

CONCERTS FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS 2012-2013

ESCHER STRING QUARTET

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2012
2 O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON



FOUNDER'S DAY CONCERT

MUSIC OF MORTON SUBOTNICK*

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2012
8 O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING
*Rescheduled due to inclement weather

COOLIDGE AUDITORIUM
THOMAS JEFFERSON BUILDING
THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

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 musical 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.

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

The CAROLYN ROYALL JUST FUND in the Library of Congress, established in 1993 through a bequest of the distinguished attorney and symphony player Carolyn Royall Just, supports the presentation and broadcasting of classical chamber music concerts.

The audio-visual equipment and the Steinway Concert Grand Piano in the Coolidge Auditorium were funded in part by the IRA AND LEONORE GERSHWIN FUND in the Library of Congress.

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THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
Coolidge Auditorium

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2012, AT 2:00 P.M.

*THE CAROLYN ROYALL JUST FUND
IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS*

ESCHER STRING QUARTET

Adam Barnett-Hart and Wu Jie, *violin*
Pierre Lapointe, *viola*
Dane Johansen, *violoncello*

PROGRAM

HENRY PURCELL (1659-1695)

Chacony in G minor, Z. 730 (c.1678)
Arranged by Benjamin Britten

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

String Quartet no. 2 in C major, op. 36 (1945)
Allegro calmo senza rigore
Vivace
Chacony: Sostenuto

INTERMISSION

CARLO GESUALDO (1566-1613)

"Se la mia morte brami," W vi,13 from *Madrigali libro sesto* (1611)
"Illumina faciem tuam," W,viii,60 (1603)
Arranged by Pierre Lapointe

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Quartet for two violins, viola and violoncello in A minor, op.132 (1825)
Assai sostenuto—Allegro—Adagio—Allegro—Adagio—Allegro
Allegro ma non tanto
Molto adagio—Andante—Molto adagio—Andante—Molto adagio
Alla Marcia, assai vivace—Più allegro—Poco adagio
Allegro appassionato—Presto

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

HENRY PURCELL, Chacony in G minor, Z.730 (1678)
arr. Benjamin Britten (1948, rev. 1963)

Purcell's place in the history of English music is secure. As one of the most prolific English composers of the Baroque period, Purcell had a pronounced influence on Benjamin Britten's compositions. Scholar Eric Roseberry named Purcell "possibly the greatest single influence on the development of [Britten's] own vocal and operatic style." Aside from the more than two dozen arrangements and realizations of works by Purcell that Britten completed, such as *Dido and Aeneas* and *The Fairy Queen*, there are many instances of direct thematic transfers. The ever popular *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, op. 34 (1945) incorporates a Purcell theme.

In explaining his desire to arrange Purcell's works, Britten remarked that a certain "Purcellian spirit" was lacking from most arrangements by other composers. Britten's success in this matter is certainly open for individuals to assess. It is undeniable, however, that he remains the most mainstream twentieth-century composer to devote a constant focus to realizing Purcell's music. The arrangement of Purcell's chacony was devised so that it could be played by string quartet or string orchestra with an optional harpsichord continuo part. Britten's notes that accompany the score indicate that the date of composition for Purcell's chacony is unknown. He believed it was "probably written as incidental music for a play—most likely a tragedy, judging by the serious and severe nature of the music."

A chacony, the Old English term for chaconne, is a type of Baroque form in triple meter featuring a set of variations that individually maintain a slow harmonic progression. Britten used this form to emphasize Purcell's influence upon him in several instances. The standalone setting of Purcell's chacony holds true to the traditions of the form. The final movement of Britten's second string quartet, also a chacony, successfully establishes the composer's unique voice in adapting the form to his style, whereas the arrangement of Purcell's work is not intended to focus on Britten's own musical language.



BENJAMIN BRITTEN, String Quartet no. 2 in C major, op. 36 (1945)

Britten's fascination with Purcell is pervasive in the second quartet, which premiered on November 21, 1945—the 250th anniversary of the composer's death—by the Zorian String Quartet at Wigmore Hall in London. The following evening Britten and his life-long companion and vocal muse Peter Pears (1910-1986) premiered *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne*, op. 35 (1945), a second homage composed for the Purcell anniversary. Both works display direct stylistic influences from Purcell, though the connection is most pronounced in the quartet's chacony.

