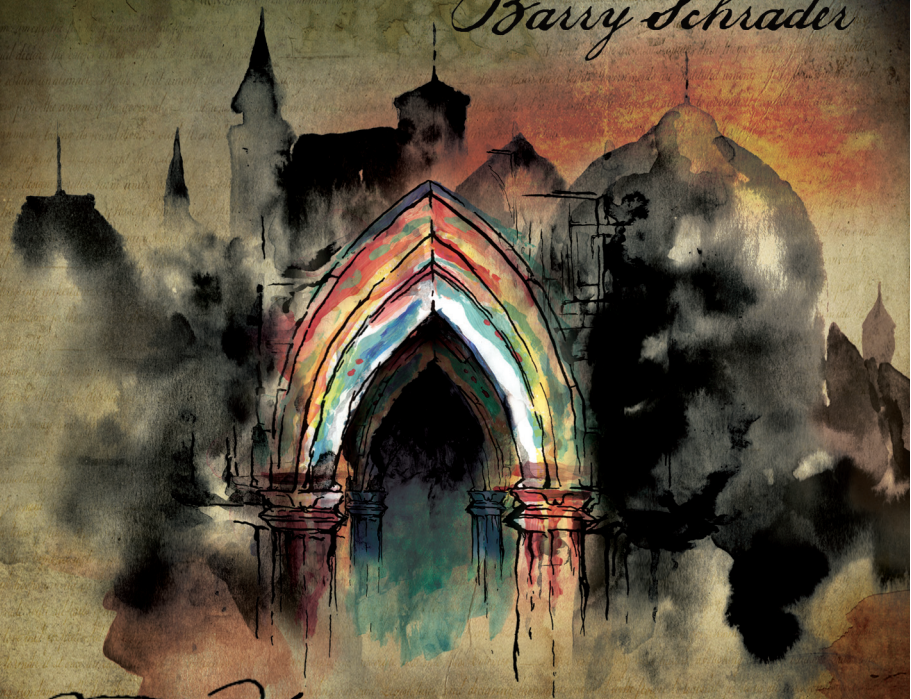


You now find yourself inside The Barnum Museum. Its vastness is overwhelming and confusing, but you must decide which exhibit to see first. You choose to enter The Hall of Mermaids through a large door on your left. Although the room is dimly lit by many fire lanterns on high poles, you immediately sense the vastness of the space. In the middle is a large black pool, perhaps over one hundred meters across, surrounded by large boulders that rise from the water's depths. In the center of the pool is a small island, and you climb up the three steps to a large wooden platform in order to better see the pool and the island. As you hold on to the railings running along the edge of the platform, you peer into the pool, looking for mermaids. It

Barry Schrader



The Barnum Museum



## P. T. Barnum

established two museums in New York City in the nineteenth century. Barnum's American Museum was on the corner of Broadway and Ann Street from January 1, 1842 to July 13, 1865 when it burned to the ground. Barnum built a second museum soon after, but it was also destroyed by fire in 1868. The attractions made the venue a combination of a zoo, museum, lecture hall, wax museum, theatre, and freak show. At its peak, the museum was open fifteen hours a day and had as many as fifteen thousand visitors daily.

The music of *The Barnum Museum* is based not on the actual historical museums, but rather on the short story *The Barnum Museum* by Pulitzer Prize winning author Steven Millhauser. Millhauser's story is a description of a Barnum Museum of the imagination, much more elaborate and fantastic than the museums of historical reality. I have taken several of Millhauser's ideas and used them as the bases for creating musical works. While these pieces are, in a general sense, programmatic, they fall more correctly, I think, into the traditional genre of tone poems. Millhauser presents many ideas, with or without elaboration, and I have let my imagination take off from what he has or has not said about things that never existed. The sound material is all-electronic, created in the computer, and no acoustic sound files are used. In this and other ways, the music follows Millhauser's paths leading to the plausible impossible.

And now, you are ready for your journey through The Barnum Museum.



