

uclaFLUX Fall 2020 RECITAL

December 11, 2020, 5pm

Program Notes

Anton Webern (1883 - 1945)
Drei Kleine Stücke, Op. 11 (1914, pub. 1924)

- I. Mäßige
- II. Sehr bewegt
- III. Äußerst ruhig

Euan Shields, cello
Brandon Zhou, piano

Anton Webern's *Drei Kleine Stücke* was composed in 1914, only two years after his teacher Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, which Pierre Boulez called "the solar plexus of modern music." The influence of Webern's mentor is undeniable, and it's no coincidence that both pieces open with an enigmatic chord featuring a high G-sharp. But Webern infiltrates Schoenberg's post-tonal style with so much of his own character.

The most poignant characteristic of Webern's music, namely his extremely condensed musical language, results in the three movements of *Drei Kleine Stücke* taking place within a space of 9, 13 and 10 bars, respectively. The piece is over after just two-and-a-half minutes. At a time when recordings weren't readily available and audiences were accustomed to works by Richard Wagner lasting multiple days, it is understandable that Webern was massively unappreciated. He was almost completely unknown toward the end of his life, before he was accidentally and tragically shot by an American soldier during WWII.

If Gustav Mahler tried to encapsulate the universe in his symphonies, Webern attempted to do the same, but in each note and each phrase. He places a unique dynamic and articulation marking on every note, making the musical expression extremely dense. The slow outer movements of *Drei Kleine Stücke*, for example, lie on the verge of inaudibility, with dynamic marks ranging from *piano* to *pianississimo*, while the fast middle movement features furious *fortissimos*. Webern was a pantheist and worshipped nature, and his faith permeates his music by inviting the listener to perceive sound in a deeper, more real, and spiritual way.

The first movement is reminiscent of a slowed-down, melancholic waltz. However, the disjointed nature of the music, largely based on two-note figures traded between the cello and piano, obscures the lilting flow of a dance. Though the movement is almost all quiet, except for one brief loud moment, the atmosphere is ominous and brooding. The abundance of rests paints a background of eerie silence, in which the two-note figures and isolated chords are like ghostly murmurs.

In contrast to the outer movements, the second movement is fiery and agitated. The tempo marking "Sehr bewegt" is a difficult German word to translate, roughly equating to "very emotional", "very moved", or "very stirred" in English. The gestures are not only short and fragmentary, but also leapy

and angular, and filled with violent dynamic shifts. Additionally, the cello and piano comment on and interrupt each other's gestures with increasing rapidity, giving this movement a crazed, almost deranged character.

After the brief 20-second outburst of the second movement, a complete reversal of character occurs and the music becomes static in the third movement. "Äußerst ruhig" translates as "extremely calm" in English. There are very few notes and the music moves so slowly that it feels as if time has stopped. The work ends with three enigmatic harmonics from the cello, like three last whispers that vanish into the vastness of the universe.

-Euan Shields, Brandon Zhou

Cross Hatch, 1982

Toru Takemitsu, 1930-1996

Jonathan Schlitt, marimba

Nick Carlozzi, keyboard

Cross Hatch, by Toru Takemitsu, is a duet for marimba and vibraphone that premiered in Japan in 1982. This piece was commissioned and dedicated to one of Takemitsu's closest friends, Hiroyuki Iwaki, who performed the debut of the piece with Summer Yoshiwara on a percussion recital. This short piece reveals a happy, carefree friendship between Takemitsu and Iwaki. The two parts dance and interact with each other, yet support what the other is saying. Takemitsu displays the quality of a relationship with his light-hearted, yet sometimes dissonant piece for two keyboard instruments.

Cross Hatch is a microcosm of many 20th-century compositional styles and techniques. The opening melody exhibits a chromaticism and use of augmented triads that was common in the 20th century. Dissonant hexachords in the accompaniment further add to the tonal complexity that is typical of this time period. The brief opening melody transforms into a scurrying, dissonant 16th-note figure that outlines triads and 7th-chords through ascending and descending 4ths. Then, in a moment of simple brilliance, this passage seamlessly transitions into Reich-like minimalism that was popular in the latter half of the century. A simple 6-note figure, shared in unison between the two instruments, is repeated with shifting accents. The hypnosis of the brief minimalist section is suddenly broken by the return of the opening material which closes this short and charming piece.

