

OJAIMUSICFESTIVAL JUNE 10-13, 2010

THOMAS W. MORRIS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

GEORGE BENJAMIN, MUSIC DIRECTOR

PROGRAM NOTES
by Christopher Hailey

CONCERT

Thursday, June 10, 2010 | 8 pm | Libbey Bowl

Members of Ensemble Modern
George Benjamin, conductor
Hilary Summers, mezzo soprano
Hermann Kretzschmar, piano

SAED HADDAD

Le Contredésir

STEVE POTTER

Paradigms (excerpts) U.S. PREMIERE

9. the blossoming of the brain trees (Mime)
4. 若すすき鳥飛びたちて五時の鐘 (Haiku)
- 2b. more than (poem segment)
1. what could she say to the fantastic foolbear (story)
7. 3-part Sinfonia (instrumental)
8. l'ennui (fragment)

Hilary Sommer, mezzo soprano
Hermann Kretzschmar, piano

ELLIOTT CARTER

Oboe Quartet

INTERMISSION

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG/arr. GREISSLE

Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 16

1. Premonitions
2. The Past
3. Colors
4. Peripeteia
5. The Obligato Recitative

JOHANN STRAUSS, Jr./arr. SCHOENBERG

Emperor Waltz

Ensemble Modern
George Benjamin, conductor

Learn more about the program at the free Concert Insights with Christopher Hailey at 7 pm, Libbey Park tennis courts.

Thursday, June 10, 2010 / 8pm Libbey Bowl
Program Notes

Le Contredésir (2004)
Saed Haddad (b. 1972)

Paradigms (2009), excerpts
Steve Potter (b. 1979)

Oboe Quartet (2001)
Elliott Carter (b. 1908)

Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 16 (1909); arr. Felix Greissle (1925)
Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951)

Emperor Waltz (1889), arr. Arnold Schoenberg (1925)
Johann Strauss Jr. (1825–1899)

Global Perspectives

Both Saed Haddad and Steve Potter have studied with George Benjamin at King's College in London, but that point of intersection belies their varied backgrounds. Haddad's musical studies have taken him from his native land of Jordan to Israel, England, France, and Germany, and he has also studied philosophy in Belgium. In his music one hears a stimulating amalgam of Arabic, Hebrew, and Western elements. Potter, born in California, studied music in the United States and Holland before joining Benjamin in England. His wide-ranging influences include renaissance, baroque, classical, and contemporary composers, as well as non-Western and popular music, but he is also an avid student of contemporary film and literature. These are composers of a new, global generation whose broad interests and horizons reflect the gradual disappearance of cultural borders.

Le Contredésir, one of Haddad's most frequently programmed works, is characteristic of its composer's idiosyncratic, often whimsical musical imagination. The three contrasting instruments have distinct, sharply etched personalities although they frequently share or trade off musical ideas. In their melodic inflection and ornamentation (including bended pitches) one can hear echoes of Middle Eastern practice, but it is also music whose harmonic language is unthinkable without the influence of European modernism.

Steve Potter has described *Paradigms* as "a fragmented piece of many tiny sections at odds with one another." The selections heard here include both sung and purely instrumental movements. The composer has emphasized that these excerpts do not represent a cohesive whole but rather serve as an indication of the stylistic range of the piece.

Elliott Carter is today a composer of global significance, but his earliest works were more narrowly focused on the kind of Americana we associate with Aaron Copland. This began to change in the late 1940s, when Carter started to explore a range of rhythmic and harmonic complexities that took him to the forefront of international modernism. Carter's more recent works are perhaps less complex, but they have lost none of the composer's characteristic wit and precision. He was 91 when he completed his *Oboe Quartet* in 2001, of which he writes: "The *Oboe Quartet* is built up from a series of six duets, which cover every possible combination of the four instruments. Each duet lasts just a minute or two, and the other two instruments provide an accompaniment. When I wrote the *Oboe Concerto* for Heinz Holliger, he showed me the amazing things he could do, such as multiphonics and glissandi, and I incorporated them into the concerto. But this new piece doesn't have any of those sounds in it. My works now are not really experimental in terms of special effects, but rather in the way the music is organized."

The stations of Arnold Schoenberg's career took him from Vienna to Berlin, and from Boston and New York to Los Angeles. His music laid the foundation for the kind of internationalist modernism that inspired Carter, but throughout his life Schoenberg remained indebted to his Viennese roots. These roots are evident in his Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 16, which, for all their revolutionary fervor, look back to the Viennese love of instrumental color and nuance. Schoenberg wrote these pieces in 1909, at a time when he aspired to a musical language of visceral immediacy, "a complete liberation from all forms, from all symbols of cohesion and logic," as he wrote the composer Ferruccio Busoni. These five movements do not follow established forms but represent what the composer described as "a continuous succession of colors, rhythms, and moods." The work's descriptive titles were urged upon Schoenberg by his publisher, who argued that audiences would be more receptive to this unusual music if provided with a few suggestive hints. Schoenberg reluctantly complied, but it is unlikely that his titles represented an aesthetic compromise. The aggressive energy and insistent ostinatos of the first piece, *Premonitions*, evokes a state of anxiety, while the drifting melodic strands of *Past*, the longest of these movements, suggests a kind of contemplative reverie. Schoenberg described the third piece, *Colors*, as a study of hushed stasis and changing instrumental timbres but his subtitle, *Summer Morning on a Lake*, alludes to a concrete vacation experience. The fourth movement, *Peripeteia*, is all jagged fragments; in Aristotelian dramatic theory the peripeteia is the turning point, or dramatic reversal, in a tragedy. The final movement, *The Obligato Recitative*, is in many ways the most radical of the five, lacking the kind of melodic or rhythmic repetition that serves to articulate structure in the first four pieces.

