



A program of works by
LUCIANO BERIO
JOHN HARBISON
RICHARD LAVENDA
and
SEBASTIAN CURRIER

Friday, October 10, 2008
8:00 p.m.
Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

Sequenza (1958)
for solo flute

Leone Buyse, flute

Luciano Berio
(1925-2003)

Cucaraccia and Fugue (2003)
for four violas

Ivo-Jan van der Werff, viola I
Pei-Ling Lin, viola II
Marissa Winship, viola III
James Dunham, viola IV

John Harbison
(b. 1938)

Rhapsody (at the center, stillness) (2006)
for viola and piano

James Dunham, viola
Charles Tauber, piano

Richard Lavenda
(b. 1955)

INTERMISSION

Static (2005)
for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano

Remote
Ethereal
Bipolar
Resonant
Charged
Floating

Heather Zinninger, flute
Michael Webster, clarinet
Eric Siu, violin
Jacob Fowler, cello
Christopher Goddard, piano

Sebastian Currier
(b. 1959)

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

Sequenza Luciano Berio

In 1958 Luciano Berio began a series of works for solo instruments with the composition of *Sequenza* for flute. Thirteen other *Sequenzas* followed, three of which exist in alternate versions; the last was for solo cello in 2002. Writer Hubert Culot has aptly described this body of work as “a thirty-four year musical Odyssey that will remain as one of the peaks of 20th-century instrumental music.” About this series Berio wrote:

All the *Sequenzas* for solo instruments are intended to set out and melodically develop an essentially harmonic discourse and to suggest, particularly in the case of the monodic instruments, a polyphonic mode of listening ... I wanted to establish a way of listening so strongly conditioned as to constantly suggest a latent, implicit counterpoint.

A landmark composition in the flute repertoire, *Sequenza* is one of the most “traditional” among the *Sequenzas*, and, as would all the *Sequenzas* to follow, exploits the entire range of the instrument and challenges the player to produce the broadest possible dynamic contrasts. This work was the first composition in our repertoire to incorporate multiphonics – elusive sounds that appear here as the third and fourth partials of harmonic series on C and D-flat, respectively. It also includes a passage of dynamically gradated key slaps, a contemporary technique which had first appeared twenty-two years earlier in Varèse’s pivotal *Density 21.5* for solo flute.

– Note by Leone Buyse

Leone Buyse is the Joseph and Ida Kirkland Mullen Professor of Flute and Chair of the Woodwind Department at the Shepherd School.

Cucaraccia and Fugue John Harbison

John Harbison, composer, conductor, and violist, studied the etudes of Bartolomeo Campagnoli as all violists do. In Harbison’s words they are “inventive, musical, and satisfying.” Inspired to create his own, Harbison wrote two sets of six etudes included in *The Violist’s Notebook: Book I* (2000) and *Book II* (2002), each dedicated to a different violist. (Mine is Book I, No. 3!) As he began collecting his notebooks, Harbison “... thought of Campagnoli, his practical, modest, subversively challenging communications with his violist colleagues, then as now some of the best people in the world, and hoped my messages would reach a few of them now and even in the future.” The convivial *Cucaraccia and Fugue*, both a postlude to *The Violist’s Notebook* and a stand-alone work, was added “... in case a conclave of violists were involved on some occasion. It begins with a species of viola joke, but continues, in a thematically related short fugue,

more serioso or perhaps just pomposo." "Cucaraccia" is itself a play on words, spelled not only to make reference to that mischievous insect but also to the old caccia, or chase.

– Note by James Dunham
(with thanks to Sarah Schaffer)

James Dunham is Professor of Viola at the Shepherd School.
Sarah Schaffer is Assistant to John Harbison.

Rhapsody (at the center, stillness) Richard Lavenda

Rhapsody (at the center, stillness) is in one movement that contains several clearly different sections. It begins with an extended viola cadenza that explores the characteristic viola sound as well as spotlighting the violist's virtuosity. Once the piano enters, the two instruments engage in a dialog in which various melodic fragments are exchanged. They also exchange roles: sometimes the viola accompanies the piano, sometimes it's the other way around, and sometimes they are equal contributors. This builds to a rather frenzied climax, after which the music calms down, and the most significant melody appears in a clear, expanded version. It turns out to be a quotation from an important Jewish prayer, "Hineni" ("Here I am") and it further turns out to have been the source for much of the music that preceded it. I leave it to any curious members of the audience to discover its connection to the subtitle of the piece.

– Note by the composer

Richard Lavenda is currently Professor of Composition and Theory and Director of Graduate Studies at the Shepherd School of Music.

Static Sebastian Currier

It could be some sort of Rorschach's test: what do you think of when you read the word "static"? Is it of something unchanging and in a state of equilibrium? Or is it of the erratic white noise that interferes with a radio signal? Both these divergent meanings relate to certain aspects of my piece, which, with its six movements of varying tempo and character, still retains vestiges of a sonata cycle (*Remote, Ethereal, Bipolar, Resonant, Charged, Floating*). The slow, distant, wave-like chords that open the piece suggest an interior landscape that is inert and unchanging. This gesture becomes a motive throughout the piece, heard or felt in almost every movement. As early as the second movement, traces of the other "static" emerge. This musical interference takes several forms, but one of the most characteristic is where string trills are played in harmonics, paired with changes in bow pressure and placement, which causes various harmonics to stand out in a constantly changing and random fashion. In the fourth movement (*Resonant*) the irregular, unpatterned ornamental gestures in the piano create a static of sorts

against the long lines in the strings. In the third movement (*Bipolar*) the juxtaposition is most pronounced. The movement consists of a long-held static chord which is abruptly interrupted by a rough, chaotic, and intense passage (radio static with a vengeance!) which almost as abruptly ends, leaving the static chord once again in the wake of its turbulence. The fifth movement (*Charged*) defines the arc of the piece as a whole, dividing it into before and after. Although the material is drawn from earlier movements, this movement stands out from the others both because of its sustained intensity (the other movements in general tend towards quietude) and because of its substitution of flute and clarinet with piccolo and bass clarinet. In the last movement (*Floating*), material from other movements returns, not so much with a feeling of formal closure or recapitulation, but as disembodied fragments of memory that float by, emerging out of an ethereal static which gains ever-increasing prominence as the movement progresses.

Static was written for Music from Copland House, which was made possible by a commission from Meet the Composer. It was premiered at Miller Theater in New York in February 2005.

— Note by the composer

Sebastian Currier has received many prestigious awards including the Berlin Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, an NEA Fellowship, an Academy Award, and the Grawemeyer Award in Music Composition. He is currently on the faculty of Columbia University.

UPCOMING SYZYGY CONCERT

Friday, November 14

PROGRAM

Luciano Berio - *Sequenza XIV* (for solo cello; 2002)

Arthur Gottschalk - *Recuerdos de México* (sonata for flute and piano; 2008)

Robert Sirota - *Birds of Paradise* (for flute, clarinet, and piano; 2008)

Pierre Jalbert - *Trio* (for violin, cello, and piano; 1998)

Performers include Shepherd School faculty and students.