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YARN | WIRE

Saturday, October 10, 2015 ~ 8 pm
Coolidge Auditorium
Library of Congress, Thomas Jefferson Building

Adeline Jewel Croft, a pianist and teacher, and her husband William were for more than forty years regular and enthusiastic members of the chamber music audience at the Library of Congress. The WILLIAM AND ADELINE CROFT MEMORIAL FUND was established in 1981 to enhance the chamber music series, enlarge the audience for chamber music through broadcasting and recording, and enrich the Library's collection of musical rarities.

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**The Library of Congress
Coolidge Auditorium
Saturday, October 10, 2015 — 8 pm**

THE WILLIAM AND ADELINE CROFT MEMORIAL FUND
IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

YARN | WIRE

IAN ANTONIO & RUSSELL GREENBERG,

PERCUSSION

LAURA BARGER & NING YU,

PIANO



Program

TRISTAN MURAIL (b. 1947)

Travel Notes (2014)

Commissioned by the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation
in the Library of Congress

LUCIANO BERIO (1925-2003)

Linea (1973)

ALEX MINCEK (b. 1975)

Pendulum VI: "Trigger" (2010)

INTERMISSION

DAVÍÐ BRYNJAR FRANZSON (b. 1978)

the Negotiation of Context (B) (2009)

MISATO MOCHIZUKI (b. 1969)

Le monde des ronds et des carrés (2015)

About the Program

TRISTAN MURAIL, *Travel Notes*

Travel Notes moves through imaginary landscapes, or soundscapes, by means of a no less imaginary transportation device. It is also somewhat of a rondo alternating between two types of musical structures. One comes back at varied intervals, like the refrains of a rondo (the “travel” structures), the other always changes—the couplets (the “landscapes”).

The “travel” structures: chords that bounce from one piano to the other. These chords, or rather musical objects, can be perceived as timbres, their harmonies being quite rich and complex; a journey sometimes soft and smooth, sometimes harsh... slow, accelerating, fast, decelerating, rarely steady, sometimes mixed with or superposed onto a “landscape” sonic image.

The “landscapes:” contrasting textures. Melodies of chords, seemingly improvised solos on piano or vibes (all written of course), flurries of arpeggios, ragged rhythms, large bell-like sounds... one can imagine mountains and chasms, peaceful lakes, whispering cascades, or just listen to the harmonic colors, timbral associations, instrumental gestures, and metamorphoses of sound textures.

More technically, the piece plays with rich sound aggregates and complex resonances, which are either complementary, moving resonances of all instruments, or contrasting. For instance, the musical object that begins the piece is a short, loudly attacked chord on one piano, enhanced by percussion and followed by a resonance of a very different color from the other piano. This acts as a landmark throughout the rest of the work.

Though the piece is for two pianos and two percussionists, the piano writing actually owes more to Liszt than to Bartók... Bon voyage!

- Notes by the composer



LUCIANO BERIO, *Linea*

1937 was one of the bread-and-butter years for the nascent ensemble of two pianos plus percussion; that was the year that Béla Bartók composed his Sonata for two pianos and percussion. Bartók's sonata (that he transformed a few years later into the Concerto for two pianos, percussion and orchestra) has since become perhaps the most familiar work in this genre to audiences. It capitalizes on elements of contrast and points of intersection between the pianos and the variety of percussion instruments employed. There is another work that, to my mind, serves as a second *locus classicus* of the genre, however—Luciano

Berio's *Linea* of 1973.¹

Linea, with its use of vibraphone and marimba, aspires to something akin to the familial homogeneity of the string quartet—the three different instruments maintain their distinctive identities, yet coexist in a similar sound space. To be sure, Berio displays much of the timbral range of the instruments as the work progresses, but he sets up the musical argument in such a way that the listener may first hear "difference" as a variation from the composite norm.

