

Our Time
as a Song in the Universe

Stephen Melillo
Composer
& Star-gazer

Our Time as a Song in the Universe Whispers on the Wind

Musical Haiku #29, #949 in 6:33, Scored for Wind Symphony of the 3rd Millennium
with Prerecorded CD of Porter Music Box Disc
by © Stephen Melillo IGNA 7 May 2007, our 1st "Mom's Birthday" without her...
2nd & 3rd Millennium

Commissioned by the Jakarta International School Wind Ensemble.
Dedicated to the Republic of Indonesia whose motto is "Unity Through Diversity."
Indonesia's many ethnic groups, religions and peoples are connected in this circle of
humanity located on the Ring of Fire, forged in the greater life cycle of the world and the
universe in which all people are now connected. John Salminen, Director

SPECIAL DIRECTIONS

In the manner and spirit of **UNIVERSE BELOW, GARRISON at GOLIAD, BEYOND COURAGE, KAKEHASHI: THAT WE MIGHT LIVE** and **LAST WORLD STANDING**, this work is accompanied by a prerecorded Audio CD. It is in fact, the very recording which, after 33 years, inspired the work.

On the enclosed CD Recording, best imported to **iTUNES** or **Quicktime**, the 1-Minute Porter Music Box Disc recording representing the Celestial Sphere as photographed at **8:18:18 on 11 September 2001** from the position of New York City plays **3** times. This happens within the center of the work for Winds and Percussion. There is essentially only **one** aleatoric section represented by clusters in the 2nd iteration of the recording beginning at measure **34**. Here is how it works and why it is present.

First, all clusters are in Ionian modes. The result of the complete stacking should be, on the *technical* level, a *practice* of stacking all tones so as to produce **no** beating or waves.

Each group is assigned a number:

- 1 = Flutes and Double Reeds
- 2 = Clarinets, Bass Clarinet(s) and Contra Bass Clarinet. (*The contra is not written for, but HOPED for!*)
- 3 = Saxophones
- 4 = Horns
- 5 = Trumpets
- 6 = Low Brass (For Group 6, use a fist to indicate the cue.)

Choose groups, and swell from, and then back to Silence. It may also be played *as written*. You will begin to feel a "pulse" in the recording which will help you to feel the tempo.

In groups such as the *Flutes/Double Reeds* and *Clarinets/Bass Clarinets*, please assign the Root and 5th of the given mode to the lower-pitched instruments first, and then the rest of the mode from the bottom up so that *each* individual player is playing their own note in their own color and space. Please note that the VOICES playing a Bb minor triad is the only, and purposeful exception.

... and now onto the Music...

Conductors, rendering any "**STORM**" work have the composer/copyright holder's permission to photocopy the Score & Parts for the **sole** and **specific** use of their students and/or musicians residing in the organization which invested in an original copy of the work from **STORMWORKS®**. Reproduction, arranging, transcribing or excerpting for **any other** purpose, including transport to another location or organization is prohibited by law. Music which has been purchased in the Digital Form may be printed with all rules pertaining to printed Music still in effect. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Stephen Melillo is a member of ASCAP.

PERSONAL MUSICAL NOTES

The Miracle of Time and Life is like the *STAR DISC*, now in your care... it is in *ROTATION*, playing a Song that has **ALWAYS** been there, *waiting* for us to listen...

What you are about to read in the following pages is Poetry in the eyes of those still filled with child-like Awe & wonder. As Lao-Tzu has said, "**When Man loses his sense of Awe there will be disaster.**" It took me more than **30** years... in fact, and I just realized this, **33** years... to bring this piece from Silent imagination to the cold black-and-white reality of paper. Intertwined in its final moments of finding a Voice, one confronts the emotion of the Moment... and events which, unlike the process soon to be revealed, could *never* be calculated.

There are a few things you should know while discovering this seemingly innocent work. "**Our Time**" was finally typeset and in fact, first played by Troy University Musicians on the same day that the ashes of James Doohan (*Star Trek's "Scotty"*) found their way into Space. That same day, 27 April is Herr Siegfried Rundel's birthday, as well as the birth of Prokofiev. I had finally recorded the Star Disc the day after my Grandmother's birthday, and on the 30th Anniversary of the premiere of Star Wars in 1977. I began setting things to ink on 19 April, the day the American Revolution began. (*See, In a Cause Called Glorious*). During the following days, kids recently killed at Virginia Tech were being buried by their Parents. I cannot come close to imagining their Sorrow and Suffering... but some of that *Tragedy* has found its way into this piece. In keeping with the very Credo of *STORMWORKS* at its inception in 1992, we find these words excerpted from **KINGS ROW** by Harry Bellaman:

"This universe was not conceived in beauty. It was conceived in tragedy and travail. It evolved, and continues to be, only in the throes of desperate struggle. Pain, and ugliness, and brute force rule it. In the midst of that continuous hurricane of destruction and death there are born from time to time men and women who resolve this disorder. They create another vision from the fire and dust of disaster. They are poets, and musicians, and artists. That is their answer to the ugliness of the world. They do not ask to be understood. They do not even ask to be liked. But without them we should find the universe an intolerable habitation. They lessen its terrors, and ameliorate the eternal torture of its unanswered and unanswerable questions. They are a gallant company. They go singing down the highways of the world, and the echoes of their words comfort us when they have passed."

These are fitting thoughts for the short "Musical Haiku" you are soon to discover. Yes, endless Symphonies could pour forth from this "idea" and its many permutations and possibilities, but it is better left as it is, and only *framed* for listeners and players alike to contemplate.

