

crimson

D.M.A. Recital 3: Shaoai Zhang, piano

Wednesday, February 2, 2022 - 5:00 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

University of California San Diego

Piano Sonata, op. 1

Alban Berg

crimson

Rebecca Saunders

Intermission

*Three Reflections**

Alex Stephenson

Piano Sonata no. 28, op. 101

Ludwig van Beethoven

*world premiere

Program Notes:

crimson (2005)

for solo piano

crimson / 'krɪmz(e)n/ adj. n. & v. –adj. of a rich deep red inclining to purple. –n. this colour. –v.tr. & intr. make or become crimson. Blood-red. (ME *cremesin*, *crimesin*, ult. F. Arab. *kirmizi* KERMES)

The Concise Oxford Dictionary

“...and O that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire and the glorious sunsets
and... yes...”

Molly Bloom's closing monologue in James Joyce's Ulysses

I recently re-wrote and fused together two separate piano soli, written between 2002 and 2004, to bring to an end a time of intense preoccupation with a specific timbral palette of sounds for the piano. The contrasting material of the three movements share a similar “intention”, which I can only more closely define by referring to the colour “crimson”, hence the chosen quotations above.

Rebecca Saunders

Three Reflections

for solo piano and synthesizer

Each of these pieces extends the pitch and timbre palette of the piano using a second, dynamically controlled keyboard. The resulting doppelgänger-like effect is at times seamless and sonorous, at others caustic and confrontational. I was also inspired by Ashley's versatility as an artist—her ability to intertwine the old and new—and found myself pondering historical composers that have, in different ways, been meaningful to me. This is another sense in which these pieces deal with “reflection:” I think of them as self-portraits, each seen through the distorting mirror of a different historical music.

1. “Tuning Up (after Ives).” A free, meditative exploration of a chord (two perfect fifths separated by a minor third plus a quartertone) that Charles Ives proposed in his 1925 article “Some Quarter-Tone Impressions.” In many cases the chord is reached through glissandi in the synthesizer, as if the performer is gradually tuning the instrument into the harmonic world that Ives had imagined. Toward the end, a quotation from Ives' song “Religion” gently wafts in.

2. “Clocks (after Nancarrow).” A shifting mobile of different musical characters. The characters themselves are simple and instantly recognizable, yet their relationships are constantly in flux. There are no quotations here, yet the piece pays homage to Conlon Nancarrow's use of primary harmonic materials as a means of exposing more complex temporal designs. In the coda, the characters combine into a sonorous harmonic field on E-flat.

3. “Nocturne (after Berg).” A slow, somber, expressive movement. Much of the harmony is loosely based on a chord progression from Act 1, Scene 2 of Alban Berg’s *Wozzeck*. Around the middle of the movement, the progression briefly comes into focus as a direct quotation. Above this bed of harmony, a higher, slithering layer—scored in Berg’s original for piccolos, oboes, and xylophone (perhaps some sort of nocturnal critter?)—is reimagined as an almost playful melodic line doubled at three-quarters of a tone.

Three Reflections is written for and warmly dedicated to Shaoai Ashley Zhang.

Alex Stephenson

Contact us for information on upcoming concerts: Music Box Office: (858) 534-3448 | music.ucsd.edu/concerts
Watch upcoming livestreams: music.ucsd.edu/live
Reserve tickets: music.ucsd.edu/tickets

This performance will be live streamed, with audio and video documentation for archival purposes, only.

Audience members are reminded to please silence all phones and noise generating devices before the performance. As a matter of courtesy and copyright law, no unauthorized recording or photographing is allowed in the hall. UC San Diego is a non-smoking campus.

Department of Music, Production:

David Espiritu, Production Coordinator

Andrew Munsey, Recording Engineer

Mint Shi, Recording Assistant

Pranav Kurup, Video Operator

Kaelynn Choi, Video Operator

Sherry An, Marketing & Promotions Coordinator

Jessica Flores, Production Manager



UC San Diego
ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Music