Rockefeller Memorial Chapel

05.13.16 FRI | 7:30 PM

Tomorrow's Music Today I

Cliff Colnot, conductor
eighth blackbird
The Decani, vocal ensemble
Roberta Freier, violin
Minghuan Xu, violin
Rose Armbrust, viola
Joshua Zajac, cello
Andrew Nogal, oboe
Karl Rzasa, bassoon
Julia Filson, horn
Christian Anderson, trumpet

JOUNGBUM LEE

Mu
eighth blackbird

PIERCE GRADONE

In Memory's Twilight – in memoriam Angela Strange
eighth blackbird

JACK HUGHES

Nox
eighth blackbird

Intermission

KATHERINE PUKINSKIS

And it was Quiet

Part I – Part I Transition – Threnody I
Part II – Threnody II
Part III – Threnody III
Part IV

Cliff Colnot, conductor eighth blackbird The Decani, vocal ensemble Roberta Freier, violin; Minghuan Xu, violin Rose Armbrust, viola; Joshua Zajac, cello Andrew Nogal, oboe; Karl Rzasa, bassoon Julia Filson, horn; Christian Anderson, trumpet
JOUBGUM LEE  b. 1986, Munich, Germany

Mu (2016)

Joungbum Lee is a composer of chamber, electronic, and orchestral music. He completed a Bachelor Degree in Composition from Eastman School of Music and Masters degree at Rice University.

Joungbum’s music has been commissioned nationally and internationally by various groups and individuals such as the Rochester chamber music society, Seoul Art Festival/Dimension, Musiqa modern ensemble, Mivos Quartet and SoundSCAPE.

He also received awards and recognitions such as 1st prize in Journal of Music composition competition 2004, Belle S. Gitelman Award, Bernard Rogers Prize (2008) at the Eastman School of Music (2009), 1st prize in Rochester Chamber Music composition competition 2009, New York State regional winner of the annual SCI/ASCAP Composers Competition (2009), 23rd IBLA Grand Prize 2014 and Sejong International composition competition 2014 honorary mention.

Joungbum has also actively premiered his compositions at numerous music festivals such as Bowdoin International Music Festival (2007), Atlantic Music Festival (2010). Recent and upcoming projects include Quince Contemporary Vocal Ensemble and Civic Orchestra of Chicago/ Composers project 2016. Joungbum is currently pursuing a PhD in composition at the University of Chicago, studying with Anthony Cheung.

The composer provided the following program note:

Mu or Mudang (shamans) are mostly female in Korea. All Mudang go through Sinbyong, an illness which is generally interpreted as a sign of a shamanic calling. Sinbyong can only be cured through naerim-gut, a ritual of acceptance of and full communion with the spirit. The cured, a hereditary shaman establishes a “spirit mother” - “spirit daughter” relationship. During naerim-gut, the hereditary shaman experiences her first shamank trance.

Through making exotic sounds and performance, a shaman gradually enters to a different perception of time where she could summon spirits. They only use sound as a bridge to the state of shamanic trance which initially became the inspiration of the composition. This piece somehow tries to reenact the process of the ritual. The structural point of the piece comes from the four different stages of the ritual - setting up the sound-space of the ritual, preparation, calling and sending back spirits and healing.

PIERCE GRADONE  b. 1986, Pensacola, Florida

In Memory’s Twilight – in memoriam Angela Strange (2016)

Duration: approximately 13 minutes

Pierce Gradone’s music reflects the strange brew of musical cultures that made up his adolescence, where an omnivorous hunger for music-making led him to playing bluegrass in the hills of Appalachia, sprinting the marathon of blinding-fast pentecostal shout music, and learning the varied languages of jazz. Drawing inspiration from visual art, literary theory, popular culture, and Western music history, his work seeks to situate notions of groove, glitch, and virtuosity within the practices of contemporary music. Gradone’s music has been performed by the Pacifica Quartet, Quince Ensemble, Ensemble Dal Niente, Line Upon Line Percussion, Concert Black, and others. He is currently a Ph.D. student and Graduate Fellow in the Arts, Science & Culture Initiative at the University of Chicago. Gradone was recently awarded a commission from the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University for a new work for Ensemble Dal Niente and the Ear Taxi Festival in Chicago.

