

CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING AND CINEMATIC ARTS
Boyer College of Music and Dance

conTemplum Presents:
Argus String
Quartet

Wednesday, November 10, 2021 • 5:30 PM
Rock Hall Auditorium
1715 N. Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122



Program

Censorship

Ramin Akhavijou

Pieces of Place: Catskills

Hannah Selin

Solitary Confinement

Sepehr Pirasteh

Respiri

Juri Seo

Argus String Quartet:

Clara Kim, violin
Giancarlo Latta, violin
Maren Rothfritz, viola
Mariel Roberts, cello

Program Notes

Censorship

Ramin Akhavijou

Censorship is a miniature opera that projects the form of censorship by gradually filtering sounds into noises. This composition is like fireworks. There are noises and floating materials in it. All materials happen extremely rapidly in the piece, much like fireworks. Although we can't see its details clearly, we can perceive its overall form. *Censorship* might also be viewed as a firework. It is difficult to oppose it because its form is constantly changing and appears soft, innocent, and more beautiful while also becoming crueler. We censor at times and are censored at others. It has devolved into a commodity. Then it may need the use of a barcode.

Pieces of Place: Catskills

Hannah Selin

Pieces of Place: Catskills explores a gradual process of displacement. As the climate warms and changes due to global warming, boreal biomes are gradually disappearing from the tops of the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York. Over the next decades and centuries, the life-forms that make up this unique biome will gradually be displaced by other flora and fauna. The string quartet and electronics take turns masking and displacing each other in a constantly shifting soundscape. A gradually unfolding, mutating melody runs throughout the piece. It's based on this sentence from a 1952 ecological study by Robert P. McIntosh: "Now, and in the future, it is difficult to envision any improvement in our ability to reconstruct the primeval state."

Solitary Confinement

Sepehr Pirasteh

This piece investigates different phases that political prisoners experience in solitary confinement, or "White Torture," a term coined by Iranian political and human rights activist, Narges Mohammadi. Once you are arrested for your political activities, for being a defender of human rights, you start questioning: what have you done?! Why are you arrested?! Since you have been held for a long time in solitary confinement, you start to believe everything the

interrogators tell you is the truth because you have not had any sort of communication with anyone. They try to break you, break your soul, or make a delusional world for you where you start to believe that you are cursed, and are the problem. Sometimes, unexpectedly they siege into your cell to put you under a lot of pressure. They come to flog you, beat you, or threaten you. All they need from you is a confession. Not a legitimate, true confession, instead something that can benefit them and their ideology. They want you to read their scenario for them, so they can videotape you and broadcast it on TV. If you do not collaborate, your life gets harder. They torture you even more, physically, mentally, and sometimes sexually. You start to believe you are stuck in absolute darkness.

Respiri

Juri Seo

“What is the purpose of music? It is, in my view, to reveal the nature of suffering and to heal. The one big question of existence.” — Jonathan Harvey

The composer Jonathan Harvey was an extraordinarily kind person. I emailed with him regularly while writing my doctoral dissertation on his four string quartets. Toward the end of our correspondence, I discovered that he was suffering from a motor neuron disease that was gradually paralyzing him; he had been spending a part of his precious final year responding to questions from a person he did not know. The disease eventually ended his life in December 2012. Although we never met in person, his work and philosophy had an immense influence on the way I think about music.

Harvey was a cutting-edge modernist who wrote unabashedly lyrical melodies framed within carefully designed, intricate structures. He believed in the ideal of complex unity, which he found, somewhat paradoxically, in both Western classical music and Buddhism. In his pieces, disparate musical ideas change and merge in multifarious ways, revealing their lack of inherent identity. He saw this as a crucial step to experiencing the transcendent unity of all things. Harvey’s music showed me that complexity and warmth needed not preclude each other; in fact, they should coexist.

Harvey’s Buddhism can be found directly in his scores. He frequently composed breathing gestures as metaphysical evocations of meditation. He used the concept of a symmetrical harmonic

field—with pitches radiating outward from a central axis, rather than deriving from a bass line—to represent the individual's freedom from obsessive desire. In this piece, I took three distinct ideas from Harvey: composed breaths, a non-octave-repeating symmetrical pentatonic scale, and a melodic segment from the first quartet. Swells of varying lengths develop into long arcs. These breathing gestures symbolize life and—at the end of the piece—death, not as a terrifying inevitability, but as the peaceful resolution I imagine Harvey would have experienced.

Respiri - in memoriam Jonathan Harvey was written for the JACK Quartet in the spring of 2016.

