Lord Thomas and Fair Annie
(1977-8)

for alto flute, clarinet, viola (or violin), harpsichord, and celeste

by Kyle Gann
For several years in my youth I harbored the idea of writing an ensemble piece, perhaps even an orchestra piece, which would be the orchestration of a single melody, rippling through the ensemble; Lord Thomas and Fair Annie, written when I was 22, was the result of the urge (along with, in a different way, Siren for flute quintet of the same year). I'm not unhappy with the piece, but it turned out so difficult to perform that I never went further with the idea. (I'm afraid I was, at the time, doing a conducting tutorial on Boulez's Le Marteau sans maître, and fancied I should be allowed all of the same metric intricacies Boulez used, despite my more tonal idiom.) The idea of making up a long melody from recurring modules, however, was an idea I'd return to in my Snake Dances and other works. "Lord Thomas and Fair Annie" was the name of a Scots ballad I enjoyed listening to at the time, and which I found related to the romantic turn of some of the melodic fragments.

In September of 2009 I simplified the metric notation at many points. Tuneful yet abstract, the piece is, perhaps, a portrait of a young composer poised between minimalism on one hand and Le marteau, Quartet for the End of Time, and Zeitmasze on the other - a symptomatic artifact of the 1970s.

Kyle Gann

Duration: 8 minutes
Lord Thomas and Fair Annie

Light, quick, and lithe, like a butterfly

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

\( \text{Alto Flute} \)

\( \text{Clarinet in B}^b \)

\( \text{Viola} \)

\( \text{Harpischord} \)

\( \text{Celesta} \)

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Kyle Gann 1978
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February, 1978
Evanston, Illinois