

THE 39TH ANNUAL BOWLING GREEN NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19

2:30 pm, Kobacker Hall

Poems of a Bright Moon (2000).....**Maria Grenfell**
Coresia Lee, flute – Tyler Pfalzer, clarinet – Shan Deng, piano

Maxine (2007).....**Rand Steiger**
BGSU Graduate Saxophone Quartet
Garret Klauss, soprano – Hayley Plauger, alto
Jonathan Kierspe, tenor – Claire Salli, baritone

Spiderweb Lead (2017).....**Adam Silverman**
X4 Percussion Quartet
Dan Piccolo, Ji Hye Jung, Julie Hill and Shane Jones

Bassoon Quartet (2016).....**Emily Joy Sullivan**
Ashley Mania, Cozette Cecconie, Kelly Ellis, and Robert Durham, bassoons

Spine (2014).....**Michael Laurello**
Nick Fox, Henrique Batista, and Jerry Emmons, percussion
Ariel Magno da Costa, piano

Program Notes

Poems of a Bright Moon was inspired by the Hsiang-Yang Songs of Li Po, an 8th-century Chinese poet of the T'ang Dynasty (ca.618-906 A.D.). On a visit to New Mexico in the United States, the discovery of the poet William Carlos Williams and the art work of Georgia O'Keeffe led to the poetry of Li Po, which conjures up visions of mountains and rivers, also very much part of the New Mexico landscape. Li Po was something of a mischievous travelling minstrel and liked to indulge in the drink. A legend says that "while out drunk in a boat, he fell into a river and drowned trying to embrace the moon." The moon appears in over a third of his poems, and the opportunity to combine Li Po's images of moonlight with the rich dark tones of the alto flute was irresistible. The individual titles of the movements of this piece come directly from the poems, and the music attempts to evoke the spirit of the titles: "Hsien mountain rises above emerald Han river," "On a moonlit night, a recluse plays his pale white ch'in" and "A pure tenthousand- mile wind arrives." *Poems of a Bright Moon* was commissioned by Ethos trio with funding assistance from Creative New Zealand.

Maxine was written in 2007 for the Prism Quartet, which gave the premiere performance in New York City, and then recorded the piece for their CD, *Beneath Breath*, on the New Dynamic

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label. My mother, Maxine Steiger, died while I was writing the piece, and she was in my thoughts constantly as I completed it. Maxine Goodman was born on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in 1922, the daughter of Jewish immigrants from Romania. She was a kind, loving, supportive parent, with a great love for music and dancing that stayed with her through her final days. Among the many things I am grateful to her for are my earliest musical experiences and her unequivocal support as I became more serious about composing. This piece is dedicated to her memory. - RS

Spiderweb Lead is a percussion quartet that assembles an exotic collection of instruments from far-flung locales; in this piece, the steel drum of Trinidad lives alongside the tablas of India and two keyboard percussion instruments of modern classical ensembles: the marimba and vibraphone. In this composition, instruments are treated with nods to their ethnic origins (with a blend of improvisatory and notated music for the tabla) and immersion in contemporary percussion techniques (with a variety of non-traditional beaters used on the steel drum and percussive playing on that instrument's rim). With the use of two unfamiliar instruments – I have never before composed for steel drum or for tabla – this challenge was a particularly exciting one, which led to some unconventional results

In my compositions, I am most interested in exploring the intersection of folk and popular musical traditions with Western art music. In *Bassoon Quartet*, I decided to build an entire thematic section out of a single, “catchy” rhythm, allowing it to groove and layer while also crafting a satisfying balance of repetition and development. However, this groove-based material is soon repeatedly interrupted by an offbeat, angular gesture that provides tension and unpredictability, threatening to take over the whole section. The B section is a study in contrast, an exploration of what happens when rhythm and meter recede and pitch and gesture take over. Several identical instruments sounding the same pitch create an entirely different texture and mood; the pitch collection and lack of clear downbeats create a yearning quality that contrasts the irreverence of the A section. Eventually, the upward-reaching gestures change the harmonic palette and create a quasi-impressionistic texture that grows more and more tenuous and vulnerable. In the final section of the piece, all the main thematic materials intersect and integrate, reconciling the fragmentation found earlier in the quartet. Reverence and irreverence, hard and soft, and vulnerability and strength co-exist in the layering of different gestures and rhythms.

A single line runs through most of *Spine*, and virtually all of the musical material is derived from it. This meta-line, performed by Percussion 1, serves as the “spine” of the music, both in structural terms (backbone), but also with respect to the line's perceived control over the direction and progression of the music (central nervous system). The material played by the supporting members of the quartet colors and punctuates this main line. Over the course of the work, players drift in and out of agreement with one another, and occasionally the primary line loses its unique identity within the texture of the ensemble. I tried to impart an almost biological sense to the way motives grow, attempting to balance intuitive, almost improvisatory, types of development with more structured patterns and processes. *Spine* is dedicated to the players of the Yale Percussion Group for their unwavering support.

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