The composer provided the following program note:

This work is dedicated to the memory of my aunt, Angela Strange, who passed away in the summer of 2014. My own words can’t adequately describe the feelings that accompany the sudden absence of one so deeply loved, so I will turn to those of John Donne, from his An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary, which inspired this work’s title:

The world, be gone, yet in this last long night, Her ghost doth walk; that is, a glimmering light, A faint weak love of virtue and of good Reflects from her, on them which understood Her worth; and though she have shut in all day, The twilight of her memory doth stay;

(Lines 70-75)

JACK HUGHES  b. 1992, Reston, Virginia

Nox (2016)

Duration: approximately 9 minutes

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Composer Jack Hughes is currently in the second year of his PhD at the University of Chicago, where his principal teachers have been Marta Ptaszyn’ska and Shulamit Ran. He earned a Bachelor of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music in 2014 as a double major in theory and composition, studying in the studio of Keith Fitch. While in Cleveland, Jack served as the Composer Fellow of the Canton Symphony Orchestra for the 2013-2014 season. For the past two summers he has attended the Stage de Création at the Orford Arts Centre in Quebec, where he studied with Jean Lesage of McGill University. A native of Reston, Virginia, he plays the trumpet, piano, violin, and viola.

The composer provided the following program note:

Nox — the word for ‘night’ in Latin — is an exploration of the relationship between musical form and dreams. Musical ideas in the work are in a constant state of transformation as the piece propels itself forward in a manner similar to what Schoenberg referred to as Developing Variation. I wanted to create a piece in which musical parameters are constantly in flux and where every idea is perpetually in a state of moving either into or out of focus. When we dream, images, settings and events seem to blend into one another so smoothly that it is only upon awakening that we realize that anything in the dream changed at all. It was this combination of spontaneity and flow that I attempted to capture in Nox.

KATHERINE PUKNKISKIS b. 1986, Storrs, Connecticut

And it was Quiet (2016)

Duration: approximately 39 minutes

Katherine Pukinskis is a PhD candidate in music composition at the University of Chicago, under the advisement of Augusta Read Thomas. Her scholarly research on Latvian choral music and nationalism is advised by Philip V. Bohlman. She has had works premiered by eighth blackbird, Quince Contemporary Vocal Ensemble, Akron Symphony Chorus, and the Spektral Quartet, as well as by members of Ensemble Dal Niente and the Chicago Symphony Chorus. Ms. Pukinskis has been commissioned to write works for the Rockefeller Chapel in Chicago, the Junior Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh, and the Living Room Chamber Music Project.

The spark to compose comes from her strong connection to nature, the human experience, and heritage; the resonances of place drive her understanding of the evolution of sound over a composition. At the foundational level, she always asks, “what does it feel like to play, to sing, to hear this piece?” kpuinskis.com

The composer provided the following program note:

Pairing the 13th century Stabat Mater text with Libby Chaney’s 21st-century poem “To Hold You” reflects the constancy of grief on the timeline of humanity. Many issues divide us geographically, socioeconomically, or ideologically; however, grief is a universal human experience. While the texts I have chosen for this piece focus on a parent’s loss of a child, I have come to understand in writing this work that any time a life is lost before we are ready, is a disruption of the cycle we expect; “for the old to die and be replaced by the young.” The words set in this composition weave a tapestry of the irrational and inconsistent experience of grief, paired with sounds and gestures that ask musicians to traverse the expanse between unity and disrepair.

“And it was Quiet” explores a cumulative processing of loss, providing sound in this place so that we may turn inward, reflect, and navigate our own memories; and still, we are surrounded by others, doing the same.