

B E Y O N D L A B E L S

CONCERTS FROM THE **LIBRARY** OF **CONGRESS**

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FOUNDER'S DAY

THE ELIZABETH SPRAGUE COOLIDGE FOUNDATION
IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

THE MCKIM FUND IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

ENSEMBLE DAL NIENTE

Thursday, October 30, 2014 ~ 8 pm
Coolidge Auditorium
Library of Congress, Thomas Jefferson Building

In 1925 ELIZABETH SPRAGUE COOLIDGE established the foundation bearing her name in the Library of Congress for the promotion and advancement of chamber music through commissions, public concerts and festivals; to purchase music manuscripts; and to support music scholarship. With an additional gift, Mrs. Coolidge financed the construction of the Coolidge Auditorium, which has become world famous for its magnificent acoustics and for the caliber of artists and ensembles who have played there.

ELIZABETH SPRAGUE COOLIDGE
(1864-1953)

The Library of Congress observes the date of her birth, October 30th, as Founder's Day, and on that day regularly presents a concert in her honor.

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.

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The Library of Congress
Coolidge Auditorium
Thursday, October 30, 2014 — 8 pm

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ENSEMBLE
DAL NIENTE



Program

GEORGE E. LEWIS (b. 1952)

The Mangle of Practice (2014), World Premiere

Commissioned by the McKim Fund in the Library of Congress

MingHuan Xu, violin

Winston Choi, piano

BRIEF PAUSE

GEORGE E. LEWIS

Assemblage (2013)

Emma Hospelhorn, flute
Alejandro Acierto, clarinet and bass clarinet
Ryan Muncy, soprano and tenor saxophones
Eric Derr, percussion
Ben Melsky, harp
Winston Choi, piano
MingHuan Xu, violin
Ammie Brod, viola
Chris Wild, cello
Michael Lewanski, conductor

INTERMISSION

GEORG FRIEDRICH HAAS (b. 1953)

in vain (2000)

Constance Volk, flute and piccolo
Emma Hospelhorn, flute, piccolo and bass flute
Andrew Nogal, oboe
Alejandro Acierto, clarinet
Katie Schoepflin, clarinet and bass clarinet
Ryan Muncy, soprano and tenor saxophones
Karl Rzasa, bassoon
Matthew Oliphant, horn
Julia Filson, horn
Weston Olencki, trombone
Jonathan Houghtling, trombone
Greg Beyer, percussion
Eric Derr, percussion
Mabel Kwan, accordion
Ben Melsky, harp
Winston Choi, piano
MingHuan Xu, violin
Andrew McCann, violin
Tarn Travers, violin
Ammie Brod, viola
Helen Hess, viola
Chris Wild, cello
Mira Luxion, cello
Mark Buchner, bass
Michael Lewanski, conductor

About the Program

**GEORGE E. LEWIS, *The Mangle of Practice* (2014), World Premiere
Assemblage (2013)**

The first half of tonight's program features the music of George Lewis, a true Renaissance man of great accomplishment in musical magisteria that do not typically overlap. This evening we celebrate him as a composer, but you may also know his work as a trombonist, improviser, interactive software programmer (and general electronic music guru), teacher and author. Of course, these descriptions are not entirely separable, as they inform each other and collectively yield the contributions we so admire. The musicians Lewis has worked with as a performer and composer are luminaries from the jazz and new music worlds, and we are pleased to host the continued collaboration with George Lewis and Ensemble Dal Niente, for whom he composed both *Assemblage* and *The Mangle of Practice*.

Professor Lewis has kindly provided notes for these two works, given below. These particular pieces do not involve electronic augmentation, but this is no limitation to the energetic vision that Lewis has for the music. The orchestrational detail in these works is wonderful, and will be evident even in the piece for "just" violin and piano, which includes a dazzling array of color and content. In a sense, the entire program is "about" process and striving to realize something by embarking on a musical path; it is not so much a framed vision of the final work that is the goal, but rather an awareness of the processes of creation and reception. The composers, performers and audience members are co-conspirators on a shared journey.

Given the range of talents that Lewis possesses and demonstrates with each new endeavor, it would be foolhardy to try to define his contributions as an artist, as so doing would be inherently exclusive. Yet the consistent, observable factor that applies to the corpus of Lewis' work is that this is music and writing that was produced by a great and thoughtful musician. We are lucky to be the beneficiaries of such creativity at concerts like tonight's, which coincides with the 150th birthday of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, founder of Concerts from the Library of Congress. I imagine that Mrs. Coolidge would have been very pleased and proud to hear such a concert in her honor.

