

LARK Chamber Artists

Deborah Buck, violin
Harumi Rhodes, violin
Kathryn Lockwood, viola
Caroline Stinson, cello
Yousif Sheronick, percussion

“Walking To A Different Beat”

- "An Exaltation of Larks" for String Quartet Jennifer Higdon (b.1961)
- “John’s Book of Alleged Dances” for Quartet & Percussion John Adams (b. 1947)
(Prepared piano part arranged for percussion by Yousif Sheronick)
- I. Judah to Ocean
 - II. Logjam
 - III. Toot Nipple
 - IV. Habanera
 - V. Rag the Bone
- Three “Cypresses” for String Quartet (1887) Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)
Death Reigns in Many a Human Breast: Allegro Moderato
When Thy Sweet Glances on me Fall: Andante con moto
Nature Lies Peaceful in Slumber and Dreaming: Allegro scherzando
- “Turceasca” for String Quartet and Percussion Sapo Perapaskero
Arranged for the Lark Chamber Artists by Gordon Green (Lark Commission)
- ~intermission~
- String Quartet No. 5 "Parks" Daniel Bernard
Roumain "DBR"
(World Premiere, Lark Commission)
Movement "Klap Ur Handz" (Percussion part arranged by Yousif Sheronick)
- Elegy* for String Quartet “Chrysanthemums” Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)
- Viaggio in Italia for String Quartet and Percussion Giovanni Sollima (b. 1962)
Movement “Federico II” (Percussion part arranged by Yousif Sheronick)

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PROGRAM NOTES

"An Exaltation of Larks" for String Quartet

Jennifer Higdon (b.1961) is one of today's most popular living composers. Brooklyn born and Tennessee raised, Higdon is a flutist and composer now living in Philadelphia. She is writing an opera for San Francisco Opera, a concerto for eighth blackbird with the Atlanta Symphony, and has an upcoming recording of her Violin Concerto with Hilary Hahn who premiered it earlier this year. Jennifer Higdon's "An Exaltation of Larks" was written at the age of 43 for the Tokyo Quartet, premiered in March 2006 at the Tucson Winter Chamber Music Festival. It is a work of great thought and beauty. In three broad sections, fast-slow-fast, it uses combinations and collaborations that fit exceedingly well to the poetic title. Trills and artificial harmonics are combined with stunning motifs. "Larks," Higdon explains, are "any of numerous singing birds." "Exaltation" is "An act of exalting; the state of being exalted; an excessively intensified sense of wellbeing, power, importance, an increase in degree or intensity." A group of larks is known as, "An exaltation." "I find this piece very American, beautifully American," violist Kazuhide Isomura of the Tokyo String Quartet says, "in a way that some of Copland's works are—lyrical and atmospheric, reflective of nature. Until we saw the score we didn't have much idea of what she would do. When we received this piece we had to get used to it. We've never played any of this kind of music before. It was refreshing."

"John's Book of Alleged Dances" for Quartet & Percussion

Composer John Adams (b. 1947) is celebrating his new appointment as Creative Chair of the LA Philharmonic. Adams will compose works for the orchestra, while joining as an essential member of the artistic planning team and serving as a catalyst for innovative ideas. He is a Grammy Award winner, Pulitzer Prize winner and known for his minimalist/post-minimalist style. John's Book of Alleged Dances is a composition by John Adams for string quartet and recorded prepared piano (where essentially one places paper and assorted bits from the hardware store on the piano strings to get clicks, plinks, and buzzes. The loops function like a pop rhythm track.). The first performance took place November 19, 1994, at the California Center for the Arts, Valencia, California. The work was commissioned and premiered by the Kronos Quartet. The recorded prepared piano tracks were originally activated by one of the quartet player using pedal operated sampler. This was eventually replaced by a prerecorded CD track.

John Adams has said that the dances are alleged because “the steps for them had yet to be invented.” John’s Book of Alleged Dances is approximately 25 minutes in length and is composed of ten humorously titled “dances” that can be played in any order. Selections from John’s book of Alleged Dances have been choreographed by a number of choreographers, including Paul Taylor.

Cypresses for String Quartet

The source of Cypresses was unrequited love. In 1865, Josefina Ermáková, a 16-year-old actress, was a pupil of Antonín Dvořák (1841-1907). He fell hopelessly in love with her but failed to win her love in return. Dvořák recovered from the episode, of course, but at the time he buried his sorrow in the love poetry of Gustav Pflieger-Moravský. Setting 18 poems from that poet’s collection, Cypresses, Dvořák first attempted art-song composition. None of these songs was published in original form for a long time, but material from several of them cropped up in Dvořák’s operas and other vocal works.

