

JACK QUARTET

WEDS@7

November 29, 2017 | 7:00 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Music Center | Concert Hall

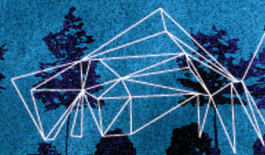
- Mark Applebaum: *Darmstadt Kindergarten*
- Marcos Balter: *Chambers*
- Natacha Diels: *Nightmare for JACK* (a ballet)
- Rand Steiger: *Inward*
- Rand Steiger: *Undone*

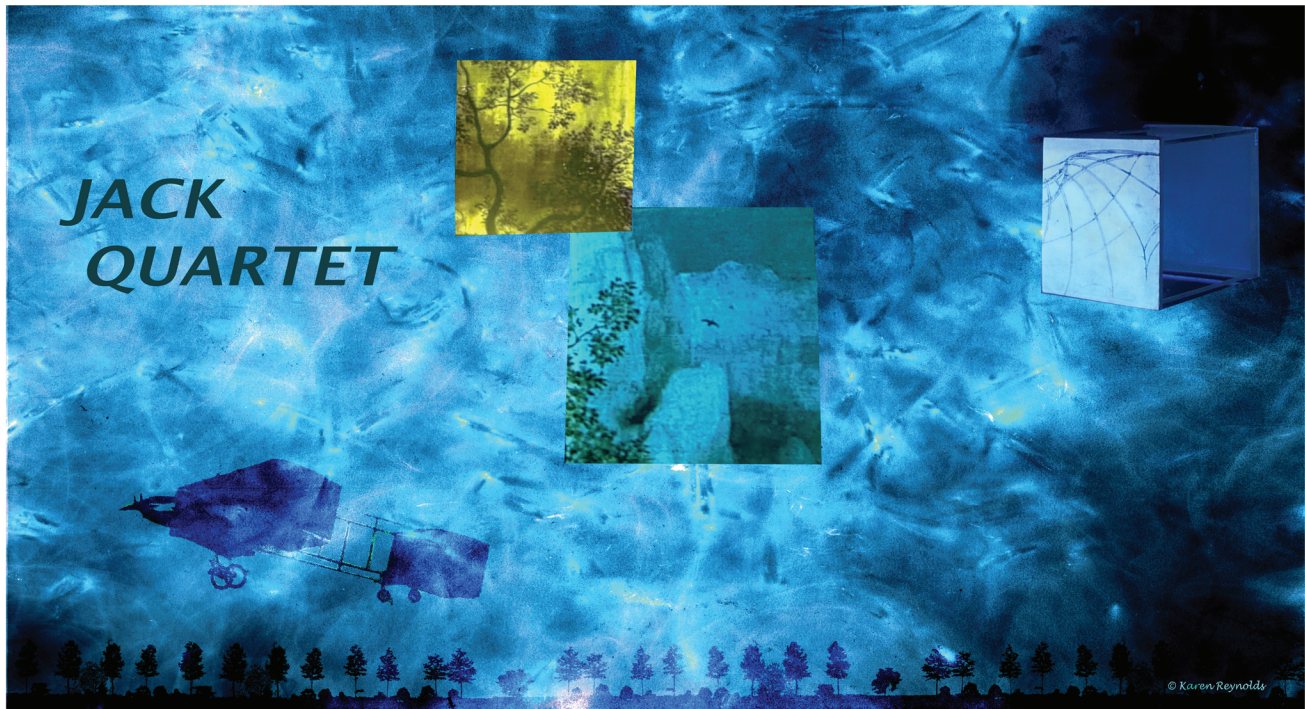
ROGER REYNOLDS' FLIGHT

Featuring JACK Quartet

November 30, 2017 | 7:00 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Music Center | Experimental Theater





JACK QUARTET IN RESIDENCE AT UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

TWO NIGHTS: 29 November 2017, WEDNESDAYS@7 and 30 November 2017, Thursday, 7pm

PERFORMS: MARK APPLEBAUM, MARCOS BALTER, NATACHA DIELS, ROGER REYNOLDS, RAND STEIGER

INFORMATION: musicweb.ucsd.edu/concerts, University of California San Diego, Conrad Prebys Music Center

Thank you to Karen Reynolds for her design contribution of the JACK Quartet residency poster and original graphics.

