

Compact Disc



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Music of Today

GARTH KNOX

Viola & Viola d'amore

with

Melia Watras, viola

Alessandra Barrett, viola

Vijay Chalasani, viola

Luke Fitzpatrick, viola

Gwen Franz, viola

Emmeran Pokorny, viola

Monday, February 22, 2016
7:30 pm - Meany Theater

CD1 - # 17,397

PROGRAM

1 Remarks

2 Pavane for solo viola d'amore (1605) 4:49 Tobias Hume (c. 1579-1645)

3 Remarks

4 Stranger for viola and viola d'amore (2014) 9:39 Garth Knox (b. 1956)
with Melia Watras, viola

5 Remarks

6 Stream for unaccompanied viola (1986) 10:01 Richard Karpen (b. 1957)

7 Remarks

Viola Spaces for two violas (2005/07) 11:31 Garth Knox

8 Nine fingers

9 One finger

10 Up, down, sideways, round

with Melia Watras, viola

INTERMISSION

CD2 - # 17,398

1 Remarks

2 Uppon la mi re (16th century) 3:30 Thomas Preston (? - c. 1563)
with Vijay Chalasani & Gwen Franz, violas

3 Remarks

4 memoirs relived for solo viola d'amore (2015) (US Premiere) 18:52 Farshid Samandari (b. 1971)

5 Remarks

6 Ockeghem Fantasy for viola d'amore and five violas (2001) 11:45 Garth Knox

with

Vijay Chalasani (Viola 1)

Gwen Franz (Viola 2)

Alessandra Barrett (Viola 3)

Emmeran Pokorny (Viola 4)

Luke Fitzpatrick (Viola 5)

7 Remarks (encore)

8 encore - ~~Amiel~~ ^{Amiel} - BOOK of Angels - John Zorn 4:37
+ Garth Knox

w/ Kronos STR QUARTET

Tobias Hume: Pavane for solo viola d'amore (1605)

Tobias Hume was an English composer, viola da gambist, and soldier active in the early 17th century during a time of great change. Hume was one of the first advocates for the viol as a solo instrument during a time when English taste was dominated by the lute and John Dowland, forecasting the dominance the viol would have over musical life in England as the century progressed. Hume's first publication of solo music for the viol, the *First Part of Ayres* (1605), contained over 100 pieces, including the *Pavane* on tonight's program, and would end up being the largest collection of music for the viol published in the 17th century. The groundbreaking *First Part of Ayres* included dances and descriptive pieces with such coy and humorous titles as *My Mistresse hath a prettie thing* and *Hit it in the middle*, and also included pieces with some of the earliest known examples of instructions for pizzicato and col legno. Oddly enough, "Captain Tobias Hume" considered himself primarily a soldier, and a musician second; he wrote the following to players of his music: "I doe not studie Eloquence, or professe Musicke, although I doe love Sense, and affect Harmony: My Profession being, as my Education hath beene, Armes, the onely effeminate part of me, hath beene Musicke; which in mee hath beene alwayes Generous." Despite his reluctance to be recognized as a musician, the eccentric Captain Hume will be remembered as a pioneer of the English viol, and a composer of music of both great beauty and wit.

– VIJAY CHALASANI

Garth Knox: «Stranger» for viola and viola d'amore (2014)

The starting point for this piece is an old Irish tune called «The Wounded Hussar» thought to have been composed by blind Irish harper Turlough O'Carolan (1670 - 1738) for his friend Captain O'Kane:

« the hero of a hundred fights from Landon to Oudenarde, who, when old and war-worn, tottered back from the Low Countries to his birthplace to die, and found himself not only a stranger, but an outlawed, disinherited, homeless wanderer in the ancient territories that his fathers ruled as Lords of Limavady. »

The bitterness and anger which accompany this eighteenth century equivalent of a post-Vietnam experience are already present to some degree in the melody. My idea was to draw these out, and to portray a world that is falling apart, gently and without drama. Following the opening exposition of the tune, there are many attempts to recapture the melody, but each time there are more parts missing or transformed and little by little a feeling of «strangeness» becomes more and more persistent, filling the absences of an Alzheimer-like memory loss.

The sympathetic strings of the viola d'amore, which prolong the resonances of the playing strings are in themselves a kind of memory, albeit a very selective one. As the piece progresses, they become more present, and are even played directly both plucked and with the bow (normally they are left to resonate passively). At the end of the piece, these sympathetic strings are left holding the last partial memories of what once had been.

«Stranger» is commissioned by and dedicated to Melia Watras, to whom I am grateful for her encouragement, her enthusiastic collaboration and her beautiful playing.

