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# MANTRA

KATHERINE CHI &  
ALEKSANDAR MADŽAR

WITH

JIM DONAHUE

CAMERON KIRKPATRICK

MINGHUAN XU

& WINSTON CHOI

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Friday, April 24, 2015 ~ 8 pm  
Coolidge Auditorium  
Library of Congress, Thomas Jefferson Building

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## Program

ELLIOTT CARTER (1908–2012)

*Duo for Violin and Piano* (1973-4)

*Commissioned by the McKim Fund in the Library of Congress*

MingHuan Xu, *violin*

Winston Choi, *piano*

Special thanks go to MingHuan Xu and Winston Choi, who were able to fill in at the last moment to perform Elliott Carter's *Duo*, replacing violinist Yura Lee, who was unable to perform tonight due to illness.

## BRIEF INTERMISSION

KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN (1928-2007)

*Mantra*, for two pianists (1970)

Katherine Chi, *Piano I*

Aleksandar Madžar, *Piano II*

James Donahue, *Sound Direction Engineer*

Cameron Kirkpatrick, *Musical Projection Engineer*



## About the Program

**ELLIOTT CARTER**, *Duo for Violin and Piano*

Notes by Paul Miller

Made possible through a commission from the McKim Fund in the Library of Congress, Elliott Carter's *Duo for Violin and Piano* was premiered to a standing room only audience at the Cooper Union's Great Hall in New York City on March 21, 1975. Raymond Ericson, the reviewer for the *New York Times*, was unmoved: he tepidly pronounced that the "piece sustains some interest." Nevertheless, he dutifully reported that the work was played twice, "each time brilliantly," by Paul Zukofsky and Gilbert Kalish. The audience gave it an "enthusiastic reception."

Perhaps some of Ericson's disappointment stemmed from the fact that at the premiere, the piano and violin were placed some thirty feet from one another at opposite ends of the stage. Though Carter did not like this potentially detrimental arrangement very much, it stemmed from the underlying premise of the piece, which is that the piano and violin express extraordinarily distinct musical characters. As Carter wrote, this is rooted in the physical way each instrument produces sound. Therefore, the composition's "basic character" derives "from the contrast between the sounds made by stroking the violin with a bow...and the sounds made by striking the piano."

Carter reflects this musically in many ways. The violin's music is often jagged, with irregular rhythms, suffused with hectic anxiety or expressive intensity specified by the many musical directions (always written in Italian, e. g. *ruvido*, *espressivo*, *molto espressivo*, *tenero*, *appassionato*, *cantabile*). On the other hand, the piano projects a cool, calculating and rational persona with its calmer, longer tones. Even in areas of thicker texture, the piano's rhythms are usually steady while the violin's are unequal. This confrontation between personalities can be heard from the very beginning; whereas the violin spins forth an active, *recitative*-like chatter, the piano withdraws

into passivity, even going so far as to depart into a nether-world of shadowy resonance by occasionally depressing a key without striking it.

If the fundamental contrast between the two instruments is apparent by their different styles of playing, Carter underscores it with a subtle but not inaudible technique of pitch deployment that can be found in many of his other works. With few exceptions, each instrument expresses its own palette of intervals: the violin typically plays minor seconds, major thirds, perfect fifths, major sixths and minor sevenths. The piano's repertoire consists of the remaining intervals, and the two share a tritone. As David Schiff has shown, a certain amount of individuation extends to chords as well. Moreover, Carter sometimes "freezes" each instrument's pitches in a formal section. This means that whenever the violin plays a note in a particular octave (say, a middle C), the piano avoids playing that specific note, and will only express it in a different octave. When this lock "thaws out" and the instruments share pitches in the same register, the timbral profile changes drastically, allowing formal boundaries to become more audible while dramatically shifting character towards a more iridescent, shimmering world of sound. The game the musicians play by alternatively sharing pitches and then claiming them for themselves allows them to probe deeply into a bubbling cauldron of social interplay and interaction.

Yet for all its intellectual muscle, the *Duo* is a work that dramatically and directly appeals to the senses. Its central "pointillistic" section contains moments of dead-pan humor at the same time as it pays homage to a well-worn modernist style dating back to Webern and avant-garde music of the 1950s by Boulez and Stockhausen (Boulez himself introduced the premiere in New York City). The *Duo's* buildup to its enormous final emotional climax involves some of the most gymnastic and acrobatic writing for violin and piano conceivable, pushing the limits not just of the instrumentalists' technique but also the composer's ability to express his ideas through notation.

