

Welcome

NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY

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NEC Composers' Series

Michael Gandolfi, series director
Sid Richardson, concert curator

Thursday, October 27, 2022
7:30 p.m.
NEC's Jordan Hall

PROGRAM

Malcolm Peyton
(b. 1932)

Cello Piece (1978)

Shannon Ross, cello

John Heiss
(b. 1938)

Nocturne (2019)

Dedicated to the memory of my son, Frank

Megan Dillon, alto saxophone
William Hume, piano

Felicia Sandler
(b. 1961)

Coming Home (2011)

I.
II.
III.

Thatcher Harrison, guitar

Sid Richardson
(b. 1987)

l'avverse (2015)

World Premiere

Anna Kevelson, Erika Rohrberg, flute

Robert Cogan
(1930–2021)

Aflame in Flight, a folio for solo violin (1999)

Eden MacAdam-Somer, violin

Lavell Blackwell '21 DMA
(b. 1979)

Fan Unfair (2019)
World Premiere

Lemuel Marc, Isaac Dubow, trumpet

Stratis Minakakis
(b. 1979)

Lowell Études: Three Etchings on Solitude (2021)

Jihye Chang, piano

Upcoming NEC Composers' Series concerts, Spring 2023

Monday, February 6, 2023 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall
Wednesday, March 29, 2023 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

Peyton *Cello Piece*

I always loved the cello—the queen of instruments. I tried to play it, but I snipped the end of my finger off at a cookout. That ended my cello playing, but I decided that I wanted to write a piece for it. The work flowed rather quickly. It contains memories that I had, such as a police car going by and various other things that were close to me at the time. The ending came very naturally to me, the A harmonic on the D string, and the piece just flowed.

—Malcolm Peyton

Heiss *Nocturne*

How can one cope with the loss of a beloved son? Frank was forty-six years of age when he made his exit from life, after spending an entire day and evening with me, listening to music and warmly reminiscing about his childhood. I didn't see it coming. It was unfathomable.

He was so loving, so intense about everything, so deeply perceptive, and so funny. At the age of four, at a New York City Ballet program, he slept in my lap for an hour-and-one-half, then came “bolt awake” at the beginning of Stravinsky’s *Firebird*, saying “Oh dad! Cool!” When he was six, he heard an ensemble playing an E-major chord with a conflicting G-natural in the bass (Poulenc). He told me that the bass was playing an *enemy note!*

In my *Nocturne* are many dark images and echoes. They work toward remembrance and a kind of resolution, filled with nostalgia, longing, and more than a few ghosts. The opening “Improvisations (lamentoso)” lead to “Echoes (urgently)”, then four “Arias (misterioso; passionate; plaintive; dolcissimo)” and a concluding “Coda (farewell)”.

I dedicate this piece to the memory of one of the finest young men I have ever known.

—John Heiss

Sandler *Coming Home*

Coming Home was composed shortly after I returned home to California after a long time away in which contact with my family was minimal. I learned shortly after my arrival that my brother had recently gone through a life-altering experience. In response, I found myself drawn into some soul-searching of my own. This piece emerged as a creative reflection on life at that time.

—Felicia Sandler

Richardson *l'avverse*

l'avverse, meaning the sudden storm or shower, takes its inspiration from a brief, but violent, hailstorm that I was caught in during a midsummer in Boston. A humid, sunny day transformed into a chaotic, gusty deluge of precipitation in a matter of seconds. Driving in my car in Brookline, I had to pull over under a tree and wait for the driving rain and bullet-sized hail to cease. I remember the sound: deafening wind punctuated by the sharp, *staccato* pinging of hail on the hood, roof, and windshield of my vehicle. In a matter of minutes, however, the gale ceased as suddenly as it had begun. The roiling clouds fled, leaving behind a quiet tranquility in which I was left pondering this sudden storm. *l'avverse* seeks to capture the energy of this tempestuous

experience and to animate its powerful moods. As the work progresses, it explores the effect of an incrementally increasing rate of synthesis between its various contrasting textures.

– Sid Richardson

Cogan *Aflame in Flight*

Aflame in Flight is the last of a large sequence of folios composed in homage to, and based on texts of William Carlos Williams. Each folio explores montage techniques in which a large, ever-growing group of segments are to be combined in many different ways. In *Aflame in Flight* the violinist uses four specific fragments to create a framework for the piece, but chooses from thirty-seven other fragments to develop the body of the work, resulting in a new composition with every performance. Rather than creating a planned path through the fragments ahead of time, I choose them on the fly, drawing from a collection of my favorites and attempting to add new fragments to my collection with each performance.

