

Presents the

CONTEMPORARY GROUP
Jonathan Pasternack, *Director*

May 23, 2012

7:30 PM

Meany Studio Theater

PROGRAM

POEMS OF 1917.....LEO ORNSTEIN (1893-2002)

- I. No Man's Land*
- II. The Sower of Despair*
- III. The Orient in Flanders*
- IV. The Wrath of the Despoiled*
- V. Night Broods over the Battlefield*
- VI. Dirge of the Trenches*
- VII. Song behind the Lines*
- VIII. The Battle*
- IX. The Army at Prayer*
- X. Dance of the Dead*

David Brooks, *piano*

The **POEMS OF 1917** stands as one of the most unremittingly bleak compositions in the entire piano literature. Written by the American composer Leo Ornstein during the height of World War I, each of its ten short movements memorializes a friend of Ornstein who lost their life during the War. More than an elegy, the piece is a harrowing depiction of the horrors of the war, as well as a protest against the mechanized carnage that killed on an unprecedented scale. Dense clusters of harmony as well as maddening rhythmic repetition produce passages of eerie, troubled tranquility as well as passages of all-out pianistic onslaught. Any glimmer of hope that appears is quickly crushed, and the cycle ends suddenly in a savage and cynical conclusion.

Pianist **David Brooks** enjoys a multi-faceted life in music. As a performer, he plays a repertoire ranging from Alkan to Zwilich, spanning the avant-garde and neglected romantics, as well as the established greats. Probing the lesser-known areas of the piano repertoire is as much a priority as performing the enduring warhorses – in recital he is equally likely to play a new transcription hot off the press, as he is to play a Beethoven Sonata.

David was the first prize winner in the 2009 MTNA Washington State Steinway and Sons Young Artists Piano Competition, and in 2010 was a top prize winner in the Seattle Ladies Music Club Competition, which resulted in a statewide tour. He has appeared as a soloist with the Whatcom Symphony, University of Washington Symphony, and the Western Washington University Symphony. In 2009, he performed at Boston's Gardner Museum and Brown Hall, and the Boston Globe called his playing "especially lush."

Committed to the performance of new music, David has taken part in the world premieres of more than 30 compositions, performing works by Rzewski, Boulez, Cage, Schoenberg, Liebermann, Ornstein, and Feldman, among others. As a composer and transcriber, David has transcribed a wide array of works for solo piano by composers ranging from Bach to Penderecki.

David holds degrees in piano and viola performance from Western Washington University, where he studied piano with Jeffrey Gilliam, viola with Eric Kean, and violin with Walter Schwede. While at WWU, he was awarded the Presser Foundation Scholarship, Western's highest honor, and was the violist of the Ravenna String Quartet. David still regularly performs chamber music as a violinist and violist.

David teaches a studio of award-winning piano students at the University of Washington in Seattle. Also a graduate student at UW, he is currently finishing his Master's Degree, studying with Robin McCabe. David and his wife, Annie, will move to New York this year to begin further graduate studies at Stony Brook. David has performed in Master Classes for pianists Frederic Rzewski, Margaret Leng Tan, Margo Garrett, Stephen Drury, Alan Chow, and Robert Roux, as well as in chamber music Master Classes for the Emerson, Takacs, and Pacifica String Quartets.

FIRST CONSTRUCTION IN METAL.....JOHN CAGE (1912-1992)

Andrew Angell
Tom Campbell
Megan Drews
Brian Pfeifer
Declan Sullivan
Chris Trimis
Evan Woodle
Erin Bodnar, *conductor*

John Cage's interest in percussion music in the late 1930's was provoked by a number of influences. One was the percussion music of Varese, William Russell, and Henry Cowell. Secondly, meeting and interacting with filmmaker Oscar Fischinger caused Cage to not only become interested in the musical potential of percussion instruments, but also everyday objects.