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Mark Applebaum: *Darmstadt Kindergarten*

Marcos Balter: *Chambers*

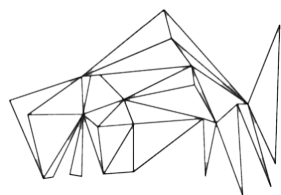
Natacha Diels: *Nightmare* for JACK (a ballet)

Rand Steiger: *Inward* for string quartet and electronics
(premiere performance)

Rand Steiger: *Undone* for string quartet and electronics
(premiere performance of quartet version)

JACK Quartet:

Christopher Otto and Austin Wulliman - violins,
John Pickford Richards - viola, Jay Campbell - cello



UC San Diego

ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Music

Darmstadt Kindergarten was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet by the David Harrington Research and Development Fund. It consists of a seventeen-measure “theme,” composed in two versions: instrumental and choreographic. The instrumental version is played conventionally on two violins, viola, and cello; the choreographic version calls for the players to substitute silent hand gestures—lavishly described in the score—for their instrumental sounds. (In this regard, the piece has a kinship with *Gone, Dog. Gone!* and *The Second Decade* (from 30) which similarly end in silent hand gestures.)

The instrumental “theme” is repeated five times in immediate succession. During each successive statement one additional player is permanently removed from the instrumental group and instead plays the choreographic version. The hand gestures are executed at precise moments corresponding to the rhythms from the player’s instrumental part. *Darmstadt Kindergarten* is thus a piece that is partly about memory; the audience is invited to “hear” the instrumental material when later voiced by choreographed action. Music can indeed be expressed even in the absence of sound.

The title alludes to the famous summer music courses held in Darmstadt, Germany. For decades composers such as Cage, Boulez, Nono, and Stockhausen met to share their latest musical sounds and ideas. The festival came to be known as a hotbed of the most gritty, modernist contemporary music, stuff aimed decidedly at mature audiences and, as a consequence, sometimes lacking the ludic sense of play that makes childlike enterprise so appealing (and perhaps in need of rehabilitation). Commissioned originally for a Kronos Quartet’s children’s concert, I wanted to compose a piece that could appeal at once to audiences of varying age, experience, and affinity for levity, gravity, whimsy, and rigor, something worthy of a “Darmstadt kindergarten.”

Note from www.web.stanford.edu

Chambers is a three-part snapshot of my compositional personality. The first movement focuses on attentive listening, immersing oneself into seemingly static textures that in return gradually unveil their many complexities and hidden hyperactivity, primarily through timbre. The second movement is centered around the role of spatial and temporal organization of musical ideas as well as at the physical and contextual questioning of music repetition. The third movement both summarizes the two previous movements and adds to them other elements dear to me: virtual polyphony (the illusion of a bigger instrumental force), internal and external counterpoint, stylistic plurality at the service of the music material, and close structuring of transitions and proportions.

—Marcos Balter

Nightmare for JACK is the first in a series of “nightmares” written for chamber ensemble between 2012 and 2016, written for the JACK quartet, and dedicated to Jessie Marino.

Throughout this series I have exploded the minute gestures executed by performers through choreography, repetition, and counterpoint. Each nightmare also describes a narrative, unique to each ensemble for which the nightmare was composed. The intention is for the pieces to exist in that halfway area between sleep and waking, where everything feels a little off—or as Steven King says so aptly— “as though everything you own was replaced with an exact copy.”

The choreography of ordinary gestures allows for a visual counterpoint to the music that is executable by performers typically unaccustomed to considering their physical movements on a detailed level. I use this platform both to exhibit and heighten my own artistic intentions and neurosis, and to establish a fairytale-like environment for the audience.

A crick of the neck.
A mumbling cry.
A shy banshee's screech
drowned out by a sigh.