*David Henning Phylar
Music Specialist
Library of Congress, Music Division*

From the composer:

The Mangle of Practice

I've borrowed the title of this piece from an essay by the sociologist of science Andrew Pickering, who deploys the word "mangle" in at least two senses, the first of which is nearly forgotten today. The mangle was the British term for what Americans called the "wringer," twin rollers in ancient washing machines that squeezed excess water from just-washed clothes. Pickering's notion of the mangle refers to the results of the nonlinear push-pull dynamic of resistance and accommodation, where human purposes and aspirations become reconfigured in indeterminate ways through our interactions with the material world—even to the extent where it becomes difficult to draw a bright line between human and material expressions of agency.

In everyday life, the mangle is a performative process, an artifact of emergence, a struggle between human and non-human (material and immaterial) realms, taking place in the real time of practice, in which human identity and purpose are run through the wringer with unpredictable and sometimes difficult or even painful results. I encourage encounters with this music in ways that recall the mangle, the dialectic of resistance and accommodation in listening that in the final analysis is fundamentally improvisative, even if (as in the case of the present work) the piece itself does not include improvised modes of organization. In both the sound and the form of this piece, I attempt to present a sense of what Pickering calls "irrevocably impure human/material hybrids" that evince their origins in processes of mangling as part of the more broadly constituted human (and even posthuman) condition.

Assemblage

Both the title and the musical content of *Assemblage* refer to a practice of visual artmaking that recombines and recontextualizes collections of natural and human-made objects. Assemblage-like processes were deployed *avant la lettre* in the work of Marcel Duchamp, Pablo Picasso, Louise Nevelson, and later, Jean Dubuffet, who called some of his creations "*assemblages d'empreintes*," a name adopted by later generations of artists and curators. Artists active in the 1960s and after, including Noah Purifoy, Betye Saar, John Outterbridge, and David Hammons, adopted and extended the practice, recycling and reframing both the quotidian urban detritus of modern civilization and the products of the black body as a means of establishing a historically synchronic Afrodiasporic imaginary in African America.

In the 1980s and 1990s, sociologists of science and technology studies associated with actor-network theory, such as Bruno Latour, adopted the image of the assemblage as a metaphor that could express the dynamics of social/material formations that exhibit contingency, heterogeneity, nonlinearity, and emergence, as well as fundamental processes of mediation, remediation, and bricolage. These are the spirits I've tried to evoke in this piece, and because I'm working in the sonic domain, I'm free to suffuse these dynamics with the power of noise as well. I encourage listeners to catch the bus

and go along for the ride, unburdened by expectations of teleologies or global form. What I'm looking for are quick, recursive reversals that generate a feeling of being far from equilibrium, encouraging listeners to do what we do best—stay in the moment and be ready for anything. Thanks very much for lending us your ears.

I'd like to thank David Plylar, the Library of Congress, and the extraordinary musicians of Ensemble Dal Niente for all the hard work they've put into this evening of music.

George Lewis
October 30, 2014



GEORG FRIEDRICH HAAS, *in vain* (2000)

There is something ineffable about works that aspire to monumentality and achieve it. While historically as much or more energy seems to be expended in the destruction of monuments, it is their creation that draws our admiration. Designations such as "masterpiece" are often used to describe those artistic monuments that meet culturally or personally determined criteria, and not just once has such an epithet been used to describe Georg Friedrich Haas' *in vain*. Without getting into the merit of such labels, I would like to briefly consider *in vain* as a monument in construction, rather than as a monument itself—or to look at it in another way, to think of it as monumentalizing the process of composition itself.

Such a view has a visual metaphor, as described by Bernhard Günther, who wrote liner notes for Klangforum Wien's inaugural recording of *in vain* with Sylvain Cambreling (to whom the work was dedicated). Therein he compares the illusory, never-ending staircases of M.C. Escher to the structure of Haas' score.¹ At each point in the work there is a direction that appears to be leading to a goal, but one finds after traversing the space that one has returned to the starting point. From one perspective, such a journey would seem to have been a wasted effort, conducted "in vain." Such a perspective, however, does not account for the changes that take place in the observer (or performer), and specifically the role of memory in coming to terms with experience of process and reclamation of what has come before.

The memories invoked are both those just created through the art experience, and those that might come to mind as precursors to the current endeavor. The river of Heraclitus, had Heraclitus been German, is evident in the rising harmonic series tide (about midway through Haas' work) that resembles the remarkable opening of Wagner's *Das Rheingold*. History and myth collide in these references to the origins of monuments, and the harmonic series has come to represent something of the

1 Klangforum Wien, Sylvain Cambreling, *in vain*, recorded 2-4.2.2002, ORF-Radiokulturhaus, Kairos 0012332KAL, 2003, compact disc. Liner notes by Bernhard Günther, 8.