I remember standing in the middle of West Street in Port Chester, New York back in **1974**. There above me was an Infinite sky with an Infinite number of possibilities and an uncertain, yet-to-written Future. When I saw the *Porter Music Box* on a family trip to Virginia, I saw everything you are about to read... in an instant.

The interconnected nature of *STORMWORKS* is difficult to explain in the score notes of any one of its puzzle-like pieces, but something happens on this Star Disc that you **must** know. In **1976**, I was at a party while still at the University of Connecticut, and still a physics major. There was a piano, out-of-tune, serving as a table! It's all very clear. Even now. I decided to write this very scene into my 1979 book, *Only for Now*. Amidst the noise of the party, I found a small harmonic progression that I would later call the "*storm motif*". At that Time, I called it the "*sound for God*". My only frustration in all of this was in sending 300 demo tapes bearing this "*storm motif*" all over Hollywood in the early 1980s, but that is another story. Since that Time, I have written the *storm motif* into many of the "Storm" works, a faith-filled David standing against Goliath-like usurpers.

Well, my friends, you can only imagine what it must have been like for me when I drove up to Alexandria, Virginia after **33** years of waiting only to discover the following. With the generosity of the good people at *The Christmas Attic*, I *finally* played and simultaneously recorded the Porter Music Box Disc. That very recording is on your enclosed CD! Can you imagine the chills, the incredible shrinking feeling of humility... when I heard, ever so clearly, melodically and harmonically... the **Storm Motif**?

Yes... it is there... *was* there... always **will be**... there. Even scarier? My original version was in **D**. On the Star Disc it is in **Db**... but remember... that party-table piano in 1976 was... flat.

I hope now you will join me in this new Wonder. I pray that with this Music you will find a way to, "**create another vision from the fire and dust of disaster.**"

And selfishly, I hope that you will one day discover **all** of the Storm Works, as together we look at our World, and "**lessen its terrors, and ameliorate the eternal torture of its unanswered and unanswerable questions.**" Then we too may become "**a gallant company and go singing down the highways of the world comforting others when we have passed...**"

Godspeed! Stephen Melillo, Composer

... And now, the Process! ...



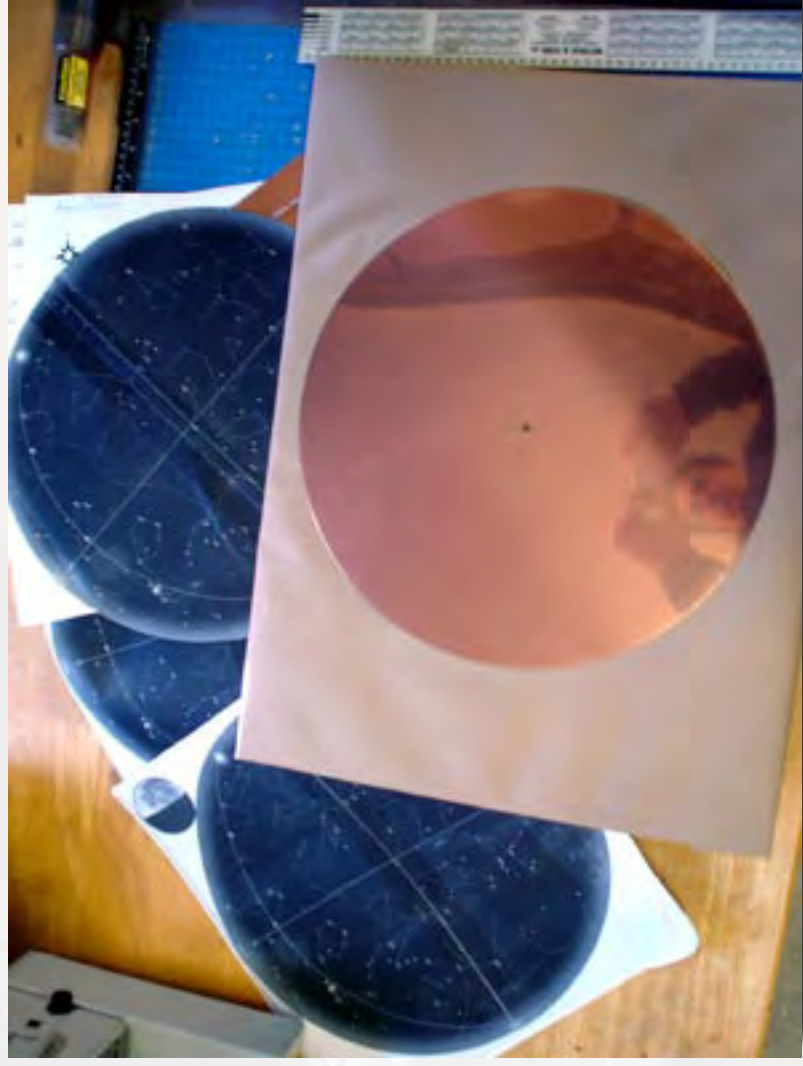
Sunrise in Alexandria
14 March 2007



The Christmas Attic
Alexandria, Virginia
Thank you!



The Porter Music Box
in a Christmas Store... How fitting!



OUR TIME as a SONG in the UNIVERSE

an Idea in Music by © Stephen Melillo IGNA, first in 1974...
Then created as a Porter Music Box Disc on 1 February 2006
and then Composed on 19 April 2007

OUR TIME as a SONG in the UNIVERSE was *composed* long before any of us were Born. And it will continue to play long after any of us, or any of our greatest of great grandchildren will be around to hear it.

Premise from 1974: Did you ever look up at the night sky and wonder what Song the *Universe* played? Not the one you imagine in response to the Infinite, but the one as determined by the position of the Stars? Locked into that “position” is a coded, mathematical message. What does it *sound* like? How does one translate the positions into... “Music”?

