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Bern Porter

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A North Korean soldier holds "bullets" to blow up the U.S. Capitol in Washington in this poster released by Pyongyang's Korean Central News Agency on Friday. The Korean banner reads: "Ruthless Punishment to U.S. Imperialism." New anti-U.S. posters have been put up along the streets of Pyongyang and other parts of North Korea pledging to fight American "imperialists," the North's state-run media said.
Scientists make music with DNA

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MADRID — Imagine the human genome as music. Unravel DNA’s double helix, picture its components lined up like piano keys, and assign a note to each. Run your finger along the keys.

Spanish scientists did that just for fun and recorded what they call an audio version of the blueprint for life.

The team at Madrid’s Ramon y Cajal Hospital was intrigued by music’s lure — how it can make toddlers dance and adults cry — and looked for hints in the genetic material that makes us what we are. They also had some microbial genes wax melodic.

The end product is “Genoma Music,” a 10-tune CD due out in February. “It’s a way to bring science and music closer together,” said Dr. Aurora Sanchez Sousa, a piano-playing microbiologist.

DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid, is composed of long strings of molecules called nucleotides, which are distinguished by which of four nitrogen-containing bases they contain: adenine, guanine, thymine or cytosine, represented as A, G, T, and C. These became the musical notes.

French-born composer Richard Krull turned DNA sequences — a snippet of a gene might look like AGCGTATACGAGT — into sheet music. He arbitrarily assigned tones of the eight-note, do-re-mi scale to each letter. Thymine became re, for instance. Guanine is so, adenine la, and cytosine do.

Played solo on percussion, classical guitar or the other instruments used on the CD, the sequences would sound cute but rudimentary, the musical equivalent of PacMan in an era of Microsoft Xbox.

So the alphabet soup of bases served as just that, base lines to accompany melodies composed by Krull and his scientific colleague. They say the melodies were influenced, even dictated, by the mood and rhythm of the underlying genetic code.

In general, the genome music is an easy-listening sound that is vaguely New Age. One of the prettiest songs is based on Connexin 26, a human gene that causes deafness when it mutates.

WHY I WRONG

As Dr. Johnson said "To a poet nothing is useless"
As Gertrude Stein said "Butter will melt"
As Pound said "I need to see a troubador about a horse"
As Tammy Faye Bakker said "My face hurts"
As Jack Spicer said "Rabbits do not know what they are"
As Dr. Williams said "The bastards have taken over"
As Basil Bunting said "Cacophony is at least as intricate an art as harmony"
As Yogi Berra said "You can observe a lot by watching"
IT'S MORE THAN HAVING TO TAKE YOUR SHOES OFF AT THE AIRPORT...

Did you know

As a result of recent legislation* the government's various agents can now:

• demand access to your child's school records UNLESS you protect your child's privacy in writing;
• enter your home while you're away -- without showing you a search warrant -- and they are not required to tell you about it until they deem it "safe" to do so;
• demand your reading records from whatever library you use -- including which sites you have accessed on the internet -- and
• that librarians are liable to being jailed if they even tell anyone those records were requested.

To learn more, contact:
MIDCOAST
BILL OF RIGHTS DEFENSE COMMITTEE,
Weds., 4 p.m. in Belfast.
Jane 338-3854, Maizy mmyers@acadia.net.

*MIDCOAST
BILL OF RIGHTS DEFENSE COMMITTEE

*Including the USA Patriot Act, Homeland Security, and Executive Orders.
Once there was a little boy named Horst Latitude who lived inside of a wire-of-oval-patterns-surrounded-on-all-sides-by (chicken coop) behind a barn (full of air) outside a little country town called Updock. He lived there on the outskirts of Updock with his mother, Hillary Clam, because that was her family name growing up in a house without any corners in Silo, Illinois. And of course one of her legs was shorter than the other from walking around in her worldview in a circle all the time. Which made her limp when she tried to be on the level with people.

When he was on the level, which was always, Horst Latitude's legs were each of equal length. The only thing unusual about him was his hair. He didn't have any. It was awful. He had to wear a stocking cap both winter and summer because of the warts. On his head he had warts, all over a bald head. There must have been a hundred of them. Which he always kept covered with a stocking cap. Which was okay until one day the wind blew off his stocking cap in the playground of the Downtown Updock Central School of Gathering Diffused Prime Energy, which is a rather long name for a school but that's okay. The other children on the playground danced around him and called him, "Weird-warts."

And that made Horst Latitude cry. He ran home to his bed and cried tears as big as a Volkswagen Jetta. Boo-hoo.

But time went by, and later on he remembered in silence inside his warty head what his father had told him before he went off to Arabia to start up a sand factory and make a fortune selling spare time to the Tuaregs.

"HORST LATITUDE, MY SON!" said his father, who always talked loud to add great emphasis on everything he said. "YOU MUST ALWAYS BE PROUD OF YOUR NAME! THAT IS WHY I HAVE A BARN FULL OF AIR! BECAUSE MY NAME IS BARNABY. BARNABY TWINKLE-STAR!"

And the little boy felt warm and safe because he knew his father's barn (full of air) was a power shield against damage by any and all bad weathers.

But his father added, "WATCH OUT FOR COBWEBs!" and took off to Arabia. Which was heard by Horst Latitude's mother, who misunderstood. She drank an entire quart of blackberry brandy and went out to the barn full of XXX and gathered up close to a two-cord shed full of cobwebs from all the dark corners and carried them into the house in a big bunch over her shoulder and dropped them into her son's breakfast, which was porridge. Slam-plop. Thud.

