30th Anniversary Celebration

Concert 2

A program of works by
William Bolcom, George Crumb,
Jacob Druckman, George Rochberg,
and David Rakowski

Wednesday, November 29, 2006
8:00 p.m.
Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall
PROGRAM

**Dark Wind** (1994) Jacob Druckman (1928-1996)
for violin and cello

**Duo Concertante** (1955-59) George Rochberg (1918-2005)
for violin and cello

**Suite** (1997) * William Bolcom (b. 1938)
for violin and cello
I. Prelude: Very free and fast
II. With energy
III. Stately, slow
IV. Very fast and skittish
V. Street Dance

**INTERMISSION**

**Inside Story** (Piano Trio No. 3) (2005) David Rakowski (b. 1958)
I. Felinious Assault
II. Sostenuto
III. Scherzicle

**Vox Balaenae** (Voice of the Whale) (1971) † George Crumb (b. 1929)
for three masked players (flute, cello, and piano)
Vocalise (... for the beginning of time)
Variations on Sea-Time
- Sea-Theme
- Archeozoic [Variation I]
- Proterozoic [Variation II]
- Paleozoic [Variation III]
- Mesozoic [Variation IV]
- Cenozoic [Variation V]
Sea-Nocturne (... for the end of time)

Curtis Macomber, violin (guest)
Norman Fischer, cello
Jeanne Kierman, piano
Leone Buyse, flute

First performance on a concert of SYZYGY, New Music at Rice:
* October 3, 2001  † April 6, 1977
PROGRAM NOTES
by Norman Fischer

Celebrations like the 30th anniversary of SYZYGY, New Music at Rice are wonderful opportunities to celebrate the connections from present to past. In this program we honor four generations of American composers who have been important leaders in musical development (notice that their birth years are separated by multiples of ten years). I have been fortunate to have worked closely with each and offer these particular observations on their work and the particular pieces we will hear this evening.

**Dark Wind**  
Jacob Druckman

Jacob Druckman was born in Philadelphia on June 26, 1928, and died on May 24, 1996, in New York City. A graduate of the Juilliard School, Druckman studied with Vincent Persichetti and Peter Mennin, and, at Tanglewood, studied with Aaron Copland. He worked extensively with electronic music and also composed a number of works for orchestra and for small ensembles. In 1972, he won the Pulitzer Prize for his orchestral work *Windows*. He was composer-in-residence of the New York Philharmonic from 1982 to 1985. Druckman taught at Juilliard, Tanglewood, Brooklyn College, Bard College, and Yale University, among other appointments. I first met Jacob when, as cellist of the Concord Quartet, I was preparing to record his *String Quartet No. 2*, the first major work in his mature style. The work is full of glistening color and vividly dramatic gestures, which are a hallmark of all his work. In 1981, he wrote the *String Quartet No. 3* for us on a commission from the Fromm Foundation, and we found the work stunning in every respect. Tonight's work, *Dark Wind*, is similar to his previous ensemble work *Come Round* from 1992. Even in its short duration it makes a welcome and striking visitation.