Severed heads snap and turn,
nightmare sounds players learn.
Noises trio and twin.
Dancing wood hair and skin.

Turning heads lock eyes
whilst others advance--
entranced by the dance
of the wood hair and skin.

Twenty gallons of play!
A delightful bouquet!
A ferocious array!
of bells, whistles, and tune.

—Natacha Diels

Inward is the middle work of a trilogy of pieces for string quartet and electronics. Unlike *Undone*, which musically speaks to my despair over recent political developments, I have here intentionally turned inward and attempted to block out the world around me, taking solace in pure sound. The piece deploys digital signal processing to enrich the sound of the instruments in various ways and to distribute the sound among eight speakers that encircle the audience to create a more immersive and expansive soundscape. *Inward* was written for and is dedicated to the JACK Quartet, in recognition of their inspiring musicality and adventurous artistic vision.

Undone was commissioned by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk for the JACK and Arditti Quartets who performed the premiere at the 2017 Wittener Tage für neue Kammermusik. I wanted to share the piece with our community tonight, but it was not possible to get both quartets here, so I revised the piece to enable the JACK Quartet to play it by themselves, with digital signal processing deployed to render the missing four parts by transforming what the live quartet plays. The original program note for the octet version is as follows:

Undone began as an experiment with spatial arrangement of a string octet. My initial aim was to create a work using only acoustic sound that would achieve conditions similar to those I have attained in other pieces that rely on digital signal processing and amplification. Seven performers physically located around the hall spatialize, resonate, and echo (in a variety of ways) the music first played by the principal violinist. But while composing the piece, I became increasingly distracted and dismayed by political developments in the United States and Europe, and the work became much more than a formal exercise in acoustic spatialization. My grandfather came to America in 1902 when he was 20 years old, leaving behind his parents and twelve brothers and sisters, most of whom were later murdered during the Holocaust. The synagogue where he had his bar mitzvah was almost completely burned; today, one remaining wall has been integrated into a secular building in a town that is devoid of Jews. Yet because the United States accepted him as an immigrant, my grandfather was able to survive, worship freely, start a small business, and raise a family. Although neither he nor my father ever made much money, I was able to get an excellent education and have enjoyed a comfortable life with many extraordinary opportunities—including this one—to do what I love most: make music.

To witness my country elect a racist president and close its doors to refugees, and to read about the rise of right-wing nationalism in Germany and other European countries, has been deeply troubling. As I composed the piece, my thoughts and emotions about my family's past and contemporary events inevitably began to make their way into my music. Drawing on memories of my own bar mitzvah ceremony, I chose to incorporate references to Ashkenazi haftarah incantation (the way 13 year olds chant sacred texts during their bar mitzvah) to honor my deceased family members. These references, along with the more restrained material from earlier in the piece, yield and ultimately give way to the despair that I and so many others feel about our present geopolitical moment.

—Rand Steiger



JACK Quartet

UC San Diego | Division of Arts & Humanities | Music

Roger Reynolds' FLiGHT Featuring JACK Quartet

an intermedial exploration of humankind's aspirations to fly

November 30, 2017 | 7:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Music Center Experimental Theater

JACK Quartet:

Christopher Otto and Austin Wulliman - violins,
John Pickford Richards - viola, Jay Campbell - cello

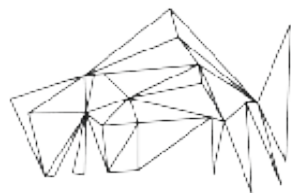
Roger Reynolds: Overall concept, text selection, music

Ross Karre: imagery, projection design
(as realized by Kyle Johnson)

Paul Hembree: computer sound-processing

Robert Castro: Actors' preparation and direction

Actors (recorded): Eva Barnes, Carla Harting, Lowel Caspar, Jack Mikesell



UC San Diego

ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Music

FLiGHT

Roger Reynolds (b. 1934)

