presents

NEXTET
The New Music Ensemble for the 21st Century

Virko Baley, music director and conductor
Sean Shepherd, guest composer-in-residence

PROGRAM

Carlos Carrasco
(b. 1980)
Trio for Brass (2012)
Micah Holt, trumpet
Jordan Rush, horn
Keith Larsen, trombone

Travis Bernau
(b. 1989)
Blanca Peak for wind quintet (2012)
sunrise, ambitious, we begin
Carmella Cao, flute
Ali Gilroy, oboe
Tallyn Wesner, clarinet
Brian Marsh, bassoon
Jon Holloway, horn

Kristen Evans
(b. 1990)
Refractions for brass quintet (2012)
Micah Holt, trumpet
Kyle Overlay, trumpet
Jordan Rush, horn
Keith Larsen, trombone
Saxon Lewis, tuba

Justin Marquis
(b. 1989)
Melatonin (2012) for piccolo, flute, alto flute, and piano
Kaite Zigterman, flutes
Jae Ahn-Benton, piano

Jae Ahn-Benton
(b. 1991)
Reminiscence, Op. 87 (2012)
Jae Ahn-Benton, piano
Conlon Nancarrow (1912–1997)

Three Studies for Player Piano
Canon X
Study #40b for 2 Player Pianos
Study #25 for Player Piano

Nancarrow at 100: A Centennial Celebration

Sean Shepherd (b. 1979)
Timothy Hoft, piano

Sean Shepherd
the birds are nervous, the birds have scattered (2008)
for clarinet, violin and piano

Talïyn Wesner, clarinet
Dmytro Nehrysh, violin
Timothy Hoft, piano

Friday, December 7, 2012 7:30 p.m.
Dr. Arturo Rando-Grillot Recital Hall
Lee and Thomas Beam Music Center
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
GUEST COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE

Called “a composer worth keeping an ear on” (Chicago Tribune), Sean Shepherd has quickly gained admiration and return engagements with major ensembles and performers across the US and Europe. In recent years, his work has been performed by the National, BBC and New World symphony orchestras, at festivals in Aldeburgh, Heidelberg, La Jolla, Lucerne, Tanglewood and Santa Fe, and by leading European ensembles including the Scharoun Ensemble Berlin, the Askol|Schönberg Ensemble and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. The Telegraph praised his music for its “fabulously seductive sound,” and the New York Times notes his “kaleidoscopic use of orchestral color.” A growing list of conductor-champions includes Oliver Knussen, who led the premiere of Wanderlust with the Cleveland Orchestra in 2009; Alan Gilbert, who led the premiere of These Particular Circumstances, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic for the inaugural season of CONTACT! in 2010; and Susanna Mälkki, who premiered the Ensemble Intercontemporain-commissioned Blur in Paris and Cologne in 2012.

Recent premieres include Blue Blazes, a Hechinger Commission from Christoph Eschenbach and the National Symphony Orchestra performed in Washington, DC and on a South American tour; Quartet for Oboe and Strings at the Santa Fe and La Jolla summer festivals in 2011; and Trio for the Claremont Trio, in celebration of the opening of Calderwood Hall at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston in 2012. Shepherd served from 2010 to 2012 as the first-ever Composer-in-Residence of his hometown orchestra, the Reno Philharmonic, where he composed two new works Silvery Rills and Desert Garden, and he engaged in a variety of community outreach and educational initiatives.

Shepherd maintains a busy schedule as an emerging voice for the orchestral world with new works scheduled for several renowned American groups. He continues as the Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellow of the Cleveland Orchestra, with a new work for Franz Welser-Möst and the ensemble to premiere in January 2013. In March 2013, the St. Luke’s Chamber Ensemble will debut a new ensemble piece at various New York venues. He will also compose a new work for the inaugural performances of Carnegie Hall’s newly established National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America in summer 2013 and another for the New York Philharmonic, performed in 2013–14, in recognition as the Kravis Emerging Composer.