Schoenberg's pieces were given their premiere in 1912 in London at a popular Proms concert and were surprisingly well received. Even today they offer an ideal introduction to that remarkable period in which Schoenberg made his breakthrough to atonality because, though dissonant, they are alluring in their timbral beauty. In this reduction, prepared by Schoenberg's son-in-law Felix Greissle in 1925, the colors of the orchestra give way and are transformed into a delicate interplay of individual lines.

Schoenberg was utterly at ease with Viennese popular style, having worked in the trenches orchestrating operettas during the early 1900s. His witty arrangements of waltzes by Johann Strauss Jr. include this setting of the *Emperor Waltz*, made in 1925 for the Kolisch ensemble, which was touring Spain with a program that featured *Pierrot lunaire*. Strauss wrote this work to celebrate a meeting between the German and Austro-Hungarian emperors Wilhelm II and Franz Josef I in 1889 and there is an appropriate degree of pomp in the introduction. It is one of Strauss's last great waltz cycles, whose popularity came to rival that of the famous *Blue Danube Waltz*.

CONCERT

Friday, June 11, 2010 | 8 pm | Libbey Bowl

Ensemble Modern

Brad Lubman, conductor

Dietmar Wiesner, flute

Hermann Kretzschmar, speaker

FRANK ZAPPA

Works from: *Greggery Peccary" & Other Persuasions*

What will Rumi do

Works from: *The Yellow Shark*

Dog Breath Variations/Uncle Meat

Outrage at Valdez

Girl in the Magnesium Dress

Ruth is Sleeping

Get Whitey

Welcome to the United States

G-Spot Tornado

INTERMISSION

EDGARD VARÈSE

Density 21.5

Dietmar Wiesner, flute

Octandre

1. Assez lent

2. Très vif et nerveux

3. Grave Animé et jublatoire

FRANK ZAPPA

Works from: *Greggery Peccary & Other Persuasions*

Night School

Revised Music for Low Budget Orchestra

The Beltway Bandits

A Pig with Wings

Moggio

Put a Motor in Yourself

Ensemble Modern

Brad Lubman, conductor

**Friday, June 11, 2010 / 8pm Libbey Bowl
Program Notes**

Density 21.5 (1936)

Edgard Varèse (1885–1965)

Octandre (1924)

Edgard Varèse

From: *Greggery Peccary & Other Persuasions* (2002)

Frank Zappa (1940–1993)

From: *The Yellow Shark* (1993)

Frank Zappa

Conceptual Continuity

Frank Zappa was 13—he was Frankie then—when he chanced upon a mention of an Edgard Varèse LP. The description of the music, something along the lines of “a weird jumble of drums and other unpleasant sounds,” so intrigued him that he set out on a quest to find that fabled album:

One day I was passing a hi-fi store in La Mesa. A little sign in the window announced a sale on 45's. After shuffling through their singles rack and finding a couple of Joe Houston records, I walked toward the cash register. On my way, I happened to glance into the LP bin. Sitting in the front, just a little bent at the corners, was a strange-looking black-and-white album cover. On it there was a picture of a man with gray frizzy hair. He looked like a mad scientist. I thought it was great that somebody had finally made a record of a mad scientist. I picked it up. I nearly (this is true, ladies and gentlemen) peed in my pants . . . THERE IT WAS! EMS 401, *The Complete Works of Edgard Varèse Volume I . . . Intégrales, Density 21.5, Ionization, Octandre . . .* Rene Le Roy, the N. Y. Wind Ensemble, the Juilliard Percussion Orchestra, Frederic Waldman conducting . . . liner notes by Sidney Finkelstein! WOW!

-*Stereo Review*, June 1971

That discovery and others that followed, not to mention a telephone call with and a letter from the composer himself, led to a lifelong passion for Varèse's music. It also set Zappa on a course that culminated in an idea he called “conceptual continuity,” that is the notion that an individual's creative acts and ideas, however disparate, are part of a larger, ever widening continuum. This is certainly true for Zappa's own works, but it also inspired his refusal to recognize artificial barriers between pop, rock, jazz, classical, or any other category of what we call music. Tonight's combination of Varèse and Zappa pays tribute to that conviction.

The two pieces by Varèse on this concert were among the works on that first LP, released in 1950. *Density 21.5* was written in 1936 for the debut of the platinum flute (the density of platinum is 21.5 grams per cubic centimeter). The work is based on two contrasting motivic cells heard at the outset of the piece, a falling minor second, then rising major second (F-E-F[#]), and the interval of a tritone (C[#]-G), what Varèse called an “atonal” and a “modal” idea. Mediating between them is the interval of the minor third. From a calm, meditative beginning the flute gradually unfolds these ideas into ever -higher registers. The texture becomes increasingly fragmented with agitated bird-like interjections. The reappearance of the opening motive leads to a return that combines registral extremes with the mood and more melodic style of the first part of the piece.

