YIN & YANG: A DIALOGUE FOR TWO GRAND PIANOS

Program notes

Yin & Yang are regarded by the Chinese as being the balancing, harmonizing factors of the universe. They are opposite energies that are totally dependent upon each other to survive. Yin energy is always found inside of yang and vice versa. They always interact with each other just as the two piano parts do in my composition entitled, Yin & Yang.

There are three elements that make up the composition Yin & Yang: two modified tone rows and a driving accented rhythm with its own dominating pitches. The pitches of the first tone row are initially presented in a quiet whole note introduction that is developed as the work evolves. These pitches are immediately presented in a highly energized unison section in four octaves that plays a dominant role throughout the composition. That highly charged rhythmic theme concludes in the final section of the work with a four-part fugue that leads to a recapitulation of the original theme.

A second modified tone row appears a third of the way into the composition in the form of a gentle dialogue between both pianos and immediately goes through a transformation of several different moods.

Throughout the work I have tried to present the two pianos with the yin/yang interdependency concept in mind. Most typical of this certainly appears in the rhythmic section of the composition where the two forces find themselves in a game of Ping-Pong utilizing a driving accented rhythm and the pitches of d flat and e flat plus several jazz oriented motifs as they forge ahead relentlessly.

Yin & Yang is made up of numerous mood shifts in which I attempt to show off the beauty, energy and percussiveness of the piano. In order to achieve these moods I have utilized several twentieth century piano techniques including glissandos and tone clusters for colour and energy purposes.

Yin & Yang was commissioned in 2003 by the Murray Dranoff International Two Piano Competition.

Fredrick Kaufman
Fantasia upon One Note  Henry Purcell (1659-1695)
Corrente IV  G. Frescobaldi (1583-1643)
Corrente III  Anna Kijanowska, 2nd piano  
(transcriptions by Gyorgy Kurtag)
Anna Kijanowska, 2nd piano

PAUSE

from Preludes, Book I (1953)  Claude Debussy (1866-1918)
La cathédrale engloutie ("The Sunken Cathedral")
Ce qu’a vu le vent d’ouest ("What the West Wind Saw")
La fille aux cheveux de lin ("The Girl with the Flaxen Hair")

from Makrokosmos Vol. 2 (1973)  George Crumb (b.1929)
The Mystic Chord
Litany of the Galactic Bells

Medieval Induction
Defensive Chili

Graceful Ghost Rag  William Bolcom (b. 1938)
Boogie Woogie Etude  Morton Gould (1913-1996)

BLAIR MCMILLEN,  
Piano

Blair McMillen has established himself as one of the most versatile and sought-after pianists today. The New York Times has described him as “riveting,” “prodigiously accomplished and exciting,” and one of the piano’s “brilliant young stars.” Recent performances include Carnegie Hall, Moscow Conservatory, Miller Theatre, Bard Summerscape, (le) Poisson Rouge, the Aspen Music Festival, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Caramoor, the Library of Congress, Casals Hall (Tokyo), the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton), and Musica Antica e Nuova at Columbia University. Concerto appearances have included the American Symphony Orchestra, the Juilliard Orchestra on a tour of Japan, the Albany Symphony, and the Zankel Band in New York City.

Known for his imaginative and daring programming, Blair McMillen’s repertoire spans from late-medieval keyboard manuscripts to today’s up-and-coming younger generation of composers. Recent recitals have included performances of selections from the Codex Faenza (some of the earliest-surviving keyboard music in the world, composed in the early 15th-century), a New York recital of piano music inspired by the art of improvisation, and a “Composer Portrait” concert of music by Esa-Pekka Salonen. His first solo CD Soundings; featuring music of Debussy, Scriabin, Liszt, and Bolcom; was released in 2004 to critical acclaim. More recent solo recordings include Powerhouse Pianists on Lumiere Records, Concert Music of Fred Hersch on Naxos, and Multiplicities: Born in ‘38 on Centaur.

Dedicated to new and groundbreaking projects, Blair McMillen is intensely committed to commissioning and performing the music of today. He has premiered hundreds of pieces, and constantly works with both established and emerging composers in commissioning new works for the piano. Pianist for the Naumburg Award-winning Da Capo Chamber Players, Mr. McMillen plays regularly with the American Modern Ensemble, the downtown NYC-based Avian Orchestra, St. Luke’s Chamber Ensembles, and the Locien Chamber Players, among others.