The second quartet was written four years after String Quartet no. 1 in D major, op. 25 (1941), immediately following the completion of *Peter Grimes*, op. 33 (1944-45). The second was commissioned in early 1945 by Mrs. Mary Behrend, a long time supporter of Britten's musical endeavors. She later commissioned a portrait of

Britten and Pears from artist Kenneth Green that hangs in the National Portrait Gallery and became a key backer for the Aldeburgh Festival and English Opera Group. Britten accepted the commission in a letter dated February 10, 1945, remarking that he had plans for a quartet in the back of his mind “for sometime.” His correspondence with Mrs. Behrend indicates she was pleased with the work, which affirmed Britten’s feeling that it was the “greatest advance” he had made to date, giving him “encouragement to continue on new lines.” In the same letter he expressed a bit of dismay about the public’s lack of openness toward the quartet, suggesting that works with text (i.e. *The Holy Sonnets*) are perceived as more accessible by audiences.

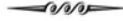
A review of the quartet’s premiere in *The Times* praised it as a “more convincing work than the first,” but criticized it for attempting to “create a diffused sonority instead of a tissue of themes.” This bone of contention is perhaps misguided, as the unique sonority Britten creates is captivating and one of the strongest merits of the quartet. The *allegro calmo senza rigore*, notable for being an exercise in straining the limits of what can be considered sonata form, opens with three consecutively introduced subjects. Three voices play them in octaves, while the fourth provides a pedal drone on the tenth scale degree, creating a haunting unsettled atmosphere. The exposition ought to be referred to as a meta-exposition, for the opening is essentially a mini-exposition within the larger expanded section. The movement progresses through to the development, alternating between the slower *tempo giusto* of the opening and the invigorating stints of *animato*, *energico* and *agitato*. The recapitulation is as brief as the opening section, notable for layering the three principal subjects on top of each other, followed by a coda of approximately the same length.

The *vivace* gives the impression of a maniacal dance at the outset. This interpretation lends itself to the theory that Britten’s music of this period is hugely informed by a stint of illness he experienced. The movement is driven by an interminable ostinato, suggesting madness or turmoil. The four voices introduce the theme of the chacony in unison from the outset of the movement, which contains twenty-one variations. Traditionally a chaconne theme is limited to phrase groups that are divisible by four. Britten devised a nine measure theme, truly marking this as his own type of chaconne. The movement is organized in four variation groups: three groups of six variations each, with a final grouping of three, serving to settle the C-major tonality. Each set of variations is separated by a solo cadenza—the violoncello, viola and lastly the first violin. The movement concludes with no less than twenty-three C-major chords.

In 1939, in preparation for his journey to the United States, Britten curiously expressed the hope of obtaining some “secretarial work at the Congress Library” in a letter to Ralph Hawkes of the publishing house Boosey & Hawkes. This never came to fruition, although Britten came to hold a special place in the history of the Library’s Music Division. Holograph manuscripts of Britten’s first quartet and *Peter Grimes* are housed in the Library of Congress, the former being a Coolidge Foundation Commission and the latter a Koussevitsky Foundation Commission. Britten maintained a professional relationship with Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge for several years in the mid-twentieth century. The founding patron of *Concerts From the Library of Congress*, Coolidge was a proud advocate for Britten’s work, bestowing upon him the Coolidge Medal “for distinguished service to chamber music” in 1941. During the

award presentation, which coincided with the Washington, DC premiere of the first quartet, she referred to the composer by his nickname “Benjy,” much to his dismay.

Nicholas A. Brown
Music Specialist
Library of Congress, Music Division



CARLO GESUALDO, “Se la mia morte brami,” W vi, 13 from *Madrigali libro sesto* (1611); “Illumina faciem tuam,” W viii, 60 (1603) ; arr. Pierre Lapointe

In the second half of the twentieth century, the music of Carlo Gesualdo has experienced something of a renaissance. At times derided for its chromatic/expressive excesses by some scholars, the same qualities that have provoked criticism have been acclaimed by performers and composers as attractive hallmarks of this unique figure. Annotators tend to focus on Gesualdo’s colorful life, and for good reason—as Prince of Venosa, he committed the double murder of his wife and her lover when caught in an act of infidelity, and got away with it (at least publicly; it is contended that he was not free from the pangs of his conscience). No less a figure than Torquato Tasso (who knew Gesualdo and whose verse was set by him) wrote a commemorative poem to the doomed lovers (“Alme leggiadre e meraviglia e belle”).