The deeper question for our own time, embedded in the work's fundamental structure, is whether by virtue of the physical construction of our own bodies ("instruments"), we are locked into expressing a certain repertoire of gestures ("intervals") that are deemed appropriate or normative. If I may speculate a guess at Carter's take on that question, I would say that on account of the sensuous nature of the sections where instruments overtly share pitches, the answer is a qualified no. Yet, the difficulty of stepping beyond embodied norms (for example, what is easier on a violin than to play a perfect fifth on open strings?) can be experienced viscerally through the oscillation of violent confrontation and qualified repose in Carter's dramatic music.



## KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN, *Mantra*

Notes by Katherine Chi

To say it as simply as possible, *Mantra*, as it stands, is a miniature of the way a galaxy is composed. When I was composing the work, I had no accessory feelings or thoughts; I knew only that I had to fulfill the mantra. And it demanded itself, it just started blossoming. As it was being constructed through me, I somehow felt that it must be a very true picture of the way the cosmos is constructed, I've never worked on a piece before in which I was so sure that every note I was putting down was right. And this was due to the integral systemization - the combination of the scalar idea with the idea of deriving everything from the One. It shines very strongly.

- Karlheinz Stockhausen

*Mantra* is a seminal piece of the twentieth century, a pivotal work both in the context of Stockhausen's compositional development and a tour de force contribution to the canon of music for two pianos. It was written in 1970 in two stages: the formal skeleton was conceived in Osaka, Japan (May 1 – June 20, 1970) and the remaining work was completed in Kürten, Germany (July 10 – August 18, 1970). The genesis of the work was not straightforward and ultimately came about from the intersection of a turning point in Stockhausen's compositional process and the desire to write a piece for a specific pair of pianists, the Kontarsky brothers. *Mantra* is Stockhausen's first major formulaic composition, where he utilizes a serial-derived process, projecting a single melody onto all other aspects of the composition, generating all parameters from one simple idea. Stockhausen created a *Tonformel* (sound-formula), a thirteen-note melody or "mantra" that is the cell from which dynamics, articulation, rhythm and form is derived. There are thirteen different gradations of dynamics, thirteen types of articulation, and sine-tone generators for each pianist that sequence through the series of thirteen pitches and its inversion, respectively, providing a slow *cantus firmus* for the work.

Stockhausen conceived the "mantra" as a 13-note melody, using all 12 pitches of the scale, starting and ending on the same pitch. The material for Piano I is derived from this "mantra" while the material for Piano II comes from its inversion or mirror:

The image shows the musical notation for the Mantra melody, consisting of two staves: Piano I (top) and Piano II (bottom). The melody is written in a single line with 13 notes, numbered 1 through 13. The notes are: 1 (C4), 2 (D4), 3 (E4), 4 (F4), 5 (G4), 6 (A4), 7 (B4), 8 (C5), 9 (B4), 10 (A4), 11 (G4), 12 (F4), 13 (E4). The notes are written in a single line with a treble clef for Piano I and a bass clef for Piano II. The notes are: 1 (C4), 2 (D4), 3 (E4), 4 (F4), 5 (G4), 6 (A4), 7 (B4), 8 (C5), 9 (B4), 10 (A4), 11 (G4), 12 (F4), 13 (E4). The notes are written in a single line with a treble clef for Piano I and a bass clef for Piano II.

The first four chords of the piece will use all of the notes of the “mantra” and from this basic compressed cell the entire piece will begin to unfold and expand through pitch, time, timbre and rhythm. The “mantra” will be reiterated in many guises 84 times throughout the piece. The longest “mantra,” which is produced by a sine-tone generator, will take the whole piece to complete the thirteen-note “melody.” Each note of the sine-tone “mantra melody” roughly corresponds to a division of the piece into thirteen cycles. There are thirteen notes and divisions for both Piano I and Piano II; however the progression of the sine-generated tones for each of the pianos is not simultaneous. It is ironic that this “melody” produced by the sine-wave generator can never be heard by itself. It will not produce a pitch by itself unless it is combined with the sounds of the piano, voice and/or percussion.