Many years ago while visiting the Natural Bridge in Virginia, I came upon a **Porter Music Box**. This very large, wonderful sounding music box uses 15.5-inch diameter disks like the one pictured to the left. These disks are punched by means of a special template. The resultant protrusions pluck tines much

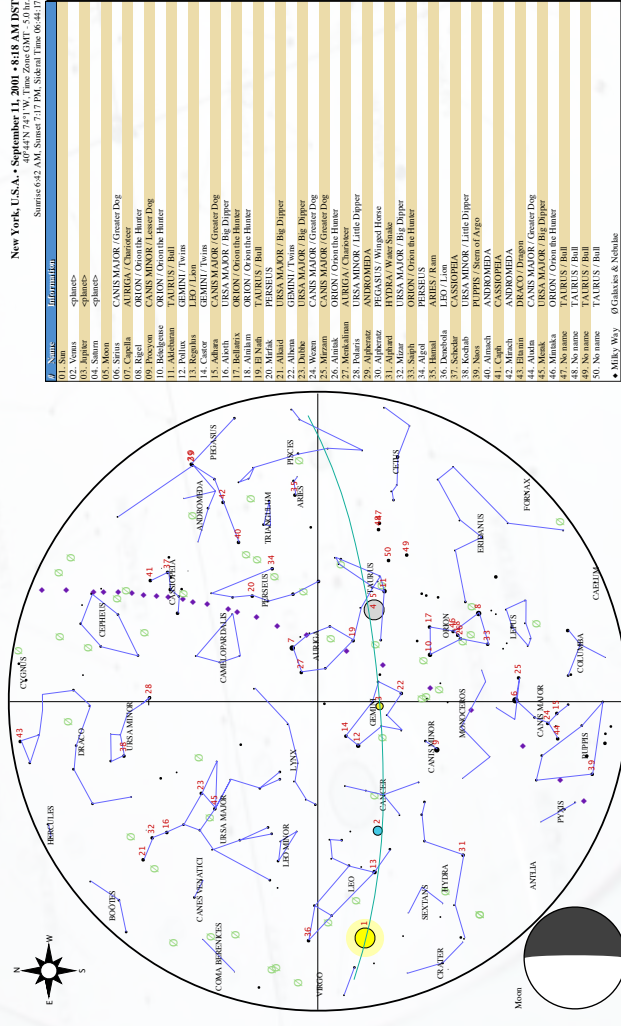
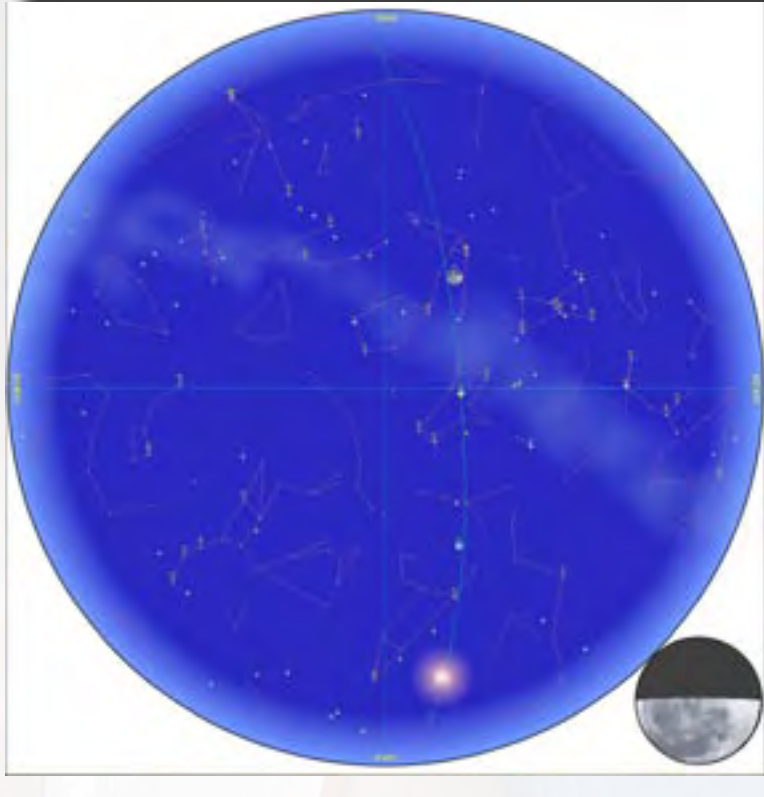
At the moment of “seeing” **The Porter Music Box** and its circular disk, I *instantly* knew how to go about hearing the “*Song in the Universe*” ... a “plot” which I had imagined since 1974. Interestingly enough, 1974 was the very time that **The Porter Music Box Company** went into Business!!! I call this, “**SYNC**”. When they sent me a letter with a **30-year-anniversary** sticker on it, during the *same* Time I was writing about the **30-year** process of *Stormworks*, I knew that something special was soon to unfold!

I had developed a kind of tripod that I called a “**Star-gazer**” back in high school days. This was before the days of computer images. **IF** one could take a photograph of the **celestial sphere**, interpolated as a **celestial plane**, and then inscribe the position of the Stars as “punches” on the disk, what “Music” would be played? If that doesn’t pique your curiosity, I doubt anything will! Remember that scientists from Pythagoras to Kepler wondered such things!

