

University of California San Diego • Division of Arts and Humanities • Department of Music

A Preuss School and Dean's Night Event



QUARTET

Wednesday, February 13, 2013 - 7:00 p.m. • CPMC Concert Hall

PRESENTS

The JACK Quartet

PROGRAM

Guillaume de Machaut
Three Machaut Pieces arr. Ari Streisfeld

Lei Liang
Gobi Gloria (2006)

Anton Webern
Sechs Bagatellen, Op. 9 (1911-13)

Salvatore Sciarrino
String Quartet No. 7 (1999)

Lei Liang
Serashi Fragments (2005)

György Ligeti
2 (1968)

Roger Reynolds
not forgotten (2010)

Since Haydn and Mozart, the string quartet has established itself as the most significant form of chamber music in the Western Classical music canon. One of the crucial considerations in the history of Western music has been this: What is the optimal number of individual “voices” that a music can carry simultaneously in a way that allows each to speak, all to participate. Bach’s unparalleled body of 4-part chorales provided a singular model that manifests harmonic power, textual articulation, and elegance of individual part writing. Perhaps this chorale tradition reflects in quite straight-forward fashion, the realities of human vocal production: male in contrast to female (the difference in pitch is approximately an octave), high versus low, gave us the tradition of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. It would be hard to ignore the parallel that arises as we consider the evolution of the string quartet – with its upper register pair of violins, and lower register complement of viola and cello. This arrangement, sometimes challenged by trio or quintet arrangements, has demonstrated by its broad adoption over time, a so far unchallenged standard. The string quartet tradition speaks to fundamental considerations: how many individual music lines can we hear at once? Does a flux of individual comments, paired exhortations, and unanimous assertions not emulate in a deeply satisfying way the ideals of conversation, of music made for the intimacy of chambers? During this performance, the distinguished New York based JACK quartet will present 20th century masterworks by György Ligeti, Webern, Sciarrino, and works by UCSD faculty Roger Reynolds and Lei Liang. Each of these works is, in a particular way, a commentary on the quartet medium.

The works on the JACK program continue the traditions of the string quartet medium while infusing it with new resources. Roger Reynolds’s *not forgotten*, is a six-movement work that references the music of twentieth century masters Carter, Takemitsu, and Xenakis as well as memorable places the composer has visited (Giverny, Ryoanji, the Aegean). Any performance begins with Giverny and culminates with the unanimous Now. Each of the inner movements is introduced by a characteristic solo from a member of the quartet, flowering into ensemble explorations. The inner movements are played in differing order at every performance lending a freshness to each presentation.

Lei Liang’s *Gobi Gloria* and *Serashi Fragments*, on the other hand, allude to elements from traditional Mongolian music, in particular, the performances of choor player Serashi (1887-1968). The former creates a heterophonic texture derived from the interaction of 4 modal melodic lines generated by contrapuntal techniques, while the latter functions as a musical commentary on the traditional artist’s performance technique and creates a musical narrative by employing fragmentation.

Gobi Gloria belongs to a series of compositions that grew out of my admiration for Mongolian music.

A principal melody is played against its own inversion, retrograde and retrograde-inversion in an otherwise mostly heterophonic texture. The piece alludes to various genres of Mongolian music that include the long-chant, as well as the music of dance and shaman rituals. It concludes with a rendering of a folk song that I heard during my visit to Nei Monggol region in 1996.

- Lei Liang

not forgotten, for string quartet, comprises five short movements, and each has “attachments” for me, arising from memories of a person or a place that left particularly vivid impressions. Three movements respond to composer friends: Takemitsu, Carter, and Xenakis. Three places are also implicated: Giverny, Ryoanji, and the Aegean Sea.

As memories are themselves mobile – shifting and recombining over time – so is the central content of this work. A performance always begins with Giverny and ends with its complement, a “tutti solo”, Now, that surveys the work’s landscape of associations with notable unanimity. The remaining movements are intended to occur in a different order with each performance, lending a tension of the unexpected even when the content of the materials themselves is fully mastered. Should not music be, as life is, significantly predictable?

The behavior already mentioned – an “ensemble solo” that ends the work serving as a metaphoric introduction to the initial Giverny movement (were the quartet’s larger process to loop) – emerges more directly in each of the other movements. Elliott is preceded by a violin 1 solo and Iannis by one for violin 2; the Toru movement is introduced by the viola; while Ryoanji is preceded by a cello solo. There are further complications: Takemitsu is fitfully disrupted by wasabi, while Iannis is framed by the Aegean.