Although the score is tightly conceived compositionally, the leap from conception to performance is enormously difficult, making performances of this approximately seventy-to eighty-minute piece rare. Stockhausen demands that the performers embrace a wider definition of virtuosity, and its execution requires a complex setup that is beyond the basic knowledge of a traditional classical pianist. Besides performing a piece that is physically demanding at the keyboard, the pianists must also learn how to use electronic<sup>1</sup> and percussion instruments, and to respond to a new spatial environment.

*Mantra*, as the title page of the music score clearly states, was written not for two pianos, but rather for two pianists. The title suggests the idea that the physical presence and the physicality of the pianists are of great importance; hence the “musical-theatre” of the pianists comes to the forefront. The pianists are required to utilize a space beyond the confines of the keyboard. They need to incorporate mallet work on the crotales and woodblocks into their keyboard work and constantly be adjusting the frequency of ring modulation throughout the piece. In one particular section Stockhausen’s fascination with Japanese Noh Theater is integrated into the piece requiring the pianists to use their voice and to act. Another important component that is weaved into the texture is morse code that is simulated electronically and also by the pianists on the keyboard.

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1 Stockhausen had a special modulator, MODUL 69 B, built to realize the electronics for the first performances of *Mantra*. MODUL 69 B took the input signal (piano, percussion, voice) and multiplied it with a sine tone, producing ring modulation. Ring modulation produces two sounds; one higher through addition of the two frequencies and one lower, through a subtraction of the two frequencies. The modulator also had a dial with frequencies variable between 3Hz and 6000Hz and had markers numbered 1-12 that were tuned to frequencies specified by Stockhausen’s “Mantra row.” Throughout the piece, each pianist turned the dial to the appropriate frequency indicated in the score.

In tonight’s performance, each pianist has a MIDI controller with 8 sliders and knobs. The maximum and minimum values of each slider and knob are controlled by a computer program and change throughout the performance to match the specifications in the score. Unlike the MODUL 69 B that used one large dial, having many smaller controls on a MIDI controller allows for complete accuracy on all the stopping frequencies. Each piano will have three mics that will take the piano (along with any percussion or voice) sound and send it to the computer where the program will perform ring modulation.

Electronics were realized in MAX/MSP\* by Caroline Park. MAX/MSP is a graphical development environment for music and multimedia.

*Mantra* is an exploration of an expanded sound world that allows a unique perspective of how electronics and instruments can co-exist.

### *Acknowledgements*

When we hear the word “performance practice,” we tend to associate this with examining music and instruments from the distant past. However, it also exists in the 21st century. The performance of electronic music is constantly in flux, and the dynamic energy in which machines (digital and/or analog), computers, software programs, hardware are constantly upgraded makes any performance challenging. As classical pianists, we are humbled when working with electronics, and the performance of this complex piece would not be possible without the help and support of many people. The performers gratefully acknowledge the following:

David Plylar and the wonderful technical crew for their passion and commitment to making *Mantra* possible at the Library of Congress.

James Donahue and Cameron Kirkpatrick for their tireless expertise, long hours of dedication and brilliance in audio rendering. We also thank them for allowing the use of their equipment for rehearsal and performance.

Caroline Park for the many late-night/early-morning hours needed to create and tweak the live ring modulation patch using Max/MSP.

Saj-nicole for allowing us to use her space and pianos for rehearsals and for her kind and generous moral support through the many tribulations of this project.

Frank Epstein for his generous donation of crotales and woodblocks for rehearsals.

John Mallia through the many meetings and advice regarding MAX/MSP and sound rendering.

Joe Buckley for creating the crotales stands.

Yvonne Lee whose intelligence and imagination brought inspiration and courage to delve into the world of *Mantra*.

~ Katherine Chi

(Program notes were extracted from an essay written in April, 2007)

## About the Artists

Pianist **Katherine Chi**, firmly established as one of Canada's fastest rising stars, has performed throughout Europe and North America to great acclaim. "Ms Chi displayed a keen musical intelligence and a powerful arsenal of technique" notes *The New York Times*. Recent and upcoming performances include her debuts with the Tallahassee and Modesto Symphony Orchestras, concerto appearances with the Vancouver Symphony and Edmonton Symphony, and collaborations at the Gilmore Festival and the Library of Congress.

