

EIGHTH BLACKBIRD

TIM MUNRO - FLUTES

MICHAEL J. MACCAFERRI - CLARINETS

MATT ALBERT - VIOLIN

NICHOLAS PHOTINOS - CELLO

MATTHEW DUVALL - PERCUSSION

LISA KAPLAN - PIANO

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2007

~ PROGRAM ~

"STRANGE IMAGINARY ANIMALS"

The Horse with the Lavender Eye
Episodes for Violin, Clarinet and Piano

STEPHEN HARTKE (B. 1952)

I. Music of the Left

II. The Servant of Two Masters

III. Waltzing at the Abyss

IV. Cancel My Rumba Lesson

Coming Together

DEREK BERMEL (B. 1967)

Luciérnagas

CARLOS SANCHEZ-GUTIERREZ (B. 1964)

~ INTERMISSION ~

Arpège

FRANCO DONATONI (1927-2000)

violence

GORDON FITZELL (B. 1968)

Rhiannon's Blackbirds

JOSEPH SCHWANTNER (B. 1943)

STEPHEN HARTKE (B. 1952)
The Horse with the Lavender Eye (1997)

I've always been fascinated by non-sequiturs, and the way that sense can suddenly appear out of nonsense. I also find imagery derived from words and pictures to be a great stimulus to my musical thinking, even if the relationships between the images I seize upon are not necessarily obvious or logical. The sources for the titles of this trio are quite disparate, ranging from Carlo Goldoni to Japanese court music to the cartoonist R. Crumb, as well as 19th century Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis and Looney Tunes; a bewildering array of references, to be sure, but one that somehow whets my musical appetite. Here are examples of just how: the ancient Japanese court, borrowing from the Chinese, was divided into left and right sides with ministries and music specific to each. The image of this official Music of the Left, suggested, first, the rather ceremonial character of my trio's first movement, and also its technical quirk: all three instruments are to be played by the left hand alone.

In the second movement, the title of Carlo Goldoni's play, *The Servant of Two Masters*, seemed to me an apt description of the performance dynamic involved in this particular combination of instruments, where the piano, in somewhat of a frenzy, serves alternately as the accompaniment to the clarinet while the violin clamors for attention, and vice versa. The third movement was suggested by a very short chapter in Machado de Assis' novel *Dom Casmurro* wherein the narrator, observing that his story seems to be waltzing at the abyss of final catastrophe, seeks to reassure his reader (falsely, as it turns out) by saying: "Don't worry, dear, I'll wheel about."

For the finale, I had in mind a panel from one of R. Crumb's underground comics of the late 60s showing a character dashing about in an apocalyptic frenzy, shouting, among other things, "Cancel my rumba lesson!" The connective thread of all these images began to dawn on me only in the midst of composing the work: all the movements have to do in one way or another with a sense of being off-balance—playing music with only one side of the body; being caught between insistent and conflicting demands; dancing dangerously close to a precipice, and only narrowly avoiding tumbling in; and, finally, not really being able to dance the rumba at all. Nonetheless, in the very end (the rumba lesson having been canceled, I suppose), a sense of calm and equilibrium comes to prevail.

DEREK BERMEL (b. 1967)

Coming Together (1999)

Derek Bermel has been widely hailed as clarinetist, composer, and jazz and rock musician. He is the founding clarinetist of Music from Copland House and co-founder, music director, and co-artistic director of the Dutch-American interdisciplinary ensemble TONK. About *Coming Together*, Mic Holwin writes:

Coming Together is a quintessential Bermel work: humorous, gesture-based and demonstrating a keen ear for invoking the human voice. This short duo consists entirely of *glissandi*. Says Bermel, "I wanted to write a piece without any 'straight' pitches, one that relied solely on gestural development, yet would still be convincing and emotional." Bermel achieves this by specifying exactly where each pitch starts and ends and where each *glissando* occurs in time—this careful placement of tonal areas defines the structure and carries the piece forward.

Program Note © Nicholas Photinos.

CARLOS SANCHEZ-GUTIERREZ (b. 1964)

Luciérnagas (1998)

Luciérnagas is an example of a rather abstract composition that is otherwise based on a very concrete experience. I was working on the music for Pascal Rioult's choreography "El Mozote" – a story about the killing of hundreds of innocent Salvadorians at the hands of militiamen, when I came across a text by Carlos Henríquez, titled "Luciérnagas en El Mozote" (Fireflies at El Mozote). The text described the arrival of Henríquez and other workers of "Radio Venceremos" to the site where the massacre had taken place three years earlier. As the men reached the outskirts of the desolate village, Henríquez writes that "...a dazzling spectacle made it clear to us that we had arrived at El Mozote: thousands of little lights began to twinkle. The intermittent dance of fireflies illuminated the night, showing us the way to the town's ruined church. 'They are the souls of El Mozote!,' said Padre Rogelio Poncel."