Dvořák’s most extensive adaptation was his arrangement of 12 of the songs for string quartet in 1887, renaming the cycle Evening Songs and then Echoes of Songs. Lovely as the movements were, the composer found it difficult to interest his publisher in a suite of small pieces for the string quartet medium. The work was “lost” until years after Dvořák’s death, when his pupil/son-in-law, Joseph Suk, rediscovered it and reworked ten of the songs extensively. Finally, in 1957, Dvořák’s original arrangements of Cypresses for string quartet were published in full. In most of the movements, the first violin takes the part originally written for voice. In the other parts, Dvořák (by 1887 a master of chamber music) builds seamless string textures. As Otakar Šourek (authority on Dvořák’s chamber music) comments:

It is unnecessary to analyze the thematic structure of these miniature pieces They are simple song-forms, calmly vocal in character, based on a single main thematic idea, their form developing naturally from the line and mood of the words to which they are set and not in accordance with any purely musical principles of construction. They are, however, undoubtedly pieces of true Dvořák charm and individuality . . .

“Turceasca” for String Quartet and Percussion

Not much can be found about Sapó Perapaskero. His work, Turceasca, has been called “Kronos’s jam session with Taraf de Haïdouks.” The title means “Turkish Song,” although the composer, Sapó Perapaskero, was born in Romania. Historically, the Turks overran Perapaskero’s homeland more than once, so the conjunction isn’t too surprising. Kronos and the “gypsy collective” break a sweat and then some on this track, and you may be whirling like the proverbial dervish by the time that it’s over. The music was arranged for the Lark Chamber Artists by Gordon Green by commission.

String Quartet No. 5 "Parks"

An innovative composer, violinist, and band leader, Haitian-American Daniel Bernard Roumain, or DBR, mixes classical music with his own cultural references and musical imagination. DBR serves as Visiting Associate Professor of Composition at his alma mater, Vanderbilt University. He's also the Artist-in-Residence of the Seattle Theater Group and the Music Director of Seattle's More Music @ The Moore program for the third consecutive year. Premiered October 2006 by Lark String Quartet, *Klap Ur Handz* is dedicated to civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks. In this work, the players have to clap, a feature he says was inspired by hip-hop rhythms but dates back to Cro-Magnon man. "There's something really communal about that," he says.

Elegy for String Quartet "Chrysanthemums"

Besides opera, to which Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) devoted most of his life, the composer left a few pieces of chamber music. Most of these stem from his student years at the Milan Conservatory and are of little consequence. However, two minuets and *I Crisantemi* (The Chrysanthemums), composed later, were published in 1890. Melodies from these found their way into the opera *Manon Lescaut* (1893): the minuets in the dancing lesson of Act II, and the impassioned *I Crisantemi* in the tragic and desolate third act, set in "the desert of Louisiana." Written in 1890, *I Crisantemi* was Puccini's threnody on the death of Duke Amedeo of Savoy. Tenaciously clinging to minor keys, Puccini cast the single movement in a simple three-part structure, using the syntax of his operatic language to build and develop themes. In the first part, the violin melody spins out its thread in a passionate and seemingly unending melody. Suddenly, a dramatic outburst interrupts the flow and leads to a codetta. The central section establishes an atmospheric accompaniment into which Puccini pours an aria-like cantilena. After its codetta, built in chords over a persistently sustained cello part, the first part of the movement returns in nearly unaltered form, closing the elegy with deft strokes of finality.

Viaggio in Italia for String Quartet and Percussion

The cellist and composer Giovanni Sollima was born in Palermo in 1962 of a family of musicians. He graduated with the highest honors at the Conservatory of Palermo. He has collaborated with Claudio Abbado, Giuseppe Sinopoli, and Martha Argerich as a cellist. Sollima has been captivated by every kind of music and has sought to create new blends among the most diverse genres by combining elements of classical, rock and jazz music, as well as of ethnic music. *Viaggio in Italia* was written in 2000 with a text by Michelangelo Buonarroti, Giordano Bruno, Francesco Borromini. Scored for string quartet/quintet and voice, the entire work runs an hour and ten minutes, but as we'll hear today, sections may be performed separately. It was commissioned by Gianmaria Buccellati and premiered at Carnegie Hall. Notes for *I Crisantemi* and *Cypresses* by Dr. Michael Fink. Others written and compiled by John Nasukaluk Clare for the SACMS. All rights reserved.