University of Washington
THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

CONTEMPORARY GROUP

Stuart Dempster and William O. Smith
Co-Directors

Works by

Ken Benshoof
Michael Angell
Joël François Durand
Donald Harris
William Thomas McKinley
Gunther Schuller
Bright Sheng

8:00 PM
Meany Theater
November 22, 1993
PROGRAM

1. OUT AND BACK AGAIN (1993) Ken Bensehof
   Sort of Country
   Sunday Afternoon
   Out and Back Again

   Ella Gray, violin soloist; Walter Gray, cello soloist;
   Libby Gray, piccolo; Felix Skowronek, flute; Molly Sandwick, oboe;
   Taina Kari, English horn; Joel Barbosa, clarinet; William McColl,
   bass clarinet; Arthur Grossman, bassoon; Jason Schilling, contrabassoon;
   David Kappy and Jennifer Barrett, horns; Kevin Karnes, trombone;
   Stuart Dempster, bass trombone; William O. Smith, conductor.

   Allegro
   Cantabile
   Dogfight

   Alex Klein and Molly Sandwick, oboes

LA MESURE DE L' AIR (the measure of the air) ... 1992
LA MESURE DE LA MER (the measure of the sea) 1989-93
Joel Barbosa, clarinet soloist; Laurent Philippe, piano soloist

INTERMISSION

3. A BIRTHDAY CARD FOR GUNTHER (1985) Donald Harris
   (b. 1931)

4. BALATELLES AND FINALE (1985) William Thomas McKinley
   (b. 1938)

5. EPISODES (1964) Gunther Schuller
   (b. 1925)

Spoken Words

TWO POEMS FROM THE SUNG DYNASTY (1985)
Bright Sheng,
Chat Tou Feng (by Lu You)
Sheng Sheng Man (by Li Qing Zhao)

Chen Pin, soprano soloist
- Pamela Butler Ryker, flute; Molly Sandwick, oboe; Joel Barbosa, clarinet,
  Jason Schilling, bassoon; Lorraine Fader, horn; Mark Wilbert,
  percussion; Alexis Quell, harp; Dwight Deckmeyer, piano; Kim Zabelle
  and Anja Kluge, violins; Felicia McFall, viola; Nora Egerbretsen, cello;
  Olav Hekala, contrabass; Bright Sheng, conductor.

CHAOTIC JUNGLE

Hong Su Shou, Huang Teng Jou
Man Cheng Chin Se Gong Qiang
Liu

Dong Feng Wu, Huan Qing Bo
Ye Hua Chou Xu

Ji Nan Li Suo.

Cuo, Cuo, Cuo.

Chun Yu Jou, Ren Kong Shou

Le Xi Hong Yi Jiang Shao Tou.

Tao Hua Luo, Xian Chi Guo.

Shan Meng Sui Zai;

Jing Shen Nan Tong
Mao, Mao, Mao.

SHENG SHENG MAN

Xun Xun Mi Mi, Leng Leng Qin

Qin

Ci Chi Can Can Qi Qi

Zhu Nian Huan Han Shi Hua
Zui Nan Xiang Si
San Hai Liang Zhai Dan Zi
Zen Di Ta Wei Tai Lai Feng Ji

Yan Guo Ye, Zhen Shang Sin
Que Shi Zou Shi Xiang Shi E

Man Di, Huang Hua Duo Ji E
Qiao Cui Sun

Seek, seek! Search, search!
Cold, cold! Bare, bare!
Grief, grief! Gruel, cruel!
Just warm but still cold.
Most difficult to rest.
A few cups of light wine.
How can that overcome the evening?
Wild goose pass, pensive.
Old time's acquaintances.

Chrysanthemums lay bestrewn all
Over the ground.
Withered and decreasing.
The oboe is commonly known as a mellow-sounding instrument, sometimes in an exotic way, sometimes in a romantic way, but always in a melodic and melifluous manner. This special character of the instrument exerts a certain power over oboe players, influencing their interpretation of music and in some cases even their lives. The notion that “good oboe players cannot be ‘outphased’” has been heard often throughout the history of the oboe. It has been said that an oboist’s worst nightmare would be to find another player with incomparable mellowness and matchless phrasing. Michael Ades’ ‘Dueling Oboes’ seems to explore this phenomenon in oboedom. In the “Allegro,” and in the “Cantabile,” both instruments sing away their joys and sorrows, always expressively challenging each other. Occasionally, someone steps over the line and a little conflict sets in, but nothing that can’t be fixed by more expressiveness. One might compare the situation to a mutual dependency that, when disturbed, creates a temporary animosity. The temporary animosity always leads back to calm waters, until another disturbance comes along. But then, there seems to be a limit to this musical run-around, calling for the final movement: “Dogfight.”

Alex Klein

These two works belong to a group of five pieces for solo instruments, to be played either in succession in the same concert, or separately. La mesure de l’air is for solo clarinet, La mesure de la mer for solo piano. The other works will be for solo oboe, solo violin, and for percussion. The original conception for this set was based on Heraclitus’ cosmology, which includes transformations of one element (earth-sea-water-air-fire), with the addition of time, into each other. My reflection on these transformations led me to interpret these natural elements in their relation to human experience.

