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2013-03-30

String Quartet Recital, March 30, 2013

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Boston University College of Fine Arts
School of Music

Center for New Music presents:

String Quartet Recital

Marcio Candido, Violin

Natalie Calma, Violin

Minjung Chun, Viola

Stephen Marotto, Violoncello

Saturday, March 30, 2013, 8pm

Marshall Room

Founded in 1872, the **School of Music** combines the intimacy and intensity of conservatory training with a broadly based, traditional liberal arts education at the undergraduate level and intense coursework at the graduate level. The school offers degrees in performance, conducting, composition and theory, musicology, music education, collaborative piano, historical performance, as well as a certificate program in its Opera Institute, and artist and performance diplomas.

Founded in 1839, **Boston University** is an internationally recognized private research university with 32,557 students participating in undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. BU consists of 17 colleges and schools along with a number of multi-disciplinary centers and institutes which are central to the school's research and teaching mission. The Boston University **College of Fine Arts** was created in 1954 to bring together the School of Music, the School of Theatre, and the School of Visual Arts. The University's vision was to create a community of artists in a conservatory-style school offering professional training in the arts to both undergraduate and graduate students, complemented by a liberal arts curriculum for undergraduate students. Since those early days, education at the College of Fine Arts has begun on the BU campus and extended into the city of Boston, a rich center of cultural, artistic, and intellectual activity.

Boston University College of Fine Arts
School of Music

The 150th concert in the 2012–13 season

March 30, 2013
Marshall Room

Giacinto Scelsi
(1905-1988)

Quartet no. 3 (1963)

- I. with great tenderness (dolcissimo)
- II. the spirit calls: dualism, ambivalence,
conflict (drammatico)
- III. the soul awakens... (con trasparenza)
- IV. ...and falls once more into pathos but now
with a sense of imminent release (con
tristezza)
- V. liberation, catharsis

Intermission

Luigi Nono
(1924-1990)

Fragmente-Stille, An Diotima (1979/1980)

Program Notes

Giacinto Scelsi was an enigmatic and inscrutable figure throughout his lifetime. His music never gained notoriety during his life, partially due to his reclusiveness and refusal to self promote. Scelsi was deeply involved with eastern mysticism; he was devoted to the arts of meditation and yoga. He considered himself a medium through which music was transmitted rather than a composer. To write music he would get into a meditative trance, record his improvisations, and then later transcribe them. He would improvise on the piano, but later moved to the ondiola. This instrument, which was like an early synthesizer, was capable of producing continuous glissandi and microtonal harmonies. Scelsi preferred this instrument to use for string instruments, which could mimic these effects.

The third string quartet was written in 1963, and has many elements that point towards his fourth string quartet, which Scelsi considered his greatest work. The piece is in five movements, and Scelsi gives programmatic titles that give the work an inherent dramatic shape. The music is based on sustained textures that slowly shift and transform by means of timbre and pitch. Each movement has a pitch center and the way Scelsi moves in and out of phase of traditional harmonies, through the use of microtones gives the music its shape and character. The first movement is introductory in nature, followed by the second and third movements that provide the conflict and upheaval. The fourth movement is a return to the tonality and texture of the first movement, followed by the fifth movement, labeled "liberation, catharsis" which acts as a coda to the piece.

Luigi Nono's lone contribution to the string quartet genre, *Fragmente-Stille, An Diotima*, was composed in 1979-80 and commissioned for the 30th Beethovenfest in Bonn, Germany. After a three-year hiatus, Nono returned to composition with a radically different style. The *Diotima* quartet represents a departure point for Nono and ushered in his late style. The quartet consists of 52 numbered fragments, each accompanied by a line of poetry by Friedrich Hölderlin. The score bears the instructions that the fragments of text are "never to be spoken aloud during performance" and, "under no circumstances to be taken as programmatic performance indications." He also writes the players should "sing them inwardly, in their autonomy, in the autonomy of sounds striving for a delicate harmony of the inner life." In this work Nono also devised his own system of fermatas to deal with the many pauses that permeate the music.

This quartet is ground breaking in several ways. The flow of the music is constantly interrupted by fermatas, many phrases and gestures are halted just as they begin. As a result, the concept of linear musical time is destroyed, rather we perceive the events independent of metrical emphasis and agogic stresses. Another striking feature of this work is Nono's use of tone color. There are over 40 different combinations of bow techniques employed throughout the piece. Nono treats each fermata as its own entity; the timbral combinations are rarely repeated. Most of this music sits just above the threshold of audibility, dynamics often dip below pianissimo. Along with the quiescent chords that dominate this work, the use of musical quotations further enhance Nono's quest for a more introverted state. Throughout the work, Nono uses Verdi's "Scala Enigmatica" for a harmonic source material. This scale can produce 3 different tritones, which is a very prominent interval in the quartet. Several times in the piece all four players play vertical sonorities that contain 4 different tritones, and when combined they form a complete octatonic scale. Symmetrical harmonies form an important structural basis, and midway through the piece, Nono explores this further. At fragment 26 we find the marking "mit innigster Empfindung" (with innermost passion), which is a quote from Beethoven's op. 132 quartet. At this moment we find a sonority that is symmetrical at the microtonal level, which becomes a pivotal harmony for the rest of the piece. We also find a quote from Ockeghem's Malor Me Bat, which is possibly an homage to his teacher, Bruno Maderna who gave this melody to Nono to harmonize. This quartet is symbolic of the individual confronting his own anxieties and disillusion, reflecting about his own existence and turning to his most intimate feelings as solace. Nono forces us to listen to fragments and silence in an entirely new way.

-Stephen Marotto

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Room 281 in 808 Commonwealth Ave.

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