

The School of Music
presents the 14th program of the 1990-91 season

C67
1990
11-26

The Contemporary Group

William O. Smith

Directors

Stuart Dempster

"Music and Politics"

an event organized by the

Committee for a Center for
Creation and Interdisciplinary Study of Music



Performing Works By

Earl Robinson

John Rahn ← 14:00

Richard Karpen

Frederic Rzewski

Vladimir Polionny

Sam-Ang Sam

Monday, November 26, 1990
8:00 PM, Meany Theater



School
of
Music

University
of
Washington

Music and Politics

Organized by the Committee for a
Center for Creation and Interdisciplinary Study of Music (CCISM)

Monday November 26, 1990
Brechemin Auditorium

2:30 Politics and the Arts

Moderator: John Rahn, Composition/Theory, UW
Laura Brunsman, art critic and painter
Salomao Manhica, Member of Parliament, Mozambique
Dick Nelson, Washington State House of Representatives
John Vadino, Seattle Arts Commission
Christopher Waterman, Ethnomusicology, UW

3:30 Can the Arts Be Abolished?

Moderator: Daniel Neuman, Director, School of Music, UW
Ed Birdwell, Executive Director, Seattle Symphony
Chris Bruce, Senior Curator, Henry Gallery
Matthew Kangas, art critic
Robert Priest, Director of the Marzena Ensemble
Sam-ang Sam, Ethnomusicology, UW

4:30 The Politics of Music

Moderator: Doug Collins, Chair, Romance Languages and Literature, UW
Melinda Bargreen, music critic, The Seattle Times
Robin McCabe, Piano, UW
Gerard Schwarz, Music Director, Seattle Symphony
Marc Seales, Jazz, UW
Diane Thome, Composition, UW

Concert

8:00 PM Meany Theater

DAT 1D2 ② The Free and Equal Blues (11') EARL ROBINSON
① The House I Live In

Earl Robinson, piano and voice

DAT 1D3 American Songs: Superman and Pledge (8') JOHN RAHN
Eric Shumsky, viola
Tom Collier, percussion

DAT 1D4 Il Nome (15') RICHARD KARPEN
Emily Berendson, soprano, and computer-realized tape

Cass. side A
side B

Intermission

DAT 1D5 Moonrise with Memories (12') FREDERIC RZEWSKI
Scott Mouseau, bass trombone
Charles Hiestand, piano
Marilyn Mead, flute
Victoria Siebert, cimbalom
David Hunter, electric guitar
Ed Pias, marimba
Paul Susen, violin
Conducted by Stuart Dempster

DAT 1D6 Suite for Piano (8') VLADIMIR V. POLIONNY
Adagio, Lento, Moderato, Lento assai
Burlesque for Piano
Lisa Bergman, piano

DAT 1D7 Changkeh Reav (Slim Waist) (7') CAMBODIAN
Chraut Srauv (Harvest)
Sam-ang Sam, sralai and khloy

DAT 1D8 American Songs: Miranda (14') JOHN RAHN
(computer-realized tape)

— General discussion with audience on the topic of music and politics —

Program notes

Composer of songs, cantatas, folk operas, musicals, film and television scores, orchestral scores — a very partial listing — Earl Robinson has drawn heavily on major social and political causes for inspiration. A Seattle native and graduate of the UW in 1933, he is also known as a conductor, teacher, entertainer, and writer.

The Free and Equal Blues is about World War II and was composed with lyricist Yip Harburg. **The House I Live In**, a shorter version of his 1942 cantata **Ballad for Americans**, was the basis for a film short of that name and won an Academy Award in 1947.

American Songs is a series of compositions that have to do with texts that are publicly American.

Superman and **Pledge** are for viola and percussion. The text for **Superman** is my version of the thrilling introduction we all remember from various radio or television Superman series: "Look! Up in the sky! ..." **Pledge** is the Pledge of Allegiance. In these pieces the text is not spoken or sung, but the rhythms of the words and phrases are translated into the rhythms of the music, quite explicitly though sometimes in a slightly stylized manner. You may be able to follow the text through the music as it manifests itself in the manner of certain African "talking drum" codes. In addition, the music itself comments on its text, and functions as subtext and context.

"Miranda" is a Latin word meaning "wonderful things" or "wonderful (female) person." Shakespeare's Miranda: "O, wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, that has such people in it!" It is also the name used to identify the United States Supreme Court decision requiring police to "read the rights" when they arrest a suspect. Surprisingly, there is no standard text of the Miranda warning. My version does try to satisfy the legal requirements.

