

PROGRAM NOTES AND BIOGRAPHIES

Composer in Residence: DAVID S. LEFKOWITZ, a native of New York City, studied music composition at The Eastman School of Music, Cornell University, and the University of Pennsylvania, where his principal teachers were Joseph Schwantner, Samuel Adler, George Crumb, and Karel Husa.

As a composer, David S. Lefkowitz has won international acclaim, having works performed in Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Ukraine, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Spain, Canada, Mexico, Israel, and Egypt. He has won national and international competitions, including the Fukui Harp Music Awards Competition (twice), and the American Society of Composers, Authors, & Publishers (ASCAP) Grants to Young Composers Competition. In addition, he has won prizes and recognition from the National Association of Composers, USA (NACUSA), the Guild of Temple Musicians, Pacific Composers' Forum, Chicago Civic Orchestra, Washington International Competition, Society for New Music's Brian M. Israel Prize, the ALEA III International Competition, and the Gaudeamus Music Week. He has also been a Meet-The-Composer Composer in Residence.

Recent commissions include works for Melia Watras of the Corigliano Quartet, cellist Elinor Frey and pianist David Fung, violinist Petteri Iivonen, soprano Ursula Kleinecke and Colloquy, harpist Grace Cloutier, quintets for Pacific Serenades and the Synergy Ensemble, the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, Cantor Joseph Gole and the Cantor's Assembly, the Harvard Westlake Orchestra, and by the Beijing City Opera Company (China's largest and best Beijing Opera company) to write the music for a thirteen-minute solo dance-drama; the resulting *BR/EIDGING OPERA* for small chamber orchestra has been well received by audiences and artists on both sides of the Pacific. He has music published by MMB Music, by Yelton Rhodes Music, Zen-On Music, Whole>Sum Music, and Lawson-Gould/Warner-Chappell Music. He has recordings available or soon to be available on Yarlung, Fatrock Ink, Japanese Victor, Yamaha, and Albany record labels.

As a theorist Lefkowitz has researched "meta-theoretical" issues such as the process of segmentation (a Component of post-tonal analysis) and the internal structure of set-classes, he has written extensively on Schoenberg's piano music, and also has done work on music theory pedagogy, culminating with his textbook *Music Theory: Syntax, Function, and Form* which is expected to be published soon.

Richards: *Defragmentation* is a piece for three tiers of instruments. The first tier, consisting of Flute, Oboe and Bassoon, is the brightest of the ensemble. The second, which consists of French Horn, Euphonium and Tuba, is the darkest in the ensemble. The final tier, consisting of violin, viola and cello, is not as bright as the first, and not as dark as the second, making it a happy medium. The piece starts off with each of the three tiers working on their own. As the music unfolds, they slowly begin to work as one, just like defragmenting a computer's hard drive, which is the process of moving similar saved data to the same physical location on the hard drive discs.

Travis Richards is a graduate student at UNLV. Upon completion of his degree, he wishes to pursue a career composing music and developing audio in the Video Game industry. Travis' main goal is to help enlighten people to the academic qualities that film and video game music presents.

Henryk Mikołaj Górecki was a Polish composer of contemporary classical music. Górecki became a leading figure of the Polish avant-garde during the post-Stalin cultural thaw. His Webernian-influenced serialist works of the 1950s and 1960s were characterized by adherence to dissonant modernism and drew influence from Luigi Nono, Karlheinz Stockhausen, [6] Krzysztof Penderecki and Kazimierz Serocki. Tonight's *Three diagrams* for solo flute belong in that tradition. He continued in this direction throughout the 1960s, but by the mid-1970s had changed to a less complex sacred minimalist sound, exemplified by the transitional *Symphony No. 2* and the hugely popular *Symphony No. 3 (Symphony of Sorrowful Songs)*. This later style developed through several other distinct phases, from such works as his 1979 *Beatus Vir* to the 1981 choral hymn *Miserere*, the 1993 *Kleines Requiem für eine Polka* and his requiem *Good Night*.

His name remained largely unknown outside Poland until the mid-to late 1980s, and his fame arrived in the 1990s. In 1992, 15 years after it was composed, a recording of his Third Symphony, *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*—recorded with soprano Dawn Upshaw and released to commemorate the memory of those lost during World War II—became a worldwide commercial and critical success, selling more than a million copies and vastly exceeding the typical lifetime sales of a recording of symphonic music by a 20th-century composer. As surprised as anyone at its popularity, Górecki said, "Perhaps people find something they need in this piece of music [...] somehow I hit the right note, something they were missing. Something somewhere had been lost to them. I feel that I instinctively knew what they needed." This popular acclaim did not generate wide interest in Górecki's other works, and he pointedly resisted the temptation to repeat earlier success, or compose for commercial reward.

Apart from two brief periods studying in Paris and a short time living in Berlin, Górecki spent most of his life in southern Poland.