Linea is divided into thirteen sections, played without interruption:

*Manège I—Entrée I—Ensemble I— Manège II—Ensemble II— Manège III—
Ensemble III— Entrée II—Coda I—Allegro—Coda II—Ensemble IV—Notturmo*

There is variability within each section, as tempos and affects shift, but each type or "class" of division share certain features. The *manège* (meaning carousel or roundabout, suggestive of oscillation and circularity—a line that returns) sections, for instance, share a singular melodic focus. All of the instruments play a unison line at the beginning of the work (unison, but already with subtle competition between the vibraphone and pianos in terms of pedal indications); each piano part is initially contained on a single staff instead of the usual grand staff.² Before too long we begin to hear some deviation from the strict unison, such as a marimba tremolo or the isolation of particular pitches through the withholding of some attacks. Each *manège* section features the return of the single line, or glosses on a discernible central line.

The *entrée* sections are not the main meal of the piece, but rather serve more of a transitional role. The ensemble sections involve greater independence of the voices; while the material is drawn from the same sources, there is less emphasis on simultaneity of attack on the same pitches. The music remains highly coordinated, however, with dramatic returns to unison writing offsetting the broader range of arpeggiation and tremolos. Another key development in the music is the incorporation of punctuating chords in the pianos—verticalizations of the lines. By the time we get to the *Allegro* section of *Linea*, the first piano embodies both planes of harmonic and melodic thought in a significant solo with commentary interjected by the other instruments. A process of consolidation and the return to a more unified execution occur as the work reaches the *notturmo*. The effective orchestration in what is essentially a third coda transforms what was once the unified action of four players into the unified sound of a meta-instrument, replete with built-in echoes of its own music.

1 This is to take nothing away from other contributions of this period by composers like George Crumb (*Music for a Summer Evening*; 1974) and Lukas Foss (*Ni bruit, ni vitesse*; 1972); the limits of *Linea*'s instrumentation, along with the particulars of Berio's compositional execution, contribute to its "classicism." The Library of Congress holds the holograph manuscripts of both the Crumb and Foss works mentioned above.

2 This simple decision helps to bring into focus the linearity of the music; Liszt did the same thing in his piano version of Paganini's first *Caprice* (no. 4 of Liszt's *Grandes études de Paganini*).

While the piano/percussion quartet genre may not (yet) have a giant collection of literature, groups like Yarn|Wire are actively generating new contributions to their vibrant idiom through commissions and collaborations. Our program starts with one of the classics—although still less than fifty years old—and continues with four works that arose from the initiative and advocacy of Yarn|Wire. Below are the notes for *Linea* by Luciano Berio, followed by statements from each of the other accomplished composers about their works.

David Henning Phylar
Music Specialist
Library of Congress, Music Division



Linea

The subject matter or theme of *Linea* is the constant transformation of a very simple melody into more complex, differentiated and independent articulations. It is rather difficult to define a melody, since this term always implies other functions; a melody by J. S. Bach—a monody, a simple line—implies not only a phrase structure and a rhythmic one, but also a harmonic structure. In a solo violin Sonata, polyphony is implied (and heard as such) even when the violinist is playing a single line... If I decide to use a melody, I must put all the implied elements into it: these elements are not taken for granted or given by history, but have to be invented anew.

Linea is exactly this—an exposition of the elements implied in a melody which is only apparently simple, and is destroyed by its own implications. At times, however, the melody reappears in recognizable form, like an object found again after an absence, and seen with different and maybe more penetrating eyes. Sometimes the four players (two pianists and two percussionists) meet on the same line, playing the same melody; sometimes they diverge and play different music, generated, however, by that ever-present melody. I composed *Linea* in 1973 for Felix Blaska and his dance company.³