The piece **Miranda** was composed for the opening of a show of paintings by the artist Mary Henry, who is also my mother-in-law. Our concepts had been running side by side for months before the show, so the paintings and the piece live well together. For the piece, Mary was recorded digitally in an anechoic chamber reading the Miranda warning. The recording was transferred digitally to a NeXT computer. It was deconstructed down to below the level of phonemes and put back together again in various ways, some of which preserve meaning at the level of word or phrase. There is no timbral or pitch processing of these sounds — every sound is exactly as it occurs in the recording. However, much of the sounds are packs or swarms of individual phonemic and subphonemic speech elements, many of which are not consciously perceived as part of speech. Hearing these in new contexts reflects back on their occurrences in speech so that you can hear retrospectively, for example, the and "t" at the end of "silent" or Mary's bass grunt at the end of "time," even in "silent" and "time." Mary Henry's painting "La Vida Breve" is shown during the performance here.

The composition of these packs, swarms, and planes of consistency is effected by means of computer programs written in the Lisp language within my Lisp Kernel software package. There is nothing random or mechanical about the composition, as I constructed and

modified the programs to get exactly the sounds I wanted to hear as I listened to the results. In the songs for viola and percussion, instrumental sounds are wedded to the rhythms of speech. In *Miranda*, speech sounds are composed in rhythms all derived from a single rhythmic motive.

Texts for *Superman* and *Pledge* for viola and percussion

II. *Superman*

Look!

Up in the Sky!

It's a bird!

It's a plane!

It's — Superman!

Faster than a speeding bullet,
More powerful than a locomotive,
Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound!

And who,
Disguised as Clark Kent
(Mild-mannered reporter for a daily metropolitan newspaper),
Wages a never-ending battle
For Truth,
Justice,
And the American Way.

III. *Pledge*

I pledge allegiance
to the flag
of the United States of America,
and to the Republic
for which it stands,
one nation
under God,
indivisible,
with liberty and justice for all.

John Rahn is Professor of Music at the University of Washington, where he currently serves as head of the Division of Composition/Theory. He is the principal investigator for a grant from the Provost's Interdisciplinary Research Initiative toward a Center for Creation and Interdisciplinary Study of Music, and has been Editor of the international professional journal *Perspectives of New Music* since 1983.

— John Rahn

Il Nome, for soprano and tape, was composed in 1987. The text, *Il nome di Maria Fresu*, is by the Italian poet Andrea Zanzotto. Maria Fresu was one of 84 people killed in the August 2, 1980 bombing of the train station in Bologna, Italy (attributed to the neo-fascist group *Avanguardia Nazionale*). She was blown up beyond any identification. The names of those killed by this bombing form a memorial on a wall of the reconstructed train station. Along with the Zanetto poem, the text for *Il Nome* includes a short passage from the libretto of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*. The Zanetto text appears in fragments, not always in the correct order, until near the end of the piece when the poem is sung through from beginning to end. The text from *L'Orfeo* occupies a section near the middle of the piece.

Il Nome was composed for the soprano Judith Bettina whose voice is also the basis for much of the tape part. All of the vocal sounds on the tape were derived from recordings of Ms. Bettina's voice. I also used recordings of breaking glass, a single note played on a violin and a tomtom. The recorded sounds, as well as some purely synthetic sounds, were produced in various ways using the resources of the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA) at Stanford University. *Il Nome* received First Prize at the 1989 Bourges Contest in France. It has been recorded on compact disc by WERGO of West Germany as part of the *Computer Music Currents* series and by *Le Chant du Monde* of France

Il nome di Maria Fresu

E il nome di Maria Fresu
continua a scoppiare
all'ora dei pranzi
in ogni casseruola
in ogni pentola
in ogni boccone
in ogni
rutto - scoppiato e disseminato -
in milioni di dimenticanze, di comi, bburp.

— *Andrea Zanzotto*

The name of Maria Fresu

And the name of Maria Fresu
keeps exploding
at dinnertime
in every pot
in every pan
in every mouthful
in every
belch - exploded and disseminated -
in millions of forgettings, comas, bburps.

— *translated by Beverly Allen*

Tu se'morta mia vita, ed io respiro?
Tu se da me partita
Per mai piu non tonare, ed io rimango?
No.

— *from Claudio Monteverdi's L'Orfeo*

You are dead my life, and I am breathing?
You have left me
Never to return, and I remain?
No.