"You don't need cream and sugar on cruel gruel," she told him. But Horst Latitude got some milk and honey and poured it on anyway. He took a small bite of the mess in the bowl and made a bad face and refused to eat any more.

His mother picked up the bowl of milk & honey and porridge & cobwebs and dumped it over the boy's head.

Oh, and it was terrible. Horst Latitude ran to his bed and began to cry (very hard); and his tears got mixed in with the many feathers that were still plentiful in the chicken coop, even in the (box of) roofing nails, behind the barn full of guess-what on the outskirts of Updock.

Horst Latitude thought about his awful head-mess, and it made him cry all the harder. He was terribly sad, but also-simultaneous sweetly wet and sticky. Which aroused his curiosity, a new and formerly unfilled part of himself.

He sent emails to his entire address book. He called his mother on the cell phone and fell asleep.

He dreamed he was a white seagull flying a long way up in a sky ablaze
with white & purple starlight. He looked ahead out over the sky and saw out of the eyes of the flying dream seagull—wow! There down below was a little boy lying in bed. He wore a crown of the same kind of light that was up in the sky above the seagull.

He heard a loud CLICK like a camera taking a picture, and the crown turned warm and melted and dribbled and ran all over the little-boy-sleeping's head. Which felt like warm syrup to both the dream seagull and the little boy in the bed with warts. Warts which like magic became a head of thick, beautiful hair and the warts were all gone. While at the same time the seagull's wings changed into little boy hands which he put ahead of himself like Superman and sailed along behind them. Then a blue sky of pure Feeling came in under him and supported his flight so it felt like a soft bed and he flew and flew and flew. And all the while he had HimSelf-God's Dream-weave safety net below and beneath him. And his head felt silky and good, and he knew he was a Dream Explorer like his father.

When Horst Latitude woke up he had no warts at all on his head; he had long dark hair as smooth as silk. No porridge. No milk or sugar. No chicken feathers. No cobwebs. Not even some (galvanized) roofing nails.

"Good morning," said his mother, who had been sitting beside his bed for more than an hour. "Last night I dreamed your father came to visit from Arabia. His pockets were full of money, and we danced The Twist to Chubby Checker's rock and roll music by the fireplace. Then I dreamed that you and your father had worked some magic together, and the warts on your head were gone. Would you like to look in this mirror?"

"Yes," cried her son, and he took a hand mirror from his mother. He gazed steadily at his reflection, all the while stroking his thick hair with his other hand and said, "I did the magic myself. When I was a white seagull. I wonder how that happened."

"We all have different dreams, and we all see different things in them," said his mother. "I feel safest and happiest when I dream of my Barnaby, your father, so that's what I saw. Is there a secret under your pillow?"

Horst Latitude looked, and found there a tiny white seagull that someone had carved from a bar of Ivory soap.

The End
Without mother love, I was taken care by nannies and aunts. My sister hates me. I sucked my grandma titties until I go to school, 6 years old (Jesuit Prep.) I was spoiled; in the evenings try to spell the alphabet by the pupitre, sat across the amah who spilling out two alabaster melons feeding my half-brother, as soon she put the little turd to sleep I jump on top of her, my head buried in her chest and I play dead for while.

“In his rhythmically fractured broken-English prose (which most often chronicles his amorous adventures in the wild manner of a slapstick Henry Miller—antic accounts of bold schemes, epic drinking bouts, and comic seductions) Nguyen Ducmanh proclaims himself an inveterate rascal, a recovering alcoholic, and a smuggling sex addict, encapsulating all the reckless vigor of an extravagant and bohemianly exemplary existence.”

ED MCCORMACK, 2001

Nguyen Ducmanh left his native Vietnam in 1950 to live in France. He came to the States in 1965, becoming a citizen in 1973. He has had numerous shows of his paintings here and in Europe. He began writing short stories and poetry in 1998.
By popular demand, the return of the litree contest. Be the first to ID the poets who wrote the stuff below and win a lunch, assuming that you eat alone, don’t drink much or tip generously. Hint: all the poets are Catalans writing in the 20th century.

Now I’d like to write a nice poem
and talk about certain things you still can find that are nice
in my opinion, or according to the neighbor next door.
I want to be nice, today I what to say nice things.
I’d go through the whole house on my knees
looking for nice things, praying that today I’d be given
certain things that were really nice.

This line is the present.
The line you’ve just read is now past
-- it fell behind after being read --
The rest of the poem is the future,
which exists outside your awareness.

Punching In

We were sitting on crates
in the back
waiting to punch in.
“I’m going to get me
a little shop of my own,”
Eugene said.
“And I’ll come in
when I want and leave
when I want,
and I’ll take money out of the tills
and it will be my money,
and I’ll dress my kids
cute as a mother’s fart,
and once a year I’ll pack up
some bent cans and busted cereal
to give to them less
fortunate, and you sorry-assed fuckers
will be on this line.
Tough shit, you all.
I could give a sweet fuck.”
And the sun wasn’t up
and we were already
late and on our way
to punch in.

Don Winter
A-BOMB, 1953

Amazing but true: that insignificant-looking puff out beyond the famous signs of downtown Las Vegas is an atomic bomb's mushroom cloud only 65 miles away, rising from an explosion in 1953. Tourists actually traveled to Las Vegas to watch such sights from 1951 to 1963, when a nuclear test-ban treaty ended above-ground blasts. Danger? No, just another attraction to compliment the stage shows and gambling.