Toru Takemitsu was a self-taught Japanese composer who was known for his use of timbral manipulation, as well as combining elements of eastern and western practices in his music. As a young composer, Takemitsu avoided influence from traditional Japanese music because of the bitterness he felt towards his homeland. In 1944, Takemitsu's education was cut short by the recruitment of the Japanese military, which naturally caused Takemitsu to rebel and seek influence from other parts of the world. He first became fond of Western classical music in his first year in the military, when he and his colleagues would indulge themselves in secret listening gatherings. The popular French song "Parlez-moi d'amour" sparked his interest and led him to the discovery of other Western classical composers. In the 1960s Takemitsu became intrigued by the music of John Cage because of Cage's use of silence and his manipulation of timbres within moments of sound. Although John Cage was born and raised in Los Angeles, much of his musical influence stems from Eastern culture and

tradition, specifically in southeast Asian countries. Upon this discovery, Takemitsu came to recognize the importance and value in his own traditions, letting go of bitter feelings he had previously harbored towards his own people.

-Jonathan Schlitt and Nick Carlozzi

Gérard Grisey (6/17/1946 - 11/11/1998)

Accords perdus – Cinq Miniatures

I. Mouvement

Composed: 1987, premiered 1988

Rachel Boehl, horn I

Rachel Boehl, horn II

Written in celebration of Elliott Carter's eightieth birthday, *Accords perdus* was premiered by André Cazalet and Hervé Joulin. The horn duet is rooted in the spectral approach, and relies heavily on the use of the horn's natural overtone series to produce audible beats when two microtones collide. Rarely performed, there is only one commercially produced recording, made in 2006 by Andrew Joy and Christine Chapman. The work comprises five movements which can be translated as: "Movement," "Lost Chord," "Wrong Movement," "Horn and Horn," and "Crash."

Gérard Grisey was born in 1946 in Belfort, France. Although he died tragically at age fifty-two, his contribution to 20th-century contemporary music was extensive, and he is considered one of the founders of the Spectralist movement. He studied with many of Europe's leading avant-garde specialists, including Stockhausen, Xenakis and Messiaen, along with Ligeti and Dutilleux. He taught at UC Berkeley from 1982 to 1985, until taking a position at the Conservatoire de Paris until his death in 1998.

The first movement of *Accords perdus*, titled "Movement," is an exercise in growth. Starting from near silence, the horns hold long, sustained microtones, adjusted according to Grisey's specific notation along the horn's natural harmonic series. As the movement progresses, the horns grow in speed and volume until reaching a bombastic argument at triple-fortissimo. From the climax, the movement rapidly unravels, falling in volume and pitch until both horns fade into nothing, an octave below the highest pitches played.

Grisey views this movement as the breathing of a living microorganism. Conventional structural qualities such as rhythm appear to the listener as unimportant or simplified, however this is very much not the case. Strict time must be kept between the performers, otherwise the perceived beats created by clashing notes will be altered. The audible clashing two microtones create when played simultaneously can be heard as pulsating beats, which lends itself to a unique texture to the sound that varies in speed depending on how close together the two frequencies are. The heart of this piece is not exclusively found in the notes on the page, but rather in the ear of the listener. By following a set of guidelines that must be strictly adhered, the horn players create a completely different sound world.

Grisey places this piece in the horn's natural overtone series, meaning both musicians are playing with "just" intonation, not equal temperament. He writes in the performance notes that he "restores the horn to its origins," with valves being used only to change the tubing length of the instrument, not to facilitate conventional note changes. This creates a unique set of challenges to the performer, as the overwhelming majority of standard and contemporary horn repertoire has moved

away from utilizing the “natural horn” technique of overtone use, favoring the relatively modern invention of the valve as a means to facilitate accuracy and expand the concept of virtuosity in the instrument. Performers must realize these notes through a combination of interval calculation and muscle memory, often re-learning the location of a note in their embouchure. In the words of Grisey, “the horn must breathe and the lips must adapt.” When performed accurately, the two voices meld into “a single idealized instrument,” growing and shifting as one.