Sought after as a concerto soloist of musical and technical distinction, Chi is noted for the breadth of her repertoire. While hailed for her interpretations of Mozart, she is also acclaimed for performances of major romantic and twentieth century concertos. "...the most sensational but, better, the most unfailingly cogent and compelling Prokofiev's Third I have heard in years" writes *The Globe and Mail*. And when Katherine Chi recreated Stockhausen's landmark work, *Mantra*, for two pianos and electronics the *Boston Globe* wrote "when the superb pianists Katherine Chi and Aleksandar Madžar took on the challenge at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum on Sunday, it was a welcome opportunity: courtside seats at the creation." "Chi and Madzar were ensconced among percussion, microphones, and MIDI controllers..., the form unfolding like a venerable suite even as it pushes the modernist envelope."

Chi has appeared with the Alabama, Calgary, Colorado, Columbus, Edmonton, Grand Rapids, Huntsville, Kitchener-Waterloo, Nova-Scotia, Philadelphia, Quebec, Richmond, Symphoria, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria Symphony Orchestras, CBC Radio Orchestra, Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra, I Musici de Montreal, Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, the Neue Philharmonie Westfalen and Toronto Sinfonia. Festival appearances include Aldeburgh, Banff, Canada's Festival of the Sound, Launadière, Domaine Forget, Marlboro, Osnabrück Kammermusik, Germany's Ruhr, Santander Summer Music, and Festival Vancouver.

Just one year after her debut recital at the age of nine Chi was accepted at the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music. She continued studies at the New England Conservatory in Boston, where she received her master's degree, graduate, artist diploma and doctorate. She later studied for two years at the International Piano Foundation in Como, Italy, and at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne. In 2000, Chi won first prize in Honens International Piano Competition and was the first Canadian and the first woman to win this award. She was also a prizewinner at the 1998 Busoni International Piano Competition. Her debut recording, on the Arktos label, features works of Beethoven and Rachmaninoff, and a new CD for the Honens label is slated for a 2015 release.



**Aleksandar Madžar** was born in Belgrade in 1968. He started playing the piano under the guidance of Gordana Malinovic and later studied with Arbo Valdma, Elisso Virsaladze and Daniel Blumenthal in Novi Sad, Belgrade, Moscow and Brussels. Aleksandar Madžar currently teaches at the Royal Flemish Conservatoire in Brussels.

Madžar was elected the most talented musician by the Yugoslav radio in 1985 and 1986, and won the Barenreiter Prize, the competition for Musical Performers in Geneva, the Busoni International Piano Competition in Bolzano, took third prize in the Leeds Piano Competition, and won the Umberto Micheli Competition in Milan and the International Competition Bach-Handel-Scarlatti in Varazdin in Yugoslavia.

He regularly gives recitals in Italy, France, Germany, UK, Japan and Colombia. He has performed with the Berlin Philharmonic, the BBC English, Scottish and Welsh, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the National Orchestra of Brussels and the Symphony Orchestra of Munich. He worked with Paavo Berglund, Ivan Fischer, Paavo Järvi, Libor Pešek, André Previn and Marcello Viotti. He is regularly invited by the festivals of Bad Kissingen, Schleswig Holstein, Davos, Roque d'Antheron, Salzburg, Sintra, Aldeburgh, Ivo Pogorelich and Piano Festival Ruhr. He has performed regularly all over Europe, enjoying a rich and varied career in recital, concertos and chamber music, occasionally also touring North and South America, South Africa and the Far East.

His discography includes, among others, the two concertos of Chopin with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony under the direction of Dmitri Kitaenko (BMG / Classic FM), works for two pianos by Chabrier from Arion, sonatas by Elliott Carter, Rachmaninoff and Schnittke with cellist Louise Hopkins (Intim Musik) and sonatas by Prokofiev, Hindemith and Martinů with flutist Mathieu Dufour (Harmonia Mundi).



**James Donahue** is on the faculty of the Berklee College of Music where he teaches classes in advanced orchestral recording as well as introductory classes in both the analog and digital domains. He has been recording for over 30 years and has worked with a wide variety of performers including Julia Child, Kermit the Frog, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and what feels like everything from Aerosmith to Zemlinsky. He is currently recording for release the Handel and Haydn Society's Haydn *Creation*, and an album (on vinyl) with the Parker Quartet. Current research projects include: "Of bodies and spirits: Soundscapes of Byzantine Thessaloniki," a project co-produced with the University of Southern California and the University of California in Los Angeles. This is Donahue's third *Mantra* performance with Katherine Chi as the Sound Direction Engineer.



