

PROGRAM

Scarlatti Cadences (1997)

Brainstorm (1994).....**Sebastian Currier** (b. 1959)

Laura Melton, piano

SPP (2001).....**Philippe Leroux** (b. 1959)

Jeffrey Heisler, soprano saxophone - I-Chen Yeh, piano

Dark Wood (2001).....**Jennifer Higdon** (b. 1962)

Susan Nelson, bassoon - Penny Thompson Kruse, violin
Alan Smith, cello - Thomas Rosenkranz, piano

They Wash Their Ambassadors

in Citrus and Fennel (1994).....**Jon Christopher Nelson** (b. 1960)

Elizabeth Pearse, soprano
fixed media

Run Before Lightning (2004).....**Jonathan Harvey** (1939-2012)

Conor Nelson, flute - Thomas Rosenkranz, piano

XAS (1987).....**Iannis Xenakis** (1922-2001)

Noa Even, soprano saxophone - John Sampen, alto saxophone
Matthew Younglove, tenor saxophone - James Fusik, baritone saxophone

Until the End, My Dear (2012, world premiere).....**Christopher Dietz** (b. 1977)

Thomas Rosenkranz, piano

of the Sacre to Diaghilev, he was a little bit surprised...He asked me only one thing, which was very offending, he asked me, “Will it last very long this way?” And I said, “Until the end, my dear.” And, he was silent because he understood that the answer was serious.”

(Ballets Russes corps de ballet member, Dame Marie Rambert) “Hearing the way his music was being played, [Stravinsky] blazed up, pushed aside the fat German pianist, nicknamed “Kolossal” by Diaghilev, and proceeded to play twice as fast as we had been doing and twice as fast as we could possibly dance. He stamped his feet on the floor and banged his fist on the piano and sang and shouted.

(Pierre Monteux, conductor of the première) ”With only Diaghilev and myself as audience, Stravinsky sat down to play a piano reduction of the entire score. Before he got very far I was convinced he was raving mad. Heard this way, without the color of the orchestra which is one of its greatest attractions, the crudity of the rhythm was emphasized, its stark primitiveness underlined. The very walls resounded as Stravinsky pounded away, occasionally stamping his feet and jumping up and down to accentuate the force of the music.”

(On 2nd June 1912, influential French critic Louis Laloy invited Debussy and Stravinsky to his home) “Debussy agreed to play the bass. Stravinsky asked if he could take his collar off. His sight was not improved by his glasses, and pointing his nose to the keyboard and sometimes humming a part that had been omitted from the arrangement, he led into a welter of sound...Debussy followed without a hitch and seemed to make light of the difficulty. When they had finished there was no question of embracing, nor even of compliments. We were dumbfounded, overwhelmed by this hurricane which had come from the depths of the ages and which had taken life by the roots.”

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NEW MUSIC FROM
BOWLING GREEN
WED APR 3 2013 - 7:30p
LE POISSON ROUGE

PROGRAM NOTES



PERFORMERS

Elizabeth Pearse, *soprano*

Conor Nelson, *flute*

Susan Nelson, *bassoon*

Noa Even and Jeffrey Heisler, *soprano saxophone*

John Sampen, *alto saxophone*

Matthew Younglove, *tenor saxophone*

James Fusik, *baritone saxophone*

Penny Thompson Kruse, *violin*

Alan Smith, *cello*

Laura Melton, Thomas Rosenkranz and I-Chen Yeh, *piano*

Christopher Dietz, *composer*

Although brought together as a set of complimentary short piano pieces, *Scarlatti Cadences* and *Brainstorm* each have an independent genesis. *Scarlatti Cadences* was written for pianist Emma Tahmizian. The outer sections take “Scarlatti-like” cadential formulas and expand upon them, creating delicate, sonorous and ephemeral textures, while the middle section emulates the percussive drive of many a Scarlatti sonata. *Brainstorm*, written for pianist John Kamitsuka, was written while I was in residence at the American Academy in Rome and dedicated to the then US ambassador to Italy, Ambassador Bartholomew. The piece constantly interweaves tonally ambiguous chromaticism with simple diatonic progressions in a satirical and sometimes raucous manner. It is in this combining of diverse, even opposing harmonic materials that the two piece, *Scarlatti Cadences* and *Brainstorm*, come together and share a common thread. As a set, the work was premiered at the 2005 Van Cliburn Competition. -SC

