

Wayne Siegel

## **Guernica**

for clarinet, percussion, violin, contrabass and electronics  
2001

April 27, 1937 was another traditional Monday market day in the small Spanish village of Guernica when German warplanes emerged in the sky above. Church bells rang as Guernica was bombed relentlessly for over three hours, leaving the town devastated and up to 1/3 of its civilian population dead. The town burned for three days.

In support of Gen. Franco's fascist forces, Hitler's Luftwaffe had chosen Guernica for bombing practice in perfecting the war machine that would play a major part in the coming world war. The plane's machine guns cut down townspeople as they ran from crumbling buildings. Over 32 tons of high explosive bombs were dropped on the village in the world's first saturation bombing raid on a civilian target. Inspired by this terrible event, Picasso's famous mural Guernica was commissioned by the Spanish Republican government for the 1937 International Exposition in Paris.

This musical work entitled Guernica is similarly inspired by the unfathomable horror, cruelty, terror and destruction of war: a topic that sadly seems to be ever relevant. A quotation from the poem Romance de la Guardia Civil Espanola by Federico Garcia Lorca appears in the piece:

*Avanzan de dos en fondo  
a la ciudad de la fiesta  
Un rumor de siemprevivas  
invade las cartucheras.*

*They are riding two abreast  
To the celebrating city.  
The murmur of everlastings  
Invades their cartidge belts.*

Guernica was commissioned by the ensemble Contemporanea with support from the Danish Arts Foundation.