The air as the representation of the present, what goes continually through the human body, barely perceptible yet always in changing motion, like the immediate passage of time. It is the present in the human consciousness.

The “sea” is not experienced here in its materiality; its occasional fury, its “dimensions” (excess), but in its capacity to make us perceive an image of eternity, to suggest a time beyond human measure. It is a “conceputalized,” idealized sea; the sea as a vast mass with large and periodic motions; the flux of its deep, powerful and contradictory currents; with independent, non-synchronized periodicities, whose influences express themselves in the continuous motion of the surface.

Accordingly, in the clarinet piece, a number of melodic models—archetypes—are constantly transformed, their shapes being altered every time they come back together as well as in interlaced content. This provides the basis for the organization of musical phrases of varying lengths. This same process of small constant transformations is applied to a harmonic texture in La mesure de la mer. In both pieces and more evidently perhaps in the second one, unfolding of time is closely related to the human experience mentioned earlier. The present is occupied by trains of thoughts; alternating constantly the perceived speed of time; the texture of the clarinet pieces is often changing, but the main activity is one of a more or less creative activity renewing itself all the time. The slowness of LA MESURE DE LA MER is indicative of its contemplative nature, where the changes are also constant; yet there unfolds progressively, the sensation of larger rhythms, of global accelerations or slowing down. What was affected of a light, ethereal, and playful character in LA MESURE DE L’AIR becomes now an object of contemplation, serene and visionary.

Joël-François Durand

OUT AND BACK AGAIN was commissioned by the Rainier Chamber Winds of Seattle, Washington. This is a chamber work featuring violin and cello with twelve wind players. The piece is a “American” in its first movement, lyrical and reflective, in the second. The third movement begins with larger, more dramatic shapes and gradually finds its way back to thoughts from the first and second movements.

Ken Benshoof

Ella Marie Gray began her career concertizing with the Kronos Quartet in New York. On returning to her native Seattle, she performed nine seasons with the Northwest Chamber Orchestra. She currently appears with the Seattle Symphony, is a member of the Pacific Northwest Ballet Orchestra and of the New Performance Group, is a faculty member of Cornish College of the Arts.

A founding member of the Sonora Quartet, Ella makes regular appearances on chamber music series in the Northwest and Canada. She is a member of the New Hampshire Festival and has also appeared at the Cabrillo, Tidewater, Olympic, and Waterloo Festivals.

Walter Gray studied at the Curtis Institute of Music. He has been a member of the Seattle Symphony and the Seattle Opera Orchestra for twelve years, including solo performances on the New Music and Baroque series. He currently teaches at Western Washington University.

Walter was a co-founder of the Kronos Quartet and performs with the Sonora String Quartet, New Performance Group of Cornish College of the Arts, Moor Celli Quartet, and is the principal cellist for the New Hampshire and Waterloo Music Festivals. Walter has performed on and produced over several recording labels, including Delos, New Albion, Mode, and Hyperion.

Ken Benshoof has lived in Seattle since 1960. A Fulbright scholar in 1965, a Guggenheim fellow in 1976 and resident composer for several seasons for the Old Globe Theatre and the Seattle Repertory Theater, Benshoof currently teaches composition at the University of Washington.
Gunther Schuller, sixty-eight years old today, is an accomplished composer, jazz scholar, and educator. His talents have been recognized in the form of, among other accolades, two Guggenheim grants and the ASCAP Deems-Taylor Award.

For the 19 November 1985 concert by the Enchanted Circle at the New England Conservatory of Music, of which Schuller served as President from 1967-72, eleven sixty-second solo pieces were written by Conservatory faculty members for four instruments associated with Schuller: the French horn, the instrument with which he built his performing career, having served as a member of the Cincinnati Symphony and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra; the flute, the first instrument he studied; the violin, his father’s instrument in the New York Philharmonic; and the piano, which he plays.

Donald Harris Birthday card, marked “quarter=60 (Years),” derives the pitches of its initial three-note motive from Schuller’s name: G, A, S (E-flat). The other two motives are labeled “Ragtime” (for many years, Schuller directed the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble) and “Margie” (Marcia Black, Schuller’s wife).

The “Allegro molto burlesco” performance instruction well suits the fanfare-like quality of the McKinely. Here the composer exploits the multiple stopping (realized as pizzicato in the coda) and dynamic (the piece begins ff and ends pp) capabilities of the violin.

Jonathan Graber

Gunther Schuller has taught at Yale University and at Tanglewood, and has appeared as guest conductor with leading orchestras. From 1968 to 1977, he was head of the New England Conservatory of Music. Schuller is self-taught, as a composer. His music shows many of the influences to which his generation has been responsive: On the one hand he has been affected by the rhythmic freedom and instrumental innovations of experimental jazz. He has been associated with the Modern Jazz Quartet and is a leading representative of the “stream” movement, which combines the techniques of contemporary music with those of jazz; his “Early Jazz” (1968) is one of the best books on the subject. On the other hand, he has absorbed the serial techniques of the twelve-tone method, which he handles in an unorthodox and altogether personal manner. Schuller leans toward an expressively chromatic atonal idiom, which he uses with poetic imagination, and a flair for orchestral sonorities. “Episodes” was written for William O. Smith and premiered at the Venice Biennale Festival in 1964.