I was fascinated by the fact that the "dance of the fireflies" described above stayed on my mind not as a visual or narrative representation of a brutal – albeit strangely poetic event, but as a powerful – and strictly musical – "picture": the sound of brief rhythmic punctuations that weave a sparkling, constant, yet unpredictable flicker. Like the *trompe l'oeils* found

in the visual arts, the outcome is a shared expression of that which is regular (or "predictable") and of the ultimately chaotic.

My "luciérnagas" are represented by tangible musical materials: ascending and descending scale-like gestures that only seem regular, but that are actually under constant transformation. Similarly, the general rhythmicity of the piece is marked by the use of *ostinati*, whose regularity is perpetually disturbed by the incisive action of various surface elements, such as displaced accents, dynamic interjections, and the juxtaposition of extreme registers: the highly organized but endlessly puzzling world of insect life.

Program Note © Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez, 1998.

FRANCO DONATONI (1927-2000)

Arpège (1986)

Franco Donatoni is considered among the most prominent of Italian composers of his generation, which includes contemporaries Berio, Nono, and Scelsi. He spent his entire career almost exclusively in Italy, studying with composers Desderi, Liviabella, and Pizzetti in Milan, Bologna, and Rome, and teaching at conservatories in Bologna, Turin, Milan, and Siena. His music went through several periods of development: in the 1950s he came under the influence of Boulez and Stockhausen in Germany and Bruno Moderna in Italy, which led to a turn to strict serial techniques. Beginning in the 1960s, the introduction of chance procedures and the influence of John Cage can be seen in such works as *For Grilly* "improvvisazione per sette" for 7 performers. In the mid-1960s and mid 1970s he underwent 2 periods of compositional crisis where he wrote nothing for over a year; the first, which was broken in 1966 by the composition of *Etwas ruhiger im Ausdruck* for quintet (fl, cl, vn, vc, pno), led him to destroy and denounce much of his earlier music. The music from his late period, from 1980 until his death, is marked by driving rhythms and the extended development of terse compositional materials, sometimes using the same melodic fragments in multiple works.

Arpège, a study in virtuosity, is representative of his late period, with several sections of varying length connected compositionally by short motivic cells that are developed over the course of the piece. The work is approximately 12 to 13 minutes in length.

Program Note © Nicholas Photinos.

GORDON FITZELL (B. 1968)
violence (2001)

Gordon Fitzell is a Vancouver-based composer and guitarist. He is currently teaching at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. About *violence*, the composer writes:

In writing *violence*, I was interested in exploring the concept of aesthetic violence. My concern was not with artistic representations of violence, but with violence inherent to the very structure of the art object. What elements conspire to wage aesthetic war in a work of art? How do issues of syntax, perspective, temporality, ideology, morality, politics, and technology foster such a conflict? Is aesthetic violence chaotic or organised? Is it destructive or constructive? Is it repulsive or alluring? How is conflict sublimated?

Program Note © Nicholas Photinos.



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada

Gordon Fitzell & Eighth Blackbird acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts which last year invested \$26.6 million in music throughout Canada.

Nous remercions de son soutien le Conseil des Arts du Canada, qui a investi 26,6 millions de dollars l'an dernier dans la musique à travers le Canada.

JOSEPH SCHWANTNER (B. 1943)
Rhiannon's Blackbirds (2006)

Rhiannon's Blackbirds (moto perpetuo) was completed in April 2006. I first worked with the members of eighth blackbird while on the Yale faculty during several of their residencies at Yale's Norfolk Chamber Music Festival. I was immediately impressed with the breadth and depth of their commitment to an eclectic and challenging repertoire, performed with great skill, imagination and intensity. Later I happily accepted their invitation to write a work for them. Chamber Music America's Commissioning Program, supported by The National Endowment for the Arts and the Chamber Music

American composer, Kevin Puts, commissioned by Music Accord.

After playing together unofficially throughout the summer, in September 2006, the Eroica Trio announced with great excitement that Susie Park would become the Trio's permanent violinist, replacing Adela Peña. Peña had been on leave of absence for over six months due to a fatigue-related hand injury. Hailed as "prodigiously talented" by The Washington Post, Park is widely known for her emotive range and dynamic stage presence. On joining the Trio, Park said, "This is my dream come true! There is incredible magic and electric chemistry among us and I feel so lucky to be making music with two such passionate and dynamic artists!"

During the 2007-2008 season, the Eroica Trio will celebrate its 20th Anniversary Season with a cross-country bus tour, with plans to revisit many of the smaller presenters who supported the Trio during its early years. The tour will coincide with the release of the Trio's eighth CD for EMI featuring all-American music, including a new arrangement of music from Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess" commissioned by the Eroica Trio.

Visit the Eroica Trio at www.eroicatrio.com.

~JOIN US FOR THE NEXT CONCERT~

PRAŽÁK QUARTET

TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 2007

MOZART

Quartet, K. 575

MARTINŮ

Quartet No. 3

BRAHMS

Quartet, Op. 67

Subscriptions for the remainder of the season are available at pro-rated prices. Please contact our office for more information by calling 713.384.5400.