There are **MANY** possibilities, but if there was “order” in The Stars, it would reveal itself in any snapshot. With that hypothesis in place and with that understanding of order within order, I chose a **celestial sphere**. Which one might you have chosen? There are *many* possibilities. But on the Great Cosmic Stage, these would produce little differences. **IF** there was a Song to be heard, it was most likely an **Eternal Song** with little, albeit interesting variations. For the date of the ecliptic plane, **11 September 2001 at 8:18:18 AM over New York City** was chosen. At that moment Spencer Melillo was born. There are other reasons, **Storm** reasons... why this date was chosen. Those reasons are connected to the complete body of work called “**Stormworks**”.

What follows now is a **record**, a documentation of the process in words and photographs. It is offered as a means of inviting you the Conductor, the Musician, and the Listener into the *Universe* of this **Eternal Song**. Had the technology existed in the Time of Bach or Mahler, I am quite sure that they too, would have conducted this experiment. In that Light, I do this for *them*... **now**.

Godspeed! Stephen Melillo



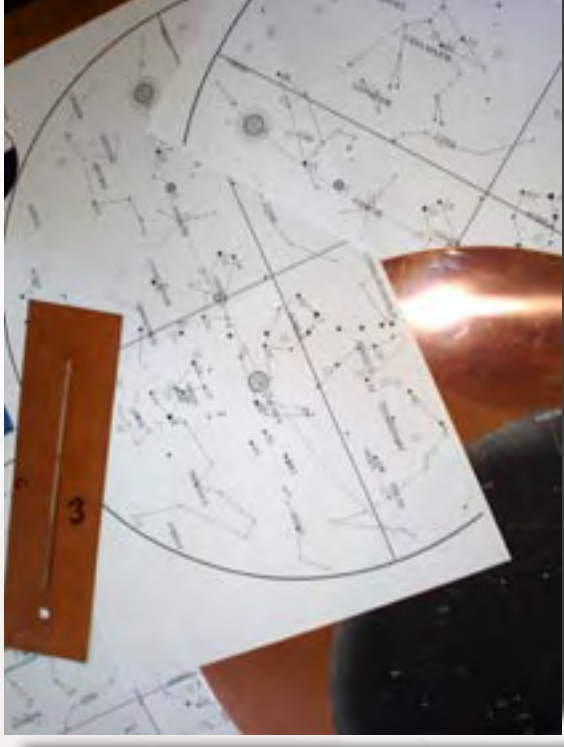


I am compelled to record this. As I moved all of these items into the garage on 1 February 2006, the very first thing which caught my eye was the number **33** in the photo of the chosen **celestial sphere**. This is an interesting SYNC. I include this photograph for personal reasons.



By means of measurement, image capture, printing at different percentages and then finally by tiling an exact-to-scale print as called for by the diameter of the *Porter Music Box Disk*, the final needed pages for plotting the Stars were printed.

Exciting!



Though indeed it would be interesting to hear each and every Star and Planet regardless of its *magnitude*, the *Porter Music Box* must follow a specific Tines-Template of possible *punches*. I had written a series of letters to Jim Sault at *Porter Music Box Company* beginning in 2003. Jim sent me not only a Disk, but also the Tines-Template to assure accuracy in designing a plot which was playable.



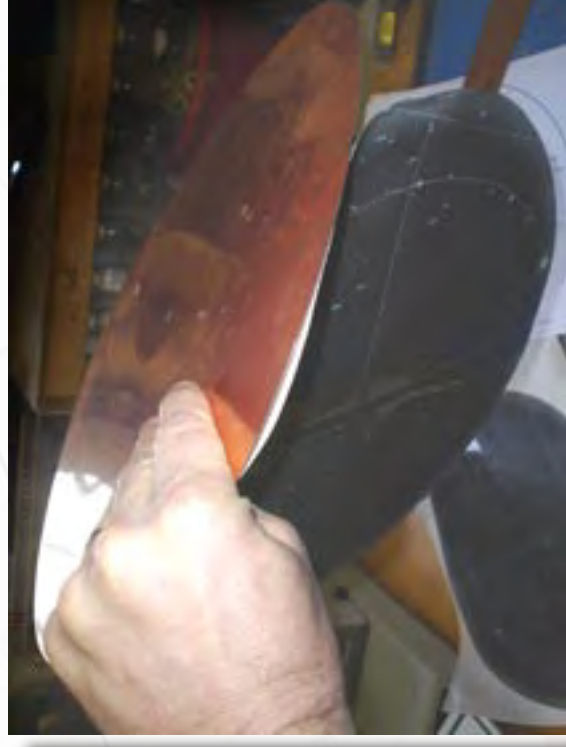
The first scaled image I experimented with was the *white-on-black* version as seen above. Originally, my intent was to puncture the white dots and leave a small mark on the Disk. Later I would embolden the marks, send the Disk to Jim Sault and have him punch out those specific moments. The Stars chosen were based on a *magnitude* which made them visible to the naked eye.



The Tines-Template is the device seen at the right. It has the numbers 3 and 3 on it. It has the same fulcrum as the Disk and is designed to spin around the Disk in the manner of a compass.