## Other recordings by Barry Schrader on Innova:

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**EAM** *Innova 575 - November 12, 2002*

**Lost Atlantis** *Innova 629 - January 18, 2005*

**Beyond** *Innova 640 - September 27, 2005*

**Fallen Sparrow** *Innova 654 - May 23, 2006*

**Monkey King** *Innova 703 - October 14, 2008*

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# *Barry Schrader* **The Barnum Museum (2009-2012)**

Inspired by the short story by **STEVEN MILLHAUSER**

1. THE ROMANESQUE AND GOTHIC ENTRANCEWAYS (7:27)
2. THE HALL OF MERMAIDS (6:52)
3. THE CAGED GRIFFIN (4:42)
4. THE SUBTERRANEAN LEVELS (6:51)
5. THE FLYING CARPET (5:55)
6. THE HOMUNCULUS IN A JAR (5:06)
7. CHINESE KALEIDOSCOPIES (5:45)
8. THE CHAMBER OF FALSE THINGS:  
PORPHYRY FIGURINES FROM ATLANTIS;  
GOLDEN CUPS FROM EL DORADO;  
WATER FROM THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH (16:20)

# *Barnum Museum*



**THE** first decision you must make when visiting The Barnum Museum is which doorway to use. There are two: **The Romanesque & Gothic Entranceways.**

The Romanesque entrance is a large rounded arch, several stories high, with massive vaulting and heavy columns. Some of the stones used in this arch are said to have come from an early incarnation of the monastery Santa Maria de Montserrat in Catalonia, and it is rumored that you can hear the echoes of chants dedicated to The Virgin as you pass through this portal. Perhaps you wish to enter through The Gothic entrance with its high, soaring, pointed arches, and impressive moldings around the great doors that are elaborately decorated with sculpted medieval dancing figures. Gothic dance music seems to echo through the stones as you cross the threshold by this entrance.

You now find yourself inside The Barnum Museum. Its vastness is overwhelming and confusing, but you must decide which exhibit to see first. You choose to enter **The Hall of Mermaids** through a large door on your left. Although the room is dimly lit by many fire-lanterns on high poles, you immediately sense the vastness of the space. In the middle is a large black pool, perhaps over one hundred meters across, surrounded by large boulders that rise from the water's depths. In the center of the pool is a rock island, and you climb up the three steps to a large wooden platform in order to better see the pool and the island. As you hold on to the velvet ropes running along the edge of the platform, you peer into the pool, looking for mermaids. It is rumored that there are at least three mermaids in the pool, but, at first, you see nothing but vague ripples. Then, as your eyes become accustomed

to the murky light, you notice undulations at various points in the pond. You think you see the underwater movement of unfamiliar bodies or long, golden strands of hair. Suddenly you hear splashes and watch as flecks of water rise into the air followed by a large aquatic tail. You are thrilled at having seen your first mermaid, but disappointed that the experience was so fleeting.

Leaving The Hall of Mermaids, you pass the exhibit of **The Caged Griffin**.. You are surprised by the size of this beast, which has the head and wings of an eagle, and the body of a lion. Even though the cage is large, it seems much too small for such an imposing creature. The great talon of the griffin's front right leg grasps one of the bars of the cage, and as you look into the griffin's emerald eyes, you feel a great sense of melancholy come over you. You sense the griffin's resignation in having gone from a creature of past great power to present doleful captivity. Suddenly, the griffin's eyes seem to catch fire. Is it remembering some bygone glory, some ancient valorous quest? Its great wings beat once, twice, and the third time it seems to believe it can actually escape its miserable pen and, once again, rise into the heavens. Alas, the griffin quickly remembers its captive state and, once more, settles into its plight of hopeless imprisonment.

