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The Lawrence University New Music Ensemble, February 24, 2019

Lawrence University

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New Music Series 2018–19

The Lawrence University New Music Ensemble

Michael Clayville, conductor
Voices from the Killing Jar

I. Prelude: May Kasahara
II. My Last Duchess: Isabel Archer
VII. The Owl and the Wren: Lady Macduff
VIII. Her Voice is Full of Money (A Deathless Song): Daisy Buchanan

Sam Stone, voice/clarinet
Erin Lesser, piccolo/flute/bass flute*
Daniel Whitworth, tenor saxophone
Evangeline Werger, piano/recorder
Alex Quade, percussion
Alex Quinn, violin
Ava Huebner, electronics

Night of the Four Moons

La luna está muerta, muerta ...
Cuando sale la luna ...
Otro Adán oscuro está soñando ...
¡Huye luna, luna, luna! ...

Emily Austin, voice
Erin Lesser, piccolo/alto flute*
Rick Kubly, banjo
Horacio Contreras, electric cello*
Nolan Ehlers, percussion

Urban Sprawl

Bianca Pratte, piccolo/flute
Nora Lewis, oboe/English horn*
Abbey Atwater, E-flat clarinet
Anthony Dare, clarinet/bass clarinet
Stuart Young, bassoon
Amos Egleston, trumpets
Julian Cohen, horn
Liam McDonald, bass trombone
Michael Mizrahi, piano*
Alex Quade, percussion
Daniel Green, drum set
McKenzie Fetters, violin
Meghan Murphy, violin
Laura Vandenberg, viola
Horacio Contreras, cello*
Mark Urness, bass*

*Lawrence University faculty
**PROGRAM NOTES**

Voices from the Killing Jar

A killing jar is a tool used by entomologists to kill butterflies and other insects without damaging their bodies: a hermetically sealable glass container, lined with poison, in which the specimen will quickly suffocate. *Voices from the Killing Jar* depicts a series of female protagonists who are caught in their own kinds of killing jars—hopeless situations, inescapable fates, impossible fantasies, and other unlucky circumstances—each living in a world constructed from among the countless possible sonic environments of the instrumentation of voice, flute, saxophone, piano, percussion, violin, and electronics.

I. In *Prelude: May Kasahara*, the titular 16-year-old of Haruki Murakami’s *Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* speculates on the true nature of the force underlying human existence, admitting its influence on her to commit acts of violence and cruelty.

II. *Isabel Archer: My Last Duchess*, set to excerpts from a 19th century dramatic monologue by Robert Browning, portrays the heroine of Henry James’ *Portrait of a Lady* (personified in a gradually collapsing clarinet tremolo), whose disastrous marriage to a soulless Machiavellian ends all hope for the future.

VII. Towards the end of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Lady Macduff is brutally and unforgottably murdered along with her children. *The Owl and the Wren* is the lullaby of her final moments, distorted by intimations of approaching horror.

VIII. In F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy’s voice is variously described as “a singing compulsion,” “an exhilarating ripple,” “a deathless song.” Just before the novel’s tragic climax, Gatsby himself weighs in for the first time, reducing this extraordinary feature to an impersonal signifier of generic luxury: “her voice is full of money.”

—Kate Soper

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Night of the Four Moons

*Night of the Four Moons*, commissioned by the Philadelphia Chamber Players, was composed in 1969 during the Apollo 11 flight (July 16-24). The work is scored for alto (or mezzo-soprano), alto flute (doubling piccolo), banjo, electric cello, and percussion. The percussion includes Tibetan prayer stones, Japanese Kabuki blocks, alto African thumb piano (mbira), and Chinese temple gong in addition to the more usual vibraphone, crotales, tambourine, bongo drums, suspended cymbal, and tam-tam. The singer is also required to play finger cymbals, castanets, glockenspiel and tam-tam. I suppose that *Night of the Four Moons* is really an “occasional” work, since its inception was an artistic response to an external event. The texts—extracts drawn from the poems of Federico García Lorca—symbolize my own rather ambivalent feelings vis-à-vis Apollo 11. The texts of the third and fourth songs seemed strikingly prophetic! The first three songs, with their very brief texts, are, in a sense, merely introductory to the dramatically sustained final song. *La luna está muerta, muerta* ... is primarily an instrumental piece in a primitive rhythmical style, with the Spanish words stated almost parenthetically by the singer. The conclusion of text is whispered by the flutist over the mouthpiece of his instrument. *Cuando sale la luna* ... (marked in the score, “languidly, with a sense of loneliness”) contains delicate passages for the prayer stones and the banjo (played “in bottleneck style,” i.e., with a glass rod). The vocal phrases are quoted literally from my earlier (1963) *Night Music I* (which contains a complete setting of this poem). *Otro Adán oscuro está soñando* ... (marked, “hesitantly, with a sense of mystery”) is a fabric fragile instrumental timbre, with the text set like an incantation. The concluding poem (inspired by an ancient Gypsy legend)—*¡Huye luna, luna, luna!* ...—provides the climactic moment of the cycle. The opening stanza of the poem requires the singer to differentiate between the “shrill, metallic” voice of the Child and the “coquettish, sensual” voice of the Moon. At a point marked by a sustained cello harmonic and the clattering of Kabuki blocks (Drumming the plain/the horseman was coming near ...), the performers (excepting the cellist) slowly walk off stage while singing or playing their “farewell” phrases. As they exit, they strike an antique cymbal, which reverberates in unison with the cello harmonic. The epilogue of the song (Through the sky goes the moon/holding a child by the hand) was conceived as a simultaneity of two musics: “Musica Mudana” (“Music of the Spheres”), played by the onstage cellist; and “Musica Humana” (“Music of Mankind”), performed offstage by the singer, alto flute, banjo, and vibraphone. The offstage...
music (“Berceuse, in stile Mahleriano”) is to emerge and fade like a distant radio signal. The F-sharp Major tonality of the “Musica Humana” and the theatrical gesture of the preceding processions recall the concluding pages of Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony.

—George Crumb

_Urban Sprawl_

After spending months looking, my wife and I bought a home in the suburbs. While looking, I increasingly became intrigued by the overall “funkiness” of the insides of a number of houses we were shown by our realtor. From the crazy wallpaper, to the downright hideous paint colors, to the do-it-yourself projects gone wrong, to the fresh smells of wacky tobacco, some of these homes were real “standouts.” After seeing so many of these homes, I began to imagine who these current homeowners were. I started picturing them moving about their homes, doing these crazy projects, and dancing a quirky new dance I called the “urban sprawl” (think Nixon dancing in _Nixon in China_).

_Urban Sprawl_ is a 7-minute funky, jazzy, kitschy, and hopefully fun ode to “Suburban Life” (which was the working title). The work was written for and premiered by Alarm Will Sound at the 2011 Mizzou New Music Summer Festival.

—Clint Needham
NEW MUSIC SERIES 2018–19

Atlantic Brass Quintet
Wednesday, October 3, 2018, 8 p.m.
Lawrence Memorial Chapel

Lawrence University New Music Ensemble
Sunday, February 24, 2019, 8 p.m.
Harper Hall

Alarm Will Sound
Friday, April 5, 2019, 8 p.m.
Lawrence Memorial Chapel

Now Ensemble
Wednesday, April 10, 2019, 8 p.m.
Harper Hall, Music Drama Center

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