About the Artists

The **ARGUS QUARTET** is dedicated to encouraging the joys of human connection, community, and discovery by bringing a wide-ranging repertoire to life through bold and meaningful programming and a vibrant commitment to collaboration and education. Praised for playing with “supreme melodic control and total authority” and “decided dramatic impact” (*Calgary Herald*), the Quartet has quickly emerged as one of today’s most dynamic and versatile ensembles, winning First Prize at both the 2017 M-Prize Chamber Arts Competition and the 2017 Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition.

Since then, increasingly busy concert seasons have taken Argus to some of the country’s most prestigious venues and festivals, including Carnegie’s Weill and Zankel Halls, Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall, Chamber Music Society of Detroit, the Ravinia Festival, the Albany Symphony’s American Music Festival, and Music Academy of the West. Highlights of the 2019-20 season include debut performances for Washington Performing Arts at the Kennedy Center and Lincoln Center’s Great Performers series, along with a return engagement in New York for the Schneider Concerts at the New School.

Iranian composer, **RAMIN AKHAVIJOU**, graduated from the Art University of Tehran with a Master’s degree in Music Composition and later moved to the United States in 2017 to continue his studies at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) where he received his second Master’s degree in Music Composition. He is currently a Ph.D. student in Music Composition and Theory at the University of Pittsburgh where his focus is “Music Perception” and its relation to his compositions. The dialectic interrelation between sounds has always been one of his main concerns and motivators for his compositional work and research. He is scientifically investigating this interrelation through various interdisciplinary projects. His passion for science and technology have led him to take diverse compositional paths that are reflected in his wide range of compositions. His opera “languagemachine” was produced by the

Pittsburgh Opera Company and performed by the CMU New Music Ensemble in April 2019.

Akhavijou's works have been performed in many countries by various soloists, ensembles, and orchestras and he has received numerous honors, prizes, and commissions. He is one of the directors of CFIM (Center for Iranian Music) at Carnegie Mellon University and currently working on his *probable* collection.

Composer, violist and vocalist **HANNAH SELIN** juxtaposes acoustic instruments and voices with electronics and field recordings to create striking and vibrant sound-spaces. Her music delves into the inner lives of sounds: shimmering sound-masses interact in unexpectedly moving ways, and instruments merge and separate to create sounds beyond their own. Hannah's music has been commissioned and performed by ensembles and soloists including Brooklyn Metro Chamber Orchestra, S.E.M. Ensemble, Chromic Duo, and soprano Stephanie Lamprea. Her score for short film *222*, directed by Delfine Paolini, was nominated for the 2018 Peer Raben Music Award at the Soundtrack Cologne Festival. Hannah is currently working on *Pieces of Place*, a series exploring the effects of global warming on places she has called home. Hannah is also co-founder and lead singer with the band GADADU.

SEPEHR PIRASTEH (b. 1993) is a composer and conductor born in Shiraz, Iran. His compositions draw on Persian classical and folk as well as contemporary classical music vocabularies to express his concerns and fears about the political and social realities of the world we are living in. Sepehr's works have been performed by ensembles such as Unheard-of, Orquestra Criança Cidadã, Hole in the floor, fivebyfive, and members of the Fifth House Ensemble. He has been commissioned by Detroit Composers' Project, YInMn project, Pushback Collective, Fresh Inc. Festival, Yara Ensemble, Central Michigan University's (CMU) Percussion Ensemble, and the CMU Saxophone Ensemble. His music has been performed in Argentina, Brazil, Iran and the United States. Sepehr currently is a Ph.D. candidate in composition at Temple University. He pursued his MM in Composition and Orchestral Conducting at Central Michigan University.

JURI SEO* (b. 1981) is a Korean-American composer and pianist based in Princeton, New Jersey. She seeks to write music that encompasses extreme contrast through compositions that are unified and fluid, yet complex. She merges many of the fascinating aspects of music from the past century—in particular its expanded timbral palette and unorthodox approach to structure—with a deep love of functional tonality, counterpoint, and classical form. With its fast-changing tempi and dynamics, her music explores the serious and the humorous, the lyrical and the violent, the tranquil and the obsessive. She hopes to create music that loves, that makes a positive change in the world—however small—through the people who are willing to listen.

