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2009-11-19

The Two Composers, November 19, 2009

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Boston University College of Fine Arts
School of Music
Presents

The Two Composers

Marc Berger, viola

Ketty Nez, piano

Thursday

November 19, 2009

7:30pm

Marshall Room

Founded in 1873, 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, 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.

In 1954, the **College of Fine Arts** was created to bring together the School of Music, along with two new entities: 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, founded in 1839, is an internationally recognized institution of higher education and research. With more than 30,000 students, it is the fourth largest independent university in the United States. BU contains 17 colleges and schools, along with a number of multi-disciplinary centers and institutes that are central to the school's research and teaching mission.

Boston University College of Fine Arts
School of Music

The Two Composers
The 51st event in the 2009–10 season

November 19, 2009
Marshall Room

Mark Berger
(b. 1977)

Catapult (2006)

Ketty Nez
(b. 1965)

transit out (2009, world premiere)

The Old Mother of Dzhaferbeg (2008)

Peter Child
(b. 1953)

Viola Sonata (2000)

Revel
Pause
Lilt

~Intermission~

Charles Koechlin
(1867–1950)

Viola Sonata op. 53 (1912-15, published 1923)

Adagio
Scherzo
Andante
Final

Marc Berger

Mark Berger, composer/violist/violinist, is very active in the Boston area and has performed with many of Boston's finest ensembles, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops, Emmanuel Music, Boston Modern Orchestra Project and Boston Lyric Opera. An avid chamber musician, he is a member of the Worcester Chamber Music Society, Music at Eden's Edge, a duo partnership "The Two Composers" with pianist/composer Ketty Nez, and has been a guest artist with the Lydian String Quartet. Mark has performed at summer festivals such as Kneisel Hall, June in Buffalo and Tanglewood, where he was a member of the New Fromm Players, new music ensemble-in-residence. As composer, Mark's works have been performed by the Worcester Chamber Music Society, New York New Music Ensemble, Dinosaur Annex, ALEA III, Xanthos Ensemble, Music at Eden's Edge, QX, the Lydian String Quartet, the Third Coast Percussion Quartet, Ensemble Permutaciones (Mexico) and the Hellenic Ensemble of Contemporary Music (Greece). Mark has been a prize winner in the ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composers Competition and the League of Composers/ISCM Competition and has received grants from NEFA and the Brannen Cooper Fund. Mark is currently on the music faculty at Clark University, U Mass Lowell and Middlesex Community College.

Ketty Nez

Composer/pianist Ketty Nez joined the composition and theory department at the Boston University School of Music in the fall of 2005, after teaching for two years at the University of Iowa. At BU, she directed the Time's Arrow new music ensemble, and her orchestral work *cirruilian ice* was premiered by Alea III, and *take time* by the BU Wind Ensemble. Ketty completed, in 2002-3, a residence several months at the École Nationale de Musique in Montbéliard, France, prior to the premiere of her chamber opera *An Opera in Devolution: Drama in 540 Seconds*, at the 2003 Seventh Festival A*Devantgarde in Munich. In 2001, Ketty spent several months as visiting composer/scholar at Stanford University's CCRMA studios, and in 1998 participated in the year-long computer music course at IRCAM. Before computer music studies, Ketty worked for two years with Louis Andriessen in Amsterdam, and co-founded the international contemporary music collective Concerten Tot and Met. Her music has been performed in festivals in Europe, North America, and Asia. Ketty holds a Ph.D. in composition from the University of California at Berkeley (1994), a master's degree in composition from the Eastman School of Music (1990), a bachelor's degree in piano performance from the Curtis Institute of Music (1983), and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Bryn Mawr College (1987). Current projects include a piano concerto for the Boston University Wind Ensemble; *Listen to a Wonder Never Heard Before!*, an Albany Records release in the spring of recent chamber works with Ketty as pianist; and collaborative performances by "The Two Composers" duo with composer/violist Mark Berger, and her duo with violinist Katie Wolfe.