Gesualdo holds perhaps two classes of attraction for composers, arrangers and performers, often inseparable: his biographical peculiarities, and his artistic contributions. To the former we owe no fewer than ten operas composed within the last twenty years; representative composers include Alfred Schnittke (*Gesualdo*, 1994), Salvatore Sciarrino (*Luci mie traditrici*, 1998 and *Terribile e spaventosa storia del Principe di Venosa e della bella Maria*, 1999), Luca Francesconi (*Gesualdo Considered as a Murderer*, 2004), Marc-André Dalbavie (*Gesualdo*, 2010), and Francesco d’Avalos, an actual descendant of Gesualdo’s murdered wife (*Maria di Venosa*, 1992—an intriguing interview with the composer is conducted by Werner Herzog in his film about Gesualdo, *Death for Five Voices*, 1995). Gesualdo’s music has inspired many to adapt it for various forces, perhaps most notably Stravinsky in his *Monumentum pro Gesualdo* of 1960; moving away from the direct transcription approach, Australian composer Brett Dean’s work *Carlo* re-imagines the music of Gesualdo for strings, sampler and tape (1997). Sometimes, as in the case of Stravinsky, the transcriptions are criticized for drawing attention to particular features of the music that might not be so emphasized in the original setting. Such criticisms are of the same ilk as saying that Brahms would not have used xylophone or trombones in the manner that Arnold Schoenberg did in the finale of his transcription of Brahms’ Piano Quartet No. 1, op. 25. What transcriptions provide is a lens through which we can view music the transcriber admires—one can trust that the arranger would not invest the time and energy if respect for the original had been absent—and as such it is an excellent way to support and promote music in a new context. For this reason it will be a pleasure to hear the perspectives of Benjamin Britten on Purcell and Pierre Lapointe on Gesualdo. The challenge for the transcriber of Gesualdo for string quartet is that these pieces originally employed five voices.

The particular pieces presented today include representatives from the secular and sacred worlds that Gesualdo inhabited. Gesualdo’s sixth book of madrigals contains

what may be his most famous compositions, which often concern love and death, and their interaction. “Se la mia morte brami” is a plea to a lover, in essence stating that if she were to care enough to want the poet to die, he would die satisfied; if she would rather he not love her at all, that would be far worse, crushing his spirit. The music starts in a highly chromatic, *lamentoso* vein, demonstrating a variety of textures (moving between homophony and actively contrapuntal settings) eventually becoming frantic as the poet’s soul is lost. The second arrangement is of the sacred work “Illumina faciem tuam,” displaying a completely different side of Gesualdo’s art. The music is intensely beautiful, and though quite active, evokes the spirit of the “Heiliger Dankgesang” of the Beethoven quartet that follows it.



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN, Quartet for two violins, viola and violoncello in A minor,
op. 132 (1825)

Ludwig van Beethoven’s fifteenth string quartet (at least in order of publication) was composed in 1825 as the second of a trio of quartets commissioned by Prince Nikolay Golitsin. Although not finished within the original expected timeframe, Beethoven did in fact complete the commission (though he was only paid less than a third of the amount due to him), which also included the quartets in E-flat (op. 127) and B-flat (op. 130); the C-sharp minor quartet (op. 131) actually postdates the others. During the composition of the A-minor quartet Beethoven became acutely ill; he famously referenced this illness in the middle movement, discussed further below.

The brief, enigmatic introduction to the op. 132 quartet serves as something of a key to the riddle of the movement’s sphinx. Starting on a solo g-sharp (the leading tone of A minor, if we are to consider the movement to be in that key) and resolving to A, Beethoven proceeds to approach the primary chord tones of A minor and E major by half steps (and a few whole steps) approaching from above and below, never quite committing to a tonality. The arrival point is an unexpected diminished sonority, and a sudden increase in tempo as the first violinist outlines this harmony with a rapid outburst (Brahms would adopt a similar approach in the Finale of his Piano Quintet, op. 34, with respect to the slow half-step motion and arrival at a diminished sonority). This short idea is immediately followed with what feels like the first fragment of a melody presented in the upper range of the cello. A great deal has already occurred by the twelfth measure; Beethoven was by nature an economist with his musical material, so the surfeit of ideas at the onset of the movement may seem out of character. However (and may this suffice as a general analytical observation for the quartet as a whole), Beethoven has provided the seeds of both motivic content and organization for the entire movement. The introductory material, for instance, serves as both accompaniment to the primary melody (with its dotted rhythm) and structural signpost when it periodically returns in isolation. Additionally, the half-step movement about a given pitch is integrated in both the primary and secondary themes, bringing with it the harmonic mobility inherent to that kind of melodic motion. What began in the guise of a short, slow introduction gradually reveals itself to be part and parcel of the movement’s dramatic development—expanding and contracting like a living organism as the music develops. Through a process of developing variation the music generally intensifies across the breadth of the movement, with only a brief respite before the frenzied ending.

The second movement is the late-Beethoven take on the minuet. The music here is strikingly simple, and mainly consists of two ideas. The first is presented in octaves—a rising step plus a third, given at four different pitch levels. The second is a descending line with a culminating resolution, added as a melodic tag to the first idea. These basic ideas are then manipulated in such a way as to serve all purposes at one point or another—in some cases one is melodic while the other accompanies (and vice-versa), sometimes each is displaced to a different registral region (above or below the “normal” presentation), and in other cases the focus shifts to one or the other. By the end of the first section Beethoven illustrated the natural affinities of the ideas by combining them. The music shifts considerably in the Trio section, with its running melodic lines. Of special note is the bucolic, escapist effect of the drone, initially presented on the first violin’s A string beneath a lullaby-like melody high on the E string. This exceptional material eventually brings a return to the opening music of the movement.