~ Luciano Berio



ALEX MINCEK, *Pendulum VI: "Trigger"*

Pendulum VI: "Trigger" for two percussionists and two pianists is the sixth part of an ongoing series of pieces inspired by the simple swinging motions of pendulums. These pieces are all constructed using materials characterized by back and forth “movements” between various binary relationships; relationships such as short/long, fast/slow, high/low, loud/quiet, sparse/dense, unified/separated, clear/ambiguous, parallel/contrary, different/similar, mechanical/organic, etc. Sometimes these oscillations occur discretely on a localized temporal level and at other times they are combined, overlapped, or occur across

3 Composer's note, accessed at the website Centro Studi Luciano Berio, <http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1388?1946039788=1>.

an expanded space of time. An important aspect of these pieces is the representation of a refusal to “choose a side.” There are also few attempts to find a middle ground. Instead, both sides of each polemic are treated as equals and are mediated by alternating in quick, constant succession from one to the other in an attempt to represent the insistence of “having it both ways.”

This particular piece plays with the various ways musical impulses can “trigger” the initial displacements of materials (in keeping with the pendulum metaphor) and also with how the oscillations that ensue may either be made to continue or be brought to rest. As with many of my other works the piece also explores the ways in which repetition affects one’s perception of difference, but more specifically, how timbre in particular relates to the cognition of varying degrees of structural complexity. For example, the opening minute or so of the piece subjects a short rhythmic structure to many “exact” repetitions. However, with each repetition the structure is articulated with a slightly different timbral combination, rendering the repetition nearly imperceptible within a web of differences. The aim is to generate a complex perceptual scenario by combining simple, opposing materials. In addition it is my hope the listener will recognize subtlety in the seemingly redundant, overly reduced.

- Notes by the composer



DAVIÐ BRYNJAR FRANZSON, *the Negotiation of Context (B)*

"For new actions to be perceived and responded to as meaningful, the shared understanding concerning what is being talked about—i.e., the frame of interpretation all participants are applying to what each other says and does—must be reached first."

- Adam Kendon: "The negotiation of context in face-to-face interactions."⁴

the Negotiation of Context (2009 – 2011), is a set of three independent pieces. Each of the three pieces is assembled from various sounds and contexts on top of a topography of pre-existing programs: the history of the instruments, the social dynamics of the performers, and the means of presentation of the piece. The listener is presented with a series of materials that embody how performers play with or against each other as well as with materials based on sound archetypes that mimic everyday sounds—sounds recently experienced and sounds distorted by memory.

the Negotiation of Context began as an exploration and an extension of the piano but transformed into an investigation of the historical and personal aspects of the piano, the instruments that the piano appears with throughout the piece, the sounds of those

4 Kendon, Adam, "The negotiation of context in face-to-face interaction," in *Re-thinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, A. Duranti and C. Goodwin, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1992), 323-334.

instruments, and the contexts in which those sounds appear.

the Negotiation of Context is a reimagining of a music that could have been. It is an alternative timeline constructed from the sounds of my childhood, the sounds that I hear in my everyday life, and the contexts that I hear them in.

In *the Negotiation of Context (B)*, the materials are extended to also include ways that two instruments of the same type can play with and against each other. The internal dynamic of these materials is based on sounds heard during walks through a local park. Low drone-like sounds overlap in all of the instruments, short attacks fluctuate back and forth between either of the two pairs of instruments, minimal pitch melodies with equally minimal accompaniment are shared between the two pianos, a shimmering sound moves excessively back and forth, and an unevenly repeated sound produced by a single action lingers throughout. These materials recollect cars driving by, construction along the side of the park, the warning sound of heavy machinery backing up while tearing down trees, the proportionally over represented sound of a bug buzzing back and forth around my head, and the non-stop jingling of my dog's leash.

- Notes by the composer



MISATO MOCHIZUKI, *Le monde des ronds et des carrés*

Le monde des ronds et des carrés (“The World of Circles and Squares”) deals with spatial and musical combinations of two geometric shapes while exploring relationships that the musicians create between each other: opposition for the square and union for the circle. As I was writing this piece, I was also contemplating the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II and the question of what would cause people to kill one another.

