

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY
FRIDAY OCTOBER 21

NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL
8PM KOBACKER

SPEKTRAL QUARTET

Clara Lyon and Mathias Tacke, violins
Doyle Armbrust, viola
Russell Rolen, cello

String Quartet 1.5: Experiments in Living (2016).....George Lewis
Commissioned by the Fromm Music Foundation

This is my first proper string quartet, although "Signifying Riffs", for string quartet with percussion, was premiered in 1998. I imagine that future quartets will be designated 2.5, 3.5, and so on. I take "Experiments in Living", a phrase from John Stuart Mill, to express my notion of recombinant assemblage, associative sonic discourses that appear and recur in ever new forms and guises, suffused with the power of noise. The Quartet has described my work as featuring "ornate detail, energetic rhythmic flows and tectonic formal shifts." Indeed, I'm looking for listeners to experience the volatility of memory, resistance, and hope.

Quartet Movement (2016).....Samuel Adams
Commissioned by the Spektral Quartet

'Quartet Movement' is a 10-minute work for string quartet and resonating snare drums. The music is quiet and built primarily of cadences, silences, and repeated gestures. Each drumhead is activated by a transducer speaker. Many thanks to my friends in the Spektral Quartet for bringing this work to life.

-BRIEF INTERMISSION-

String Quartet No. 1 (If on a winter's night...) (2015)Mikel Kuehn

String Quartet No. 1 (If on a winter's night...) was written for the Spektral Quartet and commissioned through the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition at Brigham Young University. Composed from June 2015 to March 2016, it was inspired by and is loosely based on Italo Calvino's 1979 novel, If on a winter's night a traveler. The formal structure of Calvino's book is a series of interlude-like chapters (where the reader is a character in the book) alternating with 10 novellas, each with a different plot and atmosphere yet sharing similar large-scale motivic ideas. I chose to focus on the novellas and set out to capture my interpretation of their basic moods and themes (both formal and surface). When reading Calvino's work, I am struck by its musical nature: it is always clear in formal architecture but often emits a surface containing motivic embeddings and relationships that are sometimes surprising and unexpected. String Quartet No. 1 is cast in ten connected sections following the novellas of the book. The first section, If on a winter's night a traveler, portrays the general atmosphere of steam, mist, smoke, etc., through musical analogs (special bowing, oscillating harmonics, etc.), while the second section, Outside the town of Malbork, depicts the frying of onions through crisp, metallic, ornamental flourishes, etc.

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Other movements, such as Looks down in the gathering shadow, are based more on an interpretation of their titles. Calvino was a member of the literary group OULIPO (Ouvroir de littérature potentielle) and, as such, was interested in employing techniques in his writing that were derived from the idea of using “constraints” to generate aspects of the text’s surface or content. (The OULIPO members have devised new literary forms to this effect such as the lipogram, a text that leaves out a vowel of every word, for example, the letter e). In order to attempt to capture the feel of Calvino’s writing, I used compositional techniques similar to his in the creation of the musical material.

String Quartet No. 1 – Another Place (2005).....Dai Fujikura

In this piece, I tried an unusual way of composing for me. My modus operandi is, -somewhat tediously- to start writing music at the beginning of the piece and then pray that I reach the end before the concert organizer and players phone me to ask where the piece is and I have to say “it’s almost done.....yeah, but I’m having issues with bar 32 and the C# in bar 45 is not quite there yet....

For this piece I knew that I was going to have a workshop with The Maggini String Quartet before finishing it. So I wrote 4 short fragments that are based on one harmonic field with transpositions, but contrasting in technique. For example: on fragment was pizzicato with a lot of snap pizz, another solo arco+practice mute against pizz. tremolo, and another was solo agitated pizzicato cello against static texture using practice mutes etc. I video taped and recorded the workshop and a week later, having decided to forget about the fragments I composed, I started to edit the piece like a film. It was great fun, because I was happy with all of the fragments I had already composed; and they all have harmonic unity, I could just think about the pacing and flow of the piece.

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