

*FACULTY RECITAL*

*JEANNE KIERMAN, Piano*

*Thursday, February 8, 2007*

*8:00 p.m.*

*Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall*

RICE UNIVERSITY

the  
Shepherd  
School  
of Music

PROGRAM

**Mixed Emotions (2003)**

*Agitato/Calmo*  
*Lontano/Vicino*  
*Sweet Regrets*  
*Tender Rage*

*Robert Sirota*  
(b. 1949)

**The Dead Moth Tango (1990)**

*William Bolcom*  
(b. 1938)

**Fire Waltz - Homage to  
Béla Bartók (1996)**

*Augusta Read Thomas*  
(b. 1964)

**Eine Kleine Mitternacht Musik (2001)**  
(*A Little Midnight Music*)

*George Crumb*  
(b. 1929)

*Nocturnal Theme*  
*Charade*  
*Premonition*  
*Cobweb and Peaseblossom (Scherzo)*  
*Incantation*  
*Golliwog Revisited*  
*Blues in the Night*  
*Cadenza with Tolling Bells*  
*Midnight Transformation*

INTERMISSION

**Carnival Music (1971-76)**

*Fanfares and March*  
*Blues*  
*Largo Doloroso*  
*Sfumato*  
*Toccata-Rag*

*George Rochberg*  
(1918-2005)

*The reverberative acoustics of Duncan Recital Hall magnify the slightest sound made by the audience. Your care and courtesy will be appreciated. The taking of photographs and use of recording equipment are prohibited.*

## PROGRAM NOTES

This evening, it is a great pleasure for me to present these piano works by some of my most important friends and mentors. The first work is the most recent (2003) and is written by one of my longest-standing friends from my undergraduate years at Oberlin, Robert Sirota. Bob and his wife Vicki have weathered most of life's ups and downs with me and my husband, professionally and personally. I have had the great pleasure of performing several works by Bob over many years, including a wonderful cello and piano sonata from 1988, which was written right after the passing of two of our fathers within months of each other. Bob not only composes but is now the president of the Manhattan School of Music. Bob Sirota writes about **Mixed Emotions**:

*I have always been interested in music's ability to express subtle gradations of affect and feeling, and particularly in its ability to project contrasting feelings in close succession (or simultaneously!). **Mixed Emotions** consists of four character pieces, each one exploring a set of opposites. The first, **Agitato/Calmo**, projects a state of mind that I frequently find myself in. **Lontano/Vicino** (far/near) is self-explanatory; it is my homage to Debussy, particularly the piano preludes. **Sweet Regrets** makes a nod towards the Brahms intermezzi. **Tender Rage** expresses anger tinged with passionate affection.*

Next on the program is by Pulitzer prize-winning composer William Bolcom. Again, Bill has been a close friend and mentor of mine for thirty years, from the time that he and his new wife, Joan Morris, came to Dartmouth College to perform in the late 1970s. (My husband and I have just completed a recording of the complete cello and piano works of Bolcom for Naxos records.) Bolcom is legendary for using vernacular styles in his compositions, and **The Dead Moth Tango** is a wonderful celebration of a Brazilian tango. Bolcom's composition professor at Mills College was Darius Milhaud, who spent some time soaking up tango in Rio de Janeiro. **The Dead Moth Tango** is the first of Bolcom's **Three Dance Portraits** (1990) and was written for the great conductor Dennis Russell Davies, who is also a wonderful pianist. Bolcom says "**The Dead Moth Tango** got its title from a moth I killed inadvertently."

It was in the late 1980s when my husband and I were teaching at the Oberlin Conservatory that we met the brilliant composer, Augusta Read Thomas. She came to write for us a wonderful duo in 1990, and we have been close friends and colleagues in connection with the Tanglewood Music Center ever since. For a number of years, Ms. Thomas taught at Northwestern and was the composer-in-residence for the Chicago Symphony. The work I am playing tonight is one in a series of six small etudes, written from 1996 to 2006. Each of the pieces is written in pairs, and I will just perform the second one, **Fire Waltz – Homage to Bartók**. In Ms. Thomas' words, "the first etude juxtaposes very loud notes with soft ones, whereas the second etude presents the same pitch material lowered by two octaves and turned into a boogie-woogie bass line. The notes that were soft in the first etude form in the second one Bartók-like, jazzy chords. Although I think it is easy to hear the many references to perfumes of jazz in all my music, here is a work where the scents are more explicit."

