



G. Schirmer/AMP and the Music Sales Group

March - May

Schirmer eNews

March-May, 2009



Fred Newman and Rob Kapilow up close



WebNote: Composer video interview

http://www.schirmer.com/default.aspx?tabId=2422&State_2879=2&newsId_2879=1609

Making the Choir Coo... like pigeons

Rob Kapilow and A Prairie Home Companion's sound effects artist, Fred Newman, have teamed up to create an incredibly original work for chorus. Commissioned by the Young People's Chorus of New York City, the work will be premiered at WNYC, New York Public Radio as part of the YPC's Radio Radiance project and will also be heard around the country through American Public Media. Kapilow and Newman have ingeniously brought the sounds of a crosstown bus to the choir loft: *Crosstown M42*.

Using remarkable sound effects techniques — often produced by Newman's own voice — and Kapilow's infectious talents, the collaborators have harnessed the music of everyday sounds: screeching brakes, cooing pigeons, the jibber-jabber of passengers on a bus, cell phones ringing, car horns blaring, passing sirens, bus announcements, the rumble of an engine — as in John Cage's landmark work *4'33"*, the aural fabric of our surrounding environment has now become music.

The creative process began by simply riding a bus together and bringing along a handheld digital recorder, "we got some amazing conversations and some wonderful sounds," the two recall. Newman then took this inspiration and created a sound effects soundtrack by using sounds of his own making and editing everything on a computer. Newman gave Kapilow this first draft to which Kapilow wrote music tracks that went along with what Newman had done. This back and forth continued until they had a final notated piece of music.

Originally the team was going to write a "concerto for Fred," but Newman felt strongly that the chorus should learn how to make these sounds themselves. "It's kind of like having been a dancer, then turning into a choreographer," Kapilow explains, "now instead of just producing the sounds, Fred has to think, 'what would it be like if I had a whole group of people making these sounds!'"

For Kapilow and Newman, the mantra of this collaboration became "if you see something, sing something," taking a cue from New York City's public service announcements to report suspicious packages or activity: If you see something, say something. Ultimately, for the two collaborators, what will become the message to the kids and the audience is, "there's a piece of music happening every second, if you only listen."