



Charles Argersinger



Program notes

... between Scylla and Charybdis

Written for Gerald Berthiaume's solo piano recital tour of the Middle East sponsored by the United States Information Agency (USIA), ... *between Scylla and Charybdis* was premiered in August 1993.

The expression "... between Scylla and Charybdis" has come to mean between two equally perilous alternatives, neither of which can be passed without encountering and probably falling victim to the other. In Homer's epic, the *Odyssey*, Ulysses was instructed by Circe to navigate his ship between these two dangers. According to Circe, Scylla "has twelve dangling legs and six heads. Each head contains a mouth filled with three rows of sharp teeth." Charybdis, the whirlpool, would swallow the black water three times each day, and then spit it out again. Warned Circe, "If you should happen to be there when Charybdis is sucking in the water, not even Poseidon could save you from disaster."

In the piece, swirling chromatic sextuplets and septuplets define the seascape of the work. There are occasional brief illusions of tonality in the distance which provide momentary relief from the otherwise dense chromatic patterns and clusters. Aural illusions of meter and polymeter are created, only to be shattered by adjacent rhythms which suggest that the listener's metric orientation be revised.