The third movement is central to the quartet, both literally and with respect to structural weight. Inscribed above the opening is a statement from which the quartet’s appellation springs. The inscription reads: “Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart” [Hymn of thanks from a convalescent to the deity, in the Lydian mode]. It is not clear why Beethoven needed to specify the tonality thusly, but the description is apt; for about the first four minutes of the movement (depending on tempo), the music floats almost outside of time, hymn-like but without all the expected features of a Lutheran chorale.

At the appearance of the Andante, Beethoven inscribed “Neue Kraft fühlend” [feeling new strength]. The overall tempo is kept in check, but the meter is now in three with the feeling of a stately court dance. There is much greater harmonic and melodic motion, including a comparatively ornate melody. The music is energetic but reserved; some of this energy is transmitted to the return of the opening hymn, this time with a different contrapuntal strategy that yields suspensions and more rhythmic variety. When the Andante returns, the writing is even more florid, which in turn influences the final permeation of the opening material. The hymn has undergone a remarkable transformation through contrapuntal development—the greater melodic individuality of the lines in the final instantiation reveals the vitality that remained in Beethoven through his final years of productivity.

The fourth movement serves doubly as a palette cleanser and a means of dramatically shifting from the rarefied heights of the *Dankgesang* to the depths of A minor. Marked *Alla Marcia*, the march material at the opening is innocuous enough. This A-major material is only briefly developed before Beethoven, without pausing, launches into what can only be described as an instrumental recitative. The first violin sings above its tremolando companions, ultimately landing on E, and inflecting it with its upper neighbor F, intimating the return to A minor in the fifth and final movement that begins without interruption. The music of the finale is relentless, starting with one of the quartet’s most memorable melodies above figuration that maintains the F-E motion (hinted at in the fourth movement) for some time. This material is graceful, but gradually Beethoven undermines that quality through the introduction of offbeat accentuations and cross-bar melodic emphases. At times the interplay is taken to raucous extremes, requiring absolute awareness from the group in order to keep together. As the tempo accelerates to an exhilarating pace, Beethoven begins to bring attention to the first two beats, most forcefully in a quirky

passage in octaves. In the end it is an extended version of this passage that leads to the quartet's robust conclusion in A major.

David H. Plylar
Music Specialist
Library of Congress, Music Division

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

The **Escher String Quartet** has received acclaim for its individual sound, inspired artistic decisions and unique cohesiveness. Championed by members of the Emerson String Quartet, the group recently served its third season as resident ensemble of Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's "CMS Two" program. The ensemble has already performed at prestigious venues and festivals around the world including Alice Tully Hall, the 92nd Street Y and Symphony Space in New York, Kennedy Center, Gardner Museum in Boston, the Louvre, Ravinia and Caramoor Festivals, Music@Menlo, West Cork Chamber Music Festival and La Jolla SummerFest. The Escher String Quartet is proud to have been appointed BBC New Generation Artists from 2010-2012.

Within months of its inception in 2005, the Escher String Quartet was invited by both Pinchas Zukerman and Itzhak Perlman to be the quartet-in-residence at each artist's summer festival: The Young Artists Programme at Canada's National Arts Centre and The Perlman Chamber Music Program on Shelter Island, New York. The quartet has collaborated with artists such as Andrés Díaz, Lawrence Dutton, Kurt Elling, Leon Fleisher, Anja Lechner, Vadim Gluzman, Angela Yoffe, Gary Hoffman, Joseph Kalichstein, Kurt Miroki, Joseph Silverstein, pop folk singer-songwriter Luke Temple and Pinchas Zukerman. The quartet served as the Ernst Stiefel String Quartet-in-Residence in Caramoor—where they performed their first commissioned work by Pierre Jalbert.

The Escher String Quartet's most recent recording for Bridge Records is *Stony Brook Soundings, Vol. 1*, featuring the quartet in the premiere recordings of five new works by Daniel A. Weymouth, Max Giteck Duykers, Ilari Kaila, Eugene Drucker and Perry Goldstein. Previous recordings include *Amy Beach Piano Quintet* and in 2007 *Bridging the Ages* from Music@Menlo. In spring 2011 the quartet recorded the complete Zemlinsky quartets for Naxos. They recently began releasing discs in a set of the complete Mendelssohn quartets for BIS.

The Escher String Quartet takes its name from Dutch graphic artist M.C. Escher, inspired by Escher's method of interplay between individual components working together to form a whole.