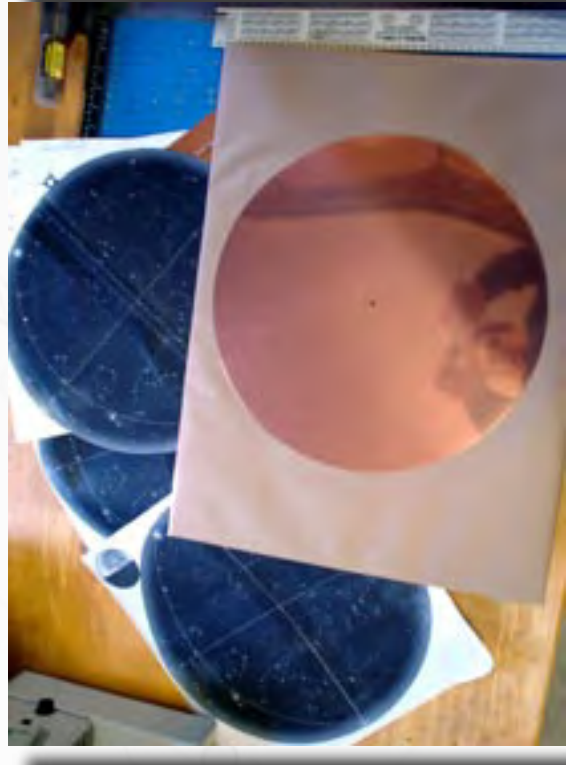


Here is a photograph of the printed **celestial sphere** from **11 September 2001** scaled to the 15.5 inch Disk-size.



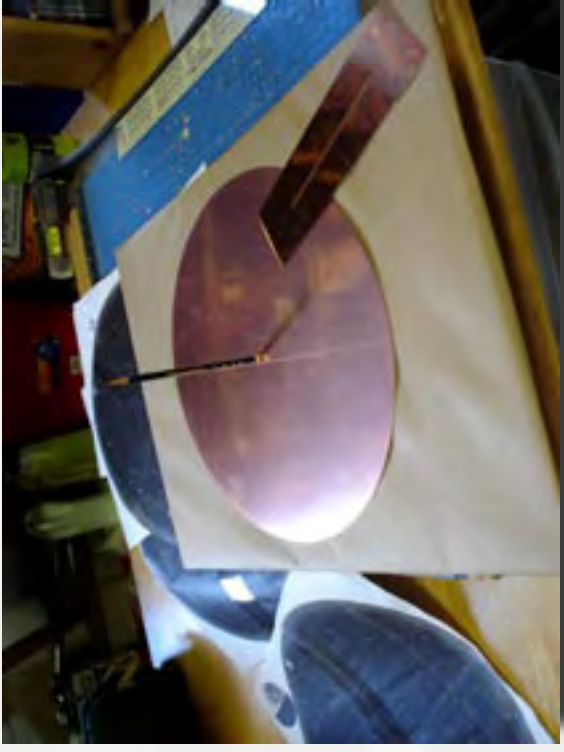
This photograph shows the Disk sent by Jim Sault of *Porter Music Box Company*. Many thanks to Jim and his Company for his patience and support during this project!

And many thanks to *The Christmas Attic* in Alexandria, Virginia. It was there I eventually recorded the Star Disc on 13-14 March 2007.

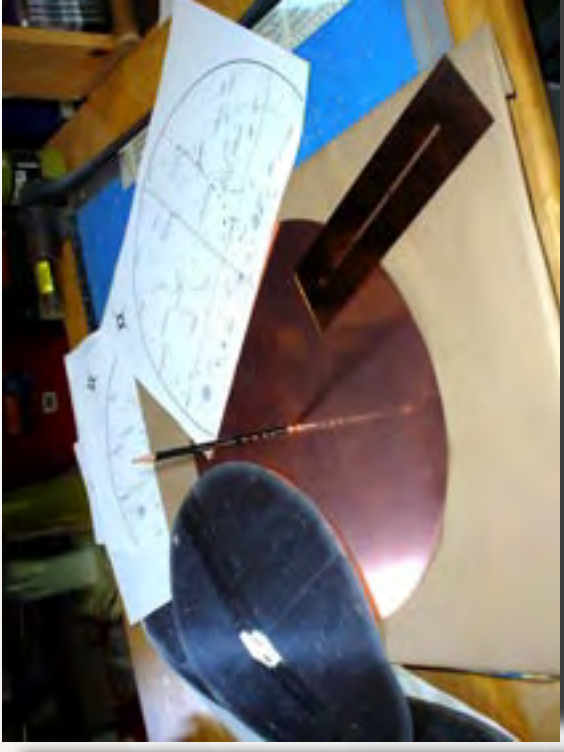


Here is another photograph of the Disk... this time with a captured self-portrait during the process!

1 February 2006, morning.



Here is a photograph of the preparation process and the 2 items sent to me by *Porter Music Box Company*. The Disk and the Tines-Template.



More prep. More "setting-up".

The Tines-Template by the way allows for 2 octaves of chromatic possibility across the Disk. All of the Stars and Planets at the selected magnitude fell into those very fine positions! (*That alone is fascinating!*)

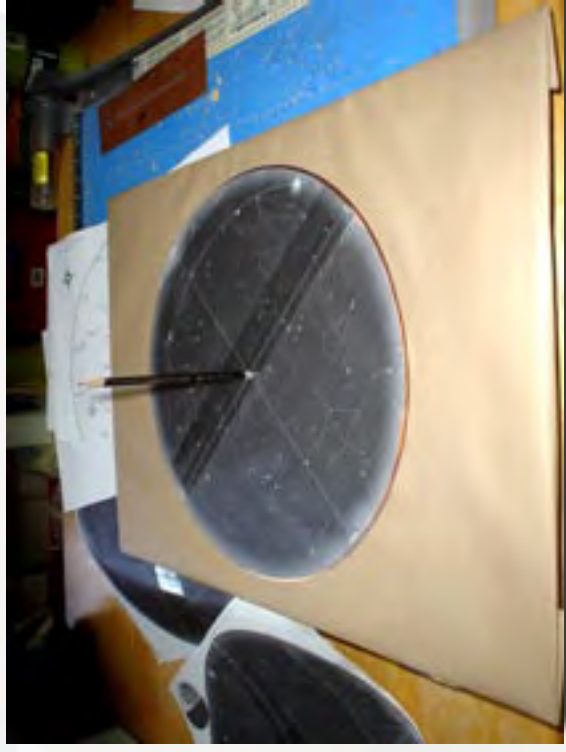


Here, the chosen **celestial sphere** photograph is carefully positioned onto the Disk.

