

Ensemble Concert:

2024-02-25 – Center for New Music Ensemble: Concert 3



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IOWA

School of Music



CENTER FOR NEW MUSIC

David Gompper, *director*

Season 58, Concert 8

Center for New Music Ensemble Concert III

Sunday, February 25, 2024 at 7:30pm
Voxman Music Building Concert Hall

CENTER FOR NEW MUSIC

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PROGRAM

Cendres for alto flute, cello, and piano (1998)

Kaija SAARIAHO

Joshua Stine, *flute*
Hanna Rumora, *violoncello*
Neil Krzeski, *piano*

Vent, for flute and piano (1990)

David LANG

Joshua Stine, *flute*
Neil Krzeski, *piano*

The Building of Curves (1998)

Piers HELLAWELL

Rachel Peters, *violin*
Rebecca Vieker, *viola*
Hanna Rumora, *violoncello*
Neil Krzeski, *piano*

INTERMISSION

Chamber Symphony No. 1, op. 9 for 15 solo instruments (1906)

Arnold SCHOENBERG

Joshua Stine, *flute*
David Cyzak*, *oboe*
Felisha Jones, *English Horn*
Sayyod Mirzomurodov, *clarinet*
Ryan MacDonald, *clarinet*
Lea Banks, *bass clarinet*
Keegan Hockett, *bassoon*
Carlos Lopez Soria, *contrabassoon*
Kristen Ronning, *horn*
Yi-Hsun Tang, *horn*
Yestyn Griffith, *violin 1*
Michael Klyce, *violin 2*
Fatima Gassama, *viola*
Hanna Rumora, *violoncello*
Natalia Terra, *double bass*
David Gompper, *conductor*

*=SOM faculty

PROGRAM NOTES AND BIOGRAPHIES

Cendres - I found the basis of the musical material for this piece in my double concerto ...à la fumée for alto flute, cello and orchestra. The name of the piece also derives from this.

While writing *Cendres*, I was mainly concentrating on the interpretation of particular musical ideas by the three different instruments of the trio, each of which has its unique character and palette of colors. Music tension is created and regulated by sometimes bringing the instruments as close together as possible in all ways (pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, color etc.), or, at the other extreme, letting each of them express the music in their most idiomatic fashion. Between these two extremes there is an unlimited number of possible ways to create more or less homogenous musical situations. The consciousness of this variety was the rope on which I was balancing while working on the piece. -*Kaija Saariaho*

Cendres was commissioned by the Gesellschaft für Neue Musik Ruhr and Kulturbüro der Stadt Essen for the Wolpe Trio.

Kaija Saariaho (1952-2023) was a prominent member of a group of Finnish composers and performers who are now, in mid-career, making a worldwide impact. She studied composition in Helsinki, Freiburg and Paris, where she has lived since 1982. Her studies and research at IRCAM have had a major influence on her music and her characteristically luxuriant and mysterious textures are often created by combining live music and electronics.

The Building of Curves - This work was commissioned by the Schubert Ensemble with funds from the Schubert Ensemble Trust and was premiered by them at London's Spitalfields Festival in June 1998.

The planning of this piano quartet rested upon various non-musical sources, that included Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, from which the title partly comes – but the structure is at heart a simple one. In the late 1990s I was concerned with the structure of a work that simply presents to the listener two opposing entities. By 'opposing', I don't only mean that the movements are contrasted in expression, but that they behave differently – for example, one being active and 'narrative' in behaviour, the other reflective. So it is here, that the two movements of the piece present very different ways of unfolding music: the first movement is a headlong rush, a communal breaking wave that gradually subsides, as part of a single curve of impetus, while the second movement, very still at first and again so in its closing pages, is a meditation that varies material within a prevailing mood. In its course it breaks out into moments of fury, but is predominantly a surface, more than a story. -*Piers Hellawell* 2024

Piers Hellawell, born in England and studied at Oxford University, was appointed when 24 to a composition post at The Queen's University of Belfast, where, since 2002, he has been Professor of Composition. His family home is in Northern Scotland; his sixty or so published works owe their genesis to that working environment. Working away from England through

his career has encouraged Hellawell's detached attitude to centralized musical fashions; in his teaching and writing about music, as in composition, he advocates traditional training as a platform for individuality, and expresses an aversion to obvious solutions. Further information is at www.piershellawell.com.

Vent was commissioned in 1990 by the American flautist Andrew Serman, and first performed in New York. It is scored for flute and piano.