Peter Child

Peter Child is Professor of Music and a MacVicar Faculty Fellow at MIT. He was born in England in 1953 and has lived in the United States since enrolling at Reed College through a junior-year exchange program. Child's composition teachers include William Albright, Bernard Barrell, Arthur Berger, Jacob Druckman and Seymour Shifrin, and he received his Ph.D. in musical composition from Brandeis University in 1981. Child was American Symphony Orchestra League-Meet the Composer "Music Alive" composer in residence with the Albany Symphony Orchestra in 2005-08 and is presently composer in residence with the New England Philharmonic. Child's music has earned awards and commissions from Music of Changes, the Fromm Foundation, the Harvard Musical Association, Tanglewood, WGBH Radio, East and West Artists, the New England Conservatory, the League/ISCM, and the MIT Council for the Arts, as well as two Composition Fellowships from the Massachusetts Artists Foundation. He has also been awarded fellowships by the Watson Foundation, the MacDowell Colony and the Composers' Conference, and four 'New Works' commissions from the Massachusetts Council for the Arts and Humanities. Some of his music has been recorded for the New World, Albany, CRI, Neuma, Centaur and Rivoalto labels. He is the recipient of the 2004 Levitan Prize in the Humanities at MIT for his work on musical analysis. Child has written for orchestra, chorus, voice, computer synthesis, and various chamber groups. His music has been prominently featured on the Lontano Festival of American Music in London (2006, 2008) and performed by United Berlin (Germany), Ensemble Lontano and the BBC Singers (UK), Interensemble (Italy), Speak Percussion (Australia), the National Symphony Orchestras of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and by new music ensembles throughout the US.

Program Notes

Catapult was commissioned by Middlesex Community College in 2006 and represents the first commissioned piece that I wrote for myself to perform. For several years I had felt the need to divorce the composer from the performer within myself in order to develop a musical language that was uninhibited by my own habits and technique. *Catapult* represents my first attempts at re-opening that door. The work consists of two types of opposing music—the first utilizing a driving pulse and the second utilizing a layering of 3 unrelated tempi to destroy any sense of pulse. The sections of firmly grounded rhythm are contrasted by sections which seem to float independent of any common pulse, yet these two opposing gestures are unified throughout by a consistent harmony—a single 6-note chord structure that defines the entire harmonic content of the work. One additional anecdote that may be amusing—the piece was composed mostly during the hours of 10pm—midnight. During this timeframe, a downstairs neighbor would consistently let her little dog out just below my window, and then consequently scold the little animal by shouting, "Bridget! No!" I hadn't realized until well into the composition that the rhythm of these interjections had become the primary motive of the piece! *Catapult* was premiered at Middlesex Community

College with the composer performing along with pianist Carmen Rodriguez-Peralta.

—Mark Berger

transit out is a transcription for violist Mark Berger, of *in transit*, written the summer of 2009 for the violin/piano duo of Wolfgang David and David Gompfer. This work reflects several levels of musical and textual meaning. Having read the writings and listened to the field recordings of Béla Bartók's ethnomusicological research on the music of various cultures of East Europe and Asia Minor, I was drawn not only to the sheer sonic qualities of the songs themselves—melos, rhythm, timbre—but also by the fact that every song is a window into an ongoing story. Most of the melodic material is loosely based on the opening stanza of Bartók's annotations of a Turkish folksong from Asia Minor, voicing the essence of desire: "how should I praise such a beauty: she mingled her hair with golden twine." In a brusque and rhythmic manner, and eventually dominating the musical discourse, are quotations of my own setting of Bosnian folksong, *The Old Mother of Dzhaferbeg* (from my work for piano and violin or viola, *Postcards from the 1930's*). The text of this second song, also inspired by Bartók's annotations, recounts the lurid tale of a jealous old mother wrongly accusing her beautiful daughter-in-law of an affair, and the resulting murder of the innocent woman by the enraged husband. My setting of *Old Mother* features the textures of the kemence fiddle accompaniment (in the violin or viola part) in addition to the vocal line. In *transit out*, the piano mimics the kemence, and the (Western) viola the wailing voice.

—Ketty Nez

7:30pm on Monday, December 7th 2009

Boston University Chamber Orchestra

Zachary Bruno, Richard Cornell,
and Geneviève Leclair, conductors

Samuel Barber *Adagio for Strings*
Charles Ives *Central Park in the Dark*
Giacinto Scelsi *Quattro pezzi (su una nota sola)*
Igor Stravinsky *Apollon musagète*

Admission is free and open to the public
Concert Hall, 855 Commonwealth Ave.
Boston, MA

My **Viola Sonata** was commissioned by the Harvard Musical Association for my MIT colleague Marcus Thompson and pianist Judith Gordon, who premiered the piece in February, 2000. The opening flourish of the first movement, *Revel*, is *cl* for the remainder of the movement: It establishes the movement's exhilarated tone and its harmonic orientation, and it presents as chords a sequence of notes that are developed in linear, motivic ways later on. The middle movement, *Pause*, is reflective and inward in feeling. An opening unaccompanied melody draws on the soulful, cantabile essence of the viola. This melody returns twice, transformed but easily recognizable and interspersed with episodes oriented more toward the piano. The final movement, *Lilt*, takes its name from the brisk, rhythmic character of the music, with its constant changes of meter and orientation toward irregular 5 and 7 beat patterns. The mood here returns to the joyful mood of the opening. I began to work on this sonata while I was on sabbatical leave in England, the first time I had lived in Britain since I left at age 20. This was an exhilarating experience, and the prevailing mood of the Sonata is I think in part attributable to that.

