

The Slee Sinfonietta
Christian Baldini, conductor
April 7, 2009 at 8 pm
Lippes Concert Hall in Slee Hall

Program

The Winds of Winter (2005)

Derek Charke

Eventyr (1998)

Jeffrey Stadelman

down / among the altitudes (2006)

Evan Johnson

Personnel

Sabatino Scirri, flute
Anna Mattix, oboe
Jean Kopperud, clarinet
Chris Culp, clarinet
Lauren Yu, bassoon
John Boden, horn
Sycil Mathai, trumpet
Stephen Lecik, trombone
Rick Styles, bass trombone
Catarina Domenici, piano
Tom Kolor, percussion
Charles Haupt, violin 1
Maureen Yuen, violin 2
Viv Jayaraman, violin 3
Adrienne Elisha, viola
Jonathan Golove, cello
James VanDemark, contrabass

Biographies

Derek Charke is a composer, a flutist and an assistant professor of music at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada. His music is circling the globe thanks to recent commissions from the Kronos Quartet, the Katona Twins and the National Flute Association; performances by such luminary ensembles as the Group for Contemporary Music in New York City and upcoming commissions from the St. Lawrence String Quartet and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

Derek's music bridges a divide between a play of pure sound, he collects natural and environmental sounds, and the continuation of the western tradition, albeit with contemporary influences. His interest in the north and the environmental space around him play pivotal roles in many of his compositions. In addition he is focused on furthering the sound words of instruments by using "extended" techniques and electronics (live processing and soundtracks) to extend the sonic possibilities.

Evan Johnson (b. 1980) is a young American composer whose music focuses on the physical and bodily underpinnings of instrumental performance, the ontology of time and proportion, and the dramatic limitation of instrumental means and musical material. He received his Ph.D. in composition from the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he studied with David Felder as a Presidential Fellow; other teachers include Johannes Schöllhorn, Chaya Czernowin, Richard Barrett and Brian Ferneyhough. A *summa cum laude* graduate from Yale University in 2002, Johnson has been invited to numerous composition seminars and festivals in the USA, Canada and Europe.

Johnson received a 2008 Robert and Margaret MacColl Johnson Fellowship in Composition from the Rhode Island Foundation, for work "demonstrat[ing] exceptional creativity, rigorous dedication, and significant artistic merit." Other awards include those from ASCAP (2008 Morton Gould Young Composers' Award), the Ensemblia Festival (Shortlist 2007), the Rhode Island State Council for the Arts (2007 Fellow), Columbia University (2006 Joseph H. Bearns Prize), Society for New Music (2003 Brian M. Israel Prize), the New York Art Ensemble (Young Composers' Competition 2001), Broadcast Music, Inc. (a 2000 BMI Student Composer Award and Carlos Surinach Prize), the Washington Conservatory of Music (the 1997 Sotireos Vlahopoulos Young Composer's Prize), and Yale University (the Joseph Lentilhon Selden Memorial Award, in connection with which his music was described as "intellectually, technically, and emotionally rich and assured," the Abraham Beekman Cox Prize, and the Friends of Music Prize for his orchestral work *Horizontal White over Dark*).

His music has been performed throughout North America, Europe and beyond by musicians such as ELISION; Ensemble SurPlus; the Nouvel Ensemble Modern; EXAUDI; 175 East; the Cantus Ensemble; the Society for New Music; pianists Ian Pace, Sebastian Berweck and Geoffrey Burleson; clarinetist Gareth Davis; violinist Mark Menzies; the Quatuor Bozzini; the New York Miniaturist Ensemble; and soloists from the National Symphony Orchestra, among others. Current and future projects include works for flügelhorn and alto trombone, for soprano, cello

and double bass (both for ELISION); for piccolo, violin and percussion (for Richard Craig); and for bass clarinet and guitar (for Gareth Davis and Elena Casoli). Also active as a writer on music, Johnson has contributed to *Tempo*, *Contemporary Music Review*, *GroveMusic Online* (forthcoming), *Music Theory Spectrum* (forthcoming), and *NewMusicBox*, and he will provide the booklet essay for upcoming releases of Peter Ablinger's *33-127* on Mode Records and of Boulez and Stockhausen on Stradivarius Records.

Johnson is currently a postdoctoral teaching associate in music theory and composition at Northeastern University, in Boston.