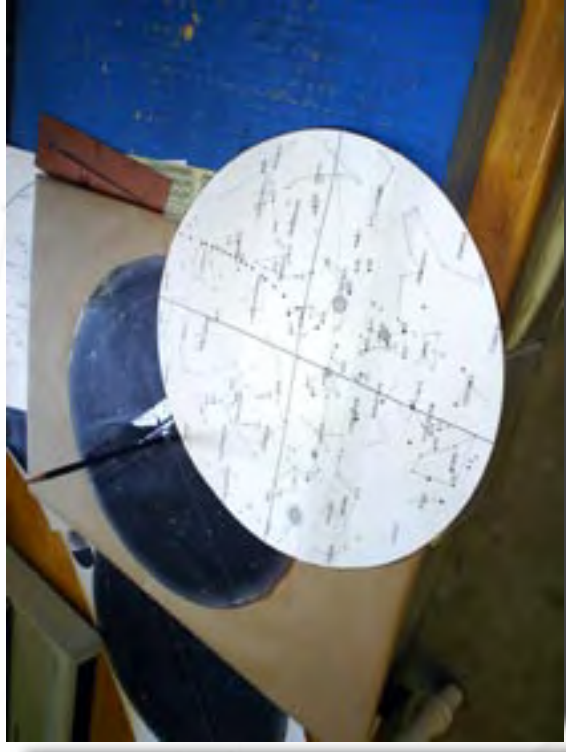


Everything has been arranged, printed, and plotted so as to allow for a consistent correlation between the Stars... and the *Porter Music Box!*

*What an AD for The Porter Music Box Company, and The Christmas Attic!
8 -)!*



Here is another photograph of this step. This photograph was taken by Spencer! How could I say no? And it's a nice photo!



Because it was difficult to see the tiny white dots through the small holes of the Tines-Template, I created an inverse image of the **celestial sphere**... an idea for whom I have Father Peter M. Rinaldi to thank! (*See the Holy Shroud of Turin. Also see Escape from Plato's Cave and Wait of the World. Did you know that the Shroud of Turin is present in the Artwork?*)



Later, I used a new printout of the **celestial sphere** as made available via computer by *MacAstronomica*, a star-gazing program that mirrors the night sky on a laptop screen.

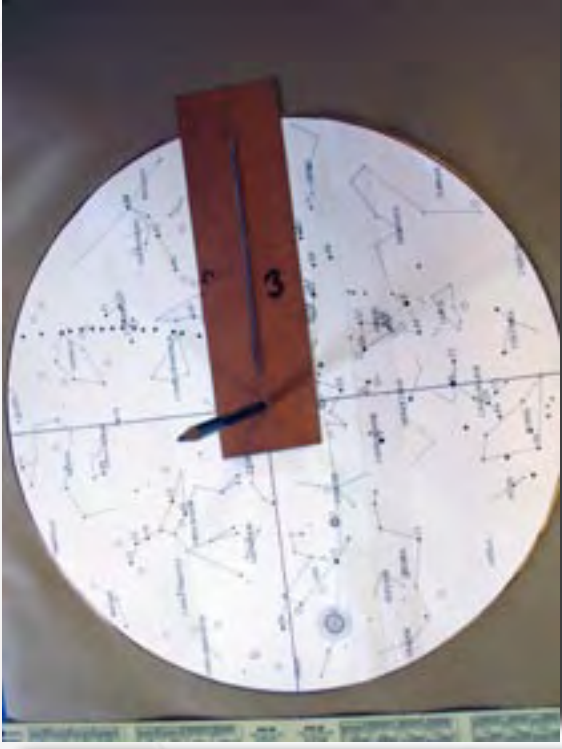


Now, using the new *MacAstronomica's* celestial snapshot, I went back to the "drawing board" as it were, and reprinted, resized, recut and then repositioned the new **black-on-white celestial sphere**.

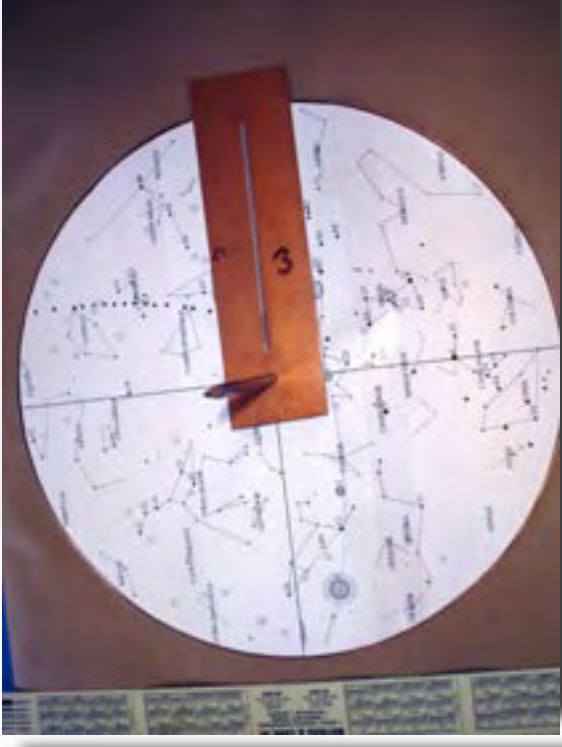
Spence wanted to do some cutting himself, so multiple copies were made!