-Rachel Boehl

Low Agenda, 2007
Gernot Wolfgang (b. 1957)

Evelyn Coffey, bassoon
Joel Bickel, bass

Gernot Wolfgang (b. 1957) is a GRAMMY® nominated, Austrian composer based in Los Angeles whose compositions have garnered the attention of Dave Brubeck, the Chamber Music Palisades, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. His 2007 composition *Low Agenda* puts two largely supporting instruments, the bassoon and double bass in the spotlight. It is one of a four-part series of pieces featuring the bassoon with the most common orchestral string instruments (i.e. the violin, viola, cello, and bass). Written in 2007, this 4-minute piece honors the great jazz saxophonist Michael Brecker and is dedicated to the composer’s wife, bassoonist Judith Farmer, and bassist Nico Abondolo. Heavily influenced by post-bop jazz fusion, the work begins with a pizzicato bass groove behind a soaring bassoon melody. Midway through the development, the roles of the instruments switch with bassoon taking a more syncopated accompaniment role while the bass glides in its upper register. With plenty of meter changes, rhythmic displacement, and use of extended techniques, listeners may never again wish to hear the bassoon and bass forgotten in the background of a symphony ever again!

This piece could very well be considered a fine solo piece for both instruments; a minute into the piece one can hear a exuberant bassoon melody over sparkling bass harmonics until the dance switches to a longing, forlorn bass solo, rising on top of a stumbling and highly rhythmic bassoon bass line.

As a skilled jazz guitarist for the The QuARTet Austrian jazz ensemble, Wolfgang writes melody and accompaniment figures that are highly syncopated and offbeat, and are heavily inspired by jazz rhythms. Additionally, audience members can find great pleasure in trying to follow the work’s 7/4 time signature and various meter changes.

The instruments of the bassoon and double bass are often reserved to fulfill supporting parts in larger orchestration. Here, they are allowed to showcase timbres and extended techniques not often heard in symphonies, such as upright bass slapping and bassoon growling. During the latter part of the arrangement, the audience may find themselves fighting the urge to clap along to the slap bass line!

-Evelyn Coffey and Joel Bickel

György Kurtág (b. 1926)

14 Fragmente aus Rückblick (1993)

- I. Alcohol
- II. In memoriam F.M. Dostojewski

Chris Chevet, trumpet

Nico Hernandez, double bass

Brandon Zhou, piano

Nick Carlozzi, piano

György Kurtág, born in 1926, is a Hungarian pianist and composer who received his formal training at the Budapest Academy of Music and in Paris, where he studied with famed 20th-century composers Olivier Messiaen and Darius Milhaud.

Kurtág's compositions are often episodic, maintaining a sense of structure but obscuring a sense of continuity. His stop-and-go style of writing is not entirely problematic, however, for one might consider this to be a reflection of his own life. Kurtág endured his own periods of depression in the late 1950s, and these understandably affected his work. His pre- and post- depression lives form two eras on his compositional timeline in addition to those created by later periods of sudden travel as he received recognition around Europe for his work. Another major event that directly affected the body of his music was the Cold War. Universal Edition, one of two publishing companies responsible for hiring his works, has noted on their webpage that, "when the world was divided into two on either side of the Iron Curtain, [Kurtág] needed another publisher as well to represent him in the west." As a result, his compositions were distanced from each other in a way that closely resembles the aural spaces between his musical phrases which commonly pervade his soundworld.

The *14 Fragmente aus Rückblick* is a suite consisting of selections from Kurtág's larger work *Rückblick* (1993). The *Fragmente* features movements from the second section of the larger work, "Drei Pilinszky-Lieder" ("Three Pilinszky-songs"), and the eighth section of the larger work, "Elf Fragmente aus: 'Die Sprüche des Péter Bornemisza'" ("Eleven fragments from: 'The Sayings of Péter Bornemisza'"). Clocking in at around twenty-one minutes, the *Fragmente* is a condensed summary of the larger work, which lasts around seventy minutes.

The German word "rückblick" translated into English means "retrospective" or "review". In *Rückblick*, Kurtág develops and re-composes previously-composed pieces, bookmarking them with a freshly-composed "Invocatio" and "Kyrie." Though not explicitly stated by the composer, it seems likely that Kurtág intended this piece to be both a nostalgic reflection on his life's work and an affirmation of his continued compositional output.