Giverny is a malleable chorale, responding to a memorable sketch Monet used to posit his aims for one of the miraculous water lily paintings. Iannis alternates between tremulous unanimity and assertive independence, my music converges upon and then emerges out of his specifics. Ryoanji responds to the raked sand and surrounded rocks of the fifteenth century Zen garden in Kyoto, evoking a parched landscape of sounds with only the faintest touch of the lyric. Takemitsu was almost as enamored of film as he was of sounds and their music. His scores include one for Teshigahara’s haunting film *Woman in the Dunes*, and Toru visits that space. Carter’s riotous *Third String Quartet* includes a passage during which the cello rises in a powerfully expressive challenge to the surrounding successions of acerbic, block-like chords. But I am concerned in this quartet not only with the music of these individuals, but with their ways ... as remembered.

not forgotten was commissioned by the Siemens Foundation, with the cooperation of the West German Radio and the Cité de la musique, and is dedicated to the Arditti Quartet. It was premiered by them at the Wittener Tage Festival April 23, 2010.

- Roger Reynolds

Serashi Fragments is a tribute to the Mongolian chaorer (an ancient two-string fiddle) player Serashi (1887-1968). It is not in any sense an imitation of his performance style or the music of Mongolia, although an allusion appears briefly in the middle of the piece. In this work, the notes Sol, La and Si appear in various forms as musical inscriptions of the artist’s name.

- Lei Liang

The JACK Quartet electrifies audiences worldwide with "explosive virtuosity" (Boston Globe) and "viscerally exciting performances" (New York Times). David Patrick Stearns (Philadelphia Inquirer) proclaimed their performance as being "among the most stimulating new-music concerts of my experience." The Washington Post commented, "The string quartet may be a 250-year-old contraption, but young, brilliant group like the JACK Quartet are keeping it thrillingly vital." Alex Ross (New Yorker) hailed their performance of Iannis Xenakis' complete string quartets as being "exceptional" and "beautifully harsh," and Mark Swed (Los Angeles Times) called their sold-out performances of Georg Friedrich Haas' String Quartet No. 3 *In iij. Noct.* "mind-blowingly good."

The quartet has performed to critical acclaim at Wigmore Hall (London), Les Flâneries Musicales de Reims (France), Ultraschall Festival für Neue Musik (Germany), Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ (Netherlands), Festival Internacional Cervantino (Mexico), Donaueschinger Musiktage (Germany), Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (Germany), Library of Congress, Kimmel Center, La Biennale di Venezia (Italy), Lucerne Festival (Switzerland), and Carnegie Hall.

JACK has recent and upcoming performances at the SONiC Festival as hosts of the Extended Play Marathon at Miller Theatre, Vancouver New Music (Canada), Strathmore Hall, cresc...Biennale für Moderne Musik (Germany), National Gallery of Art, Newman Center for the Performing Arts, Le Poisson Rouge performing with pianist Ursula Oppens, Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concerts performing with composer/guitarist Steven Mackey, Carnegie Hall Choral Institute performing with the Young People's Chorus of New York City, the Wittener Tage für Neue Kammermusik (Germany) performing string octets with the Arditti Quartet, and the Athelas New Music Festival (Denmark).

Throughout 2012-2014, JACK will join legendary pianist Maurizio Pollini as a part of his Perspectives series with performances at the Lucerne Festival (Switzerland), Suntory Hall (Japan), Cité de la Musique (France), Staatsoper Unter den Linden (Germany), and Teatro alla Scala (Italy). Additionally, JACK will be the featured ensemble for the 2012 Finale* National Composition Contest in partnership with MakeMusic and the American Composers Forum.

Comprising violinists Christopher Otto and Ari Streisfeld, violist John Pickford Richards, and cellist Kevin McFarland, JACK is focused on the commissioning and performance of new works, leading them to work closely with composers Helmut Lachenmann, György Kurtág, Matthias Pintscher, Georg Friedrich Haas, James Dillon, Toshio Hosokawa, Wolfgang Rihm, Elliott Sharp, Beat Furrer, Caleb Burhans, and Aaron Cassidy. Upcoming and recent premieres include works by Jason Eckardt, Zeena Parkins, Payton MacDonald, Huck Hodge, James Clarke, Mauro Lanza, Simon Steen-Andersen, Walter Zimmermann, , and Toby Twining.

JACK has led workshops with young composers at Princeton University, Yale University, the American String Teachers Association of New Jersey, University of Iowa, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (Germany), New York University, Columbia University, Carnegie Mellon University, Eastman School of Music, University at Buffalo, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Northwestern University, University of Huddersfield (United Kingdom), University of Washington, University of Victoria (Canada), and Manhattan School of Music. In addition to working with composers and performers, JACK seeks to broaden and diversify the potential audience for new music through educational presentations designed for a variety of ages, backgrounds, and levels of musical experience.

The members of the quartet met while attending the Eastman School of Music, and they have since studied with the Arditti Quartet, Kronos Quartet, Muir String Quartet, and members of the Ensemble Intercontemporain.