“The natural function of the wing is to soar upwards and carry that which is heavy up to the place where dwells the race of gods,” observes Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, one of the greatest of Plato’s dialogues. “More than any other thing that pertains to the body [the wing] partakes of the nature of the divine.” FLiGHT as a dream, a metaphor, and — within a mere blip of the span of human history — a reality: this embodies a fundamental human aspiration that has inspired visionaries across the spectrum, from scientists and philosophers to poets, painters, and, of course, musicians. Conceived by the pioneering American composer Roger Reynolds, the project titled FLiGHT involves a multidimensional reflection on and engagement with this topic in the form of a full-length immersive artistic experience. FLiGHT, according to Reynolds “responds to the varieties of human experience with FLiGHT: gods, angels and demons, dreams, birds, kites, balloons, gliders, powered FLiGHT, and space exploration.”

FLiGHT culminates in a performance event lasting about 80-minutes and synthesizing a wide span of performance components: an acoustical musical composition (a four-movement string quartet), other sound material, the interactive involvement of four actors voicing texts drawn from several millennia and several different cultures on the subject of FLiGHT, and a web of visual imagery that will be projected onto 30 2 x 2 foot boxes that are reoriented by the quartet members as the performance develops. The quartet members also employ Foley sound devices during the media sections. The process of creation has lasted over three years; FLiGHT is an undertaking that in a sense updates the *Gesamtkunstwerk* for the hyper-technical 21st century.

At the core of FLiGHT is Reynolds’ collaboration with the JACK Quartet: a meeting of minds that brings together some of the most extraordinarily innovative musical thinkers from two distinct generations. That collaboration got off the ground several years ago, when Reynolds invited the ensemble to play new compositions by some of his students at the University of California Washington Center. The JACKs went on to perform his string quartet titled *not forgotten* (composed between 2007-2010) at the National Gallery of Art, and have also recorded the piece, to be released at a future date. *not forgotten* is cast as a six-movement quartet, each of the movements of which pays homage to a specific composer (such as Toru Takemitsu or Elliott Carter) or a memorable locale (such as Giverny or Ryoanji); the final movement fuses these impulses into a synthesis titled “Now.”

“We’ve known about Roger and his music since we were in school,” says John Pickford Richards, the JACK’s violist. In fact, violinist Christopher Otto studied at the University of California in San Diego, where Reynolds has long been a major presence and where he established the Center for Music Experiment and Related Research. “And we really hit it off working together as a group and have developed a family of sorts,” Richards adds, singling out the composer’s “inventiveness and imagination, along with his experience” as inspiring motivators.

In working together on the composition *not forgotten*, for example, Richards observes how he came to appreciate the unorthodox ways in which Reynolds conveys his musical thoughts. “A lot of times the music is in the score, and the art of notation says it all. Roger’s notation is steeped in Western history, but there is this whole other element of imagery and character to his work. I can’t imagine playing his music without actively working with him.”

The collaborative process for FLiGHT went through its first extended phase starting the summer of 2014, when the JACKs began rehearsing the first acoustic movement to be completed from the string quartet composition that serves as the spine of FLiGHT. Since then, JACK has publically performed all four movements. The quartet is integral to the completed FLiGHT work. It should not be approached with the clichés of 19th-century program music in mind, as if the piece were merely interested in “illustration” through sound effects. Reynolds’s conception of FLiGHT — and of similarly ambitious projects — is far bolder and more original.

A little background on Reynolds and his aesthetic context is helpful at this point. Born in Detroit in 1934, he commands a reputation as a bold explorer of what he likes to describe as the multilayered character of experience. For example, Reynolds’ works are known for engaging listeners with the spatial dimension of music and with a revelatory, complexly theatrical approach to text and voice. An excellent example can be found with *george WASHINGTON*, which has many parallels with the artistic parameters Reynolds has established for FLiGHT. At the beginning of its season in September 2013, the National Symphony Orchestra and Christoph Eschenbach gave the world premiere of *george WASHINGTON*, a work commissioned in conjunction with the recent opening of the Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington.