**Duo Concertante**  
George Rochberg

George Rochberg was born in Paterson, New Jersey, on July 5, 1918, and died May 29, 2005, in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. He is best known as the father of the New Romanticism movement launched in 1971 with his *String Quartet No. 3*, which was written for the Concord Quartet’s Naumburg Award commission. Although his earliest works were influenced by Stravinsky and Bartók (while he studied with Leopold Mannes, George Szell, and Rosario Scalero), he fully embraced Schoenbergian serialism after working with Dallapiccola in Rome in the 1950s. After the breakthrough of the Third Quartet, in which Rochberg wrote a polysylistic work that drew on the musical traditions of Beethoven, Mahler, and Bartók, he became a controversial figure in musical circles. It is hard for us in the next century to understand the controversy; we are so comfortable with new music that allows a composer to find his or her own voice in a composition. But at the time, Rochberg was treated as a betrayer of the modernist aesthetic. Donal Henahan of the *New York Times* said after our premiere of the Third Quartet that its appeal lay in its “unfailing formal rigor and old-fashioned musicality. Mr. Rochberg’s quartet is — how did we use to put it? — beautiful.” Tonight’s remarkable *Duo Concertante* dates from the period of time when he was following Schoenberg’s model. In fact the tableau style of this work is extremely reminiscent of Schoenberg’s *String Trio* from 1946, and exhibits bravura virtuosity for both violinist and cellist, interrupted by humorous and then the most intimate music. Its broad palette and impressive scope make it one of the landmark works in the genre.
Duo Concertante for violin and cello was composed in 1955 and revised for publication in 1959. Its first performance took place in Philadelphia in 1956. Formally the work is made up of two parts. Part One presents a variety of ideas, gestures, and harmonic explorations of the hexachords in which the work is based. Part Two either reiterates or varies the material in Part One. Rochberg further notes, "In this Duo I hoped for an observable, perceptual simplicity of utterance. That is why the phrases of this work often seem to be entities unto themselves, rarely extended through a process of development, and also why sudden shifts in character, direction, and mood work without the usual interference. If there was one obsession I had in the writing of the work, it was to provide the players a vehicle for true dialogue. I wanted them to be able to 'talk' to each other as equals; and, if occasion warranted even to 'talk back.' I wanted also to make the instruments to sound as rich as possible. In the case of strings, their capacity for lyricism of varying degrees of intensity, gradation of dynamics, and volume, and their very considerable range of every variety of attack also engaged my interest. Most important of all, however, was my feeling that I was writing ensemble music. At the same time there was also the self-imposed problem of creating an impression of a free unfolding, yet one which would reveal, on closer inspection, a formal control which precluded any arbitrary action. In this sense, then, the work is a fantasia, which could be defined as a 'composed improvisation.'"

Suite ......... William Bolcom

William Balcom was born in Seattle on May 26, 1938, and is one of today's most eminent composers. A student of Darius Milhaud at Mills College and later in Paris, he adopted Milhaud's easy mixture of composing in almost any genre with a great appreciation of popular styles. Winner of many awards including NEA grants, several Guggenheims, and a Pulitzer, he continues to challenge audiences with vibrant connections to the most primal aspects of music. Tonight's work was actually premiered on this stage nine years ago by violinist Sergiu Luca and cellist Roel Dieltiens for a CONTEXT concert in 1997. In the five short movements Balcom finds the voices of each instrument and has us dancing and singing in wild abandon. It is a joy to perform!

Inside Story (Piano Trio No. 3) ......... David Rakowski

David Rakowski was born in St. Albans, Vermont, on June 13, 1958. Currently very active, he is not as well known as the other composers on this program, but that is changing. A student of John Heiss at the New England Conservatory, Milton Babbitt at Princeton, and Luciano Berio at Tanglewood, Rakowski is the recipient of the Rome Prize, the American Arts and Letters Academy Award, the Stoeger Prize from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and Guggenheim, Rockefeller, and NEA grants, among other awards. Since 1995, he has been on the faculty of Brandeis University, where he is Professor of Composition.

He says of Inside Story: "I wrote Inside Story, my third piano trio, for Vermont Musica Viva in October 2005. The piece is in three movements in the usual fast-slow-fast scheme, and everything in the piece comes from the snaky sul ponticello stuff from the opening. I called the first movement "Felonious Assault" because it represented, in a way, our household getting used to new kittens; as they frolic endlessly, knock stuff over, we clap loudly at them to make them get off the furniture, we pet them, and they purr, etc. The movement ends with the retrograde of the beginning accompanied by chords
in the piano. The slow movement turns the first movement’s noodling into a slowly unfolding theme that eventually becomes a unison between the strings. The final movement is a scherzo that comes off practically as a piano concerto, pitting oblique chromatic motion in the strings against fast piano figuration, with guest appearances by the first two movements in the middle of the movement.”

**Vox Balaenae (Voice of the Whale)**

George Crumb was born in Charleston, West Virginia, on October 24, 1929. He studied at the Mason College of Music in Charleston and received the Bachelor’s degree in 1950. Thereafter he studied for the Master’s degree at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana under Eugene Weigel. He continued his studies under Boris Blacher at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin from 1954 to 1955. He received the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1959 from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor after studying with Ross Lee Finney. George Crumb’s music often juxtaposes contrasting musical styles. The references range from music of the western art-music tradition, to hymns and folk music, and non-Western music. Many of Crumb’s works include programmatic, symbolic, mystical, and theatrical elements, which are often reflected in his beautiful and meticulously notated scores. A shy, yet warmly eloquent personality, Crumb retired from his teaching position at the University of Pennsylvania after more than thirty years of service. Awarded honorary doctorates by numerous universities and the recipient of dozens of awards and prizes, Crumb makes his home in Pennsylvania, in the same house where he and his wife of more than fifty years raised their three children.