"Alcohol" and "In memoriam F.M. Dostojewski," the first two of the "Three Pilinszky-songs", are re-orchestrated versions of two songs of the same title in Kurtág's early piece for voice and chamber ensemble *Four Songs to Poems by János Pilinszky*, Op. 11. The lines of the bass vocalist are given to the trumpet and double bass in *Fragmente*, often accompanied by interesting extended technique effects, especially in "Alcohol." Similar re-orchestration is done in the other section of *Rückblick* included in the *Fragmente*, "11 Fragments from 'The Sayings of Péter Bornemisza'". The foundational musical material for these eleven movements is taken from Kurtág's song cycle for soprano and piano *The Sayings of Péter Bornemisza*, based on sermon texts by 16th-century Hungarian Lutheran bishop Péter Bornemisza.

Other re-composed pieces that are included in *Rückblick* but not *Fragmente* include the piano works *8 Klavierstücke, Op. 31*, and *Játékok*.

The first movement portrays sounds characteristic of an alcoholic stupor. Throughout nearly the entire movement, the double bass and trumpet sustain a unison D3 (well into the pedal range of the trumpet). This unique timbral combination is supplemented with a wide range of unique articulations in the double bass such as “very pressed” notes and “scratched sound” notes, defined vowel shape changes for the trumpet, and supporting attacks from the piano. It is not until the final measures of the movement that the trumpet and bass resolve downward to a unison C-sharp and finally C-natural to end the movement. The piano part complements the sustained quality in the trumpet and bass with interjections often utilizing dyads to provide harmonic context. While there is obviously no conventional harmonic progression, this is unsurprising considering what seems to be the intentional prolonged-inebriated aesthetic.

The stillness at the end of the first movement is met with a sudden and dissonant attack at the opening of the second movement. Here, the trumpet and keyboards sustain a buzzing, dissonant trichord that consists only of half-steps. The ominous call is answered by a slowly sinking chromatic bassline in the double bass and keyboards. This simple and spacious phrase structure (treble sustains answered by sharp attacks in the bass) is continuous throughout the movement--painting a dark scene clouded with suspense and intrigue. With each new trumpet call the number of bass attacks increase until a subtle climax is reached. After this moment of heightened intensity, the movement closes with a series of softer and more consonant sustains in all instruments.

-Chris Chevet, Nico Hernandez, Brandon Zhou, Nick Carlozzi

Harrison Birtwistle, b. 1934

Duet 3 (2010)

Thacher Schreiber, English horn

Evelyn Coffey, bassoon

Sir Harrison Birtwistle is an esteemed British composer whose career thus far spans more than half a century, during which he has made numerous contributions to 20th- and-21st century music, including operas, chamber music, orchestral literature, and solo works. Birtwistle began his formal music education in 1952 at the Royal Manchester College of Music on a clarinet scholarship. Then, from 1975 through 1983, he served as the musical director of the Royal National Theatre in London, and would go on to serve as Professor of Composition at King's College London from 1994 to 2001. His music is a unique combination of stark modernism and lush expressionism.

Premiered in 2010, *Duet 3*'s most striking characteristic is its lack of precise vertical alignment; rather than strict meter governed by tempo and barlines (which are largely absent from the score), the two voices proceed along independently. Each fragment is separated by long rests, for which Birtwistle instructs performers to vary the duration. Thus, players are encouraged to welcome the singularity and variability of each performance.

Third in a collection of six duets for various instruments, *Duet 3* is an intriguing exploration of the melodic capabilities of the English horn and bassoon. Birtwistle masterfully compliments these instruments' idiosyncratic timbres and unique ranges, notably writing in both extremes of the bassoon's range. For both instruments, there are a number of short melodic motives and fragments from which Birtwistle develops the melodic lines, which are simultaneously mysterious and conversational. Pockmarked with disjunct entrances and endings, this duet relies heavily on clearly expressed phrases to shape the character and ideas of the piece. The frequent halts in the music are sure to command the intrigue of listeners, and guarantee a unique listening with every performance.