Collaborating with such colleagues as the intermedia artist Ross Karre and others, Reynolds designed *WASHINGTON* as a continuous work in five interconnected sections that create a complex, nuanced portrait of the first president through an amalgam of musical score, narrators portraying Washington (in his own words) from three stages in his life, and continually morphing visuals projected onto three screens. The work dramatizes an ongoing and overlapping dialogue among different aspects of Washington's personality over the course of his life, across time.

Reynolds got a relatively late start on his career as a composer, having graduated with a degree in engineering physics and after working briefly in the missile industry in the 1950s. The choice to devote himself to music at a later stage, he recalls, gave Reynolds a unique perspective — one that prompted him to approach composition as “an encounter with life and its content that is shaped less by words and more by the direct experience of sound.”

The scope of the composer's catalogue indicates how that engagement has played out: his works range from instrumental compositions in the familiar formats of chamber and orchestral music to complex dramatic collaborations wedding elaborate technology with traditional art. (*Whispers Out of Time*, a work for string orchestra composed in response to a poem by John Ashbery, won the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1989.)

Reynolds first came to attention with his music-theater rendering of the Wallace Stevens poem *The Emperor of Ice Cream* (1961-62). He earned a following through his involvement with the avant-garde ONCE festivals and his experimentation with analog and digital electronic sound. Deeply influenced by a period living abroad in Europe and Japan (including residencies at IRCAM, the Paris-based center for musical research founded by Pierre Boulez), Reynolds had earlier created a North American predecessor, the Center for Research in Computing and the Arts.

From his position as a teacher and researcher at the University of California, Reynolds has pursued a vast spectrum of interests spanning technology, sound as a spatially experienced phenomenon, literature, the visual arts, and mythology. All of these interests join together in his plan for *FLiGHT*. The whole project, as Reynolds summarizes it, “entails a text, montaged from historical sources, a multi-movement musical composition for string quartet, real-time computer sound transformation and spatialization, and the assemblage of an image-bank (drawings, paintings, sculptures, photos, and film clips) to be projected upon a constantly shifting array of box-like modules.”

This concept again underscores Reynolds' ongoing fascination with “experiential layering whereby differing dimensionality can be invoked, depending upon the particular occasion.” He furthermore envisions that, in other contexts, elements of *FLiGHT* might be abstracted as independent performance pieces: the string quartet, for example, as a stand-alone acoustic composition, perhaps alone, or perhaps with “its movements framed and inflected by computer-derived sound, by readings, and by projections.” Regarding the sonic dimension of the piece not provided by the JACKs, Paul Hembree collaborates as the programmer and computer musician for *FLiGHT*.

In all of its contexts, Reynolds conceives of *FLiGHT* overall as “a tribute to the string quartet medium.” He adds: “Everything in *FLiGHT* comes out of the quartet idea. The four JACK players are in a fluid conversation with each other all the time.” Hence the predominance of four across the work's dimensions and architecture. Along with the four string quartet movements the larger framework comprises four sections: “IMAGINING;” “PREPARING;” “EXPERIENCING;” and “PERSPECTIVE.” Reynolds explains that “the first involves speculation and dreaming before the fact, the second, the pragmatics of attempts to achieve *FLiGHT*, the third, reports of those who actually experienced or observed *FLiGHT* in its different forms, and the last, reflections upon how *FLiGHT* alters what, and how we see, spanning fear and exaltation.”

These in turn serve as the categories for four kinds of texts, which Reynolds clarifies as follows: “IMAGES (comprising brief vignettes), STATEMENTS (thoughtful, more compact pronouncements), DREAMS (particularly vivid and poetic descriptions), and STORIES (more extended, and personal descriptions).” Recorded by four actors who represent four aspects of humanity (youth, man, woman, and sage), these texts come from the treasury of world thought and literature and from path breaking aeronauts: Plato (as quoted above), the Bible, Qu Yuan, Ovid, Virgil, the Ramayana, the ancient Chinese “Nine Songs”, Shelley, Benjamin Franklin, the Wright Brothers, D. H. Lawrence, Charles Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart, and Ralph Ellison—among many others. Reynolds characterizes his unusual libretto as “an armature around which the various medial dimensions of the *FLiGHT* project will be wound (acoustic music, real-time computer sonic and visual manipulations, projected imagery and texts, dramatic readings, etc.)”