Zappa wasn't so far off when pegged Varèse as a mad scientist. "Music, which should pulsate with life," Varèse wrote, "needs new means of expression, and science alone can infuse it with youthful vigor." Varèse's fascination with science and technology led him to pioneer electronic instruments, create installations of "organized sound" for Le Corbusier's modernist architecture, and spend decades working on two gargantuan cosmic fantasies that remained unfinished at his death. But Varèse was most successful when working on a smaller scale and in such instances he often took his inspiration from intricacies of nature. *Octandre* refers to flowers with eight stamens as well as the work's eight performers of woodwinds, brass, and double bass. The absence of percussion is unusual for Varèse (as is the work's three-movement structure), but rhythmic patterns, including ostinato, play a pervasive role in defining the work's architecture. Like *Density 21.5*, *Octandre* contains short, identifiable motivic cells, but the logic and drama of the piece have less to do with their development than with the contrast of layered textures.

Varèse's relatively small output owes something to his slow, careful compositional habits as well as his propensity for revision. This resulted in numerous unfinished works as well as competing versions of his completed compositions, a circumstance that raises editorial issues for any performance or recording of Varèse's music. Performing and recording Zappa's music, on the other hand, involves very different issues. Although Zappa began composing in earnest at 14, his long career as a performer and keen interest in all innovations in recording, including tape editing, overdubbing, video, and film, meant that only a small fraction of his vast output exists as traditional scores. Moreover, in his last years he became especially enamored with the Synclavier and its ability to generate and perform any imaginable number of parts with absolute accuracy, something all but impossible with live performers. That is, until he encountered Ensemble Modern. "I've never had such an accurate performance at any time for the kind of music I do. The dedication of the group to playing it right and putting the 'eyebrows' on it is something that would take your breath away." That meeting of musical minds resulted in the tour program and the album *The Yellow Shark*, released in 1993, and, after Zappa's death, *Greggery Peccary & Other Persuasions*, released in 2002.

The *Greggery Peccary* program and album are mainly devoted to Zappa's Synclavier compositions, transcribed and arranged for the Ensemble Modern by Ali N. Askin. The pieces are drawn from various sources, including the 1986 album *Jazz from Hell (The Beltway Bandits)*, *Civilization Phase III* of 1993 (*Put a Motor in Yourself*), and the 1969 solo album *Hot Rats (Peaches En Regalia*, one of Zappa's best known compositions). *Moggio* and *Night School* were arranged at the request of the Ensemble Modern in 1996.

The Yellow Shark, a title inspired by a fiberglass fish that hung in Zappa's basement, was the last album released in the composer's lifetime and is a showcase for his eclectic and often highly complex musical language. *Dog Breath Variations/Uncle Meat*, from 1977, is an arrangement of what was originally a work for a 40-piece orchestra. The rhythmically sophisticated *Outrage at Valdez* was written as theme music for a documentary about the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska. *Girl in the Magnesium Dress* and *Ruth is Sleeping* are arrangements of Synclavier compositions, while *Welcome to the United States* is a partly improvised theater piece whose text is drawn from the Nonimmigrant Visa Waiver Arrival and Departure Form. *Get Whitey* takes its title from an early version of the piece, which was restricted to the white keys of the piano, and *G-Spot Tornado* originated as a Synclavier piece from the 1986 album *Jazz from Hell*. These arrangements, performed by classically trained artists and amplified and mixed, rock concert style, in six-channel surround sound, represent the kind of continuum of musical worlds that was Frank Zappa's credo.

CONCERT

Saturday, June 12, 2010 | 11 am | Libbey Bowl

Eric Huebner, piano

OLIVIER MESSIAEN

Vingt Regards sur l'enfant Jésus

1. Regard du Père
2. Regard de l'Étoile
3. L'Echange
4. Regard de la Vierge
5. Regard du Fils sur le Fils
6. Par Lui tout e été fait
7. Regard de la Croix
8. Regard de Hauteurs
9. Regard du Temps
10. Regard de l'Esprit de Joie
11. Première Communion de la Vierge
12. La Parole toute-puissante
13. Noël
14. Regard des Anges
15. Le Baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus
16. Regard des prophètes, de bergers et des Mages
17. Regard du silence
18. Regard de l'Onction terrible
19. Je dors, mais mon cœur veille
20. Regard de l'Église d'amour

The concert will be performed without intermission. Latecomers will be allowed to wait in the back and be seated as a group. Lawn seating will also be available.

Learn more about the program at the free Concert Insights with Christopher Hailey at 10 am, Libbey Park tennis courts.

Saturday, June 12, 2010 / 11am Libbey Bowl
Program Notes

Vingt Regards sur l'enfant Jesus (1955)
Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992)

Wonders of Creation

Wonder. It can be a question or an exclamation mark, wide-eyed bafflement or complete surrender. Olivier Messiaen spent much of his creative life exploring the simple premise that music can probe and proclaim the mysteries and wonders of God's creation. His *Vingt Regards sur l'enfant Jesus*, composed in 1944 for Yvonne Loriod, comprises, as Messiaen has written, 20 aspects of contemplation of the infant Jesus in his cradle "from the ineffable look of God the Father to the collective gaze of the Church of love, taking in along the way the tender glance of the Virgin Mary, those of the Angels and Magi, and of immaterial or symbolic figures."