Husa: Three Studies. Despite being born in Prague, **Karel Husa** is considered to be an American composer just as often as a Czech composer. He arrived in the United States in the 1950s and became an American citizen in 1959, after leaving his home country and spending several years studying composition at the Paris Conservatoire with renowned pedagogue Nadia Boulanger (who also taught American Aaron Copland). In the United States Husa has served as professor of composition at both Cornell University and Ithaca College. In 1969, his *String Quartet No. 3* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, and his *Music For Prague* has become one of the most acclaimed works ever written for the symphonic wind band.

Three Studies for Solo Clarinet was composed for the 60th Prague Spring International Music Composition in 2008. *Three Studies* was dedicated to Jiří Hlaváč on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday. Hlaváč, a Czech clarinetist and saxophonist, is a teacher and champion for new music throughout Europe. Comprised of three contrasting movements, this work is a technical tour de force for the performer. *Mountain Bird* employs pitch variation, extreme dynamic markings and virtuosic scalar passages to portray a bird residing in a majestic environment. *Poignant Song* employs pitch bending, vibrato and glissando techniques to create a sonic landscape reminiscent of a passing funeral procession; the listener stands by as devastated mourners proceed to a burial. *Relentless Machine* begins with an extended passage of quarter-tones followed by a virtuosic display of articulation that brilliantly portrays the machine of the movement's title. The movement and the piece finish with an exciting finale reminiscent of early twentieth century jazz clarinet motives.

Lefkowitz: At Onement (Miniature VI for Clarinet) was written between April and May 1993. The piece is between 5'30" and 6" long. The music is based partially on my woodwind sextet *Kapporot*.

There are a few details that are probably not entirely self-explanatory from the score. First, the music should begin — and end, as well — from absolutely nothing, dynamically, and very slowly crescendo to a level that is only slightly louder than audible. The trills in mm.2-4 and mm.73-75 should begin slowly and then quickly become much more rapid. Grace-notes have their own durational values marked; eighth-note grace-notes (mm.12-13) should be played on the beat and should be somewhat stressed. Grace-notes with smaller values should be played faster and (if appropriate) before the beat.

In the passage from mm.47-51, which is in effect a continuation of that in mm.33-35, the exaggerated articulations will — and should — tend to distort the rhythm, so that a thirty-second-note marked with a tenuto, for example, would be longer in duration than a thirty-second-note marked with an accented staccato, or with no marking at all.

The notes with the spreading or narrowing beams in mm.60-61 & 64 are the typical modern accelerando or decelerando. In m.64, the number of notes played need not be exactly as marked, as long as they fit into the time span allotted. Mm.65-70 are a paraphrase of an important Jewish hymn, sung on the night of Yom Kippur, reflecting a sentiment which is very close to the "meaning" of the entire work of music.

Lyatoshynsky: Sonata-Ballade. Before 1995, there wasn't even a single CD of Boris (Borys) Lyatoshynsky's music available on the market. Presently there are over two dozen. Unquestionably, the centennial of this composer's birth has something to do with the blooming interest in his music, but a more probable reason is that with Ukraine now an independent nation, the music world is beginning to slowly discover its musical treasures. Many years ago, in an article for the contemporary music journal, *Melos*, I wrote: "Only two voices from the chorus of Ukrainian culture have received international recognition and acceptance: the sculptor Alexander Archipenko and film-maker Alexander Dovzhenko. Some also know the inimitable and magical poetry of Taras Shevchenko. The rest is a murmur, still undifferentiated from the powerful chant of Soviet Russia." Today, however, we are able to add to that short but ever widening list the names of Boris Lyatoshynsky and his illustrious student, Valentin Silvestrov (Valentyn Sylvetrov), and to a lesser extent Leonid Hrabovskyy, Yevhen Stankovych, Valentin Bibik and Myroslav Skoryk.

The 1920's produced many genuinely important musical personalities in Ukraine, but it was Lyatoshynsky who assumed a position similar to that of Szymanowski, Kodaly, Bartok, Nielsen and Enescu in their respective countries. It was in the midst of this musical revolution that Lyatoshynsky initiated the modern movement in Ukraine with a series of intense and highly expressive works that, in an original way, reflected a central preoccupation with expressionism. The 1920's produced many genuinely important musical personalities in Ukraine, but it was Lyatoshynsky who assumed a position similar to that of Szymanowski, Kodaly, Bartok, Nielsen and Enescu in their respective countries.

