

THE 39TH ANNUAL BOWLING GREEN NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20

Program Notes

8 pm, Kobacker Hall

Oxymoron (2003).....**Erkki-Sven Tüür**

BGSU New Music Ensemble
Alexander Popovici, conductor

- brief intermission -

BGSU Philharmonia, Emily Freeman Brown, director

Campane di Ravello (1987).....**John Corigliano**

Isaac Page, conductor

On Wings of Light (2010).....**Aaron Jay Kernis**

Yabetza Vivas-Irizarry, conductor

The Location of Lines (2017).....**Kory Reeder**

Alexander Popovici, conductor

Theme and Variations (2012/2018*).....**Martin Kennedy**

Brittany Lasch, trombone

Newly Drawn Sky (2005).....**Aaron Jay Kernis**

Oxymoron – contradictory terms in conjunction – seems to be a perfectly appropriate metaphor for a music which continues to be characterised by juxtapositions of seemingly heterogeneous musical idioms, by sudden contrasts and simultaneous movements in different speeds and which thus opens wide and adventurous spaces that are conceived with a rare sense of architecture and musical dramaturgy. As Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich points out in his liner notes to Tüür’s ECM album featuring the work, “each musical quality gives rise intrinsically to its opposite...dramatic vitality thus derives from rigour itself.”

I was asked by the Chicago Symphony to write a short orchestral work to honor Sir Georg Solti’s 75th birthday. During the summer I vacationed in Italy, and stopped in the magnificent hillside town of Ravello. On Sundays, the multitude of churches in Ravello and the surrounding towns play their bells, each in a different key and rhythm. The cacophony is gorgeous, and uniquely festive. My tribute to Sir Georg attempts to make the sections of the symphony orchestra sound like pealing bells: that tolling, filigreed with birdcalls in the woodwinds, provides the backdrop for a theme that grows more and more familiar as it is clarified. At the end, it is clear and joyous – a tribute to a great man.
-JC

On Wings of Light began its life as a work for 4 trumpets and women’s voices, written for the opening of New York City’s Rose Center for Earth and Space at the Museum of Natural History in 2000. I expanded and transcribed it for orchestra to honor Gerard Schwartz’s tenure at Seattle Symphony in 2010. It is inspired by this quote by scientist and philosopher Johann Heinrich Lambert (1728-1777)- “I take on wings of light and soar throughout all spaces of the heavens. I never come far enough and the desire always grows to go still farther. This luminous Arch, the Milky Way, which stretches all around the firmament and decorates the world like a ring studded with gems, roused in me astonishment and wonderment.”

The Location of Lines was inspired by the results of the conceptual compositional techniques of painter Sol LeWitt (1928-2007). I was amazed at LeWitt’s early conceptual experiments in wall drawing that would become his legacy. In several of these pieces, LeWitt prescribed fragile and delicate pencil lines to create a grand, yet understated design that becomes integrated with the architecture of the space. In this way the art becomes an environmental, or ambient, element surrounding the viewer and encompassing their field of vision. In a similar way, I have attempted to expand out a single monophonic line across the orchestra. This line is never stated singularly, but is self-reinforcing and unfolds into the orchestra creating a larger architecture. The soft, understated dynamics, the blurred articulations, and kaleidoscopic harmonic language developed by this melodic line is intended to parallel LeWitt’s prescriptions in a sonic environment. A sonification of space here relates to the scale of LeWitt’s work; where in scale, visual art becomes a temporal experience itself. The title of this piece is derived by a 1975 series of etchings by LeWitt of the same name. This piece was partially written while I was artist in residence at Arts Letters & Numbers, and the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts.

Theme and Variations was originally written in 2002 as a trombone and piano duo for Rebecca Cherian, co-principal trombonist of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. The orchestrated version was created specifically for this week’s festival and features new BGSU faculty member Brittany Lasch as tonight’s soloist.

Ternary in structure, the main theme begins with a repeated four-note figure in the trombone, accompanied by an equally stubborn pedal point in the orchestra. Six variations and a recapitulation of the theme follow, each one using the repeated-note figure and its accompanying material in some fashion or another. These occurrences range from the opaque to the explicit, appearing as transparent melodies, structural devices, or sometimes even manifesting themselves in the dynamics and articulations. Thus the primary motive pervades the entire work — sometimes hammering away, occasionally appearing as a gentle knock of fate, and every so often as merely tapping on the surface.

