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NEC New Music Ensemble

Hugh Wolff, conductor and coach

Monday, October 31, 2022
7:30 p.m.
NEC's Jordan Hall

PROGRAM

Joan Tower
(b. 1938)

Black Topaz (1976)

Solomon Ge, piano

Amelia Libbey, flute
Aleksis Martin, bass clarinet
Eddy Lanois, trumpet
Quinn McGillis, trombone
Michael Rogers, Stephanie Nozomi Krichena, percussion

John Heiss
(b. 1938)

Eloquy (1978)

Yechan Min, flute Gwen
Goble, oboe Aleksis
Martin, clarinet Miranda
Macias, bassoon

Toru Takemitsu
(1930–1996)

Rain Spell (1982)

Amelia Libbey, flute, alto flute
Aleksis Martin, clarinet Danial
Kukuk, vibraphone Morgan
Mackenzie Short, harp Shu Wen
Tay, piano

Anthony Davis
(b. 1951)

Wayang II (Shadowdance)

Clay Hancock, violin
Isaac Berglind, cello
William Swett, double bass
Yechan Min, flute
Quinn McGillis, trombone
Michael Rogers, Stephanie Nozomi Krichena, Danial Kukuk, percussion
Shu Wen Tay, piano

Intermission

John Heiss

Serenade for Flute and Harp (2012)
In memoriam Arlene Heiss

Erika Rohrberg, flute
Morgan Mackenzie Short, harp

George Crumb
(1929–2022)

Ancient Voices of Children (1970)
A Cycle of Songs on Texts by Federico García Lorca

El niño busca su voz
(The little boy was looking for his voice)
DANCES OF THE ANCIENT EARTH
Me he perdido muchas veces por el mar
(I have lost myself in the sea many times)
¿De dondé vienes, amor, mi niño?
DANCE OF THE SACRED LIFE-CYCLE
Todas las tardes en Granada, todas las tardes se meure un niño
(Each afternoon in Granada, a child dies each afternoon)
GHOST DANCE
Se ha llenado de luces mi corazón de seda
(My silk heart has been filled with lights)

YeonJae Cho, soprano
Chihiro Asano, mezzo-soprano
(in the role of the boy soprano)
Clay Hancock, mandolin
Gwen Goble, oboe
Stephanie Nozomi Krichena, Danial Kukuk, Michael Rogers, percussion
Morgan Mackenzie Short, harp
Hugh Wolff, electric piano

This evening's concert explores the explosion of styles and ideas during the second half of the twentieth century. The generation of composers after Stravinsky and Schoenberg moved ambitiously into new territory in the 1960s and beyond. The dream world of George Crumb, the delicate sensuality of Toru Takemitsu, the muscular virtuosity of Joan Tower, the Balinese gamelan and jazz-influenced groove of Anthony Davis – these broke new ground and in turn influenced the next generation. And we honor NEC's own John Heiss, whose dedication to performing new music was an inspiration throughout his decades-long leadership of the Contemporary Music Ensemble. *– Hugh Wolff*

Tower ***Black Topaz***

Mary Lou Humphrey writes in the score:
Joan Tower's *Black Topaz* derives from a drawing she did of color rays emanating from a black, piano-like object. This single-movement work examines a similar projection of color from its focal point, the solo piano (black) to a six-member supporting ensemble. Tower selected each ensemble instrument for its ability to magnify and extend the piano's timbral essence. The percussion project the piano's capability for sharp articulation: the temple blocks emphasize staccato attack and the marimba and tom-toms add depth. Woodwinds, brass and vibraphones augment the piano's lyrical and harmonic nature. The title *Black Topaz* reflects the work's essence: topaz is a structurally stable, yellowish mineral, which can, under different light, transform into varied colors."