I first came to know George Crumb in 1972 when the Concord String Quartet (of which my husband was a member) began preparing their first performances of Crumb's **Black Angels** for electric string quartet. George's personality reflects fully in his music — multi-faceted, rather paradoxical, full of simple childlike qualities on the one hand and eager to bring out the melodramatic on the other. When he was asked how loud should the sound of the amplification be in the quartet, George replied in his mild-mannered West Virginia drawl: "Oh, probably threshold of pain ..." In the **Eine Kleine Mitternacht Music**, however, the amplification is present in order to create a dream-like state. This 2001 work is in Crumb's words "a celebration of my fascination with night music and is a set of nine ruminations on the great jazz composer Thelonius Monk's **Round Midnight**." The piece begins with a hazy version of Monk's familiar tune, punctuated with strumming and plucking inside the piano as well as rhythmic motives with a yarnstick mallet. **Cobweb and Peaseblossom** (Scherzo) evokes Shakespeare's nocturnal fairies in a puckish array of quickly shifting staccato figures. **Golliwog Revisited** is a rather grotesque parody of Debussy's cakewalk, and Crumb also incorporates a quote from Wagner's **Tristan und Isolde** and Strauss' **Till Eulenspiegel**. **Blues in the Night** suggests a familiar jazz style and even quotes "at sixes and sevens," using six or seven main beats. **Cadenza with Tolling Bells** is the dramatic climax of the work, with large bells in parallel minor sevenths leading to the announcement of twelve strokes to "the advent of midnight." The final movement recalls the opening statement of Monk's tune and the music floats away dreamily to its conclusion.

Finally, in the fall of 1971, as newlyweds, Norman Fischer and I went to visit George Rochberg and his wife, Gene, at their suburban Philadelphia home. George had recently accepted a commission to write a new piece for the Concord Quartet's winning of the Naumburg Chamber Music award (the Third String Quartet). George, a former stalwart exponent of Schoenberg-style serialism, told us about the tragic death of his son a few years before and his necessity to re-think his musical language, since he felt he could no longer create his own music with such compositional restrictions. He brought out the **Carnival Music** to play for us, and we were stunned by this celebration of European and American vernacular traditions (the latter of which George was familiar with, having been a jazz pianist in the 1930s in Paterson, New Jersey, his boyhood home). The first movement poses interspersed gestures reminiscent of Bartók or Stravinsky with music recalling a New Orleans Mardi Gras march. The second movement is a straight blues, evoking the great Jerry Roll Morton. The melancholy and heartbreaking middle movement of the suite, **Largo Doloroso**, is followed by the **Sfumato**, in which delicate sound webs are woven around apparitions from Brahms' **Capriccio, Op. 76 No. 8** and Bach's three-part **Sinfonia No. 9**. **Sfumato**, Rochberg tells us, is "a style of painting during the Renaissance in which figures, shapes, objects emerged out of a misty, veiled, dreamy background." The final movement returns to 1930s jazz music with ragtime, player piano, and blues, interwoven with rather incessant injections of the Bartók and Stravinsky-like figurations. I would like to dedicate this recital to the memory of my dear friend and revered mentor — George Rochberg.

— Notes by Jeanne Kierman

## BIOGRAPHY

*JEANNE KIERMAN has served as Artist Teacher of Piano at the Shepherd School for the last fourteen years. Whereas Ms. Kierman has made a professional specialty as a player and teacher of ensemble repertoire, this evening's concert represents her first solo recital at the Shepherd School of Music. In the 1970s and '80s, Ms. Kierman toured extensively under the sponsorship of the New England Foundation and the Vermont Arts Council as a member of the Alcott Piano Quartet. More recently, she has performed for Da Camera of Houston, Mohawk Trail Concerts, Vermont Musica Viva, Chamber Music Ann Arbor, Skaneateles and the Marrowstone Festival among others. As pianist with The Fischer Duo, Ms. Kierman has performed all over the United States for thirty-five years, and in 1996 and 1997 toured for the United States Information Agency as an Artistic Ambassador to South America and South Africa. Ms. Kierman has written about her experiences as a collaborative pianist for Piano and Keyboard Magazine and has recorded for Northeastern, Gasparo, Albany, and Bridge Records. A graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, the Dalcroze School, and the New England Conservatory, she studied piano with William Masselos, Miles Mauney, Victor Rosenbaum, and Menahem Pressler. Before the Shepherd School, Ms. Kierman formerly served on the faculties of the Oberlin Conservatory and Dartmouth College. In the summer months, Ms. Kierman works with students in piano chamber music at the Greenwood Music Camp in Massachusetts and performs also with the Concord Trio.*