In addition, the visual dimension will project onto multiple, shifting surfaces a repertoire of images “drawn from ancient times to the present and from varied cultures.” Ross Karre collaborates as videographer and projection designer. Reynolds points out that just as the JACKs and the four actors “respond to each other, pass ideas along to each other, sometimes speak at the same time” in their respective ensembles, “the same kind of thing happens with the imagery. It starts out with a singular thread and little by little develops into separate strands of images, from cave paintings to the Curiosity Mars lander.”

—Thomas May

Thomas May is a writer focusing on theatre and music at memeteria.com

FLIGHT TEXT SOURCES LISTED BY MOVEMENT:

I. IMAGINING

WINGS:	Socrates in Plato's <i>Phaedrus</i> , 370 BC
FAMA Virgil	Virgil's <i>Aenid</i> , 18 BC
GOD	The Old Testament, <i>Psalms</i> 18, 1019 BC
GOD ECHO	<i>Qu Yuan</i> (329?--299?), BC, translation, Wai-lim Yip
ICARUS	Ovid, <i>Metamorphosis</i> , Book 8, 8 AD
ICARUS ECHO	Shelley, <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> , 1820
SPHERES	Burkhardt Bilger 2013 [James Salter, <i>The Hunters</i> , 1956, William H. Rankin, 1959, Shelley, <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> , 1820]
GLEAMING	The Ramayana, 6th century AD
DISCOVERY	Le Corbusier, 1935, Benjamin Franklin, 1783
IMPETUOSITY	The Ramayana, 6th century AD
SPONTANEITY	Le Corbusier, 1935
BUBBLE	Ralph Ellison 1944

II. PREPARING

TOSSED	Wilbur and Orville Wright, 1908
DREAMS	Sigmund Freud, 1900
MACHINE	Orville & Wilbur Wright, 1908
DELIVERANCE	Gilbert Seldes, 1927; Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1933
ECCENTRIC	Amelia Earhart, 1928
BEAST	Chuck Yeager, 1947
CONTROL	Gene Kranz, 1968

III. EXPERIENCING

GLOBE	Frédéric-Melchoir Grimm 1783?; Christopher Turnor, 1865; Duc de Polignac, 1783
GLOBE [ECHO]	J. A. C. Charles, 1783?
LEARNING	Wilbur Wright, 1901
FREE	Orville & Wilbur Wright; 1908; G. Brewer, 1912
POSITION	Charles Lindberg, 1927; [Gilbert Seldes, 1927]
POSITION ECHO [ACT]	Amelia Earhart [text and recorded voice (1930s)]
SLAMMED	Chuck Yeager [text, 1947, recorded voice?]
PAIRS	James Salter, 1956
SCISSORS	William H. Rankin, 1959; [James Salter, 1956]
AWE	Michael Collins [text, 1974, recorded voice]; [Amelia Earhart, 1928; Qu Yuan (329?--299? BC)]

IV. PERSPECTIVE

PERIL	Dr. Samuel Johnson, 1759
LIMITLESS	Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1935
ZENITH	D. H. Lawrence, 1915
MARVELLING	Amelia Earhart, 1928
STILLNESS	Buzz Aldrin, 1969
TWO BIRDS	<i>Vedic Myth via Sthaneshwar Timalsina</i> , 1st – 3rd centuries BC
CURIOSITY	Burkhardt Bilger, 2013

FLIGHT is commissioned by the JACK Quartet with the National Gallery of Art.

Project Partners include the James Madison University, The Phillips Collection, Mount Tremper Arts, the University of California, the Dean of Arts and Humanities at UC San Diego, the Department of Music at UC San Diego, the ATLAS Institute at the University of Colorado Boulder, the Park Avenue Armory, the National Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution, the San Diego Air and Space Museum, NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory at the California Institute of Technology.

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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 mood is serene and urban.

KPBSTM evening | edition

Weekdays at 6:30 p.m. on KPBS-TV

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