"natural"—in Wagner's case quite literally, given the "overtones" of generative river imagery. While Wagner might be more likely to occupy a spot in the average music-lover's internal reference catalog, the sound worlds of *in vain* overlap with other musics, particularly of the twentieth century. The hyperactivity of the opening and closing sections in particular bring the micropolyphony of Ligeti's music to mind; both composers use hyper-specific notation to create a wash of sound that can be carefully directed.

Despite the use of so many notes, one could also describe the Haas as macro-minimalist, in the same vein as one might describe the sixth symphony of Allan Pettersson—larger-scale treatments of material are treated with a degree of economy, perhaps mediated by a spectral prism. For a better sense of what is meant by this, consider the rapid scalar descents that permeate the musical fabric, and consider those in the context of the slower, brass-reinforced descending scales that appear more prominently toward the end of the work.

There are also the differentiated approaches that various composers have taken to tuning and "microtonality" to consider vis-à-vis Haas. For instance, there are the perspectives of the "spectral" composers like Tristan Murail and Gérard Grisey, and the organic approaches to the harmonic series such as those found in the music of Per Nørgård. The tuning concerns of *in vain* are not of the sort that make one declare that Haas "is one of those microtonal composers." They are more in the Nørgård camp, in that one senses the privileging of "natural" tunings less mediated by artificial temperaments—however, such tunings are not easy for people to hear and understand without a great deal of care, given the predominance of equal temperament in our day-to-day lives. While the effects of Haas' choices greatly impact how we hear the music, creating harmonic conflicts of a different order, it may be only in certain moments that one is profoundly aware of the shifting tonal landscape, such as in significant timbral transformations, expanding glissandi and the isolated harp solo near the beginning of the piece.

Beyond the general sound and referential aspects mentioned above, there is also a theatrical component to *in vain* that significantly affects both the performers and the audience. At various points in the work, Haas indicates for the lights to be completely extinguished, and even flash at times, forcing the musicians to perform using memorized cells and audio-visual cues. Light—particularly the absence of light—plays an important role in other works by Haas, such as the third string quartet (played in absolute darkness), and *Hyperion*; the latter of which elevates light to the status of a musical entity in a way marginally similar to that of Scriabin in his *Prometheus*.

A problem is raised by the spectre of the title *in vain*, which courses through each musical pathway and reasserts itself at each point of familiarity. Are we to hear this music as inevitable, and therefore not worthwhile? Is a return to that which is similar the same as conceding to a Sisyphean fate? *in vain* contains music of great beauty and aspiration, and the greater portion of that beauty is in its aspiration, the music's

questing nature. One senses an eternal struggle with limitless rewards, and Haas ends the work *in medias res*, as if stopping midstep on Escher's staircase. In the final assessment, Haas has not so much left us a monument, but rather a partially hewn obelisk still partially embedded in the quarry's source stone. Its monumentality lies not in the work as a closed, finished object, but rather in its unfinished, questioning state. *in vain's* predicament inspires an appreciation for what has been accomplished, the modes of production that developed it, and the enduring struggle of composers and listeners to continue down their paths, coming together from time to time to share an experience.

-David Phylar



About the Artists

Ensemble Dal Niente is a 20-member Chicago-based contemporary music collective that presents and performs new music in ways that redefine the listening experience and advance the art form. The programming, brought to life by a flexible repertoire-based instrumentation, seeks to challenge convention and create engaging, inspiring, and immersive experiences that connect audiences with the music of today.

Described as "super-musicians" and noted for "bracing sonic adventures by some of the best new-music virtuosos around" (Chicago Tribune), Ensemble Dal Niente became the first-ever ensemble recipient of the coveted Kranichstein Music Prize - the top award for music interpretation - at the 2012 International Summer Courses for New Music in Darmstadt, Germany.

The ensemble has commissioned or premiered hundreds of works and has collaborated with visual artists and playwrights to create rich new experiences for audiences and people of diverse creative disciplines. Equally at home working with major international figures as with younger composers, Dal Niente's recent collaborators include Brian Ferneyhough, Chaya Czernowin, George Lewis, Marino Formenti, Kaija Saariaho, Marcos Balter, Greg Saunier, Deerhoof, Hans Thomalla, Lee Hyla, Johannes Kreidler, Mark Andre, Evan Johnson, Aaron Einbond, Morgan Krauss, and Jay Alan Yim.

