

1-3 *Broken Light* (13:50)

for string quartet and modified CD player

I Corelli

II Locatelli

III Torelli

Soldier String Quartet:

Laura Seaton, David Soldier, violins

Ron Lawrence, viola

Mary Wooten, cello

4 *Tobabo Fonio* (9:36)

Nicolas Collins, trombone-propelled electronics

5 *It Was A Dark And Stormy Night* (27:27)

David Moss, voice

Nicolas Collins, voice, backwards electric guitar & electronics

Robert Poss, electric guitar

Guy Klucevsek, accordion

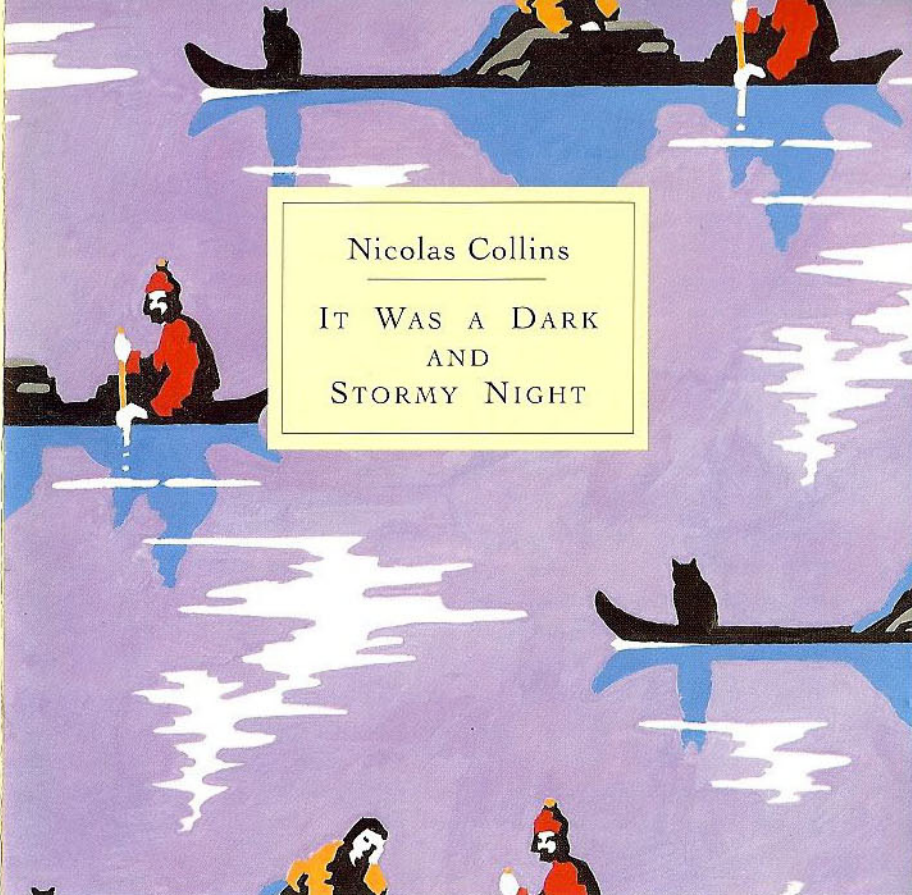
Ben Neill, trumpet

Rob Bethea, trombone

Tom Cora, cello

Soldier String Quartet

Text by Susan Tallman, John Hillaby, Peter Dickinson, E. M. Forster, Peter Vergo, Philip Broadley, Dorothy L. Sayers, Dick Francis, W. C. Handy, James "Son" Thomas, Jasper Johns, Sarah Caudwell, Nicolas Collins, and public domain.



Nicolas Collins

IT WAS A DARK  
AND  
STORMY NIGHT

*Broken Light* (1991), for string quartet and hot-wired CD player, is the first in a series of pieces that employ customized consumer electronics in conjunction with traditional instruments to rework tonal material from earlier music, in this case the string music of Corelli, Locatelli, and Torelli. Under the control of the performers, the CD player "scratches" across the disk, isolating and freezing short loops of recorded music. As it slowly steps from one "skipping groove" to the next, the lush contrapuntal texture of the concerto grosso is suspended in harmonic blocks, with the insistent rhythmic feel of the loop superimposed. The performers' parts, both written and improvised, mesh and clash with the CD, with a respectful nod to Terry Riley's *In C*. *Broken Light* was commissioned by the Soldier String Quartet, and premiered in May 1991 at the Musique Action Festival in Vandoeuvre-les-Nancy, France.