—Peter Child

7:30pm on Tuesday, December 8th 2009

Boston University Symphony Orchestra

David Hoose and Tiffany Chang, conductors

Edwin Barker, bass

Giuseppe Verdi: Overture to *I Vespri Siciliani*

John Harbison: Concerto for Bass Viol and Orchestra

(Boston premiere)

Robert Schumann: Symphony No. 2 in C, op. 61

Admission is free and open to the public

Tsai Performance Center, 685 Commonwealth Ave.

Boston, MA

Known to the music enthusiast of today for having orchestrated, at Debussy's request, his ballet *Khamma* in 1912-13, Parisian composer Charles Koechlin's musical thinking shows many similarities, including a fascination with sonata form, polytonality, flexible references to octatonic and whole tone collections, ear for enticing orchestral timbres, and a melos reminiscent of chant. Extremely prolific, his works numbered to op. 226, in all genres, including solo, chamber, orchestral, and even several film scores. He achieved a larger reputation as theorist and teacher (which professions he resorted to for financial reasons), and sadly, only by the end of his life did compositions begin to gain deserved recognition. Like Debussy, Koechlin studied with Gabriel Fauré at the Paris Conservatoire. Along with classmates Maurice Ravel and Florent Schmitt, he established in 1909 the *Société Musicale Indépendante*, for the purposes of promoting new music. Always curious and supportive of contemporary musical developments of younger composers, he became president of the French section of the International Society for Contemporary Music.

The **Viola Sonata** ends a period of early maturity, during which Koechlin was developing a highly unique, eclectic style which included a focus on counterpoint and modality (from intensive studies of J.S. Bach) and polytonality. First of four movements, the opening *Adagio* asks for a scordatura retuning of viola's lowest string downwards. The piano idiom here, a low-register flowing accompaniment featuring open fifths and fourths, and bell-like sonorities, recalls Debussy's earlier piano prelude *La Cathédrale Engloutie* (1910); interestingly enough, both works are in C major. A rollicking, relentless *Scherzo*, in moto-perpetuo style, features the occasional the play of duple against pervasive triple beat subdivisions. Long stretches of repetitive, diatonic triadic arpeggiation, to this listener, foreshadow the psychedelic trance-like textures of works minimalist composer Philip Glass—indeed, by nature Koechlin was uncompromising and unworldly, an escapist who sought the mysteries of the universe, nature, the night sky, dreams, fantasy, and classical mythology. Rich polytonal chords of the *Andante* harmonize the chant-like melodic lines, as first 'sung' by the viola. Dramatic sweeps mark the *Final*, in ever larger swelling climaxes alternating, and occasionally combining, sonorities from the opening bell-like motive outlined by fifth and octave leaps, with rapid roiling passagework which accompanies scalar melodic lines.

—Ketty Nez

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UPCOMING EVENTS AND PERFORMANCES

Saturday, November 21, 7:30pm

Xanthos Ensemble
Concert Hall

Sunday, November 22, 7:30pm

Boston University Baroque Orchestra
Martin Pearlman, conductor
Concert Hall

Monday, November 23, 7:30pm

Faculty Recital Series
Simon Estes, bass-baritone
Tsai Performance Center

Thursday, December 3, 7:30pm

World Music Concert
Room 167

December 5, 6, 7:30pm

Winter Opera Program
Boston University Opera Institute,
Opera Theatre and Opera Workshop
Concert Hall

Monday, December 7, 7:30pm

Boston University Chamber Orchestra
Zachary Bruno, Richard Cornell,
and Geneviève Leclair, conductors
Concert Hall

Tuesday, December 8, 7:30pm

Boston University Symphony Orchestra
David Hoose and Tiffany Chang, conductors
Edwin Barker, double bass
Tsai Performance Center

Friday, December 11, 7:30pm

Student Composer's Concert
Concert Hall

Saturday, December 12

Electronic Music Concert
Joshua Fineberg, director
Marshall Room

For more information on our events, please contact our office at (617) 353-8790.

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