– GARTH KNOX

Richard Karpen: Stream for unaccompanied viola (1986)

Stream, for viola, was composed in 1986 when I was a graduate student at Stanford University. Looking back at my program notes about the piece from 30 years ago, I wrote then that the piece was "a short symphony for one performer." I think I remember what I meant by that. At the same time I was working on *Stream* I was also working on a dense, longer, and quite symphonic electroacoustic piece, *Eclipse*. These two works informed each other as they emerged. Although *Stream* was composed for a single unamplified instrument, many of the gestures in *Stream* are appropriate for a large ensemble or for multi-layered electroacoustics; further, the overall form of *Stream* seems very Beethoven-derived, as are the short and long emotional/dramatic shapes; it has a narrative quality; and

the steady stream of notes suggest contrapuntal and harmonic colors one might hear in orchestral music (in ways that I still use in my compositions these years later).

– RICHARD KARPEN

Garth Knox: «Viola Spaces» for two violas (2005/07)

Interpreters of classical music can study technical exercises (scales, arpeggios, finger exercises etc) confident in the knowledge that these patterns will be useful in playing classical pieces. Due to the extreme diversity of styles in new music today, it is now more often a case of constructing a new technique to reply to the demands of a new piece. There are however recurring techniques which can be studied, among these the so-called “extended techniques” (usually meaning classical techniques taken a little further). These pieces, or “spaces,” are really concert studies designed to give players the chance to learn and explore contemporary viola techniques. Each space concentrates on one specific technique: “Beside the bridge” features sul ponticello, playing next to the bridge; “Ghosts” uses sul tasto, playing over the fingerboard; “Rapid Repeat” experiments with the various ways of playing tremolo; “Harmonic Horizon” explores the world of harmonics; “In between” seeks out quartertones, notes which are precisely in between the semitones we are accustomed to; “Nine Fingers” is all in pizzicato, without the bow (the only finger not used for pizzicato in this piece is the left thumb); “One finger” treats the sliding technique known as *glissando*; and “Up, down, sideways, round” is a virtuosic display of all the possible bow directions. “Viola Spaces” is dedicated to Nobuko Imai and the team of the Viola Space festival in Tokyo.

– GARTH KNOX

Thomas Preston: Uppon la mi re (16th century)

Uppon la mi re is a work based on the ground bass in its name, la-mi-re (the notes A-E-D). Two voices play a close canon on the repeating bass line while a third voice plays a beautiful flowing melody line that sails over the top of this ostinato. The anonymous manuscript of this piece was found amongst a collection of works by the English organist and composer Thomas Preston, and thus is presumed to be written by him. Regardless of its authorship, *Uppon la mi re* is a wonderful early example of the varied possibilities of a piece with a simple ground bass, on top of which the most extraordinary melodies are crafted.

– VIJAY CHALASANI

Farshid Samandari: memoirs relived for solo viola d'amore (2015 - US Premiere)

Memoirs Relived is a follow-up to a piece for solo cello *Memoirs Untold*. *Memoirs Relived* depicts three distinct approaches to similar dramatic life experiences. It consists of three musical tableaux, which explore the similar life experiences of joy and sadness, war and peace, trials and triumph, crisis and victories, and birth and death. Each Chapter represents a distinct approach in dealing with those events: *Mirages of nostalgia*, *Illusions of anxiety*, and *Images of reality*.

Pitch content is mainly drawn from, not restricted to, four distinct microtonal *moqām* (literally mode), and *dastgāh* (literally system, Persian combination of modal and scalar system). This includes *chéhārgāh* in F and in C as well as a composed *symmetric moqām*, influenced by Indian *Rāgā*, based on two *gushé* (literally corner or tetra-chord) from *homāyun*. Rhythmic component is loosely derived from Indian *tālā*. And the shapes are influenced by western contemporary music.

– FARSHID SAMANDARI

Garth Knox: «Ockeghem Fantasy» for viola d'amore and 5 violas (2001)

«Ockeghem Fantasy» is based on a three-part song by fifteenth century composer Johannes Ockeghem. In the 1960s, Bruno Maderna transcribed this song, called “Malor me bat,” for three violas, and his colleague Luigi Nono was so struck with it, that he quoted it in the viola part of his string quartet, “An Diotima.”

Having played the viola part of this quartet so often in the Arditti Quartet, I was very curious to know the original, and fascinated by the treatment used by Nono on this theme - there is a pause of a different length on practically every note! So my piece is partly a way of coming to understand this idea of "suspended time." The role of the five violas at the beginning of the piece is to be humble sympathetic strings increasing the resonance of the viola d'amore and more or less passive, so they sit in a line behind the viola d'amore, who stands in the middle of the stage.

As the piece goes on, they become more and more independent, split into a trio and a duo, and move forward one by one to standing positions at each side of the stage. The trio begins to play the Ockeghem song, with antiphonic interruptions and "freezes" by the duo and the viola d'amore. The duo material is based on all the notes which are not used in the Ockeghem trio.

