

A young man with voluminous, curly brown hair is the central focus, wearing a dark t-shirt and looking down at a DJ mixer. He has tattoos on both forearms. The background is dark with colorful bokeh lights in shades of purple, blue, and orange. In the foreground, another person's hands are visible, also working at a DJ mixer. A tall, thin speaker is positioned to the right of the man.

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Welcome to NEC!

I am thrilled to share New England Conservatory's 2024-25 concert season—a celebration of the power of music to connect and inspire one another.

Whether you are seated in one of our concert halls or watching online, we hope you are uplifted by the performances of our students, faculty, and guest artists.

Above all, we thank you for your support of our students as they cultivate their artistry and contribute to the world through music.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Andrea Kalyn". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Andrea Kalyn
President

The NEC Composers' Series presents

Arthur Berger
Memorial Concert

Sid Richardson, curator

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

7:30 p.m.

NEC's Jordan Hall

Arthur Berger was an influential composer, critic and teacher for more than half a century. Born in 1912 in New York City, he received his musical education at New York and Harvard Universities, pursuing further studies in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and at the Sorbonne. By his early twenties he was accepted into the circle of avant-garde New York composers and became a member of the Young Composers Group that revolved around Aaron Copland as its mentor. In his capacity as critic, Berger became one of the chief spokesmen of American music for that period.

Although Berger has made notable contributions to the orchestral repertory, he devoted the major share of his compositional activities to chamber and solo piano music. Virgil Thomson called his *Quartet in C Major for Strings* "one of the most satisfactory pieces for winds in the whole modern repertory"; and his String Quartet received a New York Music Critics Circle Citation in 1962. Among his orchestral works are *Serenade Concertante*, written for the CBS Orchestra; *Polyphony*, a Louisville Orchestra commission; and *Ideas of Order*, commissioned by Dimitri Mitropoulos for the New York Philharmonic--a work that received a full page story in *Time* magazine following its premiere.

Among Berger's numerous published critical and analytical articles, his seminal study *Problems of Pitch Organization in Stravinsky* applied the expression "octatonic" to the 8-note scale that has since become conventionally known by that term. At a time when Stravinsky's so-called neoclassicism was under attack, Berger wrote extensively and cogently in its defense. He was one of the first to write about Charles Ives and the first to write a book on the music of Aaron Copland. This study, which had occupied him since the early 1930s, was published by the Oxford University Press at a time (1953) when there was no precedent for books on American composers dealing as he did with their musical technique. In August 1990, *Aaron Copland* was reprinted by Da Capo Press.

When Berger received an award from the Council of Learned Societies in 1933, it turned out to be but the first in a long series of honors bestowed on him by prestigious organizations over the years: Guggenheim, Fromm, Coolidge, Naumburg and Fulbright Foundations; the NEA, League of Composers, Massachusetts Council on the Arts & Humanities to name a few. He is a Fellow of both the American Academy's Institute of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Berger started his college teaching career in 1939 at Mills College where the following year Darius Milhaud joined the faculty. (It was he who persuaded Pierre Monteux, conductor of the San Francisco Symphony, to ask Berger to write a woodwind quartet for first-desk players of that orchestra.) In 1943 Berger became a music critic for the *New York Sun* and in 1946 accepted Virgil Thomson's invitation to join the *New York Herald Tribune*. After a decade as a full-time daily music reviewer in New York City, he resumed teaching in 1953 at Brandeis University during the formation of its graduate music program. Following his retirement from Brandeis in 1980 as the Irving Fine Professor of Music Emeritus, Berger taught at New England Conservatory of Music until 1999. Coinciding with his 90th birthday in 2002 the

University of California Press published Berger's memoir, *Reflections of an American Composer*, which won a 2003 ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award.

Mr. Berger died in Boston on October 7, 2003. Mr. Berger's Archives are located at the N.Y. Public Library for Performing Arts in Lincoln Center.