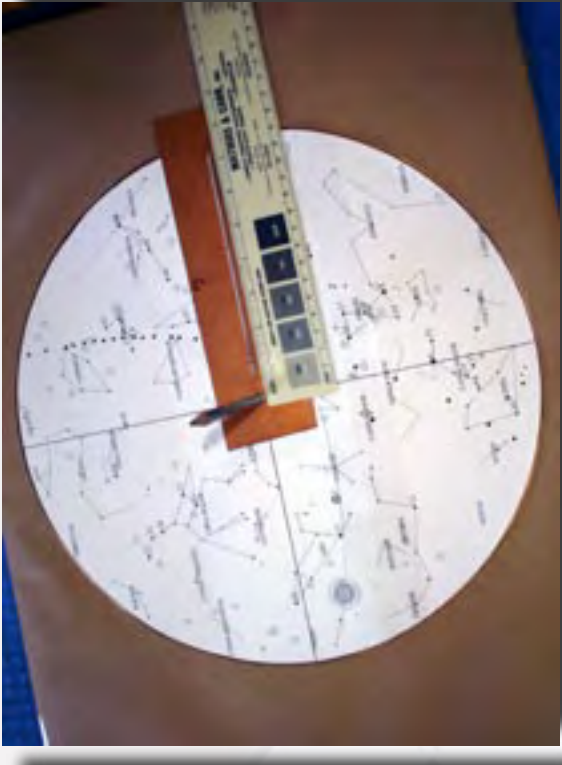
Here is a photograph of the set-up right before the "marking process". Everything, including the layers of paper, the Disk, the background brown paper, all are mounted on a kind of foam board.



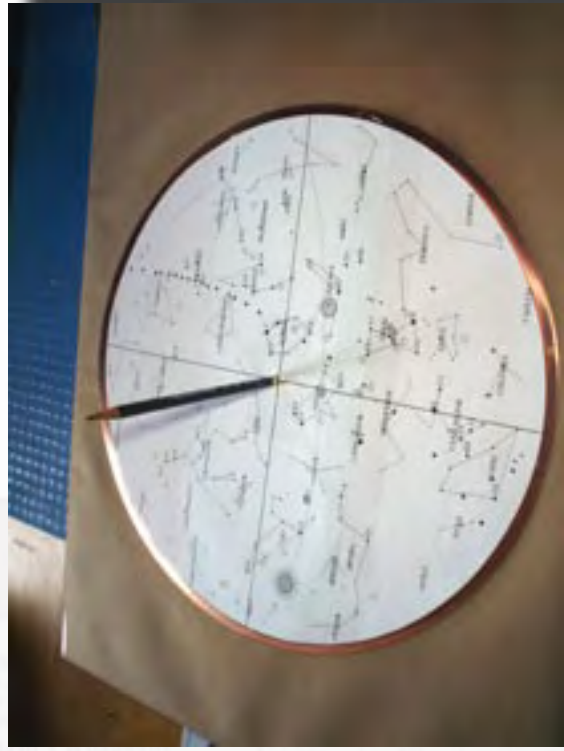
Here, the Tines-Template is carefully positioned onto the **black-on-white celestial sphere**. It will now be rotated. Through the tiny rectangular slots or holes in the Tines-Template, Star positions can be seen and then marked. These Star positions will be **playable** on the *Porter Music Box*. **WOW!**



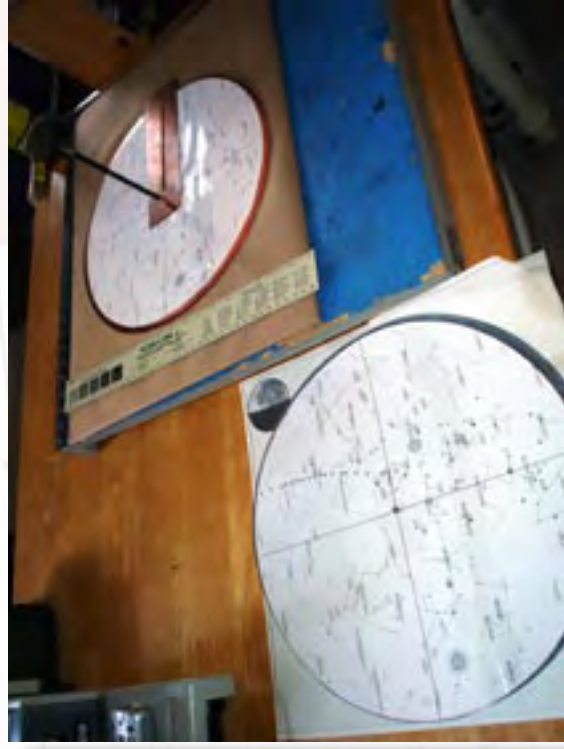
In the manner of a compass, the Tines-Template is carefully, slowly spun around a controlled center point, common to all Disks and graphics.



Through the tiny holes of the Tines-Template, and using careful measurement, the Stars will be punctured through two layers of paper and into the foam board.



But first, all positioning must be accurately controlled, and the Stars have to fall within the radius-range of the Tines-Template. The difference between THIS photograph and the one prior, is that now you can see almost 1/2 an inch of the Disk. To meet the needs of the Tines-Template, the entire **celestial sphere** needed to be scaled down and then reprinted.



Final measurements are once again taken.



Now, it is time to spin the Tines-Template around the common axis... and painstakingly perforate the Star locations through the brown paper and into the foam board that is beneath the set-up.



