

Claudia Chan with Benjamin Bowman

Sunday, May 28, 2017 at 1:00 pm

Post-concert Chat

Mazzoleni Concert Hall

Claudia Chan, piano

Benjamin Bowman, violin

PROGRAM

Michelle Agnes Magalhaes: *mobile* (Canadian premiere)

Gabriel Prokofiev: *Howl* (world premiere of a new arrangement)

Christopher Goddard: *Winter Rings* (world premiere)

INTERMISSION

Isang Yun: *Gasa*

John Corigliano: Sonata for Violin and Piano

Winter Rings by Christopher Goddard commissioned by The Royal Conservatory/Koerner Hall

Beginning the program with sounds most foreign to what one would expect to hear from either a violin or a piano is Michelle Agnes Magalhaes's *mobile*, in this revised version for Claudia Chan. The young Brazilian-born, French-based composer came to the techniques used in this piece by using John Cage's preparations for his Sonatas and Interludes as a starting point, to which she added her own unique use of neodymium magnets on the piano strings, as well as an assortment of other objects. The alien sound-world is grounded only very rarely by a few open keys which have not been manipulated and remind us of the instrument briefly, yet the organic nature of the piece and the effect of the preparations create an atmosphere that seems familiar – as if evoking a more primal language of music.

“*Gasa* exists in space. It takes no heed of time – each moment exists in space and that space is unending. Within this (space) however there exists a dramatic development.” (Isang Yun)

Korean-born composer Isang Yun pulled together two worlds – the Asian and the avant-garde European – in his music, which he wrote primarily while living in Berlin, Germany. A ‘gasa,’ or ‘kasa’ in Korean, is a form of Korean art song where a female singer masterfully traverses huge ranges, and switches quickly between sweet, saccharine passages and coarse, punishing statements. The piano replaces the traditional ensemble of the taegum (bamboo flute), changgo (hourglass drum), and haegum (two-string fiddle) as accompaniment. The piece begins with a 12-tone statement in the violin that is tender, yet imploring, with pulsing echoes from the piano. Shortly after, however, it cuts the violin short with a turn as the changgo, providing a percussive underlining of the end of the first melody, as it will often do, sometimes seeming to affirm the sentiment, sometimes even opposing it. Ancient ‘kasa’ was actually a poetic literary form which in the 16th century suddenly turned into a sung form, while retaining its narrative quality, and thus one can also imagine the violin as capricious narrator whose whims the piano has to

temper and at times combat with. *Gasa* is also a testament to the tension between the two inner worlds apparent in Yun's music; as he said himself, "I had to confront Western culture and Western music artistically – it was a matter of life or death to me. I don't think it's correct to say that if you learn Western compositional technique, you become a Western composer. (That) it is necessary to forget your own roots and to become a tabula rasa for the new and the foreign. I had to struggle to learn Western music. Then I had to remember that I am from Asia."

Written in the exact year as *Gasa*, 1963, one listens to John Corigliano's Sonata for Violin and Piano and hears a completely different spirit on the other side of the ocean, and this time, by a composer composing entirely in his native language and for his native folk – in New York City. Still, success was not assured and, in fact, Corigliano's father, for whom he wrote the piece, originally discouraged his son to compose at all. It was only in 1966, after the piece had been performed multiple times by other violinists, that his father agreed to take a look at the score and put it on stage. And after the tense and dry-wrung harmonies of Isang Yun, one can fully enjoy and relax into the largely tonal and, indeed, romantic adventure that is this four-movement Sonata. Here, the violin and piano are jovial partners, hopping up and down the respective instruments in odd meters and jazz-influenced, accentuated licks. The second movement is melancholic and moody, and the third movement provides a sullen moment in contrast to the rest of the light-hearted piece, but with the opening notes of the fourth movement, all worries are washed away in the dazzling virtuosic display where the only danger comes from the instruments daring each other to fall off the lilting 16th-note tracks.

- Claudia Chan

Gabriel Prokofiev

Composer

Composing music that both embraces and challenges western classical traditions, Gabriel Prokofiev has emerged at the forefront of a new approach to classical music in the UK at the beginning of the 21st century. His Concerto for Turntables was performed at the BBC Proms in August 2011 to critical acclaim and it has since been performed by Seattle Symphony and Copenhagen Philharmonic.