Boyer College of Music and Dance

The Boyer College of Music and Dance offers over 500 events open to the public each year. Students have the unique opportunity to interact with leading performers, composers, conductors, educators, choreographers and guest artists while experiencing a challenging and diverse academic curriculum. The Boyer faculty are recognized globally as leaders in their respective fields. Boyer alumni are ambassadors of artistic leadership and perform with major orchestras, opera and dance companies, teach at schools and colleges and work as professional music therapists, choreographers and composers. Boyer's recording label, BCM&D records, has produced more than thirty recordings, three of which have received Grammy nominations.

boyer.temple.edu

The Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts

The Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts consists of the Boyer College of Music and Dance, School of Theater, Film and Media Arts, the George and Joy Abbott Center for Musical Theater and the Temple Performing Arts Center. The School of Theater, Film and Media Arts engages gifted students with nationally and internationally recognized faculty scholars and professionals. A hallmark of the School of Theater, Film and Media Arts is the Los Angeles Study Away program, housed at historic Raleigh Studios. The George and Joy Abbott Center for Musical Theater engages visiting performers, guest artists, set designers, playwrights and other Broadway professionals. The Temple Performing Arts Center (TPAC), a historic landmark on campus, is home to a state-of-the-art 1,200 seat auditorium and 200 seat chapel. More than 500 concerts, classes, lectures and performances take place at TPAC each year.

arts.temple.edu

Temple University

Temple University's history begins in 1884, when a young working man asked Russell Conwell if he could tutor him at night. It wasn't long before he was teaching several dozen students—working people who could only attend class at night but had a strong desire to make something of themselves. Conwell recruited volunteer faculty to participate in the burgeoning night school, and in 1888 he received a charter of incorporation for "The Temple College." His founding vision for the school was to provide superior educational opportunities for academically talented and highly motivated students, regardless of their backgrounds or means. The fledgling college continued to grow, adding programs and students throughout the following decades. Today, Temple's more than 35,000 students continue to follow the university's official motto—*Perseverantia Vincit*, or "Perseverance Conquers"—with their supreme dedication to excellence in academics, research, athletics, the arts and more.

**Temple University 2021-2022 Season
Upcoming Events**

Wednesday, November 10 at 7:30pm

Jazz @ the Underground: Justin Faulkner, drums
Howard Gittis Student Center

Thursday, November 11 at 12:00pm

Jazz Ensemble Recital: Dick Oatts Senior Ensemble
Art of Bread Café

Thursday, November 11 at 4:00pm

Chamber Music Recital
Sarah Walsh, oboe; Adam Brotnitsky, viola; Max Culp, cello
Ethan Hall and Catherine Holt, trombone; Daniel Virgen,
euphonium; Joseph Gould, tuba
Sarah Lee, piano; Yucheng Liao, violin; Haocong Gu, cello
Rock Hall Auditorium

Thursday, November 11 at 4:30-6:30pm

Rite of Swing Jazz Café: Jason Blythe Group
Jason Blythe, saxophone
Christian Ertl, saxophone
Ajay Dean, guitar
Greg Kettinger, bass
Sungwoo Bae, drums
Temple Performing Arts Center Lobby

Thursday, November 11 at 7:30pm

Temple University Concert Band
Paul Bryan, conductor
Temple Performing Arts Center

Friday, November 12 at 1:00-2:30pm

Music Studies Colloquium Series: Kurt Nelson, "The Meaning
of Monumentality in Tadeusz Baird's Last Decade"
Presser 142, also via Zoom

**Temple University 2021-2022 Season
Upcoming Events**

Friday, November 12 at 4:00pm

Student Recital: Sarah Eom, clarinet
Rock Hall Auditorium

Friday, November 12 at 5:30pm

Senior Recital: Kyungmin Kim, violin
Rock Hall Auditorium

Friday, November 12 at 7:30pm

Master's Recital: Tracy Nguyen, bassoon
Rock Hall Auditorium

Friday, November 12 at 7:30pm

Saturday, November 13 at 2:30pm & 7:30pm

Student Dance Concert

Tickets: \$20 General Admission, \$15 students/senior citizens, \$10 Temple employees, \$5 Temple student with OWLcard. Available at boyer.temple.edu, 215.204.1122, in-person at the Temple Arts Box Office (Tomlinson Theater lobby, 1301 W. Norris St., Mon-Fri 12-6pm), or at the venue 45 minutes before each performance. Credit, debit and checks only. Cash not accepted.

Conwell Dance Theater

Monday, November 15 at 1:30pm

Chamber Music Recital

Dominick D'alessandro, piano; Iuliia Kuzmina, violin
Stephanie Ben-Salem & Bolun Zhang, piano
Samuel Allan-Chapkovksi & Sendi Vartanovi, violin; Yoni Levyatov, piano
Rock Hall Auditorium