PROGRAM

Arthur Berger
(1912–2003)

Perspectives III (1987)

David Kopp, Rodney Lister, piano

Jason A. Coleman
(b. 1983)

Valse (2009)

Evan Chu, clarinet
Haoran Sun, clarinet
Aleksis Martin, bass clarinet

Malcolm Peyton
(1932–2025)

Overture for Piano (2005)

Geonwoo Yi, piano

Sid Richardson
(b. 1987)

Shine Darkly Over Me (2020)

With sighs of fire
Fly away, fly away, breath
My stars shine darkly over me

Emma Krause, flute
Luther Warren, viola
Yvonne Cox, harp

Rodney Lister
(b. 1951)

Just Another Day (2023)

Charles Coe, narrator
Katherine Filiss, English horn
Aleksis Martin, clarinet
Charlie Picone, viola
Jonathan Fuller, cello
Jessica Yuma, piano
Juliano Aniceto, conductor

Arthur Berger

Bagatelle No. 2 (1946)

Rodney Lister, piano

Davide Ianni

E se ... (2013)

Ashley Addington, bass flute
Amy Advocat, bass clarinet
Lilit Hartunian, violin
Stephen Marotto, cello
Yali Levy Schwartz, piano
Mike Williams, percussion
Stratis Minakakis, conductor

Upcoming Composers' Series Concerts

Sid Richardson, series director

DMA Composers Showcase

Lingbo Ma, curator

Thursday, March 27, 2025 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

Malcolm Peyton Composers-in-Residence

John Mallia, curator

guest composers: Ingrid Laubrock and Ikue Mori

Thursday, May 1, 2025 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

Berger *Perspectives III*

At some point after the composition of his *Ode of Ronsard* in 1987, Berger decided that nobody cared about his music and there was no point in writing any more of it. However, after that time he spent all his compositional activity rewriting (or more specifically re-imagining and re-orchestrating) pieces he had already written. *Diptych* (1990) and *Collage III* (1992) are dramatic re-compositions of the Wind Quintet (1984) and *Composition for Piano Four Hands* (1976, rev. 1989), respectively. *Perspectives II* (1985) for chamber orchestra and *Perspectives III* (1982) for Piano Four Hands are recompositions of movements of the withdrawn Chamber Concerto of 1959.

The titles of the two *Perspectives* pieces were meant to commemorate the time when he was co-founder with Benjamin Boretz, and the first editor of *Perspectives of New Music* (1962-63), and his musical interests at the time. They are in Berger's later style, characterized by the constant use of completely chromatic tri-chords (C, C#, D, for instance) not presented as clusters but as widely spaced "chords" and melodic fragments, used in a manner which he thought of as being 'perpetual variation', which he described as "a form of ruminating over the same material, turning it this way and that, allowing it to fluctuate in mood and tempo within sections, and ultimately yielding, despite sectional breaks (mere pauses for breath), one relatively long movement." *Perspectives III* is in six short sections, each separated by a short pause.

The music in both Berger's earlier neo-classic style, and his later, modernist one, combine a tireless and painstaking concern for artistic and musical operation and expression with what Virgil Thomson described as an "only slightly disguised sidewalks-of-New-York charm."
– Rodney Lister

Coleman *Valse*

While riding the 1 bus one day I overheard a conversation about how difficult ballroom dancing is; more specifically, how difficult the waltz is. How could I resist writing a piece about a ballroom couple that sucks at dancing? Over the course of four attempts, the inept couple (the clarinets) trips over themselves, steps on each other's toes, and gets on each other's nerves before giving up by the end of the piece, all while losing track of the waltz music itself (bass clarinet).
– Jason A. Coleman

Peyton *Overture for Piano*

Malcolm Peyton's *Overture for Piano* begins in media res with pealing chords that open out to a swirling, sostenuto tremolo. A forceful line wends its way through the opening, and continues to evolve throughout the work as it morphs into phantasmagoric new textures. *Overture for Piano* is dedicated to emeritus piano faculty member Gabriel Chodos, who passed away shortly before Mr. Peyton in January of this year.

A special thank you is in order for Mr. David Stevens, who engraved the autograph of *Overture for Piano* for tonight's performance on short notice. Mr. Stevens is engaged in the important work of cataloging and archiving Mr. Peyton's oeuvre,

which can be accessed at <https://www.abstractionmusicgroup.com/malcolm-peyton-catalog>.

Malcolm Peyton joined the faculty at New England Conservatory in 1965 and taught composition and music theory here for over five decades. He served as chair of the Composition Department for three of those. The Composers' Series was founded by Mr. Peyton, who directed it for several decades as well. The Composition Department grieves this loss to the NEC community, and mourns with his family.