Passionate, prolific, and complicated, composer **David Lang** embodies the restless spirit of invention. Lang is at the same time deeply versed in the classical tradition and committed to music that resists categorization, constantly creating new forms. Lang is one of America's most performed composers. Many of his works resemble each other only in the fierce intelligence and clarity of vision that inform their structures. His catalogue is extensive, and his opera, orchestra, chamber and solo works are by turns ominous, ethereal, urgent, hypnotic, unsettling and very emotionally direct. Much of his work seeks to expand the definition of virtuosity in music – even the deceptively simple pieces can be fiendishly difficult to play and require incredible concentration by musicians and audiences alike.

Chamber Symphony No. 1 (1907)

When Schoenberg completed the *Kammersymphonie* (Chamber Symphony) No. 1 in 1906, he told his friends: "Now I have established my style. Now I know how I have to compose." He quickly realized this was not true: as he put it, he was "not destined" to continue in this post-Romantic manner. Looking back, he saw that the *Chamber Symphony* was only a way station—but an important one—on the road toward his goal, which was to master what he described as "a style of concision and brevity in which every technical or structural necessity was carried out without unnecessary extension, in which every single unit is supposed to be functional." Within a few years, Schoenberg was composing an astoundingly dense, non-repetitive, richly detailed new music: the Stefan George song cycle *Das Buch der hängende Gärten* (The Book of the Hanging Gardens); *Three Pieces for Piano*, Op. 11; *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 16; and the one character opera *Erwartung* (Expectation), all completed in 1909, had gone far away from the luxuriant Romanticism of the earlier *Verklärte Nacht* and *Gurrelieder*. Something that did not change was Schoenberg's artistic personality and his temperament. From *Verklärte Nacht* to the last scores, passion is a constant, and the most immediate and ultimately overwhelming impression the *Chamber Symphony* No. 1 makes is that of urgent, ardent, even wild utterance.

The *Chamber Symphony* is in one movement; it is also in five movements. Schoenberg uses a formal device that had served him well in *Pelleas und Melisande* and the *String Quartet* No. 1: he combines the traditional four-movement plan—sonata allegro, scherzo, slow movement, finale—with that of a single sonata movement. Sections I, III, and V are characterized sharply enough to encourage you to hear five distinct movements; at the same time, their mutual connectedness is so clear that the symphony's master plan as a single sonata movement with extended interludes on either side of the development is also readily audible.

The *Chamber Symphony* opens with a great pile-up of notes that coalesce into a luscious five-note chord, which resolves ever so suavely into a chord of F major. As soon as the very fast


main tempo begins, Schoenberg has the horn rush impetuously up the steep slope of fourths from D below middle C to the F at the top of the treble staff. After the horn call, the cello plays an energetic, upward-rushing theme easily recognized by its persistent triplets as well as by its Debussyan whole-tone steps. This moves forward to an intense climax, which is followed by a new melody for violin and horn in a broad, singing style. The first movement presents a series of fervent, spirited, and variegated themes in rapid succession. The return of the energetic cello theme becomes a transition to the scherzo. The scherzo itself is even faster than the first movement; the ghostly Trio takes about twenty seconds. In the symphony's main development section, the themes of the first movement are reconsidered, recombined, and recostumed with captivating energy. Rising fourths introduce the slow movement, but now they take on the form of incorporeal double-bass harmonics, delicate six-note woodwind chords, weightless clarinet arpeggios, a dreamy melody for the first violin, all pianissimo. The music that ensues is a feast of lyric inspiration. The finale recapitulates and sometimes further transforms earlier themes with great freedom in their order of appearance. The rising fourths and the excited theme from the beginning of the first movement return in the coda. The close, with exultant horns and emphatic assertions of E major against the chromatic current, is joyously exuberant.

- *Program note by Michael Steinberg*




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FEBRUARY

25	7:30pm	Center for New Music Ensemble III 	Concert Hall
28	7:30pm	University Choir 	Concert Hall
28	7:30pm	Hawk Combo	Recital Hall
29	7:30pm	Composers' Workshop Concert III 	Concert Hall

MARCH

1	7:30pm	Faculty Chamber Recital: Tribute to Willie Ruff	Recital Hall
2	7:30pm	Best of The Sacred Concerts - Duke Ellington: Johnson County Landmark and Kantorei	Hancher Auditorium
3	1:30pm	Piano Sundays at the Old Capitol: Doreen Lee and UI Collaborative Pianists	Old Capitol Museum