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
Coolidge Auditorium

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2012 — 8 PM

THE ELIZABETH SPRAGUE COOLIDGE FOUNDATION
THE MCKIM FUND IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

FOUNDER'S DAY CONCERT
MUSIC OF MORTON SUBOTNICK

Morton Subotnick, *composer and keyboard*
Joan La Barbara, *voice*
Lillevan, *multimedia artist*
Kathleen Supové, *piano*
Todd Reynolds, *violin*



PROGRAM

MORTON SUBOTNICK (b. 1933)

The Other Piano, for piano and electronics (2007), excerpts

III. *Many*

IV. *Rocking*

KATHLEEN SUPOVÉ, *piano*

MORTON SUBOTNICK, *live electronics*

Trembling, for violin, piano, voice and electronics (1983)

TODD REYNOLDS, *violin*; KATHLEEN SUPOVÉ, *piano*;

MORTON SUBOTNICK, *live electronics*

LUCY: Song and Dance (2012)

for computer, live electronics, female voice and live video
animation—WORLD PREMIERE

JOAN LA BARBARA, *voice*; LILLEVAN, *live video animation*;

MORTON SUBOTNICK, *live electronics*

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Tonight's program offers a diverse sampling of the musical worlds of Morton Subotnick. The first half opens with two movements from a recent work for piano and electronics (*The Other Piano*, 2007), in which the specifically notated piano part is processed live in an improvisatory manner according to sets of rules for each movement, sculpting the sound as it is heard. The second work on the program (*Trembling*) was commissioned by the McKim Fund in the Library of Congress, and serves as a classic example of Subotnick's compositions featuring a "ghost score." To conclude the program, a concert version of Subotnick's new wordless opera (*Lucy: Song and Dance*) will be premiered. We are privileged to have the composer's own notes for each piece detailed below, but a few more words of explanation are in order with respect to the program's middle work.

Trembling was the twelfth and last in the initial series of compositions by Subotnick that included a "ghost" score, produced between 1976 and 1983. The key to these works was the incorporation of performable, live electronic manipulations of the sound. The musicians would perform, and that sound data would be processed and modified according to the set of instructions that comprise the "ghost" score; heard without performer input, the electronics would be silent, inspiring the appropriate spectral moniker. In 2007, Subotnick began a new series of "ghost" score works, utilizing new technology. Unfortunately, the technology used to produce the original performances of Subotnick's "ghost" works is not widely available, making new performances of these older works difficult to present. Only five from the original series are available from the composer with the "ghost" score realized in Max/MSP, a currently ubiquitous platform for handling live electronics. Subotnick is well aware of the transitory nature of such things; in a 1987 interview with Curtis Roads, Subotnick addressed the issue thusly:

I think it is very possible that some of my scores will become obsolete. This can be the case with any score though, and if something is strong and significant we find a way to put it back together. But I don't compose music to be heard in a billion years. My urge is to create an expressive art, with the technology of our time.¹

Although this stance may produce frustrating situations in the future, its merits become especially clear when we substitute the word "instruments" for "technology"—the means of sound production change over time. Consider the development of keyboard instruments, and the desire of some musicians to perform works using instruments from the period of their conception—the issues are largely the same, with similar concerns for authenticity in sound. Luckily for us, Subotnick has "put it back together," reconstructing the means of electronics production for *Trembling* and allowing its performance tonight.

David Henning Plylar
Music Specialist
Library of Congress, Music Division

¹ Curtis Roads, "Interview with Morton Subotnick," *Computer Music Journal* 12:1 (Spring 1988): 14.

MORTON SUBOTNICK, *The Other Piano*, for piano and electronics (2007)

The Other Piano was performed for the first time on May 1st, 2007 by Vicki Ray.

The Other Piano is for piano with surround sound processing. It has 4 continuous sections: *Within*, *Lullaby*, *Many* and *Rocking*. Each section has its own distinct character as well as a special approach to how the piano sound is processed throughout the space of the auditorium. For instance, *Lullaby* unfolds slowly with great care taken to the details of exact timing of each note as well as the subtle evolving changes of the melody. Individual notes are captured by the computer and form lingering chords that float through the auditorium.

I hesitate to say too much about this, or any work. Words can easily filter the meaningful quality of the musical expression. In fact, I am convinced that the musical experience is a part of a primal quality of expression which is present at birth and, perhaps even before. It is with us before we have language. Words allow us to limit and focus the expression of our musical and gestural intelligence. Out of this primal intelligence, we have created what we call music to give expressiveness to all aspects of our various diverse cultures – from birth celebrations to funeral rites.

In creating *The Other Piano*, I tried to capture a sense of this pre-verbal embodied musical experience by staying close to basic musical qualities. The work unfolds slowly and with emphasis on the small changes in pitch, time and loudness that bring meaningfulness to our expression. The surround quality is exactly that, surrounding us as if we are inside the sound.