As you walk down the hall, moving away from the griffin, you see a door marked with a sign stating: **The Subterranean Levels**. As your curiosity wins out over your better judgment, you decide to open the door. Descending the wooden staircase, you arrive at the first subterranean level. Here things are somewhat the same as the upper floor, and there is dim but adequate lighting. You decide to go down another floor to the second lower level, walking on narrow stairs of rusting iron. The second subterranean level is very dark, lit only by hissing gas lamps. You think that as you've come this far, you may as well go down to the third level of the museum, but the crumbling stone stairs make you think that this may not have been a good idea. Arriving at the bottom of the steps, you see that the floor on this level is merely earthen and that there is almost no light except for a few flickering torches. You take a few steps into the darkness, but you really cannot see clearly, and you know there

## **CREDITS**

**Inspired by the literary work THE BARNUM MUSEUM**  
by **Steven Millhauser** ©1990 All Rights Reserved

**Design/Art Direction:** *Vision/Peter Grenader*

**The Barnum Museum drawing:** *Pedro Lavín*

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**Barry Schrader** has been acclaimed by the *Los Angeles Times* as “a composer born to the electronic medium”, named “a seminal composer of electro-acoustic music” by *Journal SEAMUS*, and described by *Gramophone* as a composer of “approachable electronic music with a distinctive individual voice to reward the adventurous”. *Computer Music Journal* states that “Schrader’s music withstands the test of time and stands uniquely in the American electronic music genre.” “There’s a great sweep to Schrader’s work that puts it more in line with ambitious large-scale electronic works by the likes of Stockhausen (Hymnen), Eloy (Shanti) and Henry (take your pick), a line that can be traced backwards to Mahler, Bruckner and Beethoven.” writes the *Paris Transatlantic Magazine*. Schrader’s compositions for electronics, dance, film, video, mixed media, live/electro-acoustic music combinations, and real-time computer performance have been presented throughout the world. Schrader is the founder and the first president of SEAMUS (*Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States*), the author of *Introduction to Electro-Acoustic Music*, and has written for numerous publications. Active in the promotion of electro-acoustic music, he has been involved with the inauguration and operation of several concert series such as SCREAM (*Southern California Resource for Electro-Acoustic Music*), the **Currents** concert series at Theatre Vanguard (the first ongoing series of electro-acoustic music concerts in the U.S.), and the **CalArts Electro-Acoustic Music Marathon**. He has been a member of the Composition Faculty of the California Institute of the Arts School of Music since 1971, and has taught at the University of California at Santa Barbara, the California State University at Los Angeles, and The University of Nevada at Las Vegas. More information can be found on his website: [barryschrader.com](http://barryschrader.com).

is some movement in the distance. As you return to the stairwell, you consider going to the lowest level of the museum, but seeing that everything from here on down is inky black, and sensing danger below, you quickly retrace your steps up the staircases and through the door to the main floor.

As you close the door to the lower depths of The Barnum Museum, you notice another doorway announcing the exhibit of **The Flying Carpet**. Entering this room, you are immediately impressed with its luminosity and airy ambience. It is exquisitely decorated with flowing arabesques in blue and gold, which reach upwards and cover the five-story high ceiling. On the floor in the middle of the room is a bearded Bedouin, sitting on the most elaborately decorated Arabian carpet you have ever seen. Matching the colors of the room, the carpet is decorated in countless shades of blue, gold, and white, with very long golden fringes. At first, the carpet is still, but then, slowly, it rises into the air and sails around the room, now higher, now lower, now faster, now slower. The movement of the carpet seems to imitate the intertwined lines of the arabesques on the walls. As the carpet settles down to the floor, you decide to leave, but looking over your shoulder as you do so, you see the carpet rising again, only this time it seems to disappear beyond the very ceiling.

You now find yourself in front of a large bell-shaped glass container, in which is housed **The Homunculus in a Jar**, the first you have ever seen. The small creature seems an imperfectly formed human, strange in some ways, yet familiar in others. At first glance, you see the thing is fully self-absorbed, busy doing some sort of arcane activity in its small universe. You regard it as frivolous, even foolish. But then the homunculus notices you, stops its maneuverings, and stares into your eyes. You are captured by its gaze and begin to see and feel the environment of the world inside the bell jar. Swirls of colored light seem to move around the inside of the jar, accompanied by gusts of wind. You feel compelled to watch whatever the creature has in store for you. But just as you feel you are being pulled into its domain, and you think something grand is about to happen, the homunculus quickly turns away and resumes the state of preoccupation you initially found it in, once again

oblivious to you and the world outside its area of confinement. You decide that, after all, it is probably a mindless and soulless creature, and you walk on to the next exhibit.

