat: The Rise and Fall of Isabella Rico* took the group into salsa over film noir-ish video images. Odd meters enlivened the pop texture . . . accompanied by a sentimental childlike violin solo, to chilling effect."
-- Kyle Gann, *Village Voice* (June 28, 1994)

"The best work came from Neil B. Rolnick, whose vernacularly flavored electronic music is already known and admired. Mr. Rolnick's pieces *Macedonian AirDrumming*, *Vocal Chords* and *I Like It* -- all had pop elements but were really serious works of art. But *fun* serious works of art."
-- John Rockwell, *New York Times* (June 1, 1991)

"[*ElectriCity*] is a magnificent work of pastoral beauty and sinister industry . . . essential listening for anyone interested in where 'classical' music is going in the next century."
-- Cliff Furnal, *College Media Journal* (July 3, 1992)

"This . . . is what distinguishes Rolnick's music from the majority of today's electronic music. It has an ability to enchant, and to amuse without reducing the power and beauty of the traditional material it emulates."
-- Cliff Furnal, *College Media Journal* (May 15, 1992)

"A cut above, artistically speaking, is Neil B. Rolnick's *Balkanization*, which fades girls' choruses from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia in and out of a synthesized accompaniment."
-- Lesley Valdes, *Philadelphia Inquirer* (September 20, 1990)

"Among the brighter lights on the horizons of contemporary music . . . Even listeners with conservative taste will appreciate Rolnick's craftsmanship, and particularly his decision to make non-gimmicky, ultimately musical use of his gear."
-- Bob Doerschuk, *Keyboard Magazine* (April 1988)

"Rolnick's unexpected moves re-focus ears that are prone to drift off . . . [and] recreate a welcome sense of tonal form and steer *minimalism* in a direction where its -ism falls off from disuse, and it becomes once again simply *music*. What better direction to take it?"
-- Kyle Gann, *Village Voice* (May 24, 1988)

"*Balkanization*, based on Bulgarian and Yugoslav folk themes . . . brought to mind the folk-theme fantasies composed in the 19th century. Mr. Rolnick's fantasy is technologically and idiomatically updated, but the sense of spirited and inventive variation is very much in that time-honored tradition."
-- Allan Kozinn, *New York Times* (June 4, 1988)