The title is a tribute to the memory of Morty Feldman (I was with him at the premiere of his work, "piano"). He told me once that when a friend called him and congratulated him on marrying Joan La Barbara, he told his friend, "thanks, but that was the other Morty." The work was written for Vicki Ray.



MORTON SUBOTNICK, *Trembling*, for violin, piano, voice and electronics (1983)

The word 'tremble' was spoken by Joan La Barbara, recorded, synthesized and transformed with the assistance of Richard Karpen at The Center for Computer Music at Brooklyn College. The materials of the work come from two invented scales, which are fixed in register... one scale for each of the two instruments. The instruments were treated as if only these notes were possible on the instruments.

The work is in several short sections without pause. The opening section of quick 16th notes comes back several times throughout the work... each time varied... almost like a refrain. Throughout the work, the ghost acts to heighten the shimmering... 'trembling' quality of the music.

The word 'tremble' (on tape) occurs at the end. Each of the four statements contains four simultaneous utterances of the word... and each utterance, though starting at the same time, unfolds at a different rate... resulting in a 'rose petal' effect.

Trembling, for violin, piano, tape and an electronic ghost score was commissioned by

the Library of Congress. It was first performed at the Library of Congress, on October 29, 1983 with Ben Hudson, violin and Alan Feinberg, piano.

The Library of Congress holds the holograph manuscript of Morton Subotnick's *Trembling*, commissioned by the McKim Fund in 1983. In addition to the manuscript, the Library possesses Subotnick's colorful structural sketches of the work. The Library also holds the two Buchla 100 Modular Synthesizers used in the creation of *Silver Apples of the Moon*, which is now listed in the National Recording Registry.



MORTON SUBOTNICK, *LUCY: Song and Dance*, an opera without words (2012)
for computer, live electronics, female voice and live video animation—
WORLD PREMIERE

The title, *LUCY*, refers to the grandmother of us all.

Throughout our evolution, pitch gestures were an important form of direct communication of emotion and must have been empathically understood. These early utterances, the cries of grief, the murmurs of tenderness and the roars of outrage, might well have been the beginnings of what we now call song.

Somewhere in our 4- to 5- million-year journey to becoming human we became able to move together in almost exact synchrony. As we did so, we must have experienced, as we do today the sense of being one with all the others, evolving into, no doubt, dancing, marching and chanting. This was one, among many abilities, that allowed us to live in larger and larger groups. We must have begun to experience a thrilling one-ness with those around us in play and in ritual. But this one-ness is also a loss of individuality that has made it possible for individuals with motives far beyond playful to manipulate crowd behavior into horrific actions.

Pitch gesturing and timing movement-synchrony have different roots in our evolution. Used together they have enabled us to create the wonder of the arts we call music and dance. The earliest forms of gestural/emotional expression and empathy and the overwhelming attraction to moving with pulsed precision, alone and in groups or crowds, have been and remain key ingredients in our 'humanness'.

Without words, only pitch gestures and rhythm, *LUCY* unfolds as a dream-like odyssey of emotional states in a transforming landscape of sound and image.

The names of the 9 overlapping scenes are:

Prologue: Cosmos
Song of whispers
Cadenza of grief, tenderness, rage, lust and longing
Song of Songs
Playing with rhythm: one to one
One becomes many: Cadenza of dance rhythms
Many becomes one: Pulsing Dance
One alone
Epilogue: Song and Dance



The performance this evening is a concert version of *LUCY: Opera Without Words (Song and Dance)*. It is the start of a work that will continue to develop over the next year, and, finally, transform into a fully staged performance piece.

Morton Subotnick, October 2012

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Morton Subotnick is a pioneer in the development of electronic music and an innovator in works involving instruments and other media, including interactive computer music systems. The work which brought Subotnick celebrity was *Silver Apples of the Moon* (1966-7), commissioned by Nonesuch Records, marking the first time an original large-scale composition had been created specifically for the disc medium—a conscious acknowledgment that the home stereo system constituted a present-day form of chamber music. It has become a modern classic and was recently entered into the National Register of Recorded Works at the Library of Congress. Only three hundred recordings throughout the entire history of recorded music have been chosen. In the early 1960s, Subotnick taught at Mills College and with Ramon Sender, where he co-founded the San Francisco Tape Music Center. During this period he collaborated with Anna Halprin in two works (*the 3 legged stool* and *Parades and Changes*) and was music director of the Actors Workshop. It was also during this period that Subotnick worked with Don Buchla on what may have been the first analog synthesizer.