Heiss ***Eloquy***

The two works of John Heiss on this evening's program were written over forty years apart. *Eloquy*, a woodwind quartet, dates from 1978. The opening Soliloquy is a study in color as a unison melody passes from one instrument to others. Several short variations follow: Chorale, Scherzo, March (with a cheeky quotation from Ives' *Three Places in New England* – a favorite of Heiss), and Fantasia (where multiphonics make an appearance), before a reprise of the Chorale and the Soliloquy. The music ends as it began: a single note, C-sharp, passed quietly from one instrument to the next.

Takemitsu ***Rain Spell***

Rain Spell is one of many pieces by Toru Takemitsu inspired by the sound of rain and the random flow of water. Though generally gentle and quiet in character, woodwind multiphonics and quarter-tone tuning of the harp expand the sonic palette, giving the music an exotic and mysterious quality. The composer writes that Rain Spell "is intended to realize the magical image and the gradation in coloration of the rain in a small-scale ensemble."

Anthony Davis ***Wayang II***

Wayang II is one of five ensemble pieces Anthony Davis wrote in the 1970s and 1980s inspired by Balinese gamelan music. The composer writes: "I was interested in

creating rhythmic drama, using polyrhythmic structures to articulate expanses of time. Rhythmic ostinatos, repeating structures of various lengths…delineate time and space, providing a subtext in the music that is both conscious and subliminal, embodying forward motion and giving the music the inevitability of groove." A 5/4 vibraphone ostinato is supplemented by 7/4 and 11/4 patterns in marimba and piano. Cello, violin and flute have solo turns before the trombone and bass take charge.

Heiss ***Serenade***

How does one cope with the loss of one's beloved life-partner? We were married for forty-seven years and knew each other for fifty-one. One mourns (profoundly) but one also treasures the overall experience… Arlene was so original, imaginative, energetic, and buoyant. Her life-force was animating. Thinking of her (beyond the sadness) brings cheer, optimism, and hope… as well as deeper devotion to those who still remain.

These all play into my *Serenade*. She often told me that she loved my "lyricism", my "chords", my "surprises", and my sense of humor. The piece thus evolves through six phases, *Aria–Incantation–Runes–Dances–Pulses–Encomium,* while briefly referencing moments we both liked in my works and others. The first four phases are probably self-evident; *Pulses* is a little game based on telephone dial-tones of people frequently called, and *Encomium* is an homage and tribute to Arlene herself. I like to think that this piece would bring some smiles to her. *– John Heiss*

Crumb ***Ancient Voices of Children***

Ancient Voices of Children was composed during the summer of 1970 on commission from the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, while I was in residence at Tanglewood, Massachusetts. This work forms part of an extended cycle of vocal compositions based on the poetry of Federico García Lorca which has absorbed much of my compositional energy over the past eight years. Other works in this cycle include *Night Music I (1963)* for soprano, keyboard and percussion; four books of *Madrigals (1965-69)* for soprano and a varying instrumental combination; *Songs, Drones and Refrains of Death (1968)* for baritone, electric instruments and percussion; and *Night of the Four Moons (1969)* for also and four instrumentalists. *Ancient Voices of Children* was first performed on October 31, 1970, as part of the Coolidge Foundation's 14th Festival of Chamber Music at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. By the same performers involved in the Nonesuch recording.

In *Ancient Voices of Children*, as in my earlier Lorca settings, I have sought musical images that enhance and reinforce the powerful yet strangely haunting imagery of Lorca's poetry. I feel that the essential meaning of this poetry is concerned with the most primary things: life, death, love, the smell of the earth, the sounds of the wind and the sea. These "*ur*-concepts" are embodied in a language which is primitive and stark but which is capable of infinitely subtle nuance. In a lecture entitled "Theory and Function of the 'Duende'", Lorca has, in fact, identified the essential character-istic of his own poetry. "Duende" (untranslatable, but roughly: passion, élan, bravura in its deepest, most artistic sense) is for Lorca "all that has dark sounds…

This 'mysterious power that everyone feels but that no philosopher has explained' is in fact the spirit of the earth…All one knows is that it burns the blood like powdered glass, that it exhausts, that it rejects all the sweet geometry one has learned…"

The texts of *Ancient Voices of Children* are fragments of longer poems which I have grouped into a sequence that seemed to suggest a "larger rhythm" in terms of musical continuity. The two purely instrumental movements—Dances of the Ancient Earth and Ghost Dance—are dance-interludes rather than commentaries on the texts. These two pieces, together with the 3rd song, subtitled Dance of the Sacred Life-Cycle (which contains a rising-falling *ostinato* bolero rhythm in the drums), can be performed by a solo dancer.

