

Concerts from the Library of Congress 2011-2012

*The McKim Fund
in the Library of Congress*

CYGNUS ENSEMBLE

with guest artists

Miranda Cuckson, *violin*
Daniel Panner, *viola*
Blair McMillen, *piano*

*Friday, February 3, 2012
8 o'clock in the evening
Coolidge Auditorium
Thomas Jefferson Building
The Library of Congress*

The McKIM FUND in the Library of Congress was created in 1970 through a bequest of Mrs. W. Duncan McKim, concert violinist, who won international prominence under her maiden name, Leonora Jackson; the fund supports the commissioning and performance of chamber music for violin and piano.

The Steinway concert grand piano used in this performance was acquired through the generous support of the IRA AND LEONORE GERSHWIN FUND in the Library of Congress.



The audiovisual recording equipment in the Coolidge Auditorium was endowed in part by the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Fund in the Library of Congress.

Please request ASL and ADA accommodations five days in advance of the concert at 202-707-6362 or ADA@loc.gov.

Latecomers will be seated at a time determined by the artists for each concert.

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THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Coolidge Auditorium

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2012 – 8 P.M.

CYGNUS ENSEMBLE

TARA HELEN O'CONNOR, *flute and piccolo* • ROBERT INGLISS, *oboe*
CALVIN WIERSMA, *violin* • SUSANNAH CHAPMAN, *cello*
WILLIAM ANDERSON, *mandolin* • OREN FADER, *guitar*

with guest artists

MIRANDA CUCKSON, *violin*
DANIEL PANNER, *viola*
BLAIR McMILLEN, *piano*



PROGRAM

FRITZ KREISLER (1875-1962)

Chanson Louis XIII et Pavane (in the style of Couperin), for violin and piano (1910)
Caprice Viennois, for violin and piano (1910)
Praeludium and Allegro (in the style of Pugnani), for violin and piano (ca.1910)

MIRANDA CUCKSON, *violin*

Liebesleid, for violin and piano (1910)
Liebesfreud, for violin and piano (1910)
Schön Rosmarin, for violin and piano (1910)

CALVIN WIERSMA, *violin*

HAROLD MELTZER (BORN 1966)

Kreisleriana, for violin and piano (2011)

World première performance; commissioned by the McKim Fund

Intermission

HAROLD MELTZER

Brion, for chamber ensemble (2008)

I. – II. – III.

FRITZ KREISLER

Quartet for strings, in A minor (1919)

I. Fantasy – II. Scherzo – III. Prelude and Romance – IV. Finale

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Fritz Kreisler (born Vienna, 1875; died New York, 1962) was one of the most significant and influential violinists of the twentieth century. His immense talent, scholarship, and highly personal performing style have not only defined the course of his own life and career, but have also created an enduring legacy for violinists everywhere.

Young Fritz began to study the violin at age four with his father, a physician and amateur violinist. He entered the prestigious Musikverein Konservatorium at age seven (the youngest student ever to do so), where he studied violin and theory (the latter with noted composer Anton Bruckner). At the age of ten, he achieved another unprecedented feat by winning the Konservatorium's gold medal. The young Kreisler then began violin studies at the Paris Conservatoire with Joseph Massart (teacher of Henri Wieniawski, one of the nineteenth century's greatest violinists), as well as composition with Léo Delibes and Jules Massenet. After having attended the Conservatoire for two years, Kreisler won that institution's *Premier Prix* in 1887, sharing the award with a number of other students (all of whom were ten years his senior). At the age of twelve, however, Kreisler left the Conservatoire; remarkably, he was never to pursue further violin instruction for the rest of his life.

Although a concert tour of the United States in 1888-89 with pianist Moriz Rosenthal (during which he made his American *début*, with the Boston Symphony conducted by Walter Damrosch) garnered respectable acclaim, Kreisler's interest in the violin waned; he returned to school in Vienna with the intention of becoming a physician, and then, briefly, a painter. Following his compulsory military service, however, Kreisler decided definitively on a musical career. Taking up his violin once again, which he had barely played during the intervening years, his astonishing technique quickly returned. For the next two years, he was a member of orchestras in Vienna and then Berlin, but it was his appearance as soloist in London in 1902 that generated the accolades that established his career. Composer Sir Edward Elgar was so impressed with Kreisler's playing that he was inspired to write his Violin Concerto for Kreisler, who performed as soloist in the work's *première* in 1910, under Elgar's baton.