Shepherd’s (b. 1979) education includes degrees in composition and bassoon performance from Indiana University, a master’s degree from The Juillard School, and doctoral work at Cornell University with Roberto Sierra and Steven Stucky. He lives in New York and his music is published by Boosey & Hawkes.

PROGRAM NOTES

Blanca Peak: Summer 2007, I had traveled to Cimarron, New Mexico to work at one of the three prominent high adventure camps in the country, Philmont Scout Ranch. The summer job and its tedious duties and meager pay was neither the consensus nor the essence to why I had agreed to my brother's offer of an adventure in Philmont's backcountry wilderness. One weekend off, my brother and I, explored north into the San Luis Valley of Colorado with the fire inside to conquer a 14,000 ft. high peak, Blanca Peak. With choosing the wind quintet for exploration of its instrumentation and timbre, I felt each unique sound coalesces well in a way fitting to depict such an endeavor. With melodic and motivic ideas introduced and expounded, I strive to emulate
an undying energy determined to succeed while marked with moments of impasse and fatigue as the mind would begin to conflict with the body after hours of incessant turning of the feet over rocks and pebbles. Beginning at the crack of dawn and after many switchbacks in a midst of shrubs and juniper forest, enthusiasm was high as was random intermittent emotions.

— Travis Bemau

**Preludes:** While Sean Shepherd has composed several works incorporating the piano, this is his first for piano solo. Each of the three preludes explores a different mood as well as a different approach to the instrument. The first is spacious and pensive, exploring the possibilities of sonority from the scarcely audible to the fullest fortissimo. A couple of brief outbursts punctuate a general feeling of timelessness, and the final outburst tells us a brief but important message, as if chiseled in stone, before receding back into nothingness. The second piece, to my ears, has echoes of some of Debussy’s pricklier preludes. It is fleet and humorous, with occasional grotesque jabs, and it leads to a surprising quotation (as Debussy’s Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq., P.P.M.P.C.). Although you definitely are familiar with it, you may not realize what it is until it is virtually over—which is the point of this charade. The third prelude is a delicate tapestry of sound. As if there are two separate pianos at work, a second, interloping idea—consisting of a massive, snail-paced single-note melody—works at cross purposes with the first. As in the first prelude, there is a moment of truth near the end, after which the previously heard material can never be resumed. It is both a chilling and poetic conclusion.

— Aaron Wunsch, dedicatee

**Composer’s Notes**

*the birds are nervous, the birds have scattered:* When my friends Trio Volans, whose members (pianist Xak Bjerken, violinist Stephen Miakhy and clarinetist Rick Faria) have premiered and performed my work on many occasions, approached me in late 2007 about a writing piece on short notice, I happily moved other projects around to oblige. Writing for those one knows and trusts, musically and otherwise, is a true joy, and knowing the sounds of a particular player often leads the way to envisioning the course the piece for them will take. This piece was, however, unusually difficult for me to write, and I felt several times that I was composing for the first time. My creative wheels, although properly greased, still locked up. Consequently, this relatively short work—around 7 minutes—takes some twists and turns that, for me, were surprising. Any musical depiction involving birds makes a reference to the music of the French master Olivier Messiaen hard to avoid, so I didn’t try to avoid it. But while birdsong (Messiaen’s area of fascination) might be an obvious point of departure, I found myself meditating more on the idea of the flock. Any music that came about via these thoughts was purely coincidental: any connection to be found would be at a subconscious level.

— Sean Shepherd

*The next NEXTET concert will be on January 26, 2013. The whole evening will consist of the first concert performance of Virko Baley’s complete opera Holodomor (Red Earth. Hunger). The principal singers will include John Duykers, tenor, Laura Bohn, soprano and Tod Fitzpatrick, baritone. The Nextet Ensemble will be conducted by Virko Baley.*