Begun in Paris during the Balkan violence at the end of the twentieth century, the work is dedicated “to the memory of all those past and present everywhere who have been driven from their homes—*a flame in flight* in the worst sense.” Stillness, silence, flurries of motion, ecstatic passages, and lyrical laments give voice to this dedication, and I feel an eerie connection to this history through my own recent work in Afghanistan. Although Bob did not write this piece for me, I know that he loved the way that I play it. With every performance, I grow and stretch a little bit more as an artist, which is, I think, a fitting tribute to Bob’s legacy. I am deeply honored to have known and collaborated with him.

– Eden MacAdam-Somer

...a crow zigzags...

...smaller birds...

dive from above stabbing for his eyes

...a flight of empurpled wings!

...kindled / to sudden ardor!

...churring...a flashing
of wings and a churring song

...A burst of wings...

...a flame (only) in flight!

Love is a stone endlessly in flight...

The stone lives, the flesh dies

– we know nothing of death.

The gulls, vortices of despair, circle and give
voice to their wild responses...

...small birds
Moved by desire, passionately...
The colors of their plumage...indecipherable
...the white, the yellow, the black...

Anywhere is everywhere...

Oh life, bizarre fowl, what color are your wings?
Green, blue, red, yellow, purple, white, brown,
orange, black, grey?

Your great wings
Flap as you disappear in the distance...

...life...is only a bird
That has...a cry
That reaches to every rock's center...

The flames towering / Ah!

flames with... a belly of their
own that destroys...
A drunkenness
of flames... All fire, afire!

Whirling flames, leaping
Carried by the wind...
Beautiful thing! Aflame
Intertwined with fire

the waterfall of the
flames, reversed, shooting
upward
 the person
becomes the flame –
 a shriek of fire with
the upwind...
 float
upon the flames as upon a sweet breeze
 riding the air...
Beautiful thing
the flame's lover –
The pitiful dead
cry back to us from the fire, cold in
the fire, crying out...

From William Carlos Williams, *Spring and All* and *Paterson* © New Directions, 1923 and 1958.
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Blackwell *Fan Unfair*

Fan Unfair, a piece written for 2 Trumpets in C with a length of 7 minutes, was completed in 2020 and revised in 2021. I took as my initial inspiration the tertian motives contained in traditional fanfares, and used it as a point of departure to explore the contrapuntal and harmonic possibilities between two identical instruments. The work is constructed in 3 main sections in a vaguely ternary form—an initial playful section, a more subdued middle section, and then an expanded version of the first section.

I begin the piece with the two players playing in homorhythm and I use the contours of fanfares, but distort the traditional intervals and rhythms to make them virtually unrecognizable as such. Then as the piece progresses, I displace the two players rhythmically, creating a further level of tension and dissonance. The middle section is a point of contrast and relaxation with a slow waltz-like feel, which is then followed by an augmented restatement of ideas from the first section. It is only at the very end of the piece that we hear obvious consonance between the two players, and we glimpse the more traditional fanfare that has been lurking beneath the surface of the entire piece, waiting to announce itself.

— Lavell Blackwell

Minakakis *Lowell Études: Three Etchings on Solitude*

“For a good voice hearing is a torture.” This line from “Beethoven”—which I happened upon randomly when leafing through a collection of poetry at a Philadelphia bookstore—was my first introduction to the work of Robert Lowell (1917-1997). From this epigrammatic summation of Beethoven’s late style to his intimate confessions of his struggles with bipolar disorder, Lowell’s best lines strike at the center of things with an electrifying sense of precision.

A quintessential Bostonian of aristocratic origin, Lowell often used New England as the setting for his works. Of all his depictions of the area, I felt a strong kinship with his portrayal of a certain Boston kind of solitude: “The loneliness inside me is a place / Harvard where no one might always be someone. / When we’re alone people we run from change / to the mysterious and beautiful / I am eating alone at a small white table, / visible, ignored” (excerpt from “Eating Out Alone”).

Lowell Études: Three Etchings on Solitude traces its origins to the aforementioned lines, interwoven with remote resonances of Debussy’s “...Des pas sur la neige...” (Préludes, Book I, No. 6), a masterful exploration of acoustic space and memory.

— Stratis Minakakis

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Food and drink are not allowed in the concert hall, and photography and audio or video recording are prohibited.

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