The outbreak of World War I prompted Kreisler to return to his native Austria to join its army. Soon thereafter, however, he was wounded, resulting in his discharge from military service. He then moved to the United States in 1914 with his American wife, the former Harriet Lies Woerz, whom he had married in 1902. Although he had intended to establish a concert career in his adopted homeland, pervasive anti-German sentiments in American society at the time prevented him from doing so, and even prompted him to withdraw from the concert stage entirely for five years. He returned to Europe in 1924, residing in Berlin. The Nazi annexation of Austria in 1934 resulted in an offer of citizenship by the French Government. Kreisler returned definitively to the United States in 1943 and became an American citizen. Although he resumed his performing career, he appeared with less frequency than before, the result of a serious traffic accident in 1941 which was to compromise permanently his hearing and vision. After 1950, Kreisler performed only rarely in public and sold off nearly his entire collection of musical instruments. One of the instruments that had been owned by Kreisler, a violin created by master luthier Giuseppe Guarneri in about 1730, was donated to the Library of Congress by Kreisler himself in 1952, along with his

papers (which comprise the Music Division's Fritz Kreisler Collection) and a child-size violin that was apparently used by him in his youth. The Guarneri violin, considered a favorite of Kreisler (and a preferred instrument by subsequent performers) by virtue of its exceptionally beautiful sound, will be performed on this evening's concert by guest artist Miranda Cuckson.

Kreisler's career was as spectacular as it was unorthodox; yet he nevertheless established international renown on the basis of his natural technique (he practiced only infrequently), his uncommonly lovely and expressive tone, and the elegance of his innate musicianship. Even in his efforts as a composer, Kreisler proved himself an iconoclast: composing a number of impressive works, among them a string quartet (1919) and two operettas (*Apple Blossoms*, 1919; *Sissy*, 1932), Kreisler also wrote a number of short pieces for violin which were the subject of one of twentieth-century music history's greatest hoaxes: Kreisler originally claimed that he had simply "rediscovered" a number of pieces by various seventeenth- and eighteenth-century composers (i.e., Couperin, Pugnani, Tartini, Boccherini, Leclair, Francœur, and Wilhelm Friedemann Bach), rather than claiming credit for these works' authorship himself. These works conformed so perfectly in language and style to those of their reputed composers that Kreisler's musical joke fooled musicologists for a decade – until Kreisler himself revealed these works' true origin in 1935. Although causing indignation among the more dour music scholars of the time, it is a testament to Kreisler's own talent and scholarship (not to mention sly wit!) that these charming works – now rightly credited to Kreisler – have attained a permanent place in the violinist's repertoire.



ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

The unusual instrumentation of the Cygnus Ensemble – comprised of pairs of woodwinds, strings and plectral instruments – offers sonic possibilities to adventurous composers seeking unexplored musical timbres, textures and means of expression. Since the Ensemble's establishment in 1985, numerous composers have responded to the challenge, among them Milton Babbitt, Charles Wuorinen, David Lang, Dina Koston, Sebastian Currier, Laura Schwendinger, and George Walker, all of whom have created works for the Ensemble or for various combinations of its core members, with the addition of supplementary musicians as required. The Ensemble's recent projects have included the creation of a chamber opera at New York's Guggenheim Museum, and the realization of Mario Davidovsky's *Ladino Songs*, anticipating the work's world première performance on this evening's concert.

The Cygnus Ensemble is also active in presenting frequent master classes for the next generation of performers; it presently serves as ensemble-in-residence at both Sarah Lawrence College and at the City University of New York's Graduate Center. The Ensemble has released several recordings, notably on the CRI and Bridge labels; its recording of Harold Meltzer's *Brion*, released on the Naxos label, appeared in the New York Times's roster of the best classical music recordings of 2010.



Composer **Harold Meltzer** has emerged in recent years as an original and compelling compositional voice. Winner of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a residency at the American Academy in Rome, Meltzer was honored by being one of the two finalists for the Pulitzer Prize in Music for 2009 for his work *Brion*, for chamber ensemble. Founder of the Sequitur new music ensemble in New York, Meltzer presently serves on the faculty of Vassar College.

Brion was inspired by a visit made by its composer to the Brion-Vega cemetery near Treviso, Italy, east of Venice. The cemetery was created in 1970-72 for the Brion-Vega family by Italian architect Carlo Scarpa, who is himself interred within the space that he envisioned, a space acknowledged as a literal monument to harmony with nature and the universal order of life. Meltzer writes of the work: "I explored much of [the cemetery] for an hour, took a break, then went back in for another spell, almost twice as long, seeing the things I hadn't seen and retracing my steps to some of the places I'd seen before. Then, after a second break, I had a last look around." The work's three movements may be perceived as conforming to the duration of Meltzer's visit, allowing us to experience the composer's impressions – represented sonically – of the cemetery's unique space, conveyed with a highly personal immediacy and imagination.

Kevin LaVine
Senior Music Specialist
Library of Congress, Music Division



Thank You!

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CONCERTS FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Coolidge Auditorium, constructed in 1925 through a generous gift from **Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge**, has been the venue for countless world-class performers and performances. Another Washingtonian *grande dame*, **Gertrude Clarke Whittall**, presented to the Library a gift of five Stradivari instruments which were first heard here during a concert on January 10, 1936. These parallel but separate donations serve as the pillars that now support a full season of concerts made possible by gift trusts and foundations that followed those established by Mrs. Coolidge and Mrs. Whittall.

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