— *translated by Richard Karpen*

Richard Karpen, born in New York in 1957, studied composition with Gheorghe Constinescu, Charles Dodge, Morton Subotnick, and Leland Smith. Among the numerous awards and grants he has received are those from the ASCAP Foundation for Young Composers, The American New Consortium, the National Endowment for the Arts, NEA/USIA, the

Bourges Competition in France, the NEWCOMP contest, the National Flute Association, and the Luigi Russolo Contest in Italy. He was Fulbright Fellow in Italy during 1984-85. His compositions are performed throughout the United States and Europe as well as in Australia and Canada in both concerts and radio broadcasts. Major international festivals which have included performances of his works are the Gaudeamus International Music Week in Amsterdam, the Warsaw Autumn Festival in Poland, the Bourges Festival in France, the International Computer Music Conferences, and others. His compositions have been recorded on compact disc by Le Chant du Monde of France and WERGO of West Germany. From 1985 - 1988 he worked extensively at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA) at Stanford University in California from which he received his doctorate. In 1988 he was awarded Stanford's Prix de Paris and spent a year in France where he realized a composition (*Pour la terre*), at IRCAM in Paris. Richard Karpen is presently on the Composition/Theory Faculty of the School of Music at the University of Washington in Seattle.

— Richard Karpen

Moonrise with Memories was written in 1976 for the bass trombonist David Taylor (who commissioned it, as well as pieces by many other composers, in the hope of contributing to the creation of a solo literature for this instrument). One of the limitations imposed by the commission was that the piece should not be performable on a tenor or tenor-bass trombone. I have heard attempts to play it using a tenor-bass and the results have been in fact unsatisfactory. There is a richness in the sound of this instrument, as it rises from its characteristic deep bass range to reach its soaring upper register, that is inimitable.

To enhance the melodic and expressive potential of the instrument, I decided to invert the normal procedure of accompanied melody: i.e. to write a running accompaniment in the soprano range. This accompaniment is played by six soprano instruments. The orchestration of this ensemble is left open, except for the stipulation that the six colors involved should be all different. (A possible combination, for example, might consist of harp, violin, oboe, marimba, soprano saxophone, and alto flute.)

The piece is in three parts, the first and third of which are melodies with running accompaniments, rising and falling respectively. The second part consists of a setting of Langston's Hughes' poem "World War II":

What a grand time was the war!
My, my, my! My, oh my!

In wartime we had fun,
Sorry that old war is done!

What a grand time was the war!
My, my, my! My, oh my!

Did somebody
Die?

In this section the six accompanying players half-improvise, choosing from a repertory of melodic lines all heterophonically derived from a single basic figure, while the soloist plays a written-out line, also heterophonically derived from the same figure. (By "heterophonically derived" I mean that the notes actually played are subtracted from the basic figure, with each line containing a different selection of subtracted notes, so that if all of the lines were played together, they would add up to the basic figure, no more and no less.) This procedure is vaguely related to the techniques of traditional Pygmy music. The manner of writing for the bass trombone was suggested by Colin Turnbull's description (in his book *The Forest People*) of the *molimo*, a sacred instrument (some kind of tube or pipe, perhaps salvaged from industrial junk) used to evoke ancestral voices during periods of Pygmy migration in the forest, which is supposed to be both playful and scary at the same time.

— Frederic Rzewski

Bass Trombonist Scott Mousseau, a guest of the Contemporary Group, was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1959. He grew up in Melbourne, Florida and began trombone in the 5th grade. He graduated from the University of South Florida, and earned his M.Mus. from the University of Illinois, where he is presently finishing a D.M.A. under Dr. Robert Gray. Scott is currently Bass Trombonist with the 724th Air Force Band at McChord Air Force Base and trombonist with the Olympia Chamber Orchestra.

Cambodian born Sam-Ang Sam is a Visiting Artist in Ethnomusicology at the University of Washington. Of the *sralai* used in *Changkeh Reav* he writes, "Shawms date their origin back to the ancient civilizations of the Middle East and Europe. While most of the shawms are double reed, the Cambodian shawm, the *sralai*, is a quadruple reed made of palm leaf and fastened to a brass tube. The *sralai* is used in several Cambodian ensembles: court, funeral, and boxing." The *khloy* (fipple flute) played in *Chraut Srauv*, he describes as "an aerophone made of bamboo, cane, wood, plastic, or metal. It has six fingerholes and a thumbhole for a two octave range. The *khloy* is used as a solo instrument or in the ensembles of *mohori*, *kar*, and *avakk*."

If you would like to be placed on a mailing list to receive information about Contemporary Group or CCISM events, please clip and fill out this form and mail to:

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