For Messiaen the substance and craft of musical composition, down to the minutest details of motive, rhythm, harmony, and structure, served to symbolize, through abstract correspondences, the very mysteries he explored. The technical details are fascinating in themselves but what makes Messiaen a great composer is the communicative power of his language, his capacity for translating the abstract into music that is concrete, gripping, and memorable.

Vingt Regards makes use of four recurring musical ideas: a stately Theme of God; a short but catchy Theme of Mystical Love; an angular Theme of the Star and of the Cross; and the all-pervasive Theme of Chords, which Messiaen described as "a complex of sounds destined to perpetual variation, pre-existing in the abstract like a series, but quite concrete and easily recognizable by its colors: a steel-blue shot through with red and bright orange, a mauve stained with a leathery brown and encircled with a light purple." The following remarks draw upon Malcolm Troup's translation of Messiaen's own notes on the work.

1. *Gaze of the Father* presents a full statement of the Theme of God: "And God said: 'This is my own dear Son with whom I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 3:17)
2. *Gaze of the Star* introduces the Theme of the Star and of the Cross.
3. *The Exchange* has to do with the mystery of the human incarnation of the divine. Messiaen describes the movement as one long crescendo in which "the same fragments, juxtaposed or superimposed, are repeated: Each time, certain notes ascend, others descend, and others remain the same."
4. *Gaze of the Virgin* expresses the "innocence and tenderness" of the maternal gaze.
5. *Gaze of the Son upon the Son* concerns the "Word made flesh" contemplating the "God made flesh." Here the composer juxtaposes three sonorities, three modes, three rhythms on three staves of music. "From time to time, the polyrhythm and polymodality are interrupted, and the Theme of God continues, counterpointed only with the song of an ideal bird, which borrows at times from the blackbird and the garden warbler."
6. *Through Him everything was made* is an agitated movement about "Creation of the All: space, time, stars, planets and the Face of God behind the flame and the fury. ..." Messiaen structures the movement as a grandiose, "anti-scholastic" fugue encompassing the full range of the keyboard and incorporating the Themes of God, Mystical Love, and Chords.
7. *Gaze of the Cross* again introduces the Theme of the Star and the Cross "accompanied by an increasingly chromatic lament." Here and elsewhere Messiaen's use of modes evoked for him a succession of colors ranging from mauve- and rose-grey to yellow, orange, violet, carmine red, and black.

8. *In Gaze of the Heights* the songs of the Angels are symbolized by the songs of birds, including the thrush, nightingale, blackbird, garden warbler, and the field lark, “the great soloist, he who permanently commands the loftiest reaches of the scene.”
9. *Gaze of Time* addresses the mystery of the birth of the eternal within time: “The whole piece is thus mysterious and its musical material remains elusive.”
10. *Gaze of the Joyful Spirit* conjures the spiritual intoxication infusing the soul of Christ. Prominent in its seven sections are an oriental dance (at the outset), as well as the Themes of God and Chords, and an additional Theme of Joy.
11. In *The Virgin’s First Communion* Mary adores the as-yet-unborn Jesus. The movement begins with a pianissimo statement of the Theme of God. “Fleeting garlands of sound evoke the forms of stalactites in oracular grottos.”
12. *The All-Powerful Word* is “The Child Jesus is this Son” and it inspires music that is “simple and terrible,” a single line played fortissimo with percussive accents above and below.
13. *Christmas* is orchestral in its inspiration and “demands of the pianist a variety of attacks imitating other instruments: timbres of bells and of tam-tam, of xylophone and marimba, of clarinets and flutes [...], not to mention the rhythm of kettle-drums at the close.”
14. *Gaze of the Angels* is in five strophes evoking in their course a “flickering of flames,” athletic angels blowing into “immense brass instruments,” “bird song (especially the blackbird),” and “the stupefaction of the Angels.” Pervasive throughout is the Theme of Chords.
15. *The Kiss of the Infant Jesus* is a set of variations beginning simply (“as unadorned as Rameau”) and becoming ever more ornamented (“ranging from Mozartian accentuation to the nimble fingerwork associated with Chopin’s Etudes”). Messiaen characterizes the movement as “the Theme of God arranged as a lullaby.”
16. Messiaen describes *Gaze of the Prophets, the Shepherds and the Magi* as “exotic strains of tam-tams and oboes, shrill and nasal harmony.”
17. *Gaze of Silence* subjects patterns of chords (including the Theme of Chords) to an array of contrapuntal treatments culminating in a coda Messiaen depicts as “multicolor and impalpable music like confetti, scattered precious stones, crisscrossing shafts of light.”
18. *Gaze of the Awesome Anointing* is “that unique, unheard-of, terrifying Unction” in which the Word puts on a human likeness through the flesh of Jesus having been chosen by the awesome Majesty.” Messiaen further characterizes the piece as “a mighty chorale of sounding brass, enlivened by the crashing of thunder.”
19. *I Sleep, but My Heart Keeps Watch* conjures up the “soul which awaits the Well-Beloved.” This quiet movement is dominated by the Theme of Mystic Love.
20. *Gaze of the Church of Love* brings together the Themes of God, Mystic Love, and Chords. “A grand coda, always on the theme of God: after the sheaths of night, the anguished tossing and turning, here is the triumph of Love and the tears of Joy—all the passion of our arms embracing the Invisible!”