The vocal style in the cycle ranges from the virtuosic to the intimately lyrical, and in my conception of the work I very much had in mind Jan DeGaetani's enormous technical and timbral flexibility. Perhaps the most characteristic vocal effect in *Ancient Voices* is produced by the mezzo-soprano singing a kind of fantastical vocalise (based on purely phonetic sounds) into an amplified piano, thereby producing a shimmering aura of echoes. The inclusion of a part for boy soprano seemed the best solution for those passages in the text where Lorca clearly implies a child's voice. The boy soprano is heard offstage until the very last page of the work, at which point he joins the mezzo-soprano onstage for the closing vocalise.

The instruments employed in *Ancient Voices* were chosen for their particular timbral potentialities. The pianist also plays toy piano (in the 4th song), the mandolinist musical saw (2nd song) – although a separate player can be used for the saw – and the oboist harmonica (4th song). Certain special instrumental effects are used to heighten the "expressive intensity" – e.g., "ending" the pitch of the piano by application of a chisel to the strings (2nd song); use of a paper-threaded harp (in Dances of the Ancient Earth); the frequent "pitch-bending" of the oboe, harp and mandolin. The mandolin has one set of strings tuned a quarter-tone low in order to give a special pungency to its tone. The three percussionists command a wide range of instruments, including Tibetan prayer stones, Japanese temple bells and tuned tom-toms. The instrumentalists are frequently called upon to sing, shout and whisper.

In composing *Ancient Voices of Children* I was conscious of an urge to fuse various unrelated stylistic elements. I was intrigued with the idea of juxtaposing the seemingly incongruous: a suggestion of Flamenco with a Baroque quotation ("Bist du bei mir," from the *Notebook of Anna Magdalena Bach*), or a reminiscence of Maher with a breath of the Orient. It later occurred to me that both Bach and Mahler drew upon many disparate sources in their own music without sacrificing "stylistic purity."

It is sometimes of interest to a composer to recall the original impulse—the "creative germ"— of a compositional project. In the case of *Ancient Voices* I felt this impulse to be the climactic final words of the last song: "…and I will go very far…to ask Christ the Lord to give me back my ancient soul of a child." *– George Crumb*

from the cover of the Nonesuch recording

El niño busca su voz.
(La tenía el rey de los grillos.)
En una gota de agua
buscaba su voz el niño.

No la quiero para hablar;
me haré con ella un anillo
que llevará mi silencio
en su dedo pequeñito.

The little boy was looking for his voice.
(The king of crickets had it.)
In a drop of water
the little boy was looking for his voice.

I do not want it for speaking with;
I will make a ring of it
So that he may wear my silence
on his little finger.

Translation by W. S. Merwin

Me he perdido muchas veces por el mar
con el oído lleno de flores recién cortadas.
con la lengua llena de amor y de agonía.
Muchas veces me he perdido por el mar,
como me pierdo en el corazón de algunos niños.

I have lost myself in the sea many times
with my ear full of freshly cut flowers,
with my tongue full of love and agony.
I have lost myself in the sea many times
as I lose myself in the heart of certain children.

Translation by Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili

¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?
De la cresta del duro frío.
¿Qué necesitas, amor, mi niño?
La tibia tela de tu vestido.
¡ Que se agiten las ramas al sol
y salten las fuentes alrededor!
En el patio ladra el perro,
en los árboles canta el viento.
Los bueyes mugen al boyero
y la luna me riza los cabellos.
¿Qué pides, niño, desde tan lejos?