In 1966 Subotnick was instrumental in getting a Rockefeller Grant to join the Tape Center with the Mills Chamber Players (at Mills College with performers Nate Rubin, violin; Bonnie Hampton, cello; Naomi Sparrow, piano and Subotnick, clarinet). The grant required that the Tape Center relocate to a host institution that became Mills College. Subotnick, however, did not stay with the move, but went to New York with the Actor's Workshop to become the first music director of the Lincoln Center Rep Company in the Vivian Beaumont Theater at Lincoln Center. He became an artist-in-residence at the newly formed Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. The School of the Arts provided him with a studio and a Buchla Synthesizer (now at the Library of Congress). During this period he helped develop and became artistic director of the Electric Circus and the Electric Ear. This was also the time of the creation of *Silver Apples of the Moon*, *The Wild Bull* and *Touch*.

In 1969 Subotnick was invited to be part of a team of artists to move to Los Angeles to plan a new school. With Mel Powell as dean, and Subotnick as associate dean, and a

team of four other pairs of artists, he carved out a new path for music education and created the now famous California Institute of the Arts. Subotnick remained associate dean of the music school for four years and then, resigning as associate dean, became the head of the composition program where he created a new media program that introduced interactive technology and multimedia into the curriculum. Subotnick is now pioneering works to offer musical creative tools to young children. He is the author of a series of CD-ROMs for children, and a children's website, www.creatingmusic.com. In May Subotnick released his iPad App *Pitch Painter* for kids, the first in a series.

Among Subotnick's awards are a Guggenheim Fellowship, Rockefeller grants (3), Meet the Composer grants (2), an American Academy of Arts and Letters Composer Award, a Brandeis Award, support from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst Künstlerprogramm (DAAD) Berlin Composer-in-Residency, a Lifetime Achievement Award (SEAMUS at Dartmouth), an ASCAP John Cage Award, the ACO Lifetime Achievement, and an Honorary Doctorate from the California Institute of the Arts. Morton Subotnick tours extensively throughout the United States and Europe as a lecturer and composer/performer.

Joan La Barbara is a composer, performer, sound artist, and actor, renowned for her unique vocabulary of experimental and extended vocal techniques—multiphonics, circular singing, ululation, and glottal clicks—that have influenced generations of composers and singers. In 2008, the American Music Center conveyed its Letter of Distinction Award to La Barbara for her significant contributions to American Contemporary Music. Awards and prizes include: Premio Internazionale "Demetrio Stratos"; DAAD-Berlin Artist-in-Residency; Civitella Ranieri, Guggenheim and seven National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, and numerous commissions. Composing for multiple voices, chamber ensembles, theater, orchestra, interactive technology, and creating soundscapes for dance, video and film, including a score for voice and electronics for Sesame Street, her multi-layered textural compositions have been presented at the Brisbane Biennial, Festival d'Automne à Paris, Warsaw Autumn, Frankfurt Feste, Metamusik-Berlin, Olympics Arts and Lincoln Center. She was Artistic Director of the multi-year Carnegie Hall series "When Morty Met John" and the New Music America festival in Los Angeles, and co-founded the performing composers-collective Ne(x)tworks. She produced and performs on acclaimed recordings of music by John Cage, Morton Feldman and Earle Brown, and premiered compositions written for her by Robert Ashley, David Behrman, Cage, Feldman, Philip Glass, Alvin Lucier, Steve Reich, Morton Subotnick, and James Tenney. Recordings of her work include: *Shaman Song* (New World), *Sound Paintings*, and *Voice is the Original Instrument* (Lovely Music). *73 Poems*, her collaboration with text-artist Kenneth Goldsmith, was included in *The American Century Part II: Soundworks* at The Whitney Museum. The award-winning interactive media/performance work *Messa di Voce* premiered at the ars electronica festival in Linz. Exploring ways of immersing the audience in her music, La Barbara recently placed musicians and actors throughout Greenwich House Music School for her music/theater piece *Journeys and Observable Events*, allowing the audience to explore the building, unveiling theatrical and sonic events. In March 2011, she seated musicians of the American Composers Orchestra around and among the audience in Carnegie Hall's Zankel auditorium, building her sonic painting *In solitude this fear is lived*, inspired by Agnes Martin's minimalist drawings. La Barbara is developing a solo performance work, *Storefront Diva*, for pianist Kathleen Supové, and composing a new opera exploring the artistic process, interior dialogue, and sounds within the mind.

Lillevan studied politics, film and film theory, and is now best known as a founder of the visual/musical art group Rechenzentrum. He has collaborated with artists from an array of

genres—from opera to installation, and electronic experimentalism to classical. Lillevan has performed around the world at major art and media festivals. Since the mid-nineties he has mainly investigated non-narrative facets of film, yielding completely abstract works as well as collage explorations of film history and interactive works. Lillevan's DVD releases include *The Mahler Remixes*, *Xenakis Live*, and *Sound & Vision Tokyo*.