CONCERT

Saturday, June 12, 2010 | 8 pm | Libbey Bowl

Ensemble Modern

George Benjamin, conductor

Anu Komsu, soprano

Hilary Summers, contralto

IGOR STRAVINSKY

L'Histoire du Soldat Suite

The Soldier's March

Airs by a Stream

Pastorale

The Royal March

The Little Concert

Three Dances (Tango, Waltz, Ragtime)

The Devil's Dance

The Great Chorale

Triumphal March of the Devil

INTERMISSION

GEORGE BENJAMIN

Into the Little Hill (concert version) West Coast Premiere

Part One

I The Crowd

II The Minister and the Crowd

III The Crowd

IV The Minister and the Stranger

V Interlude

Mother and Child

Part Two

VI Inside the Minister's Head

VII The Minister and the Stranger

VIII Interlude

Mother(s) and Child(ren)

Anu Komsu, soprano

Hilary Summers, contralto

Concert Insights with Christopher Hailey and guest artist George Benjamin with an introduction from Classical KUSC Kimberlea Daggy, at 7 pm, Libbey Park tennis courts.

Saturday, June 12, 2010 / 8pm Libbey Bowl
Program Notes

L'Histoire du Soldat Suite (1920)

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

Into the Little Hill (2006)

George Benjamin (b. 1960)

Folk Tales

Here we have two folk tales: one an ancient parable of temptation involving a devil's bargain for a human soul; the other, a tale of retribution in which the soul of humanity itself is at stake. Like all such tales these are lessons meant to be remembered and heeded, and like all such tales they are retold because they are not.

In 1917, in the midst of a world war, Igor Stravinsky, cut off from his principal collaborator, Serge Diaghilev, isolated in neutral Switzerland, and beset with financial difficulties that would only be exacerbated by the turmoil of Russian Revolution hit upon the idea of creating a theater piece very unlike the lavish productions of the Ballet Russes: "Why not do something quite *simple*? Why not write together a piece that would need no vast theater or large public? Something with two or three characters and a handful of instrumentalists." Multiple necessities had become the mothers of invention and Stravinsky turned to a favorite source, a compilation of Russian folk tales compiled by Alexander Afanasiev and, together with the Swiss playwright Charles Ferdinand Ramuz, reworked a series of episodes concerning "The Deserter and the Devil" into a modern-day parable of enticement and punishment.

The underlying theme of the play goes back at least to Biblical times and has resonated across cultures and epochs. In this re-telling a soldier, presumably on leave but actually a deserter, meets the devil and bargains away his violin for a book that brings him great wealth. He manages to win back his violin and with it cure a princess who then becomes his bride. His homesickness, however, draws him back to his native village where the devil, awaiting him, takes him to hell. To underscore the universality of the story, what the composer called its "essentially human aspect," the original staging in September 1918 made allusions to contemporary circumstances and local dialect, but mixed costumes of various periods and styles, a strategy Stravinsky recommended for all subsequent productions.

To accommodate the exigencies of their circumstances, Stravinsky and Ramuz restricted their cast to three speaking roles (a narrator, the soldier, and the devil) and a dancer (the princess), but the most remarkable aspect of the work was Stravinsky's scoring. It is a uniquely astringent and often threadbare-sounding ensemble that pairs widely spaced instruments from the woodwind, brass, and string families with an especially prominent role reserved for percussion, which is associated with the devil. Moreover, for this curious dramatic hybrid—part play, part melodrama, and part ballet—Stravinsky composed music of a shocking and dizzying diversity of styles. Among its dance numbers there is a chirpy waltz, an Argentinian tango, and a Spanish paso doble, but there is also a military march, a brass band, gypsy violin, and a Lutheran chorale, not to mention American ragtime, which at the time had become Stravinsky's passion. Although Stravinsky described *The Soldier's Tale* as his decisive break with his Russian roots, there remains, as Richard Taruskin has demonstrated, a firm foundation in Russian folk sources.

With its low-budget scoring and the stylistic pastiche of its multiple brief movements *The Soldier's Tale* was predestined for concert performance as a suite, which Stravinsky duly provided in 1920. Though half the length of the original stage work this suite contains virtually all its principal musical numbers, thus providing a satisfying musical synopsis of the drama. In this form the work traveled widely throughout Europe and America

in the 1920s and '30s and became one of Stravinsky's most popular and influential pieces and the prototype for his own neoclassical style, which he would cultivate until well into the 1950s.