*Tobabo Fonio* (1986-90) is a reconstruction of recorded brass band music from the Peruvian Andes, imposing upon that music the kind of structural adaptations and cultural misunderstandings that accompanied its own diversionary course from Europe. The sounds are processed through my "trombone-propelled electronics" – a digital signal processor that is controlled from the movements of a trombone slide and uses the brass instrument as an acoustically malleable loudspeaker. The initial samples are so short that they are heard as only as the resonant drones of stolen waveforms, sprayed around the room by the highly directional trombone speaker. The pitch of the drone deepens as the samples are lengthened. This texture gives way to bursts of trumpet riffs and drum rolls, and finally brief glimpses of its core of Cuzceña music. The original recording is by the group Primavera de Tauca.

*It Was A Dark And Stormy Night* (1990) is an extremely liberal re-orchestration and re-interpretation of *Tobabo Fonio*, surrounding a text about cultural piracy. The form of *Tobabo Fonio* arose from the twin dictates of an idiosyncratic

electronic instrument and borrowed musical material. For *It Was A Dark And Stormy Night* the signature sounds of sampling and looping were translated into techniques appropriate to voice and a small string-oriented ensemble: electronic drones were replaced by descending patterns of open strings on electric guitars and the instruments of a string quartet; the filling-up and clearing-out of a digital loop was emulated by the guitarist moving from staccato to tremolo and back again, by fragmented ensemble playing, and by David Moss's purely acoustic vocal imitation of electronic collage; the shards of the Peruvian song that crop up throughout *Tobabo Fonio* were replaced by "ghosts" of the melody, played within the overtones of the strings, and gradually coalescing into a full rendition of the tune.

The text of *It Was A Dark And Stormy Night* is based on the looping narrative of an old campfire story, and is read by two vocalists. Electronics extract and separate melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic information from the speech: a Pitch-to-MIDI Converter triggers drum sounds in response to the rhythm and pitch contours of the voice, producing a sloppy, automatic percussive accompaniment; the voice also electromagnetically resonates the strings of a "backwards" electric guitar, eliciting a wash of overtones, which is imitated and reinforced by the accompanying instruments. The nested and interlocked stories (some true, some fiction) wind through the subjects of forgery, copying, appropriation, and repetition – ideas of special relevance to an instrumental reinterpretation of an electronic sampling of an indigenous music played on alien instruments imported by missionaries.

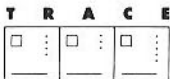
*It Was A Dark And Stormy Night* was commissioned by the New York State Council on the Arts and The Kitchen, New York City, and was premiered at The Kitchen in February, 1990.

Nicolas Collins    May 1992

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RECORDS

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*Broken Light* and *It Was A Dark And Stormy Night* were recorded and mixed at Baby Monster Studios, New York City, February-May 1992, by Bryce Goggin. Additional recording for *It Was A Dark And Stormy Night* was engineered by Alex Noyes at Studio PASS, New York City, April 1991. *Tobabo Fonio* was recorded direct to DAT at Stichting STEIM, Amsterdam, December 1991, by Hayo den Boeft. Digital editing by Dan Farkas. Produced by Nicolas Collins with Robert Poss and David Soldier.

Design by Amy Bernstein. Cover illustration by Susan Tallman after *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*, by George Caleb Bingham, 1845.

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Special thanks to all the musicians for their work in the development and recording of the pieces, and to Studio Consultants for technical assistance.

Also by Nicolas Collins:

"Real Electronic Music," on *Imaginary Landscapes*, Nonesuch Records, CD & cassette, 1990

*100 of the World's Most Beautiful Melodies*, Trace Elements Records, CD, 1989

*Inverse Guitar* (with Robert Poss), Trace Elements Records, cassette, 1988

*Devils Music*, Trace Elements Records, LP, 1986

*Let The State Make The Selection*, Lovely Music, LP, 1984

*Going Out With Slow Smoke* (with Ron Kuivila), Lovely Music, LP, 1982