Los blancos montes que hay en tu pecho.
¡Que se agiten las ramas al sol
y salten las fuentes alrededor!
Te diré, niño mío, que sí,
tronchada y rota soy para ti.
¡Cómo me duele esta cintura
donde tendrás primera cuna!
¿Cuándo, mi niño, vas a venir?
Cuando tu carne huela a jazmín.
¿Que se agiten las ramas al sol
y salten las fuentes alrededor!

From where do you come, my love, my child? From the ridge of hard frost.
What do you need, my love, my child?
The warm cloth of your dress.
Let the branches ruffle in the sun
and the fountains leap all around!
In the courtyard a dog barks,
in the trees the wind sings.
The oxen low to the ox-herd
and the moon curls my hair.
What do you ask for, my child, from so far away?
The white mountains of your breast.
Let the branches ruffle in the sun
and the fountains leap all around!
I'll tell you, my child, yes,
I am torn and broken for you.
How painful is this waist
where you will have your first cradle! When, my child, will you come?
When your flesh smells of jasmine-flowers.
Let the branches ruffle in the sun
and the fountains leap all around!

Translation by J. L. Gili

Todas las tardes en Granada,
todas las tardes se muere un niño.

Each afternoon in Granada,
a child dies each afternoon.

Translation by Edwin Honig

Se ha llenado de luces
mi corazón de seda,
de campanas perdidas,
de lirios y de abejas,
y yo me iré muy lejos,
más allá de esas sierras,
más allá de los mares,
cerca de las estrellas,
para pedirle a Cristo
Señor que me devuelva
mi alma antigua de niño.

My heart of silk
is filled with lights ,
with lost bells,
with lilies and with bees,
and I will go very far,
farther than those hills,
farther than the seas,
close to the stars,
to ask Christ the Lord
to give me back
my ancient soul of a child.

Translation by J. L. Gili

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Upcoming Concerts at NEC
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CALLITHUMPIAN CONSORT & [NEC]SHIVAREE, Steven Drury, artistic director Shaw *Gustave Le Gray;* Czernowin *Seed I* and *The Hour Glass Bleeds Still* ***Tuesday, November 1, 2022 at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall***

LIEDERABEND LXI: "Snapshots of Goethe"
The program will include settings of Goethe by Schubert, Hensel, Wolf, Zemlinsky, Robert Schumann, Emilie Mayer, Brahms, Hans Eisler, Ives, Webern, Medtner, Grieg, Strauss, and Anna Amalia.
Wednesday, November 2, 2022 at 6:00 p.m., Williams Hall

"WHAT I HEAR": BSO/NEC collaboration
Caroline Shaw *Valencia, Gustave La Gray, Aurora Borealis, Entr'acte* and excerpts from Ravel *String Quartet in F Major*
Thursday, November 3, 2022 at 5:30 p.m., Brown Hall

FIRST MONDAY IN JORDAN HALL, Laurence Lesser, artistic director
All-French program: Saariaho *Cloud Trio;* Poulenc *The Story of Babar;* Messiaen *Quartet for the end of time*
Monday, November 7, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC SYMPHONY, Paul Biss, conductor
Mussorgsky *Night on Bald Mountain;* Simon *A Cry from the Grave;* Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 4 in F Minor*
Wednesday, November 9, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC WIND ENSEMBLE, Charles Peltz, conductor: "NEC Favorites"
Tomasi *Fanfares liturgiques*; Adams *Strange Birds Passing;* Tippett *Mosaic;* Ives *Charlie Rutlage* and *Decoration Day;* Lully/Philidor *Musique pour les douze oboi*
Thursday, November 10, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

SONG & VERSE, Brett Hodgdon, director
Friday, November 11, 2022 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall

NEC CHAMBER ORCHESTRA, Donald Palma, artistic director
Veress *Transylvanian Dances;* Netsky *Chagall's Mandolins* – G Rockwell '24, mandolin; Stravinsky *Apollon Musagète*
Monday, November 14, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