It is not difficult to see George Benjamin's *Into the Little Hill* as a descendent of Stravinsky's quirky drama. Like *The Soldier's Tale*, Benjamin's opera is a re-telling of a familiar folk tale with limited resources. Here two soloists take on six different roles, and while Benjamin's instrumental ensemble is twice the size of Stravinsky's the writing is no less transparent and imaginative. Indeed, on first hearing it is the distinctive quality of Benjamin's instrumental writing that is perhaps the most arresting aspect of the work. There are striking instrumental effects and, on occasion, evocations of distant musical worlds, here a 17th-century consort of viols, there an Indonesian gamelan. The other remarkable aspect, of course, is Benjamin's brilliant vocal writing, writing of such power, variety, and intensity that it seems scarcely possible that it involves only two singers. Benjamin's vocal and instrumental virtuosity is never an end in itself but serves to delineate character, atmosphere, and dramatic structure.

The story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, probably inspired by the catastrophic of the Children's Crusade of 1212, is the tale of a Westphalian town overrun by rats in 1284. A mysterious piper in a multi-colored cloak succeeds in ridding the town of its rats, but when he is denied his payment he leads the town's children into a mountain cave from which they never again emerge. Martin Crimp's libretto reshapes the narrative into a tense, highly concentrated confrontation in which the extermination of the rats is given contemporary resonance with echoes of some of the darkest chapters of recent human history.

This is the point at which the comparison to Stravinsky begins to break down. Ramuz's drama may be pessimistic, even cynical, but it is a morality tale about an individual from whom we are removed by the distancing effects of Stravinsky's highly stylized musical frame. Crimp's libretto asks more of us because, in a sense, we are more directly implicated. And Benjamin's music does not so much frame the story as reach through to its terrifying core. In composing the work Benjamin was keenly aware of the tension between what he calls "self-contained statement" and "prolonged, even developmental passages." We, too, can appreciate the skill with which Benjamin captures concrete characters and situations—the slashing whiplash of the bloodthirsty crowd; the smooth platitudes of the unctuous minister; the scurrying rats; the mysterious, unsettling stranger—but there is also a firm sense of dramatic line that grips us from first to last.

CONCERT

Sunday, June 13, 2010 | 11 am | Libbey Bowl

Wildcat Viols:

Joanna Blendulf, treble viol
Julie Jeffrey, tenor viol
Elisabeth Reed, bass viol
Annalisa Pappano, bass viol

Aashish Khan, sarode
Javad Ali Butah, table
John Stephens, tanpura

HENRY PURCELL

Fantasias for Viols

Fantasia 11 à 4 in G major
Fantasia 7 à 4 in c minor
Fantasia 2 à 3 in F major
Fantasia 5 à 4 in B^b major
Pavan à 3 in d minor (adapted from Z. 749 in a minor)
Fantasia 8 à 4 in d minor
Prelude in g minor (accompanied treble)
Fantasia 3 à 3 in g minor
Fantasia 4 à 4 in g minor
Fantasia 9 à 4 in a minor
Fantasia 12 à 4 in d minor
Fantasia 1 à 3 in d minor
Fantasia 6 à 4 in F major

Wildcat Viols:

Joanna Blendulf, treble viol
Julie Jeffrey, tenor viol
Elisabeth Reed, bass viol
Annalisa Pappano, tenor viol

INTERMISSION

North Indian Classical Morning Ragas

Aashish Khan, sarode
Javad Ali Butah, table
John Stephens, tanpura

Learn more about the program at the free Concert Insights with Christopher Hailey with Aashish Khan, at 10 am, Libbey Park tennis courts.

Sunday, June 13, 2010 / 11am Libbey Bowl
Program Notes

Selected Fantasias for Viols (c. 1680)

Henry Purcell (1659–1695)

North Indian Classical Morning Ragas

Music and Time

Time is the necessary medium for music's unfolding but music is also a medium that articulates time. This can be a question of simple metric division, as with a clapping hand, or an envelope of duration, as with, say, John Cage's *4'33"*. The music on this morning's program explores two further possibilities. In the Fantasias of Purcell it is a musical past that lingers on; one composer's attempt, perhaps, to arrest time's passage through the cultivation of a form, a technique, a sound, and a social practice that were all fast fading into obsolescence. In the ragas of North India, on the other hand, we have music as an embodiment of time's recurrence, the cyclic passage of the day or of the season. In both instances music serves to heighten our awareness of our own dependence upon time and why, like music, we so fear its cessation.

In his short life Henry Purcell established himself as the preeminent musical figure of his age and at his death at age 36 was mourned as "one of the most celebrated Masters of the Science of Musick in the Kingdom and scarce inferior to any in Europe." Indeed, with the exception of George Frederick Handel (that anglicized German), no British composer would enjoy such renown until the 20th century. While Purcell's fame rested primarily on his vocal and dramatic music he wrote a substantial number of instrumental and keyboard works, among which the fantasias rank supreme.

Purcell was writing during what we now call the high Baroque, a time when the era's instrumental chamber genres and technical procedures—most particularly the trio sonata, dance suites, and contrapuntal forms such as the fugue—were reaching their maturity. The conservative nature of England's musical life is evident both in the continued cultivation of older instruments and ensembles—the consort of viols in the age of violins and the keyboard-bassline continuo—and the persistence of Renaissance forms, including the fantasia, also known in England as the fancy, which had enjoyed its heyday in the late 16th century. In his *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musick* of 1597 Thomas Morley gave the classic definition of the form: "The musician taketh a point at his pleasure and wresteth and turneth it as he list, making as much or little of it as it shall seem best at his own conceit. In this may the more art be shown than in any other music because the composer is tied to nothing but that he may add, diminish or alter at his pleasure."