**Cameron Kirkpatrick** holds a master's degree in oboe performance from the New England Conservatory. In 2005 he was the audio engineer for the Boston University Tanglewood Institute and in 2006 worked as production assistant at 89.7 WGBH, in the Classical Music Department. Kirkpatrick attended the Banff Center for the Arts, Audio Engineering program, where he first encountered *Mantra* from a non theoretical perspective, performing as musical projections engineer in 2008. This performance at the Library of Congress will be Kirkpatrick's fourth performance cycle of *Mantra*. He currently resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts where he produces video content for K&M Productions, and has a surprisingly successful baroque oboe performance career having recently performed with the period instrument ensembles Harvard Baroque Chamber Orchestra, Cambridge Concentus, Symphonie des Dragons, Portland Baroque Orchestra, and the Bach Society of Houston.



Duo Diorama comprises Chinese violinist **MingHuan Xu** and Canadian pianist **Winston Choi**. They are compelling and versatile artists who perform in an eclectic mix of musical styles, ranging from the great standard works to the avant-garde. It is a partnership with a startlingly fresh and powerful approach to music for violin and piano. Comprised of two renowned soloists who can effectively blend their distinctive personalities together to create a unified whole, the duo maintains an active performing and touring schedule.

Having performed extensively throughout Asia, North America, South America and Europe, Duo Diorama has gained a loyal following wherever they travel to. The duo's recent appearances at the Colours of Music Festival, Ebb and Flow Arts, the GroundSwell Series, the Mammoth Lakes Music Festival and Walla Walla Music Festival were met with critical and audience acclaim. Their recent South American tour included performances at the Festival Musica Nova in Brazil and Festival Encuentros. As the inaugural recipients of the Banff Centre's Rolston Fellowship in Music, they have recently toured throughout Canada, having performed in recital series from coast to coast. Recent concerts in China included the Central, Shenyang, and Sichuan Conservatories of Music, as well as Shandong University. In 2006 they gave their successful New York debut at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, as winners of Artists International Presentations' "Special Chamber Music Award." A feature broadcast on the debut was covered by Voice of America, a weekly television program viewed by millions of people in Asia. They were also named Artists-in-Residence for the Chinese Fine Arts Society's 2011-2012 season.

Having already commissioned and premiered over 20 works in the last few years, Duo Diorama is a leading proponent of music of living composers. Their insightful and dynamic interpretations have established the duo as a true champion of contemporary music. They are committed to music from today's culture and take a very personal approach to the presentation of these works—both those by the established modern

masters and those of today's emerging young composers. Composers they have commissioned include Marcos Balter, George Flynn, Derek Hurst, Gregory Hutter, Felipe Lara, Jacques Lenot, George Lewis, M. William Karlins, John Melby, Robert Morris, Robert Pollock, Huang Ruo, Daniel Weymouth, Amy Williams, Jay Alan Yim, and Mischa Zupko. They have also worked with composers William Bolcom, John Corigliano, Gunther Schuller, Bright Sheng and Chen Yi. Their many projects include performing multi-disciplinary works involving electronic media. By juxtaposing their performances with colorful commentary, Duo Diorama's unique performances emphasize the relevance and vivacity of classical music. A husband and wife team, the duo makes their home in Chicago, with their twins Lillian and Ethan.

**MingHuan Xu** performs extensively in recital and with orchestras in China and North America. She is also a highly sought-after chamber musician, having collaborated with the St. Petersburg Quartet, Colin Carr, Eugene Drucker, Ilya Kaler, and Ani Kavafian. She delights audiences wherever she performs with her passion, sensitivity and charisma. Xu was a winner of the Beijing Young Artists Competition and gave her New York debut at age 18 as soloist with the New York Youth Symphony Orchestra. Currently on faculty at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University, she plays on a 1758 Nicolas Gagliano violin.

**Winston Choi** was Laureate of the 2003 Honens International Piano Competition (Canada) and winner of France's 2002 Concours International de Piano 20e siècle d'Orléans. He regularly performs in recital and with orchestra throughout North America and Europe. A prolific recording artist, he can be heard on the Albany, Arktos, Crystal Records, l'Empreinte Digitale (piano works of Elliott Carter), Intrada and QuadroFrame labels. Formerly on the faculties of the Oberlin Conservatory and Bowling Green University, he is Associate Professor and Head of Piano at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University.



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