

NAGOYA MARIMBAS (1994) for two marimbas
.....STEVE REICH (b. 1936)

Brian Yarkosky & Chris Lennard, Jr, *percussion*

VORTEX TEMPORUM (1995) GÉRARD GRISEY (1946-1998)

I

Interlude 1 – II – Interlude 2

Jessica Polin, *flute* / Jessie Canterbury, *clarinet*

Eric Rynes, *violin* / Brianna Atwell, *viola*

Brad Hawkins, *cello* / Lee Hancock, *piano*

Julia Tai, *conductor*

PHRYGIAN GATES (1977-78) JOHN ADAMS

The piece, together with its smaller companion *China Gates* is what is considered Adams' "opus one". They are, according to his own claims, his first compositions consisting of a coherent personal style. It was commissioned and written for the pianist Mack McCray, and first performed by him in Hellman Hall, San Francisco on March 17, 1978. The work was funded by a group of the Board of Trustees of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

The piece is written in a minimalist style, and based on a repetitive cell structure. Simultaneously, Adams' desire to move away from the conventional techniques of minimalism is noticeable. The composition is set in the Phrygian mode, and cycles through half the keys throughout its roughly 30 minute duration, modulating in the circle of fifths. As claimed by Adams, it is "in the form of a modulating square wave with one state in the Lydian mode and the other in the Phrygian mode." Gradually, the amount of time spent in the Lydian shortens and shifts more to the Phrygian. The "Gates" in the title is an allusion from the electronic music gates, a term for rapidly shifting modes.

CHANT DE LINOS (1944) ANDRÉ JOLIVET

Chant de Linos was composed by André Jolivet in 1944. The title is descriptive of a Greek funeral lament, and the piece depicts the lament as well as a funeral dance. Jolivet was heavily influenced by non-Western

music, drawing upon the music of areas such as Africa and East Asia. This influence furthered the tradition of French Exoticism established by composers such as Debussy, Ravel and Messiaen. Exoticism is evoked in *Chant de Linos* with the overall modal quality of the piece and the complexity of the rhythm, especially in the recurring 7/8 passages. *Chant de Linos* was the flute competition piece for the Paris Conservatoire the year of its composition, and first place was won by esteemed flautist Jean-Pierre Rampal.

SONATA for flute, viola and harp (1915) CLAUDE DEBUSSY

This work is the second of an unfinished set of sonatas for various combinations of instruments which Debussy had planned in the last years of his life. He lived to complete three of the six originally planned. In this Sonata for flute, viola and harp, Debussy had originally planned to use an oboe instead of the viola, but his change of timbre is a happy one. When the work was written in the autumn of 1915, France was at war with Germany, and Debussy, disappointed that he could not participate in the defense of his country due to his age and illness, threw all his energy into nationalistic efforts of a musical nature. The traditional form in three movements, shared by the three completed Sonatas, illustrates the composer's attempt to return to some sort of musical classicism, as exemplified by such French composers as Couperin and Rameau (to some extent contradicting his own earlier position against all form of academic return to the past). The composer called this Sonata "dreadfully melancholic," and it does recall to some extent the "Nocturnes" for orchestra—with, however, a perfectionism and expressive restraint which makes it even more fascinating.

NAGOYA MARIMBAS (1994) STEVE REICH

Although a late piece, this 1994 composition revives some aspects of the works of the 1960s and 1970s that made Reich famous, namely repeating patterns on both instruments, one or more beats out of phase. However, in older works Reich's system would have been to continue playing these, with their phase relationship shifting one beat-unit each repetition, until they snapped back into exact unison. In this work, though, the patterns change through a process of development, and usually don't repeat more than three times. The parts for the two instruments are through-composed, both of them requiring virtuoso quality players. It was commissioned by the Nagoya Conservatory in Japan for the inauguration of a new auditorium, Shirakawa Hall.

VORTEX TEMPORUM (1995)

GÉRARD GRISEY

The title: *Vortex Temporum* ('Vortex of Time') defines the birth of a system of swirling, repeated arpeggios and its metamorphosis in different time fields. Here I have tried to go deeper into some of my recent investigations on the application of a same material to different times. Aside from the initial whirlpool formula taken directly from *Daphnis et Chloé*, the vortex suggested to me a harmonic writing centered around the four notes of the diminished seventh, a rotating chord *par excellence*. Indeed, by considering each note of the chord like the leading-note, one after another, it allows for multiple modulations. Of course, there is no question here of tonal music but much more one of grasping what, in its functioning, is still up-to-date and innovative today.

Here this chord is thus at the intersection of spectra and determines the other transpositions. It therefore plays a nodular role in the articulation of the pitches of *Vortex*.

We find it again literally inscribed in the four frequencies of the piano tuned a quarter-tone lower, this undermining of the sacrosanct piano-tuning making possible a distortion of the instrument's timbre at the same time as allowing a better integration within the different micro-intervals necessary to the piece.

The three sections of the first movement develop three aspects of the original wave, well known to acoustic engineer: the sinusoidal wave (whirlpool formula), the square wave (dotted rhythms), and the jagged wave (piano solo). They unfold a time which I would define as 'jubilatory', a time of articulation, rhythm and human breathing. Alone, the piano section takes us to the limits of virtuosity.

The second movement takes up identical material in a dilated time. The initial *Gestalt* is heard here only once, spread out over the whole length of the movement. I tried to create a feeling of spherical, dizzying movement with the slowness. The rising movements of the spectra, the interlocking of fundamentals in chromatic descents, and the continuous filtering of the piano generate a sort of double rotation, a continuous helical motion which rolls up on itself.

Short interludes are planned between the different movements of *Vortex Temporum*. The few breaths, noises and sound shadows one hears are intended to discreetly color the awkward silence and sometimes even the involuntary discomfort of the musicians and listeners who catch their breath between movements.

Gérard Grisey

(*Vortex Temporum* includes a third movement, which we will not hear tonight; according to the composer's wishes, any movement(s) of the work can be performed on their own).

presents

THE CONTEMPORARY GROUP

February 12, 2008 7:30 PM MEANY THEATER

PROGRAM

PHRYGIAN GATES, for piano (1977-78)JOHN ADAMS (b. 1947)

Alastair Edmonstone, *piano*

CHANT DE LINOS, for flute and piano (1944)
..... ANDRÉ JOLIVET (1905-1974)

Jessie Polin, *flute* / Akiko Iguchi, *piano*

SONATA for flute, viola and harp (1915)
..... CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Pastorale
Interlude
Final

Zhao Rong Chen, *flute* / Sarah Bass, *viola* / Ashley Wong, *harp*

INTERMISSION