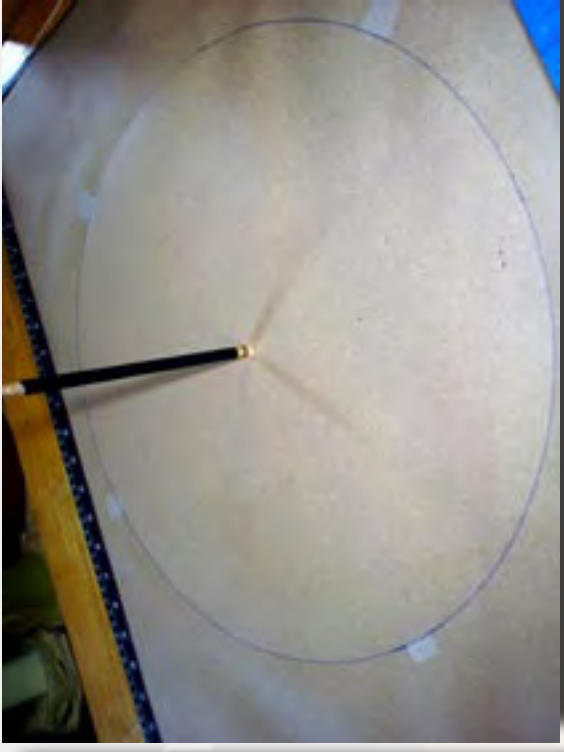
One of the Inspirations for this Piece looks on. Yes, Spencer Melillo is shown here looking at the "sky" as it was at the very moment of his birth... 8:18:18 on 11 September 2001.



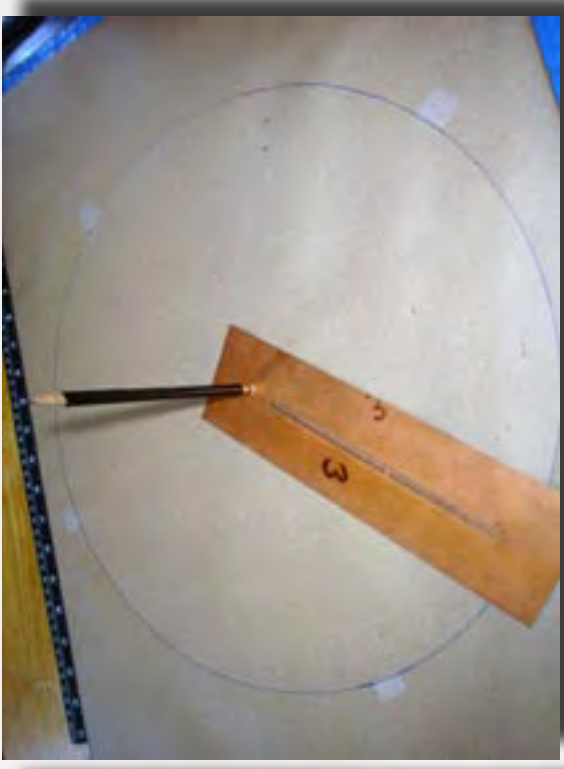
Here is a photograph of the **celestial sphere** after it has been perforated.



Removing the **black-on-white celestial sphere**, we are left with the perforated brown construction paper. These represent, literally **pinpoint Star Locations**.



This new perforated "paper disk" will now be cut out and then repositioned over a piece of blank white paper.



In this step, each tiny dot will be touched by a fine point Sharpie. The new dot will appear on a non-perforated white piece of prepositioned paper.



Once the white paper has been inked, the Tines-Template is then once again... painstakingly rotated over the dots. This time, the Sharpie is used to fill in the exact **rectangular dimensions** for the punch on each occurrence.



Using this approach and the Tines-Template, the marks are guaranteed to coincide with the *Porter Music Box's* Tine Positions. In this photograph, we are now **looking** at the Music! **Chills!**



The **new** Template for the "SONG" is cut. It is carefully lifted from the cutting board, left unfolded and then...



...packaged and sent to *The Porter Music Box Company*. What will these **"dots/punches/Stars"** produce? Will it be recognizable as... "Song"? Or will it become the backdrop Inspiration to a New Song?

Only Time & Fate will tell....
And now to the **present!**

Our Time as a Song in the Universe

Whispers on the Wind, Musical Haiku #29

© STEPHEN MELILLO, COMPOSER
IGNA 27 APRIL 2007, 2-3 MILLENNIUM
GOODSPEED!

mm@57... Ephemeral Fragments

1 2 3 4 5 6

Musical score for 'Our Time as a Song in the Universe' featuring various instruments and percussion. The score is divided into six measures. The instruments listed on the left are: Flute 1, Flute 2, Flute 3, Oboe, Bassoon, Clarinet 1, Clarinet 2, Clarinet 3, Bass Clarinet in B \flat , Alto Sax 1, Alto Sax 2, Tenor Sax, Bari Sax, Horn 1, Horn 2, Horn 3, Trumpet 1, Trumpet 2, Trumpet 3, Euphonium, Trombone 1, Trombone 2, Bass Trombone, Tuba, PAD Bass, Voices, Piano, Harp, Timpani, Chimes, Celesta/Orch. Bells/Vibe, Wind Chimes, Finger Cymbals, Suspended Cymbal, Crash & Bass Drum, and Gong.

Annotations include: 'Always double at lowest 8vb' for PAD Bass; 'p ... ad lib slight dynamic...' for Timpani; 'Use brushes w/opened Pedal, or board, or multiple percussionists to strike all notes.' for Chimes; 'on Vibe... w/motor' for Celesta/Orch. Bells/Vibe; and 'gliss.' for Wind Chimes.