Richardson *Shine Darkly Over Me*

This trio draws its title from William Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*. A famous work dealing with the intersections of love and power, *Twelfth Night* inspired the music herein primarily through its vivid prosody and evocative imagery. The three movements "With sighs of fire", "Fly away, fly away, breath", and "My stars shine darkly over me" are taken out of context and explored through musical gestures stimulated by these phrases. The final movement, for example, weaves the words into the harmonic fabric of the music and, with its prominent focus on the pitch E, plays with the double entendre of me and the solfège syllable for E, mi. The real muse for the work, however, is harpist Chloe Tula, who commissioned the piece and to whom it is dedicated with admiration and gratitude. *Shine Darkly Over Me* was premiered on July 6, 2024, in Studzinski Hall at Bowdoin College as part of the Bowdoin International Music Festival's sixtieth season.

– Sid Richardson

Lister *Just Another Day*

I've been an admirer of Charles Coe's poetry for a while, and I'm happy and honored now to be a friend of his. I've set a number of his poems to music. *Just Another Day* was written last summer and played very soon after it was finished by members of the faculty of Greenwood Music Camp, with Charles doing the narration, when he was a resident poet there.

– Rodney Lister

Just Another Day (for Juneteenth)

On the first day of the New Year, 1863, on a Texas plantation, a man opens his eyes as sunlight streams through the window of his little shack. The windows aren't really windows, just holes in the walls covered with tarpaper when the cold winds blow.

This man rises from his rough bed of hay, splashes water on his face, and eats a breakfast of cold fatback and cornbread. It's winter time, too early to harvest sugar cane, work the press that rolls stalks flat to extract the juice, the press that longs to crush careless fingers. It's too early to stir the giant iron pots that splash boiling cane juice on your skin. January is too early to plant, or pick, or haul, or bale cotton. Those hot and thankless days will come soon enough. Today's a day

to build stalls in the master's stable.

When this man steps out of his shack into the morning light, his woman is already gone. Up at the big house, nursing the mistress's baby, and after that will churn butter, and after that will sit with needle and thread, to mend a rip in the master's shirt, and after that will kill and pluck and gut a chicken, and after that will haul wood and stoke the stove, and after that will weed the garden, and after that will go outside to stir a cauldron of lye soap, and after that will once again nurse the baby while her mistress sits on the porch, in the shade, sipping cool tea and reading passages from her Bible.

On this first day of the New Year, two thousand miles to the north and east a tall, bearded white man sits at a desk, pauses a moment, as if awaiting guidance, dips his pen in ink, and write the words, "all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free."

As his pen scratches slowly across the page, two thousand miles to the south and west, a man and a woman toil beneath the Texas sun. For them, it's just another day.

Two years later another bearded white man will sit astride his horse in Galveston and read General Orders No. 3: "The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are freed." Maybe the man and woman who built stalls in a stable and nursed their master's baby on the day Abraham Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation are still alive when those words spread like wildfire through the state of Texas. Or maybe they are not.

However you pray, whether you put your hands together to speak Holy Words, lower your head for a moment of silence, or simply lift a glass, take a moment to remember those enslaved women and men who lived out their lives never knowing they were now free, no longer chattel, never knowing they were no longer merely beasts of burden, subject to the whims and whips of overseers.

– Charles Coe

Berger *Bagatelle No. 2*

At some point between 1943 and 1953, when he was a music critic in New York—first for the *New York Sun*, then for the *New York Herald Tribune* (working for Virgil Thomson), Arthur Berger was introduced to Vladimir Horowitz at a cocktail party. Horowitz enthusiastically said, "Oh, I know you. I love your music. I play it all the time." Berger was, understandably, a little surprised by that greeting. It turned out that Horowitz was a monster sight reader, and he had all the publishers in New York send him their new issues so he would have sight reading material, and in that context he had run across some music of Berger's, and continued playing it beyond

the sight reading stage. Into the conversation Berger asked, “Why don’t you play it in public?” Horowitz said, “Nobody wants to hear that stuff.” It’s not clear whether or not the *Three Bagatelles for Piano* are among the Berger pieces that Horowitz loved to read through, but since they were written in 1946 they might have been. The second Bagatelle, is a representative of his earlier, neo-classic style. – Rodney Lister

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