Lyatoshynsky was no doubt influenced by the then prevalent *Romantic vitalism*, a loosely defined Ukrainian artistic current that shared with other modernist movements of the day an exuberant belief in the dawning of a new age. *Active Romanticism*, as it was also known, ceded primacy to genius and the developed intellect, to the artist's role as guardian of the right to perpetually re-examine. In short, it was an alternative to the primitivization of the arts that was beginning to take place throughout the USSR. The Sonata-Ballade is an example of his fully mature style. The music in this sonata, as many other works, begins as if suddenly startled out of deep slumber. Tense, and with hints of apprehension, the themes unfold gradually, propelled by insistent rhythms and extreme dynamics. His melodies are essentially shy: they are woven out of short phrases, full of romantic ecstasy, and seemingly incomplete. It is the structure of the composition that forces the music to emerge. The effect is achieved by placing the motives on rhythmic

and dynamic waves that cajole the music to open up and at times bringing folklore into it (as Alban Berg did so brilliantly in his Violin Concerto).

Baley: Nocturnal No. 7, Introitus : “The chronology and journey of this piece is fairly convoluted. I began Nocturnal No. 7 exactly two decades after composing Nocturnal No. 5 which fully developed a musical process that periodically I feel the need to revisit. When I started the piece, I was keeping company with the Las Vegas artist Rita Deanin Abbey and her husband, Dr. Robert Belliveau. They had commissioned a piano concerto from me, with the request that I use some of my favorite paintings by Rita as points of reference in that three-movement work. I then decided that the present Nocturnal would make an excellent opening movement – or rather, the first part. In 2013 I returned to the solo version and completed it on March 4, 2014. Nocturnal No. 7 is a tone poem that might seem to belong to some primordial stream of being. It is a recollection of the origin of sound, now as lost to memory as is Charles Foster Kane’s sled. The pianist gradually “learns” to navigate in this particular sound-cauldron and learns to give shape to the various aural ghosts that congregate within the many melodic patterns. As the cacophonous climax is reached, the music settled into a simpler more reflective mood. I am delighted and proud to dedicate the piece to our terrific pianist Timothy Hoft in this preview premiere performance, as the official premiere will be played by Timothy in Houston on March 23rd, in a concert dedicated to my music.” – Virko Baley

Arvo Pärt is an Estonian composer of classical and sacred music. Since the late 1970s, Pärt has worked in a minimalist style that employs his self-invented compositional technique, *tintinnabuli*. His music is in part inspired by Gregorian chant. As of 2013, Pärt has been the most performed contemporary composer in the world for three years in a row. *Spiegel im Spiegel (Mirror in Mirror)* is the description of what happens in the piece. The solo violin part is constructed like a mirror: the phrases it plays – each one successively adding one more note of the scale – always returning, by steps or jumps, to the mirror axis, the central A. Out of the simplest of means, Pärt creates an unfolding of a melody not unlike that of the awakening of a flower.

Lefkowitz: Snows Sing a Farewell (2010): A setting of four poems by Avrom Avrom Sutzkever, the great Yiddish poet, who was born in July, 1913 in what is now Belarus, and died in January, 2010 in Israel. His early poetry is full of imagery, most especially of nature; his first collection recalled his time in Siberia (to which his family had fled to escape the First World War), finding beauty in the snow-swept landscape. In 1921, after his father’s death, his family returned to Vilna (Vilnius, Lithuania), where he remained until the Second World War. During the war, he was able to escape the Nazis, and join a partisan group fighting in the forests. Ultimately, he moved to Palestine (subsequently Israel) in 1947, where he championed Yiddish literature.

The selection of four Sutzkever poems set to music here spans his life and career: *Siberian Spring* from 1936, *Frozen Jews* from 1944, *Mirrors of Stone* from 1947, and *Yortsayt for My Father*—one of his last—from 1990. Three of the poems (all but *Mirrors of Stone*) evoke snow and frozen landscapes, and in all of the poems one gets a palpable feel for a certain quality of light. But in the four poems the imagery of snow and light and their importance are markedly different one from another. In the first, we see the snows melting, and are filled with the excitement of the onset of spring and rebirth. In the second, what are frozen are the bodies of Jews, killed by the Nazis and left in a mass grave. In the third, one can feel the astonishment that Sutzkever must have felt, seeing Jerusalem for the first time in his life, which marked a moment of spiritual rebirth after the death of the Holocaust. And lastly, in the fourth poem, Avrom, now an old man, returns in his imagination and in his memory to the snows of Siberia for the Yortsayt (in Hebrew, Yartzeit—memorial) for his father, whom he imagines to have been resurrected. This cycle of poems, therefore, represents a sort of “inside-out” life trajectory: instead of birth, life, and death, we see birth, death, rebirth, and life.

To represent both this trajectory and the importance of language in Sutzkever’s life, I chose to set the first poem in the original Yiddish, the second in English (as if the Holocaust had robbed Sutzkever of Yiddish culture), the third in Hebrew (representing the important role that Jerusalem and Israel played in Sutzkever’s spiritual rebirth), finally returning to Yiddish in the last poem.

The next NEXTET concert will be on April 8 at 7:30 PM and will be dedicated to new works for the string quartet by our composition students. The composer-in-residence will be Dan Welcher, from Austin, Texas.