Prokofiev's own distinctive sound is informed by his background as a producer of hip-hop, grime, and electro records, as well as his earlier involvement in electroacoustic music at York and Birmingham universities. His classical composing career began in 2003 with his first two String Quartets, which he composed for the Elysian Quartet. Large-scale works include a ballet *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Concerto for Bass Drum and Orchestra, plus an all-electronic ballet collaboration *Howl!* In May 2013, he made his Russian orchestral debut with the world premiere of his Cello Concerto No. 1 with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic. Most recent orchestral commissions were a critically acclaimed Concerto for Trumpet Percussion, Turntables, and Orchestra premiered by Orchestre de Pau Pays de Béarn, a symphonic work *Dial 1-900 Mix-A-Lot* for Seattle Symphony, and his first Violin Concerto written for Daniel Hope. In March 2015, he made his Royal Opera House debut with a one-hour contemporary dance work, *Bayadere: The Ninth Life*. Prokofiev is currently the Composer-in-Residence for Orchestre de Pau Pays de Béarn in southern France, which premiered the first chapter of his new orchestral city-inspired series, *Carnet de Voyage*, with movements on St. Petersburg, London, and Vienna.

Howl

Howl was originally composed for a ballet collaboration with American choreographer Maurice Causey, and it was premiered by Luzerner Ballet, in Switzerland, March-June 2013.

The original inspiration for this piece was the political turmoil happening in the world at that time; the protests, the battles, and the revolutions. The title *Howl* was inspired by the poem of the same name by Allen Ginsburg.

In this new version, for violin and electronics, we open with an introspective mood, the 'calm before the storm,' a melancholic reflection on an often brutal world.

Originally a purely electronic score, the solo violin brings a contrasting sensitivity and human touch to the dark electronic sound world. The primary sound-source for the electronics was a 'vintage,' 1970s Arp Odyssey Synthesiser, which has a particularly rich tone & extremely powerful filter and self-oscillating features.

In the slow movement, menacing clicking oscillators under-pinned by sub-bass throbs, are contrasted against a duet between the solo violin and solo synthesiser.

In the fast movement, motoric, post-techno, distorted synth-lines, drive the piece forward like a swarm of protesters. I heavily processed, sequenced, and multi-tracked various motifs and noises from the Arp synthesizer inside my computer. In particular, I focused on digitally degrading the sounds, in the same way that the digital signals on mobile phones, youtube videos, and skype calls are often distorted and degraded – those same modern means of communication that have aided political activists over the last five to 10 years. - Gabriel Prokofiev

Christopher Goddard

Composer

Christopher Goddard is a composer and pianist currently based in Montreal. As a composer, he has collaborated with NYO Canada, le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, l'Orchestre de la Francophonie, TAK Ensemble, and Play duo, and NOISE-BRIDGE duo. He was selected for the 11th International Forum for Young Composers with the NEM, and has participated in the Wellesley Composers Conference and the NAC Young Composers Program. His work has been recognized by the CLC's Friends of Canadian Music Award, the SOCAN Foundation Young Composer Awards, and the Prix Collégien de Musique Contemporaine. He was recently selected as the RBC Foundation Composer-in-Residence by NYO Canada, for whom he composed a new orchestral work that was premiered in Lisbon on their 2016 summer tour.

As a performer and advocate of contemporary music, Christopher Goddard has presented dozens of premieres by his colleagues, appearing with new music groups such as Ensemble Moto Perpetuo, Columbia Composers, the Wet Ink Ensemble, and others. He has participated in the Samos Young Artist Festival, the Avant Music Festival in New York, and was a member of the 2013 Lucerne Festival Academy. Starting in September 2017, he will serve as Artistic Director for Ottawa New Music Creators.