John Pickford Richards

Called “wholesome-looking” by the New York Times, violist John Pickford Richards has gained a reputation for performing new and unusual music throughout North America and Europe. He is a founding member of the ensemble Alarm Will Sound, allowing him to work closely with composers such as John Adams, Meredith Monk, and Steve Reich at venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Holland Festival. In addition to his work with Alarm Will Sound, John is the founding violist of the JACK Quartet, which has worked closely with composers Helmut Lachenmann, György Kurtág, Matthias Pintscher, Wolfgang Rihm, and Elliott Sharp with appearances at the Library of Congress, Venice Biennale, and Donaueschingen Festival. John has appeared with bands such as the All-American Rejects, Silversun Pickups, and Grizzly Bear and has performed as soloist with the Pasadena Symphony, Armenian Philharmonic, Wordless Music Orchestra, Ossia New Music, and with the Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra playing the solo part to Luciano Berio’s *Chemins II* under the direction of Pierre Boulez. He holds degrees from the Interlochen Arts Academy and Eastman School of Music where his primary teachers were David Holland and John Graham.

Ari Streisfeld

Ari Streisfeld, violin, has quickly established himself as an avid interpreter of contemporary classical music through performances with Ensemble Dal Niente (Chicago), Juventas Ensemble (Boston), Signal Ensemble (New York), and as a founding member of the critically acclaimed JACK Quartet (New York). Ari has worked closely with composers such as Helmut Lachenmann, Wolfgang Rihm, Matthias Pintscher, Steve Mackey, Toshio Hosokawa, Georg Friedrich Haas, and Aaron Cassidy and has performed at venues including Carnegie Hall, the Library of Congress, Le Poisson Rouge, the Venice Biennale, and Wigmore Hall. He has attended the Music Academy of the West, New York String Orchestra Seminar, Kent/Blossom Music Festival, Atlantic Music Festival, and the Lucerne Festival Academy. He has soloed with the Kennett Symphony Orchestra and the Northwestern Philharmonia. As a winner of the 2008 Boston University Concerto Competition, Ari performed the Berg Violin Concerto with the Boston University Symphony Orchestra. As a composer Ari was a recipient of the 2000 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composers Awards. The Los Angeles Times said his arrangements of music by Machaut and Gesualdo were “imaginatively arranged for string quartet.” He received his BM at the Eastman School of Music, MM at Northwestern University, and is an ABD Doctoral Candidate at Boston University. His teachers have included Zvi Zeitlin, Almita Vamos, and Peter Zazofsky. Ari has recorded for Mode, Albany, and Cantaloupe Records. He currently resides in New York City.

Christopher Otto

Violinist Christopher Otto studied composition at the Eastman School of Music with Martin Bresnick, David Liptak, and Robert Morris. As a violinist, Christopher has premiered many compositions and worked with such composers as Harrison Birtwistle, Pierre Boulez, Helmut Lachenmann, and Steve Reich. Christopher has participated as composer and performer in such contemporary music festivals as the Lucerne Festival Academy, Internationale Musikinstitut Darmstadt, Karlheinz Stockhausen Courses, Institute and Festival for Contemporary Performance at the Mannes College of Music, June in Buffalo, and Festival Internacional de Música Contemporánea de Michoacán.

Kevin McFarland

Cellist Kevin McFarland is currently infiltrating the New York City new music scene as a recent transplant from his hometown of Lancaster, PA. As a freelance musician, he has recently appeared with ensembles such as Alarm Will Sound, Dal Niente, the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), Signal, and the Wordless Music Orchestra. He is also a member of the Tarab Cello Ensemble, a new music cello octet, with whom he has recorded for Bridge Records. Kevin holds a degree from the Eastman School of Music, where he studied composition with David Liptak, Robert Morris, and Ricardo Zohn Muldoon, and cello with Steven Doane. At Eastman he performed often with new music ensembles Ossia and Musica Nova and premiered over one hundred student compositions. He continues to compose both acoustic and electronic music and lives in Brooklyn.

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Lear on the Second Floor
Wednesday, March 6th, 2013
7:00 pm
CPMC Theatre

PASSAGE 9
Wednesday, March 13th, 2013
7:00 pm
CPMC Concert Hall

Kartik Seshadri
Wednesday, April 10th, 2013
7:00 pm
CPMC Concert Hall

Cuatro Corridos
Wednesday, May 8th, 2013
7:00 pm
CPMC Theatre

May 22, 2013 – Palimpsest
Wednesday, May 22nd, 2013
7:00 pm
CPMC Concert Hall

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A black and white photograph of a city skyline at night, with numerous skyscrapers illuminated and their lights reflecting on the water in the foreground. The sky is dark, and the overall scene is serene and urban.

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