Cage moved to Seattle in 1938 to teach body percussion at the Cornish College to dance students where he found a large studio of percussion instruments and a recording studio. He began writing for a percussion ensemble made up of dancers and amateur musicians. After their first percussion-only concert, Cage invited other composers to write pieces for their ensemble, extending the repertoire from three or four pieces in 1934 to about fifty by 1940. **FIRST CONSTRUCTION IN METAL** was written for this ensemble and was the first piece to utilize rhythmic structure, a manner of organizing music which Cage used for the next ten years. Rhythmic structure relates the parts to the whole in terms of time and rhythm, for example in First Construction in Metal, the whole is 256 measures whereas the parts are the square root of 256, 16: 16 parts of 16 measures. Each section of 16 measures is further divided into 4, 3, 2, 3, 4 which mirrors the larger structure of five sections (also grouped as 4, 3, 2, 3, 4) which are designated by tempo changes. The number 16 is also important in terms of the motivic material; Cage used only 16 rhythmic motives throughout the piece.

POOLS OF SHADOW FROM AN OLDER SKY.....HUCK HODGE (b. 1977)

in five continuous movements:

- I. Machine elegy – Do appliances sing of electric sleep?*
- II. Ave Maris Stella*
- III. Music for a starry night*
- IV. In lost Venetian air*
- V. Shadows from an older sky*

Huck Hodge, *piano*

POOLS OF SHADOW FROM AN OLDER SKY was commissioned by the American Academy in Rome in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the first demonstration of Galileo's telescope, which occurred on Academy grounds.

Huck Hodge writes music that explores the embodied poetics of organized sound, perceptual illusion and the threshold between design and intuition. His output is diverse and comprises a wide range of symphonic, chamber and multimedia works.

Hodge is the winner of the Rome Prize, the Gaudeamus International Composition Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Goddard Lieberman Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Aaron Copland Fellowship from the Bogliasco Foundation and commissions from Music at the Anthology, the American Composers Forum, the American Academy in Rome, *Musik der Jahrhunderte* and *Muziek Centrum Nederland*, among many other awards and honors.

Praised by The New York Times for his "harmonically fresh work...full of both sparkle and thunder", his music has been the subject of numerous international radio broadcasts and is regularly performed at major festivals throughout the world (ISCM, *Nuova Consonanza*, *Gaudeamus Muziekweek*, *MaerzMusik*, *Laboratoire Instrumental Europeén*, etc.). He has had performances of his work at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center and has collaborated with members of Ensemble Modern and the Berlin Philharmonic, the ASKO Ensemble, *l'Ensemble Aleph*, the Berlin Philharmonic's Scharoun Ensemble, the JACK Quartet and the Talea Ensemble. His music is licensed and distributed by Alexander Street Press.

Hodge received his MA and DMA from Columbia University, where he studied Composition with Tristan Murail and Fred Lerdahl. Prior to this, he studied Music Theory and Computer Music at the Musikhochschule Stuttgart, where his teachers included Georg Wötzer and Marco Stroppa. During this time, his studies were supported with funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (DAAD). He is currently Assistant Professor in Composition at the University of Washington.

INTERMISSION

BLACK ANGELS..... **GEORGE CRUMB** (b. 1929)

OCEANA STRING QUARTET

Emily Choi, *violin*
Rochelle Nguyen, *violin*
Romaric Pokorny, *viola*
Sonja Myklebust, *cello*

BLACK ANGELS was conceived as a kind of parable on our troubled contemporary world. The numerous quasi-grammatical allusions in the work are therefore symbolic, although the essential polarity -- God versus Devil -- implies more than a purely metaphysical reality. The image of the "black angel" was a conventional device used by early painters to symbolize the fallen angel.

The underlying structure of **BLACK ANGELS** is a huge arch-like design which is suspended from the three "Threnody" pieces. The work portrays a voyage of the soul. The three stages of this voyage are Departure (fall from grace), Absence (spiritual annihilation) and Return (redemption).