W. Q. Smith

“Chai Tou Feng,” the cycle’s first song, deals with regret over lost love. It tells of the poet’s ill-fated marriage to his cousin. The poet’s mother forced the happy couple to separate after the wedding because she did not like his son’s bride. The couple did not see each other again until they accidentally met in a park in Hangzhou ten years later. Although the girl had since remarried, she graciously offered her former husband food and wine. Still in love with one another, the two soon separate, knowing that they will never be allowed to be together again. The cycle’s second song, “Sheng Sheng Man,” one of the composer’s favorites, dates from the end of the Sung Dynasty. At the time of the poem’s composition, a Mongolian invasion had forced the emperor to move the capital city from occupied territory to Hangzhou. The poet’s beloved husband, a high-ranking government official, died during the move to the new capital; in this poem he laments her loneliness and impoverished state, a sharp contrast to the luxurious life she once led at court.

TWO POEMS FROM THE SUNG DYNASTY was written for soprano Irene Gubrud, who premiered the work in New York City on 26 March 1986 with the Music Today Ensemble, Gerard Schwarz conducting.

Bright Sheng’s personal experiences as survivor, victim, and witness of the Cultural Revolution led to one of his best known compositions, H’un (Lacerations), which was awarded first runner-up of the 1989 Pulitzer Prize. He has been awarded National Endowment for the Arts and Guggenheim Fellowships, and has recorded on New World Records and Delos. From 1989 to 1992, Mr. Sheng was Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Lyric Opera. His music has been widely performed throughout the United States, Europe, and China, and he has received commissions from such organizations as the New York Philharmonic, the New York Chamber Symphony, and the Seattle Symphony.

Born in Shanghai, Mr. Sheng started piano studies at the age of five. After graduating from high school during the Cultural Revolution, he went to work as a pianist and tianman in a music-dance company in Chinhin, where he had his first opportunities to study and collect various Chinese folk music. After the Cultural Revolution, he was one of the first students accepted by the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, but was denied his diploma when he chose to emigrate to the United States in 1982. Studies at Columbia, University of Queens College, and City University of New York, with such eminent composers as Mario Davidovsky, George Perle, and Hugo Weisgall precipitated his rapid rise to international recognition. He lives in Seattle, where he is Composer-in-Residence with the Seattle Symphony and Affiliate Professor of Music at the University of Washington.

Bright Sheng
UPCOMING 1993-94 CONCERTS:

To request disability accommodations, contact the Office of the ADA Coordinator at least ten days in advance of the event. 543-6450 (voice); 543-6452 (TDD); 685-3885 (FAX); access@u.washington.edu (E-mail).

November 29, University Singers, 8 PM, Meany Theater.

November 29, Percussion Ensemble, 8 PM, Meany Studio Theater.

December 1, Wind Ensemble, 8 PM, Meany Theater.

December 3, Jazz Studies Concert Series, 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

December 4 and 5, Madrigal Singers, Collegium Musicum and Baroque Ensemble, “To Saint Cecelia,” 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

December 5, FACULTY RECITAL: Soni Ventorum Winds Quintet, 3 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

December 6, Studio Jazz Ensemble, 8 PM, Meany Theater.

December 6, Voice Division Recital, 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

December 7, University Chorale, 8 PM, Meany Theater.

December 7, ProConArt, 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

December 8, University Symphony, with guest Carmen Pelton, soprano, and Patricia Michaeilan, piano, 8 PM, Meany Theater.

December 9, Keyboard Debut Series, 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

January 6, FACULTY RECITAL: Bassoon Bash, 8 PM, Meany Theater.

January 10, Orchestra Festival Concert featuring the University Symphony and outstanding high school orchestras from Washington state, 6 PM, Meany Theater.

January 11, Choral Festival Concert featuring The Trenchcoats, 7 PM, Meany Theater.

January 13, Jazz Band Festival Concert featuring Eddie Daniels, clarinet, 7 PM, Meany Theater.

January 14 and 15, Concert Band Festival Concert featuring Eddie Daniels, clarinet, 7 PM, Meany Theater.

January 18, Brechemin Scholarship Winners Recital, 7 PM, Meany Theater.

January 25, Concerto Competition Winners & the University Symphony, 8 PM, Meany Theater.

January 31, Voice Division Recital, 7 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

February 2, FACULTY RECITAL: Craig Sheppard, piano, Barry Lieberman, double bass, and friends, 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

February 10, Keyboard Debut Series, 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

February 14, Contemporary Group, 8 PM, Meany Theater.

February 23, University Symphony with Gerard Schwarz, conductor, 8 PM, Meany Theater.

February 24, Jazz Studies Concert Series, 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

February 25, UW FACULTY DEBUT RECITAL: Craig Sheppard, piano, 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.