Christopher Goddard has studied composition with Pierre Jalbert, Karim Al-Zand, Chris Paul Harman, and Brian Cherney. Piano studies took place with Chris Oldfather, Anthony de Mare, Kyoko Hashimoto, and Nicole Presentey. He holds degrees in composition, contemporary performance, and theory from the Manhattan School of Music, Rice University, and McGill University. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in composition with Professor John Rea at McGill University

Winter Rings

Inspired in part by the "dual personage" evoked by Xenakis in his 1981 violin/piano composition *Dikhthas*, this work explores various forces that work against one another. It is also a meditation on the year's cold months, throughout which certain confrontations seem to become more profound. *Winter Rings* seeks to express the season's unique ability to resound and encircle us, animating our sense of the near vs. the distant and amplifying the separation between interior warmth and the austere world of the exterior.

The piece is assembled by way of pitch constellations that are in constant rotation by major and minor thirds. By virtue of equal temperament, this perpetual motion through harmonic space occurs concurrently in opposing directions across different time scales, yielding an almost hypnotic tension between forward energy and stasis. Triads loom, but only rarely flicker into sight. Against the piano's all-encompassing chromatic universe the violin comes to embody the world of limitations, playing mediator between the effable and the ineffable.

Winter Rings is dedicated to the artists of the premier performance, Claudia Chan and Benjamin Bowman, whose support and energy for the project have been unwavering throughout its long period of gestation.

Claudia Chan

Piano

Claudia Chan was recently named a laureate of Concours d'Orléans 2016, where she was awarded the Claude Helffer prize and her premiere piece by Matthias Krüger, *renk*, won the Yvonne Chevillion-Bonnaud Prize. She has also been appointed Artist-in-Residence at the Fondation Royaumont as part of the Voix Nouvelles program from 2017 to 2020.

Ms. Chan made her German orchestral debut in 2012 at the Stadthalle in Wuppertal as a soloist in Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, and has subsequently been heard at various festivals in Europe, United States, and Canada, including the first 21C Music Festival in 2014. As a chamber musician, she is a founding member of the award-winning contemporary music ensemble BRuCH, which has been featured at the Acht Brücken Festival Köln and the Zeitgenuss Festival in Karlsruhe, and recently completed an extensive recording project for the Westdeutscher Rundfunk and Deutschlandfunk in Cologne.

Her work with contemporary music has brought Ms. Chan into close contact with such exciting composers as Helmut Lachenmann, Hans Thomalla, Unsuk Chin, Brian Current, Vassos Nicolaou, and Johannes Schöllhorn, and she has the honour of being the dedicatee of works by composers Alice Ho, Matthias Krüger, Julien Jamet, Giovanni Biswas, Christopher Goddard, and Michelle Agnes Magalhaes, with many more collaborations planned for the near future.

After finishing her studies with Elaine Kruse in Ottawa, Ms. Chan completed her undergraduate studies at The Royal Conservatory's Glenn Gould School as a scholarship student, studying with David Louie and John Perry. Her Master of Music was completed at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln and she graduated with highest honours from the Masters of New Piano Music in the class of Professor Pierre-Laurent Aimard.

Benjamin Bowman

Violin

American-Canadian violinist Benjamin Bowman performs to critical acclaim throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. He is very active and engaged as a chamber musician and soloist; he is a member or frequent guest artist for leading chamber music ensembles internationally, including the three-time Grammy Award nominated ARC Ensemble (Artists of The Royal Conservatory), Art of Time Ensemble, and Leondari Ensemble. His latest disc with the ARC Ensemble, *Chamber Works of Jerzy Fitelberg*, was nominated for a 2017 Grammy. He was also featured on the 2013 Juno-winning album, *Levant*, and the 2011 Juno nominated disc, *Armenian Chamber Music*, with the Amici Chamber Ensemble. Other collaborative work includes extensive immersion in contemporary/new music, improvisation, and performance with singer/songwriters. Benjamin Bowman is the concertmaster of the American Ballet Theatre in New York.

Bowman's performances have been recorded for radio broadcast in the USA, in Canada with the CBC, the UK, Poland, Hungary, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Korea. His discography includes recent solo and chamber music releases on the Sony Masterworks/RCA Red Seal, ATMA Classique, and Innova labels. He received his Bachelor of Music degree from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.