Newly Drawn Sky is a lyrical, reflective piece for orchestra, a reminiscence of the first summer night by the ocean spent with my young twins (who were six months old when the work's initial inspiration came to me), and of the changing colors of the summer sky at dusk. While the work is not programmatic or specifically descriptive, it reflects a constancy of change and flux musically and personally. The piece begins with chromatically shifting three-note chords in the foreground that move upwards through the strings, then enlarge into the horns and winds as a background to a long, singing line in the violas. These chords and their shifts between diatonic and chromatic voice-leading are a fundamental element in the formation of the work.

Short bursts of quick, scherzando music which grow larger in orchestration alternate with continuations of the increasingly expressionistic singing melodic line and rhythmically punctuated brass and percussion outbursts. A chaotic culmination leads to a return of open fifths (the first notes of the piece) in the full orchestra and metal percussion.

The calm middle section of the work features serene melodic writing in the winds and solo trumpet, underpinned by undulating, slow moving harmonies in the strings. The opening lyrical line returns in the strings and leads upwards to a brief interruption, a transformation of the scherzo-like music which quickly vanishes into a full return of the opening music which grows into a vast landscape of sound in the entire orchestra, leading upwards once again to a short, intense climax. *Newly Drawn Sky* closes with a simple, consonant coda, which gradually and lyrically calms the memory of tensions that have surfaced over the course of the work.

Newly Drawn Sky is roughly 16 minutes long. It was premiered by the Chicago Symphony at the Ravinia Festival in July, 2005 and was commissioned by Welz Kauffman and the Ravinia Festival in honor of James Conlon's first season as music director.

As the 2nd Place winner of the 2017-2018 American Prize, Trombonist **Brittany Lasch** has appeared as soloist with numerous ensembles including the U.S. Army Band "Pershing's Own", the Queens Symphony, and the Rodney Marsalis Philadelphia Big Brass. With playing described as "masterful" (Syracuse Post-Standard), Brittany is Assistant Professor of Trombone at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. Brittany also performs as Principal Trombone of the Michigan Opera Theatre Orchestra at the Detroit Opera House.

Brittany was a winner of Astral Artist's 2017 National Auditions, as well as the winner of the 2015 National Collegiate Solo Competition hosted by the U.S. Army Band and the 2010 Eisenberg-Fried Brass Concerto Competition and was the recipient of the Zulalian Foundation Award in 2014. Her trombone quartet Boston Based was named the winner of the 2017 International Trombone Association's Quartet Competition.

Brittany was a finalist in the 2015 International Trombone Association Frank Smith Solo Competition, and has received prizes from the 2015 Enkor Woodwind, Brass and Percussion Competition, the 2010 Queens Symphony Young Soloist Competition, and the 2006 International Women's Brass Conference Competition, as well as the International Trombone Association's Larry Wiehe Solo Competition and Gilberto Gagliardi Competition. Upon graduation from the Manhattan School of Music, she received the coveted John Clark Award for outstanding accomplishment in Brass Performance.

Brittany has performed with the Toledo Symphony Orchestra, Rhode Island Philharmonic, the Oregon Bach Festival Orchestra, the Vermont Symphony, Albany Symphony, Springfield Symphony, Symphoria, Bangor Symphony Orchestra, and the New World Symphony in Miami Beach. She participated in the Verbier Festival Orchestra for two summers, and has also appeared at the Spoleto USA Festival, Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan, the Castleton Festival, in the National Repertory Orchestra, and at the Aspen Music Festival. She has also been a participant in the prestigious Alessi Trombone Seminar in Fossano, Italy, and in the Summer Trombone Workshop at Temple University.

A native of Park Ridge, Illinois, Brittany Lasch earned her Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Boston University, where she received the Brass Department Award. She also holds a Master of Music degree from Yale School of Music. With a deep commitment to education, she has been a featured teacher and performer at workshops such as the Midwest Trombone Tuba Euphonium Conference at Eastern Illinois University and Trombonafide in Wichita, Kansas. She has presented masterclasses at schools including Youngstown State University, Louisiana State University, Towson University, and the Boston University Tanglewood Institute. Her principal teachers include Toby Oft, Scott Hartman, and Steve Norrell.