

Work on **Strange Things Begin to Happen When a Meteor Crashes in the Arizona Desert** (music by Mark Engebretson, text and artwork by Michael Basinski, artwork by Wendy Collin Sorin) began shortly after enigmatic sound/art/poet Michael Basinski's appearance at the 2008 UNCG New Music Festival. I asked Michael whether he had any text I might consider setting, and he responding with this extraordinary book—all black and white--of the same name he produced in collaboration with visual artist Wendy Collin Sorin. The book contains, when read front to back, a collection of texts in Basinski's highly personal idiom of invented letters, imagery, ciphers and symbolism. Read backwards (and upside-down), the book presents a "mutated rondeau" in relatively "normal" language. Using this rondeau as the basis for my composition, I had friends, family and colleagues read one or two pages each, and then used their recorded voices to generated a "musicalized" electronic score. This was developed in conjunction with a solo flute part, which brings us back many years earlier when my friend from Chicago, Janice Misurell-Mitchell and I cooked up the idea that we would each write pieces for each other, and do performances in our home locales and abroad. Janice specializes in, among other things, the performance of text while playing her instrument, and I thought this would be a perfect match for her, my music, and the book. The flute interacts in many ways with the electronic score as well as the visual element, for example by commenting on the "upside down" portions of text, dramatizing or vocalizing certain text fragments, or interacting with the musical element of the spoken/musicalized texts in a more or less conventional musical way. Finally, with the kind contribution of color pictures Wendy had provided, I created a kind of montage of the images that syncs up with the musical element, trying to capture the flavor of the process of overlapping emails and photocopies that she and Basinski used in the original book.

--Mark Engebretson

Strange Things Begin to Happen When a Meteor Crashes in the Arizona Desert began in 1998 with a "sex-text" performance poem in need of visual imagery and a format. Men, women, the flying patterns of bees, and codes were tied together by a snaking trail of overprinted emails written between poet Michael Basinski, publisher/typographer luigi-bob drake and myself. The book caught the attention of Indiana filmmaker Alfred Eaker and began its next transformation: *W the movie*, with additions from a script by Eaker and the **Anti-War Manifesto** of Columbus poet John M. Bennett. Through four years of writing, drawing, ongoing conversation, filming and editing, new images were generated and further informed by current events: a Dr. Strangelove on steroids with bombs & Saddam, W. & the Rapture. Earlier this year, Mark Engebretson contacted me asking for permission to use the images from the book for a video to accompany his composition inspired by meteors and all things strange. I sent him the additional, reworked drawings from the film project: **STBtHWaMCitAD**, Part 3.

--Wendy Collin Sorin