The numerological symbolism of **BLACK ANGELS**, while perhaps not immediately perceptible to the ear, is nonetheless quite faithfully reflected in the musical structure. These "magical" relationships are variously expressed; e.g., in terms of length, groupings of single tones, durations, patterns of repetition, etc.. An important pitch element in the work -- descending E, A, and D# -- also symbolizes the fateful numbers 7-13. At certain points in the score there occurs a kind of ritualistic counting in various languages, including German, French, Russian, Hungarian, Japanese and Swahili.

There are several allusions to tonal music in **BLACK ANGELS**: a quotation from Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" quartet (in the Pavana Lachrymae and also faintly echoed on the last page of the work); an original Sarabanda, which is stylistically synthetic; the sustained B-major tonality of God-Music; and several references to the Latin sequence Dies Irae ("Day of Wrath"). The work abounds in conventional musical symbolisms such as the Diabolus in Musica (the interval of the tritone) and the Trillo Di Diavolo (the "Devil's Trill", after Tartini).

The amplification of the stringed instruments in *BLACK ANGELS* is intended to produce a highly surrealistic effect. This surrealism is heightened by the use of certain unusual string effects, e.g., pedal tones (the intensely obscene sounds of the Devil-Music); bowing on the "wrong" side of the strings (to produce the viol-consort effect); trilling on the strings with thimble-capped fingers. The performers also play maracas, tam-tams and water-tuned crystal goblets, the latter played with the bow for the "glass-harmonica" effect in God-Music.

[Program notes by George Crumb, 1990]

The **Oceana String Quartet** was formed in winter 2011 by violinists Emily Choi and Rochelle Nguyen, violist Romaric Pokorny, and cellist Sonja Myklebust, and currently serves as the official student string quartet of the University of Washington. The OSQ won the 2nd Annual Strings and Piano Chamber Music Competition at the UW School of Music, and was awarded the Alcor Scholarship. The quartet is coached by Melia Watras, violist of the Corigliano Quartet, and has also worked with Ronald Patterson, Elisa Barston, and members of Cuarteto Casals. Highlights of their inaugural season include their debut concert at Brechemin Auditorium, a performance at Daniels Recital Hall in downtown Seattle, and an appearance for Paramount Pictures for the 100th anniversary of the maiden voyage of the Titanic. Oceana was recently nominated by the UW School of Music to perform at HuskyFest, a school-wide event in April celebrating the university's 150th birthday.

Emily Choi is a scholarship recipient at the UW studying violin with Ronald Patterson, and is pursuing Bachelor's Degrees in both Violin Performance and Speech and Hearing Sciences. She began playing violin at the age of 5 under the tutelage of Larisa and Michael Miropolsky. Emily is a member of the Bellevue Philharmonic and the Seattle Chamber Orchestra, and has soloed with the Northwest Symphony Orchestra and the Garfield Symphony Orchestra.

Rochelle Nguyen currently studies violin with Ronald Patterson at the University of Washington, and previous teachers include Robin Sharp at Stanford University, and Daniel Kobialka in San Francisco. She has worked with members of the St. Lawrence, Emerson, Cypress, Concord, American, and Corigliano string quartets. Rochelle has attended several summer music festivals, including Music@Menlo, Youth Music International, and Tanglewood Music Center. She is a graduate student in Bioengineering at the University of Washington.

Romaric Pokorny is a student in Viola Performance at the University of Washington. In 2007, he received his Diplôme Supérieur de Solfège at the Conservatoire de Musique de Aulnay-sous-Bois, France. Romaric is an active orchestral and chamber performer around the Puget Sound area, playing in many of the region's orchestras and organizations. He currently studies with Melia Watras, a member of the Corigliano Quartet and the Associate Professor of Viola at the University of Washington.

Sonja Myklebust is a second year master's student in cello performance studying with Toby Saks. Sonja received her BA from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Sonja co-founded the indie cello group the Portland Cello Project which has played sold-out shows at Seattle's Triple Door, Portland's Aladdin Theater, participated in Austin's SXSW Festival and Musicfest NW. Sonja works for the UW World Series as their Education Program Assistant.

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