Raised in San Francisco and Charlotte, NC, Blair McMillen holds degrees from Oberlin College, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Juilliard School. A past winner of the Aspen Music Festival’s Time-Warner Award, he won the Gina Bachauer Competition and the Sony ES Grant for Musical Excellence while studying at Juilliard. An active educator, a self-taught jazz pianist, and a fledgling electric guitar novice, McMillen serves on the piano and chamber music faculty at Bard College and Conservatory.
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on the piano and chamber music faculty at Bard College and Conservatory.
ANNA KIJANOWSKA,
Piano

Hailed by The New York Times (2007) as “an excellent young Polish pianist,” Anna Kijanowska (key-en-OFF-ska) has distinguished herself internationally as a recitalist, chamber musician and concert soloist. A devoted promoter of the music of Karol Szymanowski, her recording of his Mazurkas (DUX, 2005) has already gained substantial recognition and was recently named by Adrian Corleone of Fanfare Magazine “as superior to any other interpretations that came before or after hers.” Mr. Muse of the Classicist Reviews called the performance a “revelation,” while Mr. Leonard of All Music Guide noted, “Kijanowska’s performances are amazingly virtuoso, astonishingly charismatic, astonishingly empathic and completely compelling.”

Past and upcoming engagements include solo recitals at Carnegie and Merkin Halls NYC, the National Gallery of Arts and the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, Harvard University in Boston, North-West University in South Africa, the French Institute in New Delhi, India, the Polish Embassy in Tokyo, Singapore and Bangkok, Chinese Conservatory in Beijing, and orchestral appearances in the Ukraine and Poland (Piano Concerti by Lutoslawski and Gorecki). As a chamber musician, she has collaborated with such eminent performers as Charles Castleman, Diane Monroe, and Basil Vendryes.

Ms. Kijanowska began her musical education in Poland at the age of seven, and gave her first recital at age eight. In 1992, she entered the Szymanowski Music Academy in Katowice, where she studied with Prof. Jozef Stompel. After receiving her Master of Music Degree in Piano Performance and Pedagogy from the Music Academy in Wroclaw, she was awarded a scholarship to study with Dr. Madeleine Forte at Boise State University in the United States. She holds a Doctorate and a Master of Music in Piano Performance from the Manhattan School of Music in New York, where she studied with Byron Janis Mykola Suk, Sara Davis Buechner and Marc Silverman. Ms. Kijanowska is currently a visiting professor at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, and is a former faculty member of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and the Levine School of Music in Washington DC.

FREDRICK KAUFMAN,
Composer

Fredrick Kaufman is the composer of over one hundred and thirty published compositions that have been performed worldwide by orchestras such as the Warsaw Philharmonic, the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, the Czech Radio Orchestra, the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, the Lithuanian Philharmonic and Chamber Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic, the Jerusalem Symphony, the Instrumental Ensemble of Grenoble, the London Sinfonietta, Orchestra Novi Musici (Naples Italy), the Dominican Republic National Orchestra, the National Orchestra of Brazil, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the New World Symphony and the Pittsburgh Symphony orchestras.

Kaufman is a former Fulbright Scholar, who is the recipient of the Darius Milhaud Award in Composition from the Aspen Music Festival, and honors and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller, Guggenheim and Ford Foundations, the California, Montana and Pennsylvania Arts Councils as well as the Norwegian and Israeli Governments. Kaufman has been a BMI fellow since 1977.

His works have received prizes at international competitions and have been selected for performances at festivals such as the Aspen Music Festival, the Telluride Chamber Music Festival, the Music Festival of the Hamptons, the Sarasota Music Festival, the Israel Festival, the Darmstadt Festival for New Music, the International Arts Festival in Vilnius, Lithuania, and the St. Cyprien International Festival of the Arts in France.

Kaufman’s latest multi-cultural works have received overwhelming praise in the press. His Kaminarimon (for Taiko drums and Flamenco dance) has been called “remarkable” and “stunning” and was voted as “the number one classical composition of 2002” and “the most imaginative new work of the year” by The Miami Herald. Critic of The South Hampton Post (2004) called Kaminarimon “one of the most amazing mixes of multiculturalism I’ve ever encountered, a work [that] will stay with me forever.” Yin & Yang: A Dialogue for Two Grand Pianos, was lauded by critics in New York and Miami, where it received its world premiere. String Quartet #6, The Urban” was called “stunning” by The Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel and its New York city premiere “wild and wonderful by New Yorker Magazine.