In today's terms the fantasia is a free-form movement in which three to six independent voices (the instrumentation can vary) develop a short motive or theme through contrapuntal manipulation, including augmentation, diminution, and inversion. Since the logic of this music is primarily linear rather than harmonic there are occasional cross relations that produce delicious dissonances that would largely disappear in the more streamlined harmonic practice of the 18th century. Even in its day the fantasia required skill both of the composer and the performer and a certain sophistication on the part of the listener. As a consequence it was a form best suited to a circle of connoisseurs in intimate settings. As can be imagined, such works found little encouragement during the pleasure-loving Restoration of the late 17th century, during which dance music enjoyed the widest appeal.

Purcell's interest in the fantasia and the old-fashioned instrumental consort of viols may have been that of a composer looking to match his skills against such predecessors as Matthew Locke, Orlando Gibbons, and Morley himself, whose treatise was still read and studied. In any event, Purcell's works were not published in his lifetime and may well have been known to only a small circle of his closest friends and admirers. It would seem that he planned his fantasias as a coherent collection and from his manuscripts it is clear that he intended

to continue the cycle with ever-larger ensembles of up to eight parts. George Benjamin's love of these works is evidenced by his own use of viol consort in his Yeats setting *Upon Silence* of 1990.

The word *raga* is derived from a Sanskrit word meaning to be colored (specifically reddened) in the sense of being moved by emotion, passion, or delight. As a musical concept the raga dates back to the 5th century A.D. and denotes a repertory of fixed scale patterns associated with particular moods, states of mind, and, especially in North India, times of the day or seasons of the year which can have both religious and aesthetic significance or even therapeutic effects. These patterns, or modes (of which there are dozens, if not hundreds) are believed to be divinely inspired and each involves a specific set of ascending and another set of descending pitches, as well as a range of ornamentation, pitch variation, and motivic formulae that can be elaborated in composition, performance, and improvisation.

The basic raga scale consists of five to seven pitches and, as with the tonic and dominant of the Western practice, the first and fifth scale degrees ("Sa" and "Pa") are fixed and central. The other pitches of the raga are subject to being flattened and/or sharpened, which fills out the traditional 12-note tonal spectrum, though with the possibility of additional microtonal inflection of individual pitches.

Regula Qureshi describes the typical ensemble, which consists of three separate melodic, rhythmic, and metric elements above a drone:

The primary melodic material is traditionally carried by a singer, a plucked string instrument, or a reed instrument. Antiphonal or accompanying melodic material is sometimes provided by a bowed instrument (with the singer) or a second reed instrument; bowed instruments and transverse flutes are now used as solo melodic instruments. Drums provide an independent rhythmic stratum, from simple configurative cyclic patterns to complex virtuoso passages. Rhythmic and melodic parts in ensemble are held together on a third level, provided by idiophones or hand-clapping or both, marking out the time cycles.

There are numerous distinctions between Northern (Hindustani) and Southern (Karnatak) musical styles, but on the whole the Northern tradition is largely Muslim and associated with court culture.

CONCERT

Sunday, June 13, 2010 | 5:30 pm | Libbey Bowl

Ensemble Modern
George Benjamin, conductor
Anu Komsí, soprano
Ueli Wiget, piano
Dietmar Wiesner, flute
Megumi Kasakawa, viola
Patrick Juedt, viola

PIERRE BOULEZ

Memoriale

Dietmar Wiesner, flute

GEORGE BENJAMIN

Viola, Viola

Megumi Kasakawa, Patrick Juedt, violas

OLIVER KNUSSEN

Requiem - Songs for Sue, Op. 33

1. Is it true, dear Sue?
2. Cuando murió su amada
3. Time will say nothing but I told you so
4. Bist du noch da? In welcher Ecke bist du?

Anu Komsí, soprano
Ensemble Modern
George Benjamin, conductor

GEORGE BENJAMIN

At First Light

I
II
III

Ensemble Modern
George Benjamin, conductor

INTERMISSION

GYÖRGY LIGETI

Chamber Concerto

1. Corrente
2. Calmo, sostenuto

3. Movimento preciso e meccanico
4. Presto

OLIVIER MESSIAEN
Oiseaux exotiques

Ueli Wiget, piano

Learn more about the program at the free Concert Insights with Christopher Hailey at 4:30 pm, Libbey Park tennis courts.

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Program Notes

Memoriale (...Explosante-Fixe... Originel) (1985)
Pierre Boulez (b. 1925)

Viola, Viola (1997)
George Benjamin (b. 1960)

Requiem: Songs for Sue, Op. 33 (2006)
Oliver Knussen (b. 1952)

At First Light (1982)
George Benjamin

Chamber Concerto (1970)
György Ligeti (1923–2006)

Oiseaux exotiques (1956)
Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992)

Derivations

Pierre Boulez is loathe to let things go and in addition to a propensity for revising and making multiple arrangements of his works he often revisits ideas from older pieces. *Mémoriale*, written in memory of the flautist Lawrence Beauregard in 1985, reworks material from ...*explosante-fixe*..., a score dedicated, in turn, to the memory of Igor Stravinsky. The basic harmonic and melodic substance of the work derives from a seven-note sonority, whose transpositions are centered around E^b. At the outset the flute leads, capricious, playful, dancing, the colorful ensemble trailing in its wake. As the piece progresses, however, the texture grows darker and thicker and the flute is increasingly enmeshed in the other instruments until coming to rest on a hushed E^b.