The viola d'amore is an exotic cousin of the viola, with 14 strings - seven playing strings and seven "sympathetic" strings, meaning strings which are not played directly, but which vibrate in resonance. In this piece, there is a simple electromagnetic amplification of the sympathetic strings, controlled by a foot pedal, and opening this pedal gives us the impression of going inside the viola d'amore into a world of swirling harmonics and magical resonances.

– GARTH KNOX

BIOGRAPHIES

Garth Knox was born in Ireland and spent his childhood in Scotland. He studied with Frederic Riddle at the Royal College of Music in London where he won several prizes for viola and for chamber music. Thereafter he played with most of the leading groups in London in a mixture of all repertoires, from baroque to contemporary music.

In 1983 he was invited by Pierre Boulez to become a member of the Ensemble InterContemporain in Paris, which involved regular solo playing, including concertos directed by Pierre Boulez, and chamber music, touring widely and playing in international festivals.

In 1990 Garth Knox joined the Arditti String Quartet, which led him to play in all the major concert halls of the world, working closely with and giving first performances of pieces by most of today's leading composers including Ligeti, Kurtag, Berio, Xenakis, Lachenmann, Cage, Feldman and Stockhausen (the famous "Helicopter Quartet").

In 1998, Garth Knox left the quartet to concentrate on his solo career. As a soloist, he has given premieres by Henze (the Viola Sonata is dedicated to him), Ligeti, Schnittke, Fernyhough, James Dillon, George Benjamin and many others. He also collaborates regularly in theatre and dance projects, and has written and performed a one-man show for children.

He has recently become a pioneer of the viola d'amore, exploring its possibilities in new music, with and without electronics, and is in the process of creating a new repertoire for this instrument.

Garth Knox now lives in Paris, where he enjoys a full time solo career, giving recitals, concertos and chamber music concerts all over Europe, the USA and Japan. He is also an active composer, and his «Viola Spaces», the first phase of an on-going series of concert studies for strings (published in 2010 by Schott) combines ground-breaking innovation in string technique with joyous pleasure in the act of music making. The pieces have been adopted and performed by young string players all over the world.

Garth Knox is International Viola Tutor at the RNCM in Manchester, and Visiting Professor at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

Violist **Alessandra Barrett** is pursuing a Masters of Music degree in Viola Performance at UW, studying with Melia Watras. Alessandra holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree specializing in violin and viola performance from the California Institute of the Arts, where she played in numerous collegiate ensembles both on the campus and around the Los Angeles area. Alessandra has studied and performed at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute in Massachusetts, the International Music Academy Pilsen in the Czech Republic, the Kinhaven Music School in Vermont, the Idyllwild Arts Academy in California, Composers Forum at the University of Oregon, UCLA and the California State Summer School for the Arts. She started instrumental study at age 4. At age 13 she soloed with the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra. Alessandra's performance career includes concerts on five continents, including such places as Kathmandu, Nepal; Ubud, Bali; Rio de Janeiro; Delhi, India; and Kilgali, Rwanda. For two years she was in the Los Angeles-based American Youth Symphony, widely considered the nation's top entry-level musical orchestral group. She formerly was a member of the Isaura String Quartet in Los Angeles.

Violist **Vijay Chalasani** is a versatile and commanding artist known for his imaginative and passionate performances. Equally at home on both modern and historical violas, Chalasani was featured as a soloist in performances ranging from the Mozart Sinfonia Concertante and the Telemann Concerto for Two Violettas with early music ensembles, to the Walton Viola Concerto and others with modern orchestras. Recent projects of the 2015-16 season include performances with ensembles ranging from early music group American Bach Soloists to contemporary music collective Inverted Space, collaborations and performances with new music luminaries Garth Knox and Brian Ferneyhough, and chamber music with members of the Seattle Symphony. Chalasani is currently a Pre-Doctoral Candidate at the University of Washington School of Music, where he studies viola with noted contemporary violist Melia Watras; he is also a co-director of the UW Modern Ensemble and teaches viola and chamber music as the Viola Department Teaching Assistant. Chalasani's graduate studies were at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he studied with Don Ehrlich (modern viola), Elizabeth Blumenstock (baroque viola), and the late Mark Sokol (chamber music).

Luke Fitzpatrick is a violinist, violist, composer, and improviser. In 2014, he performed Luigi Nono's *La Lontananza Nostalgica Utopica Futura* with both André Richard and Marcin Pačkowski. He is a founding member and performs frequently with Inverted Space, a new music collective in Seattle. Additionally, he has performed with Deltron 3030, The Penderecki String Quartet, The Moth, The Parnassus Project and as a guest artist with The Argento Chamber Ensemble for the West Coast premiere of Helmut Lachenmann's *Mouvement (-- vor der Erstarrung)*. His world premiere recording of Vera Ivanova's *Quiet Light* for solo violin was released on Ablaze Records in 2011. Luke holds degrees from California Institute of the Arts and the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He is currently a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Washington where he studies with Ron Patterson.