The next room you enter is quite small, and contains a variety of **Chinese Kaleidoscopes**. You have never seen a Chinese kaleidoscope before, and, as you bring the eyepiece close, you initially see what you expect: countless colors of glass and jewels tumbling to form beautiful and unpredictable geometric designs that seem to circle around and around your new world of vision. Then, unexpectedly, you see a dragon, in brilliant red and breathing gold fire, slowly rise from the bottom of the circle and disappear through the top. You are astonished by this and shortly look away from the kaleidoscope, but when you return your eye to gaze again, you see a brilliant display of every color imaginable, sparkling in an impossible dance that dissipates into blackness.

You now move to **The Chamber of False Things**, itself containing many rooms. You first visit the **Porphyry Figurines from Atlantis**, which are arranged in a large glass case. These figurines are said to have come from the Garden of Cleito, the wife of Poseidon and mother of Atlas, for whom Poseidon built an elaborate park on the island of Atlantis. As you look at the figurines, depicting gods, goddesses, and animals of ancient myth, their muted purples, greens, and coppers, flecked with magical pieces of glitter, impress you. As you stare at the figurines, you can almost imagine the gleaming and glancing of disturbed water, rising yet again to plunge Atlantis into the depths.

Your next visit in the Chamber of False Things is the exhibit of the **Golden Cups from El Dorado**. These are said to have come from a three thousand year old pre-Inca ceremonial center in Peru. Found in a large tunnel underneath an ancient pyramid, the Golden Cups from El Dorado are believed to be part of a primeval ritual in which narcotized youths were taken underground and presented with the sounds and sights of the gods. Using torches, the light casting grotesque shadows on the stone walls, and sounding trumpets of silver and

flutes of bone and wood, their calls echoing around the circular tunnel, the priests would put on a show intended to terrify those chosen for sacrifice. The victims were then led to the top of the pyramid, accompanied by the sounds of drums, percussion, and conch shells where they were ritually slaughtered. The blood of the chosen was caught in the golden cups as it poured from their bodies down the sides of the pyramid, as flutes and conch horns sounded yet again. As you look closely at the Golden Cups from El Dorado, you notice tinges of red that stain the hearts of the chalices.

As you move away from the golden cups, you notice a faint but gleaming distant light that seems to shimmer in a liquid way. As you move closer, you see that this is a large fountain, illuminated from above and below, with a marquee that states it is **Water from the Fountain of Youth**. As you move closer to the fountain, you notice a sweetness in the air, a sense of ionic well-being, as after a rainstorm. Staring at the water in the fountain, you feel as though it is speaking to you, voicing some unbelievable and primordial promise. You begin to wonder if, indeed, the articles in The Chamber of False Things are really counterfeits, or are they really things so ancient and valuable that the only safe way to exhibit them is to falsely proclaim them as fakes? After all, you reason, if such things as mermaids, griffins, and flying carpets can exist, why can there not be a real Fountain of Youth? As you consider this and stare ever more deeply into the fountain's waters, you are convinced that if only you can touch the water, perhaps even taste the water, you will be changed forever into something magnificent and eternal, instead of something paltry and fleeting. But as you reach to touch the water, an alarm sounds: it is the closing signal of The Barnum Museum. Quickly, you are moved away by the museum guards as you watch the Water from the Fountain of Youth seem to increase its flow and take on an internal glow. As you leave the museum, you promise yourself that you will return soon; you must return soon. Having experienced The Barnum Museum, mere reality will forever pale in comparison, and you vow to return to the Impossible as quickly as you can.

**- Barry Schrader**