- Notes by the composer
translated by Aaron Einbond

About the Artists

Yarn|Wire is a New York-based percussion and piano quartet composed of Ian Antonio and Russell Greenberg (percussion), and Laura Barger and Ning Yu (piano). Founded in 2005, the ensemble is admired for the energy and precision it brings to performances of today's most adventurous music, and is dedicated to expanding the repertoire written for its instrumentation, through commissions and collaborative initiatives that aim to build a new and lasting body of work. Influenced by its members' experiences with classical music, avant-garde theater, and rock music, the ensemble champions a varied and probing repertoire.

Yarn|Wire has commissioned works from numerous American and international composers including Raphaël Cendo, Ann Cleare, Davíð Franzson, Alex Mincek, Thomas Meadowcroft, Misato Mochizuki, Tristan Murail, Kate Soper, and Øyvind Torvund; and has given the U.S. premieres of works by Enno Poppe, Stefano Gervasoni, and Georg Friedrich Haas, among others. The ensemble also enjoys collaborations with genre-bending artists including Tristan Perich, David Bithell, Sufjan Stevens, and Pete Swanson.

Yarn|Wire appears nationally at leading festivals and venues including the Lincoln Center Festival, BAM, New York's Miller Theatre, River-to-River Festival, La MaMa Theatre, and the Festival of New American Music. Their new and ongoing series, "Yarn|Wire/Currents," serves as an incubator for new experimental music at Brooklyn's ISSUE Project Room. In addition to performance and recording projects Yarn|Wire works to promote new music in the U.S. through educational residencies and other outreach activities. For more information, visit yarnwire.org.



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ATOS Trio

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Coolidge Auditorium (Tickets Required)

Pre-Concert Conversation – 6:30 pm

Michael Hersch and Kay Redfield Jamison
Coolidge Auditorium (No Tickets Required)

Saturday, October 17, 2015 – 2:00 pm

Nicholas Phan & Myra Huang

Featuring the songs of Rorem, Schumann, Britten & Bowles
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Monday, October 19, 2015 – 8:00 pm

THE MUSIC OF MARVIN HAMLISCH

Ted Sperling | Lindsay Mendez | Capathia Jenkins
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Friday, October 23, 2015 – 8:00 pm

PAVEL HAAS QUARTET

Works by Dvořák & Martinů
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Michael Beckerman, PhD, New York University
Whittall Pavilion (No Tickets Required)

Saturday, October 24, 2015 – 8:00 pm

WINDSYNC

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Paul Lansky and the Artists
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"The Ongoing Composition of Rhapsody in Blue"

Ryan Raul Bañagale, PhD

Professor of Music, Colorado College

American Musicological Society Lecture

Montpelier Room, Madison Building (Tickets Required)

Tuesday, November 10, 2015 – 7:00 pm

"Berlioz, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Charles Munch"

D. Kern Holoman, PhD

Distinguished Professor of Music Emeritus, University of California, Davis

Montpelier Room, Madison Building (Tickets Required)

Monday, November 16, 2015 – 7:00 pm

"Debussy's Fascination with the Exotic— from China to Spain"

Marie Rolf, PhD

*Senior Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Professor of Music Theory,
Eastman School of Music*

Montpelier Room, Madison Building (Tickets Required)

Wednesday, December 2, 2015 – 7:00 pm

"Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock 'n' Roll"

Peter Guralnick, author

Montpelier Room, Madison Building (Tickets Required)

Wednesday, December 9, 2015 – 12:00 pm

"Fritz Kreisler's Violin and Piano Version of the Sibelius Violin Concerto"

Jani Lehtonen, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra

Whittall Pavilion (No Tickets Required)

Thursday, December 10, 2015 – 7:00 pm

"Louis and Lil—A Couple Making Musical History"

Dan Morgenstern

Library of Congress Jazz Scholar

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