As both a live performer and recording artist, **Gwen Franz** is a violist of multiple genres. Her many years of professional orchestra experience include performing as a regular extra musician with the Seattle Symphony, and memberships in the Grand Rapids Symphony, Lansing Symphony, Evansville Philharmonic, and Northwest Sinfonietta. Ms. Franz has been featured as a concerto soloist, chamber musician, and solo recitalist throughout the Northwest. In 2012, she toured Chile, South America in a viola/guitar duo with Hilary Field. Ms. Franz is a member of the string trio Douce Ambiance, and has explored and performed many varieties of ethnic music such as Brazilian choro and traditional fiddle tunes. She is a third year doctoral student in Viola Performance at UW with an emphasis on improvisation.

Richard Karpen is a composer and researcher in multiple areas of music and the arts. His compositions for traditional and experimental media are widely known, recorded, and performed internationally. Over the last 30 years he has also been one of the leaders in the development of computer applications for music composition, interactive performance and sonic arts. He has recently returned to the stage as a pianist. Karpen has composed works for many prominent international performers and along with frequent concert performances his works have been set to dance by groups such as the Royal Danish Ballet and the Guandong Dance Company of China. Karpen's compositions have been recorded on a variety of labels including Wergo, Centaur, Neuma, Le Chant du Monde, DIFFUSION i MeDIA, Fleur du Son, Capstone, and RareNoise. Richard Karpen is Director of the School of Music at the University of Washington where he is also a Professor of Music Composition.

Emmeran Pokorny is a student in the Bachelors of Music in Viola Performance program at the University of Washington, where he studies with Melia Watras. He was born and raised in France, where he studied violin, piano, and voice for many years. While in France, Emmeran studied at the Boulogne Conservatoire as well as the Music Conservatory of Aulnay-sous-Bois, before moving to the United States in 2008. Emmeran is an avid chamber music player and has played in several ensembles and groups with fellow UW students. He often performs with his brothers Romaric and Corentin as the Rocoempo Trio.

Farshid Samandari was born in Iran in 1971. His music reflects his interest in contemporary classical vocabulary, spectral analysis, and extended techniques. In addition his profound faith in Unity in Diversity, has stirred him toward integration and synthesis of different ethnic musics and vocabulary in his music. This vision has directed him to collaborate with a various choirs and ensembles all over the world, including Tehran National Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, UBC String Orchestra, Vancouver Intercultural Orchestra, Red Shift Vertical Orchestra, Laudate Singers, Turning Point Ensemble, Musica Nova, Nu:bc Collective, Standing Wave Ensemble, Red Chamber Quartet, Orchid Ensemble, Parto, UBC Guitar Quartet, Vancouver Peace Choir, and Erato ensemble, as well as soloists such as Muminat Abdulgalimowa, Ariel Barnes, Neal Bennett, Jeremy Berkman, Connie Gitlin, Corey Hamm, Bruce Huebner, Mark McGregor, Sahba Motallebi, Julie Nessrallah, Beth Orson, Curtis Patterson, Bo Peng, Michael Strutt, and Eric Wilson. Moreover his music has been read by many others including Vancouver Chamber Choir. He is a winner of Vancouver Symphony winter Olympic commission.

Hailed by *Gramophone* as "an artist of commanding and poetic personality" and described as "staggeringly virtuosic" by *The Strad*, violist **Melia Watras** (meliawatras.com) has distinguished herself as one of her instrument's leading voices. Watras's discography has received considerable attention and praise from the media. Her latest album, *Ispirare* was described by *Strings* as "a provocative, relentlessly absorbing recital of profoundly expressive, experience-laden music." *Short Stories* was a *Seattle Times Critics' Pick*, with the newspaper marveling at her "velocity that seems beyond the reach of human fingers." *Strings* called her second release (*Prestidigitation*) "astounding and both challenging and addictive to listen to." Watras's exploration of improvisation has led her to collaborating with jazz innovators Cuong Vu and Ted Poor, and to writing her own compositions. Her violin/viola duo *Liquid Voices* recently had its European premiere, and her next disc will feature five of her works. Watras is currently Associate Professor of Viola and chair of Strings at the University of Washington School of Music, where she holds the Adelaide D. Currie Cole Endowed Professorship and was awarded the Donald E. Petersen Endowed Fellowship. Watras has given viola and chamber music classes at schools such as Indiana University, Cleveland Institute of Music, Strasbourg Conservatoire (France), and Chosun University (South Korea). This spring, she will return for a third time to her alma mater, Indiana, to teach as a guest professor.



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