He says of **Voice of the Whale**: “Vox Balaenae was inspired by the singing of the humpback whale, a tape recording of which I had heard two or three years previously. Each of the three performers is required to wear a black mask. The masks, by effacing the sense of human projection, are intended to represent, symbolically, the powerful impersonal forces of nature (i.e. dehumanized). I have also suggested that the work be performed under deep-blue stage lighting.

The opening **Vocalise** (marked in the score: “wildly fantastic, grotesque”) is a kind of cadenza for the flutist, who simultaneously plays her instrument and sings into it. This combination of instrumental and vocal sound produces an eerie, surreal timbre, not unlike the sounds of the humpback whale. The conclusion of the cadenza is announced by a parody of the opening measures of Strauss’ **Also sprach Zarathustra**.

The **Sea-Theme** (“solemn, with calm majesty”) is presented by the cello (in harmonics), accompanied by dark, fateful chords of strummed piano strings. The following sequence of variations begins with the haunting seagull cries of the **Archezoic** (“timesless, inchoate”) and, gradually increasing in intensity, reaches a strident climax in the **Cenozoic** (“dramatic, with a feeling of destiny”). The emergence of man in the Cenozoic era is symbolized by a partial restatement of the Zarathustra reference.

The concluding **Sea-Nocturne** (“serene, pure, transfigured”) is an elaboration of the **Sea-Theme**. The piece is couched in the “luminous” tonality of B major, and there are shimmering sounds of antique cymbals (played alternately by the cellist and flutist). In composing the **Sea-Nocturne**, I wanted to suggest “a larger rhythm of nature” and a sense of suspension in time. The concluding gesture of the work is a gradually dying series of repetitions of a ten-note figure.”
GUEST PERFORMER

The playing of violinist CURTIS MACOMBER has been praised recently by Fanfare Magazine as "remarkable for its depth of feeling as well as for technical excellence." Macomber is considered to be one of the most versatile soloists and chamber musicians before the public today, equally at home and committed to works from Bach to Babbitt, and with a discography ranging from the complete Brahms String Quartets to the Roger Sessions Solo Sonatas to the complete Grieg Sonatas.

Mr. Macomber has for many years been recognized as a leading advocate of the music of our time. He has performed in hundreds of premieres, commissions, and first recordings of solo violin and chamber works by, among others, Carter, Davidovsky, Perle, Wuorinen, and Mackey.

As first violinist of the award-winning New World String Quartet for eleven years (1982-1993), Mr. Macomber performed the standard repertoire as well as numerous contemporary works in performances in major halls throughout the United States and Europe, and, with the Quartet, was appointed Artist-in-Residence at Harvard University from 1982 to 1990.

A founding member of the Apollo Piano Trio and a member of the 20th-century music ensemble Speculum Musicae since 1991, Mr. Macomber has also appeared with the New York New Music Ensemble, Group for Contemporary Music, Sea Cliff Chamber Players, and in chamber music series across the country and in Europe. He has recorded for Nonesuch, Koch, Vanguard, Pickwick, and Musical Heritage. In October 2005, Mr. Macomber and The Fischer Duo launched the Vermont Musica Viva Festival, a new chamber music festival in Norwich, Vermont.

Mr. Macomber is a member of the chamber music faculty of the Juilliard School and the violin faculty of the Manhattan School of Music. He has also taught at the Tanglewood Music Center, the Taos School of Music, and the Yellow Barn Music School. He holds his Bachelor of Music, Master of Music, and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from the Juilliard School.

UPCOMING CONCERTS DURING 2006-2007

CELEBRATING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF SYZYGY, NEW MUSIC AT RICE

CONCERT 3: Wednesday, March 28

CONCERT 4: Thursday, March 29
Symphonic wind ensemble music of Samuel Jones, Anthony Brandt, and Arthur Gottschalk.