The ensemble's name, Dal Niente ("from nothing" in Italian), is a tribute to Helmut Lachenmann's work for clarinet *Dal niente* (Interieur III), the courageously revolutionary style of which serves as an inspiration for its musicians. The ensemble's name also references its humble beginnings -- founded in 2004 by a group of music students at various Chicago schools, the ensemble has risen from obscurity to a position as one of North America's most prominent new music groups.

George E. Lewis is the Edwin H. Case Professor of American Music at Columbia University. The recipient of a 2002 MacArthur Fellowship, a 1999 Alpert Award in the Arts, a 2011 United States Artists Walker Fellowship, and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Lewis studied composition with Muhal Richard Abrams at the AACM School of Music, and trombone with Dean Hey. A member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) since 1971, Lewis' work in electronic and computer music, computer-based multimedia installations, and notated and improvisative forms is documented on more than 140 recordings. His work has been presented by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Talea Ensemble, Dinosaur Annex, Ensemble Pamplemousse, Wet Ink, Ensemble Erik Satie, Eco Ensemble, and others, with commissions from American Composers Orchestra, International Contemporary Ensemble, Ensemble Dal Niente, Harvestworks, Ensemble Either/Or, Orkestra Futura, Turning Point Ensemble, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, 2010 Vancouver Cultural Olympiad, IRCAM, Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra, and others. Lewis has served as Ernest Bloch Visiting Professor of Music, University of California, Berkeley; Paul Fromm Composer in Residence, American Academy in Rome; Resident Scholar, Center for Disciplinary Innovation, University of Chicago; and CAC Fitt Artist In Residence, Brown University. Lewis received the 2012 SEAMUS Award from the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States, and his book, *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (University of Chicago Press, 2008) received the American Book Award and the American Musicological Society's Music in American Culture Award. Lewis is the co-editor of the forthcoming two-volume Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies, and is composing *Afterword*, an opera commissioned by the Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago, to be premiered at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.



In spite of all the contrasts that can be felt in the music of **Georg Friedrich Haas**, the composer's central focus is the sensual stimulus of the sound and an interest in a live instrumental tone, while still maintaining and not contradicting the more conceptual aspects of his compositions. Born in Graz in 1953, he pursued his studies both in his home town with Gösta Neuwirth and Ivan Eröd, and later in Vienna with Friedrich Cerha. Already as a student, he investigated different concepts of microtonal systems, consulting the oeuvre of composers like Wyschnegradsky, Hába, Tenney, Nono and Grisey.

Microtonality thus became an important denominator in his work early on, as in his chamber opera *Nacht* which was premiered with great success at the Bregenz Festival in 1996. After initial experiments with quarter tones in the mid-eighties, he began to explore sound as a set of iridescent intermediate values. In pieces such as his first string quartet (1997) he worked intensively with overtone constellations - a process

that culminated in his ensemble piece *in vain* (2000).

Haas' works have been performed at the most prominent contemporary music festivals since the end of the 1990s. He garnered much attention at the Salzburg Festival 1999 as the featured Next Generation composer. The Bregenz Festival commissioned another chamber opera (*Die schöne Wunde*) which was premiered in 2003 by Klangforum Wien. In the same year, the SWR Radio Symphony Orchestra performed his work *Natures mortes* in Donaueschingen, where in 2006 the great success *Hyperion* was also performed.

Many renowned symphony orchestras have premiered works by Haas, including the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Vienna Philharmonic (Cello Concerto, 2004), Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg (*Sieben Klangräume*, 2005), Cleveland Orchestra (*Poème*, 2006), Munich Philharmonic (*Bruchstück*, 2007), Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra (Piano Concerto, 2007), WDR Radio Symphony Orchestra Cologne (BariSaxophone Concerto, 2008), the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig (*Traum in des Sommers Nacht*, 2009) and the Munich Chamber Orchestra in a co-commission with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra (*chants oubliés*, 2011).

Haas has also written three more operas since 2008: *Melancholia* has been performed in various opera houses since its successful premiere at the Opéra National de Paris in 2008; *Bluthaus* and *Thomas*, which feature a libretto by Händl Klaus, both had highly acclaimed world premieres at the Schwetzingen Festival in 2011 and 2013.

Haas has received numerous composition awards and was honored with the Grand Austrian State Prize in 2007. He has been a member of the Austrian Kunstsenat since May 2011. He has been a professor at Columbia University in New York since September 2013.

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150th BIRTH DAY celebration

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*Special Technofiles Event with Panos Panay, David Dufresne, Casey Rae,
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Friday, November 7, 2014 – 8:00 pm

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A piano recital featuring the music of J.S. Bach, Beethoven and Brahms

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