The music of **Jeffrey Stadelman**--once described by a Los Angeles Times reviewer as "painterly . . . , deftly dispersed in time and glazed with a dry wit"--has been performed in the U.S and Europe by a number of the leading groups active in contemporary music performance. Stadelman has completed commissions from, among others, the Fromm Foundation and Boston Musica Viva, Nuove Sincronie, Concert Artists Guild, Trio Italiano Contemporaneo, Phantom Arts, Bernhard Wambach, Elizabeth McNutt, Jon Nelson, Jonathan Golove, and UW-Madison.

Stadelman serves as Associate Professor of Music at the University at Buffalo, where he teaches composition and contemporary music. A CD of his instrumental music, entitled "Pity Paid," was released late in 2008, on the Centaur label.

Program Notes

THE WINDS OF WINTER (2005) is a composition for amplified solo flute and twelve piece chamber orchestra. The duration of the piece is approximately fifteen minutes. The score is transposed to reading pitch. The piece is synthesis of my research into contemporary flute literature, performance practice and technique, and my compositional interests and studies. As such the solo flute becomes the primary impetus for most of the material through out the work. For example, harmonic material is derived from multiphonics produced on the flute. Extended flute techniques such as key clicks, tongue pizzicatos, timbre trills and singing are frequently passed between the chamber ensemble and the solo flute. Wind sounds, glissando effects and trills are also integral to this work. In the hope of achieving a more malleable and fluid sense of time alternation of free form, aleatoric and graphic notation, and quasi-improvisational techniques work in conjunction with standard notational practice. Thus moments of absolute rhythmic activity are easily juxtaposed with free form sections of relative and approximate duration. This alternation allows everyone - the composer, the flute soloist, the ensemble musicians and the conductor moments in which to shape temporal domains within the piece.

The title *down / among the altitudes* is taken from the book-length poem *Anathemata* by the Welsh poet David Jones. The passage from which the phrase in the title is taken describes, in a wide-ranging fashion typical of the poem, the changing of the Earth's surface on a geologic time-scale as it intersects with the *genius loci*-based nature of native Celtic mythology – itself in turn a distorted reference to the Catholic Mass, around which the entire poem is somehow constructed.

All that aside, the present work is, in its first half (comprising the first movement), a similarly “geologic” endeavor. Very little happens on the large scale, and that which does happen takes place slowly, and within a strictly circumscribed zone: one unchanging tempo, a narrow (very quiet) dynamic range, a narrow (high) registral environment, and virtually without exception one single (undifferentiatedly active) texture. The focus of this movement is entirely on the fact of the entry and exit of various instrumental subgroups, and the various innate energies they bring to their own struggles with these restrictions. The piano and percussion (exclusively crotales, with the exception of a vibraphone passage near the beginning) play characterlessly and aimlessly throughout, grounding the music even more tightly around a single timbral strand.

The second half of the piece, comprising movements II through VI, which, theoretically speaking, together have a duration exactly equal to that of the first movement, and share an identical sequence of bar lengths and time signatures), is a spectacular explosion of this singularity and simultaneously an attempt to “fill in the gaps” that are an artifact of the eddies of local repetition that destroy much of the material meant to appear in the first movement. That material appears in these broken shards instead, placed in time where they ought to have appeared in the first movement, as the piece stumbles fitfully to a close. *down / among the altitudes* finally ends in exhaustion, as it manages, gasping, to present the last chord for which it is responsible.

Eventyr (Norwegian: “adventure,” and also “folk tale”) was written in 1998 for the 175 East Ensemble of Auckland, New Zealand. With this commission I was interested in exploiting the earthy possibilities of the group's unusual core instrumentation—a sort of negative “Pierrot ensemble” with low winds/brass, two low strings, and percussion—while retaining most elements of the musical practice I had explored in many other, higher, chamber pieces. The players' virtuosity allowed me to do this.

The piece breaks down into two unequal sections, with the second, shorter one initiated by a skeletal glockenspiel solo that soon finds itself in a proliferating duet with bass clarinet, playing at the very top of its range. Musicians have a word—Italian of course—to talk about the issue of where in a performer's overall pitch range a particular passage lays: *tessitura*. Among other things I remember in this piece thinking about trying to develop an analogy—in form and time—to the feeling of the way high notes “sound” when played by low instruments like cello, bass, trombone and bass clarinet.