Lillevan's current projects include collaborations with Olga Neuwirth (Opera Garnier (Paris), Wien Modern (Vienna), Köln Philharmonie, Musik Fest Weimar); new DVDs with Fennesz, Ensemble Modern, Klangforum Wien; live performances with Morton Subotnick (Lincoln Center, Club Transmediale, Radar-Festival Mexico, Bregenzer Festspiele); a collaboration with Ran Arthur Braun (Settimana Musicale (Siena, Italy)); and *Faust* at Opera North (Leeds, UK).

Lillevan was recently appointed the artistic director of Glacier Music Festival 2013.

Kathleen Supové is one of America's most acclaimed and versatile contemporary music pianists, known for continually redefining what a pianist/keyboardist/ performance artist is, in today's world. Ms. Supové annually presents a series of solo concerts entitled THE EXPLODING PIANO. In this series, she has performed and premiered works by such established composers as Louis Andriessen, Terry Riley, Frederic Rzewski, Alvin Curran, Neil Rolnick, and Morton Subotnick, as well as emerging composers such as Missy Mazzoli, Randall Woolf, Anna Clyne, Lainie Fefferman, Mohammed Fairouz, Nick Didkovsky, Carolyn Yarnell, and Bubbyfish, just to name a few. She is also involved in commissioning a repertoire of pieces for piano, electronics, and video. This past December, she premiered ELECTRIC SHEEP by Marc Mellits for solo piano and LEMUR robots. Another recent ongoing project is DIGITAL DEBUSSY, working with a variety of composers including Joan La Barbara, Annie Gosfield, Matt Marks, Gene Pritsker, techno artist Jeff Mills, Elan Vytal (aka DJ Scientific), Marita Bolles, Eric km Clark, and others. In May, 2012, Ms. Supové received the ASCAP John Cage Award for "the artistry and passion with which she performs, commissions, records, and champions the music of our time."

Ms. Supové is a Yamaha Artist. Her latest solo CD is THE EXPLODING PIANO, on the Major Who label. She has appeared with The Lincoln Center Festival, Other Minds Festival, The Philip Glass Ensemble, Bang On a Can Marathon, Piano Spheres in LA, New Music New College in Sarasota, Music at the Anthology, Composers' Collaborative, Inc., and at many other venues, ranging from concert halls to theatrical spaces to clubs such as Le Poisson Rouge.

Todd Reynolds, violinist, composer, educator and technologist is known as one of the founding fathers of the hybrid-musician movement and one of the most active and versatile proponents of what he calls 'present music'. The violinist of choice for Steve Reich, Meredith Monk, and Bang on a Can, his compositional and performance style is a hybrid of old and new technology, multi-disciplinary aesthetic and pan-genre composition and improvisation. Reynolds' music has been called "a charming, multi-mood extravaganza, playful like Milhaud, but hard-edged like Hendrix" (Strings Magazine), and his countless premieres and performances of everything from classical music to jazz to rock'n'roll seem to redefine the concert hall and underground club as undeniably and unavoidably intertwined. He has just released his double CD set, *Outerborough* on Innova Recordings, featuring InSide, a collection of his own music, paired with OutSide, music written by a veritable who's who of contemporary composers.

A forerunner in the expansion of the violin beyond its classical and 'wood-bound' tradition, Reynolds electrifies in concert, weaves together composed and improvised segments, and makes use of computer technology and digital loops to sculpt his sounds in real time, seamlessly integrating minimalist, pop, jazz, Indian, African, Celtic and indigenous folk musics into his own sonic blend. As a cross-genre improviser and collaborator, he has appeared and/or recorded with such artists as Anthony Braxton, Uri Caine, John Cale, Steve Coleman, Joe Jackson, Dave Liebman, Yo-Yo Ma, Graham Nash, Greg Osby, Steve Reich, Marcus Roberts and Todd Rundgren, and has commissioned and premiered countless numbers of new works by America's most compelling composers, including John King, Phil Kline, Michael Gordon, Neil Rolnick, Julia Wolfe, David Lang, Evan Ziporyn and Randall Wolff. His interdisciplinary work includes ongoing collaborations with sound painter Walter Thompson as well as media artists Bill Morrison and Luke DuBois and sound artist Jody Elff.

Reynolds is a founder of the band known as Ethel, a critically acclaimed amplified string quartet, with whom he wrote and toured internationally for seven years. He has also produced *Still Life With Microphone*, an ongoing theater piece which incorporates his own written and improvised music, compositions written for him, and elements of video and theatrical arts. *Nuove Uova [new eggs]*, *new works for violin and electricity*, another Todd Reynolds production, is a 'new-music cabaret' of sorts, having as its home Joe's Pub in Manhattan. The Todd Reynolds String Quartet and Typical Music, an avant-garde piano trio featuring Ashley Bathgate and Vicky Chow from the Bang on a Can All-Stars, continue to commission, perform and record music from some of contemporary music's brightest stars.



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