Boulez' tendency to reprocess older material suggests gradual development and seamless continuity. The music of George Benjamin, on the other hand, has often been noted for its radical shifts, as if every successive work represented a pendulum swing in the opposite direction. "Each new piece feels like I have to start again," Benjamin has said, though he adds: "Having said that, I do see my compositional life as a continuum, but a continuum of trying to break through to new territory." There can be no doubt that with *Viola, Viola*, first heard in Ojai in 2000, Benjamin achieved a remarkable breakthrough. It is tour de force in which he conjures a universe of textures and sonorities with a mere two instruments. But he also creates from this series of strongly profiled musical ideas a compelling overarching structure. "There may be many ideas going on in my pieces, but there is always the possibility of unity somewhere."

In *At First Light* that unity has to do with the work's inspiration: a late painting by William Turner, *Norham Castle, Sunrise*. "What struck me immediately about this beautiful image," Benjamin recalled, "was the way in which solid objects—fields, cows, and the castle itself—appear virtually to have melted under the intense sunlight. [...] Abstractly, this observation has been very important to the way I have composed the piece. A 'solid object' can be formed as a punctuated, clearly defined musical phrase. This can be 'melted' into a flowing, nebulous continuum of sound. There can be all manner of transformations and interactions between these two ways of writing."

Benjamin has described *At First Light* as “a contemplation of dawn, a celebration of the colors and noises of daybreak.” In the work’s brief first movement “superimposed fanfares burst into hazy, undefined textures.” The second and longest movement is fractured, “full of abrupt changes in mood and tension,” while the last movement, which follows without a break, “progresses in a continuous, flowing line illuminated with ever more resonant harmonies.”

If Benjamin’s work celebrates the birth of day, Oliver Knussen’s *Song for Sue*, a lyric requiem for his late wife, is a meditation on its close. But this is no rage against the dying light, but rather an exploration the mysteries of presence and absence. Sue Knussen was a warm and vibrant presence, much loved here in the Southern California musical community during her years as education director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. These four poems trace a journey from the shock of loss and the effort of memory to a confrontation with the impassive face of time and the stab of a lingering luminescence. In Knussen’s settings the arching, aching beauty of the vocal line flows past luxuriant instrumental banks that send out skittering phosphorescent sparks and loving, solicitous tendrils.

Both Knussen and Benjamin have drawn inspiration from György Ligeti, whose music revolutionized the instrumental thinking of the 1950s and ’60s, in particular in its ability to produce beguiling surface effects with complex, often layered events on a micro-level. As with *At First Light*, Ligeti’s Chamber Concerto is music that invites visual metaphor. The composer himself has said that the first movement, *Corrente*, suggests smoothly running water, beneath which is a world of separate activity: “The musical events you hear are blurred; suddenly a tune emerges and then sinks back again. For a moment the outlines seem quite clear, then everything gets blurred again.” The second movement seems to invert the strategy of the first. Here the activity scurries along the surface above an underlying stasis that recalls the *Colors* movement of Schoenberg’s *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 16. The third movement is a classic example of Ligeti’s love of a clockwork of layered polyrhythmic, polymetric activity. The last movement, *Presto*, is a fiendishly difficult finale that reminds us that this chamber concerto is also meant to be a showcase of 13 virtuoso soloists.

After the finely spun detail of Ligeti’s Chamber Concerto the strident brilliance of Messiaen’s *Oiseaux exotiques* is a shock. And unlike *At First Light*, Messiaen gives us the full glare of day and a raucous flutter of chirping, cackling, and squawking far removed from Benjamin’s tentative birdcalls. This is an altogether different philosophy of sound and orchestration—hard-edged and spiky—that arises not only from Messiaen’s choice of instruments (woodwind, brass, percussion, and piano soloist) or dynamic levels that scarcely fall below *forte*. More fundamentally it is a notion of sonority that reflects the crystalline clarity of Messiaen’s faith. Ligeti’s intricate clockwork is messy by comparison, the mirror of a cosmic order shot through with chaos. Messiaen’s musical universe, by contrast, can seem rigid and insistent, but his cleanly articulated motivic material, his firm harmonies, and an array of fixed, often reversible rhythmic patterns, bespeak a world order that is autonomous, far removed from human agency, in which composition is, as it were, an act of transcription. *Oiseaux exotiques* is one of the first of Messiaen’s works to derive its musical material from meticulously transcribed birdsongs. But Messiaen’s birds are archetypal rather than individual voices, not so much the record of human impressions of the natural world as emissaries of the Divine. The work is cast as a kind of piano concerto alternating tutti sections with piano solos. Among the birds represented are the Indian Minah, the Cardinal, Cat Bird, Prairie Chicken, and Bobelink, as well as Wood, California, and White-Crested Laughing Thrushes.