-Evelyn Coffey and Thacher Schreiber

Due Pezzi Perpetua, 2013
Brian Kehlenbach (b. 1958)

Spencer Hart, Tuba I
Hannah Stefureak, Tuba II
Andrew Ordonez, Tuba III

Brian Kehlenbach is an accomplished American pianist and composer with a background as a jazz performer and classical recitalist. Having initially earned a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree from the University of Connecticut, Kehlenbach would pursue graduate studies in music earning a Master of Music (MM) from the same institution and complete a Doctorate of Musical Arts (DMA) from the University of Southern California, where he was named as an outstanding graduate in music theory and composition. Kehlenbach currently serves as a professor in the Music department at Santa Ana College.

Due Pezzi Perpetua ("Two Perpetual Pieces") comprises two movements entitled *Prelude* and *Canzona*. Each movement is unified by a perpetual motive: a held E-flat pedal point in the first movement, and constant rhythmic motion in the second. The instrumentation of the ensemble provided the composer with the opportunity to create the illusion of a perpetually held note in the first movement by trading the note amongst the three tuba parts; the second movement trades continuous contrapuntal lines, becoming increasingly more chaotic as the movement develops until abrupt breaks provide moments of release.

Due Pezzi Perpetua was commissioned from Kehlenbach in 2013 by a consortium of tuba players from around the world organized by Dr. David Holben of California State University, Fullerton. Containing renowned tuba players such as Deanna Swoboda (Arizona State University, former president of the International Tuba and Euphonium Association), Micky Wroblewski (Beijing Symphony Orchestra), and David J. Saltzman (Bowling Green State University), *Due Pezzi Perpetua* represents the culmination of the consortium's efforts to expand the repertoire of chamber music available to ensembles made exclusively of tubas rather than the typical combinations of tuba and euphonium.

-Andrew Ordonez, Hannah Stefureak, Spencer Hart

William Kraft (b. 1923)

Encounters III: Duel for Trumpet and Percussion (1973)

1. Strategy

2. Truce of God

Chris Chervet, trumpet

Jonathan Schlitt, percussion

William Kraft (b. 1923) is an American composer, educator, and performer who has made enormous contributions to the world of music over the past eighty years. Kraft started his career in New York City, where he attended Columbia University for his Bachelors and Masters degrees. He was fortunate to study with a variety of seminal musicians: composition with Jack Beeson and Henry Cowell, orchestration from Henry Brant, percussion with Morris Goldenberg and Saul Goodman, as well as conducting from Rudolph Thomas and Fritz Zweig. While Kraft was in New York he enjoyed working as a freelance musician, playing in jazz clubs, the Metropolitan Opera, and other “gigs”. Being the extremely versatile musician that he was, this worked out very well for Kraft. He eventually won a position in the Dallas Symphony, then a few years later in the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Once Kraft moved to Los Angeles, he spent 25 years playing in the Philharmonic, 8 years as a section percussionist, and the remaining 17 years as principal timpanist. Kraft also served as the assistant conductor under Zubin Mehta for a few years, as well as the Composer-in-Residence for the orchestra. During this time, Kraft founded and directed the Philharmonic’s New Music Group, which is still active today.

Encounters III (1973) is written for trumpet and percussion, dedicated to Thomas M. Stevens and Mitchell T. Peters. Characteristic of Kraft’s style, this piece, subtitled “Duel for Trumpet and Percussion,” requires a sprawling percussion set up, and a multitude of mutes and horns for the trumpet part. The first movement initiates contact between the performers. More of a battle sequence than a dialogue, the back and forth nature of the movement features tense silences, leaping gestures, and improvised textures. The rare unity of the two performers brings out a dense texture of percussion instruments and lively trumpet attacks. This movement embraces the full range of the instruments, along with extended techniques including the use of quarter tones, and roll with one mallet on top and one underneath, among others.

Movement two releases the rigidity of the listener and steps back to a more meditative texture. The sound of a distant gong, vibraphone, and song bells is drawn out through the movement. The lyrical trumpet line simply hovers above the textures created by the various percussion instruments, emerging from its restrained stance only toward the very end of the piece for a few quick flourishes, only to return to the sustained character to finish the movement. The atmospheric wandering of this movement provides a clear contrast to the intense energy of the first.

-Chris Chervet and Jonathan Schlitt