In *SPP* - a reworking for saxophone of a 1993 piece for flute and piano titled *PPP* - there is nothing resembling a conventional duet or even an improvisatory dialogue. Like two pistons (or often three: saxophone, right hand, left hand) they pound delicately, and so pervasively that when the saxophone breaks into its sole recognizably melodic statement, the effect is simply astonishing. Surrounding this singular moment, phrases expand and contract in a manner wholly plastic, growing and shrinking before our ears. A similar emphasis on gradual or progressive change infects both timbre and pitch as the saxophone moves smoothly from breathy sounds to clear ones or slides from one note to a neighboring note. Composer Julien Copeaux considers the three “P’s” of Leroux’s original title to represent three paradoxes: a strange stasis that is revealed only through transformation; a taming of potentially disruptive elements by reiterating them rather than dismantling them; and finally an understanding that repetition that holds even greater power over the listener after it has ceased than while it is ongoing. Leroux’s iterative processes are too varied to be hypnotic. Instead, a precisely coordinated, ever-changing flux - between the rapid shimmer of trills or tremolo and the carefully measured rhythmic divisions that make up most of the score - invites active, not passive hearing. As Copeaux puts it, “violence [is] substantiated by the captivating force of fascination.”

Dark Wood is a work that features the bassoon... a wonderful instrument that does not have a tremendous amount of chamber literature. I wanted to create a work that features the bassoon prominently, but also respects it within the framework of a true chamber dialogue (along with its partners, the violin, cello, and piano). Since much of the literature for this beautiful instrument is slow moving, I made the conscious decision to explore its virtuosic abilities. While there is slow music within the piece, there is an emphasis on real “bite” within the language, rhythm, and tempi. The title refers to the beauty of the bassoon’s wood. *Dark Wood* was commissioned in 2001 by St. Luke’s Chamber Ensemble, with funds provided by The Jerome Foundation. -JH

They Wash Their Ambassadors in Citrus and Fennel is based on a poem by Robert Gregory and is dedicated to Joan La Barbara, who commissioned the work. The composition’s incorporation of a variety of extended vocal techniques is inspired by La Barbara’s use of the voice. Its formal structure is greatly influenced by both the larger design and internal form of Gregory’s poem. This poem is of special interest to me because of its many internal cross-references. These recurring referential structures are similar to musical ideas that I have explored in recent works. The computer-generated tape was created in Sweden’s national Electronic Music Studios (EMS) where I was in residence as a Guggenheim Fellow in the fall of 1994. Much of the material on the tape is derived from Joan La Barbara’s voice. I am indebted to her for providing me with rich source material. I thank Robert Gregory for allowing me to set his poem. I am also grateful to the Guggenheim Foundation and EMS for providing me with the necessary resources to realize this composition. -JCN

Run Before Lightning was prompted by the experience of exposure to close lightning, and running fast before it in wild exhilaration, aware that it could kill at any moment. The flute, with its vivid connection to turbulent storm-wind, is also close to human breath, breath in emotion. The acoustic structure of the flute’s tube determines how the turbulence is channeled into musical sound; and canonic melodies channel further the musical sound’s embodiment as structure. I would like to thank Sophie Cherier, Isabelle Carré and Tony Robb for advice on the flute; and Claude Samuel for suggesting I write for the distinguished Concours Rempal. -JH

During the mid-1980s, during his unceasing quest for new forms of sound and expression for conventional instruments, Iannis Xenakis came to know the Rascher Saxophone Quartet and was immediately fascinated by their possibilities and the distinctive sound of the saxophone, which he began working intensively to interpret. This led to several “rehearsals” and colloquies between the composer and the interpreters, who immediately tried out the ideas which Xenakis had suggested and which gave impetus to the creative musicians’ voyage of discovery. In 1987 the composer presented his finished *XAS* to the group. The title reflects, on the one hand, the name of the instrument’s inventor, but at the same time it also includes the three main letters of the composer’s last name. Lastly the inverted letter “S” (displayed in the title on the score) reflects the fundamental symmetry of the work.

Until the End, My Dear: In the year leading up to the infamous première of *Le Sacre du Printemps* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on May 29, 1913, Stravinsky was busy revising the score and working with the dancers of Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, choreographer Nijinsky and conductor Pierre Monteux. Below are a few accounts of Stravinsky’s attempts to express the scope of his grand orchestral vision via the piano during that time.

(Stravinsky, in his own words, 1965 interview) “When I composed the first part of the *Sacre*, Diaghilev invited me to Venice. And when I played this beginning

(Continued on back of program)