Upcoming Concerts at NEC
–continued

CMA Department: "Pushing the Limits"
A retrospective concert directed by CMA co-chair Hankus Netsky showcasing the innovative legacies of CMA faculty and alumni, featuring CMA student and faculty performances of music and arrangements by Carla Kihlstedt, Anthony Coleman, Peter Row, Magdalena Abrego, Hankus Netsky, Ted Reichman, Ran Blake, Joe Maneri, Linda Chase, and Lautaro Mantilla.
Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

Tuesday Night New Music
New music by NEC student composers, performed by their peers
Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall

Liederabend LXII: "Violet City – Queer Life in New York, 1920-2020"
Songs by Virgil Thomson, John Corigliano, Ned Rorem, Martin Hennessy, Daron Hagen, and others with texts by Gertrude Stein, Hart Crane, Richard McCann, Walt Whitman, Bob Dylan, and others.
Wednesday, November 16, 2022 at 6:00 p.m., Williams Hall

NEC Philharmonia, Hugh Wolff, conductor
Beethoven *"Leonore" Overture No. 2;* Elena Langer *Leonora's Dream* (world premiere); Strauss *Don Quixote, op. 35* – Leland Ko '24 AD, cello
Wednesday, ***November 16, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall***

Sonata Night 43, Pei-Shan Lee, director
Works for cello and piano by Bach, Chopin, and Britten
Thursday, November 17, 2022 at 6:30 p.m., Burnes Hall

NEC Symphonic Winds, Symphonic Choir, Navy Band NE
William Drury, Erica J. Washburn, Lt. Matt Shea, conductors;
Smith *The Consolation of Apollo;* medley including works by Saint-Saëns, Francis Scott Key, Sousa, Whitacre, Williams, Donovan, Smith, Hayman
Thursday, November 17, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

Britten: The Turn of the Screw
Opera students and members of NEC Philharmonia perform; Connor Gray Covington, conductor; Steven Goldstein, director
Thursday-Sunday, November 17-20, 2022, times vary
Plimpton Shattuck Black Box Theatre

Upcoming Concerts at NEC
–continued

FACULTY RECITAL: **BORROMEO STRING QUARTET**
Haydn *String Quartet in F Major,* op. 74 no. 2; Bartók *String Quartet No. 2* ***Sunday, November 20, 2022 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall***

NEC PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE, Will Hudgins director
Monday, November 21, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

GUNTHER SCHULLER LEGACY CONCERT: "Founding Family"
Music, remarks, and memories from those faculty appointed by Gunther Schuller during his tenure as NEC president: John Heiss, Ran Blake, Laurence Lesser, Carl Atkins, George Russell, Frank Battisti, and Hankus Netsky; performances by students, alumni, and members of NEC Wind Ensemble and CMA Bluegrass Ensemble
Tuesday, November 22, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

FACULTY RECITAL: **KENNETH RADNOFSKY**, *saxophone*
Monday, November 28, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC SAXOPHONE ENSEMBLE, Kenneth Radnofsky, director
Tuesday, November 29, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

UNDERGRADUATE OPERA STUDIO: Opera Scenes**,** Michael Meraw, director
Opera scenes performed by the members of the Undergraduate Opera Studio
Friday & Saturday, December 2 & 3, 2022 at 8:00 p.m.,
Plimpton Shattuck Black Box Theatre

CHAMBER MUSIC GALA
Sunday, December 4, 2022 at 8:00 p.m., Jordan Hall

FIRST MONDAY IN JORDAN HALL, Laurence Lesser, artistic director
All-French program: Ravel *Chansons madécasses;* Dutilleux *Ainsi la nuit;* Fauré *Quartet No. 2 in G Minor, op. 45*
Monday, December 5, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

TUESDAY NIGHT NEW MUSIC
New music by NEC student composers, performed by their peers
Tuesday, December 6, 2022 at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall

Support the musical journeys of NEC students!
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