

UC San Diego | Division of Arts and Humanities | Department of Music

presents

The Dean's Night at The Prebys



Palimpsest

Music for Instruments + Electronics

Wojtek Blecharz • John Cage • Pierre Boulez • Milton Babbitt • Luigi Nono • John Luther Adams

Conrad Preybs Music Center Concert Hall

WEDNESDAY @ 7 November 7, 2012

The University of California San Diego
Division of Arts and Humanities
Department of Music
presents

PALIMPSEST

music for instruments + electronics

Wojtek Blecharz: -onym (2011)

Christine Tivolacci, bass flute
Ariana Lamon-Anderson, bass clarinet
Ryan Nestor, percussion
Leah Asher, violin
Jennifer Bewerse, cello
David Medine, electronics
Rand Steiger, conductor

John Cage: Williams Mix (1953)

electronic realization by Tom Erbe

Pierre Boulez: Dialogue de l'ombre double (1985)

Curt Miller, clarinet
Scott Worthington, electronics

Intermission

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Milton Babbitt: Phonemena (1970)

Bonnie Lander, soprano

Luigi Nono: A Pierre. Dell'azzurro silenzio, inquietum (1985)

Rachel Beetz, contrabass flute
Samuel Dunscombe, contrabass clarinet
Greg Surges, electronics

John Luther Adams: The Light Within (2007)

Christine Tavalacci, alto flute
Robert Zeligman, bass clarinet
Stephen Solook, percussion
Stephen Lewis, piano
Batya MacAdam-Somer, violin
Jennifer Bewerse, cello
Issac Garcia-Muñoz, electronics
Rand Steiger, conductor

Palimpsest curated by: Rand Steiger
Lead Audio Technician: Issac Garcia-Muñoz

Wojtek Blecharz (Voytek Blehash)**-onym****for bass flute, bass clarinet, violin, cello, percussion and live electronics (2010-11).**

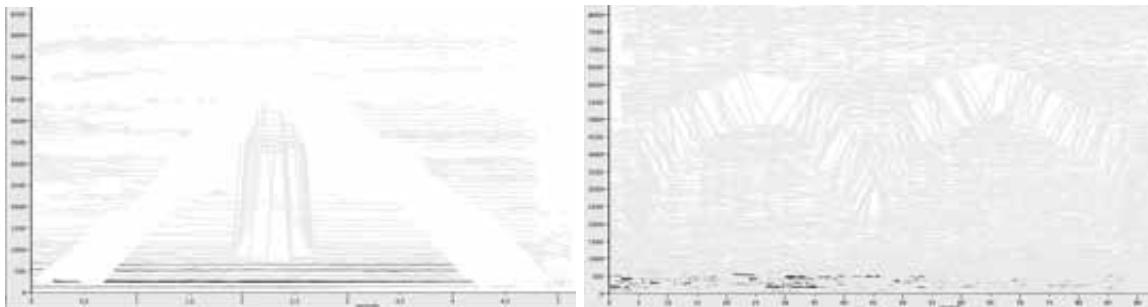
The only thing I knew between May 2010 and January 2011 was that **-onym** was supposed to address the issue of *identity*, the most important topic for me at that time.

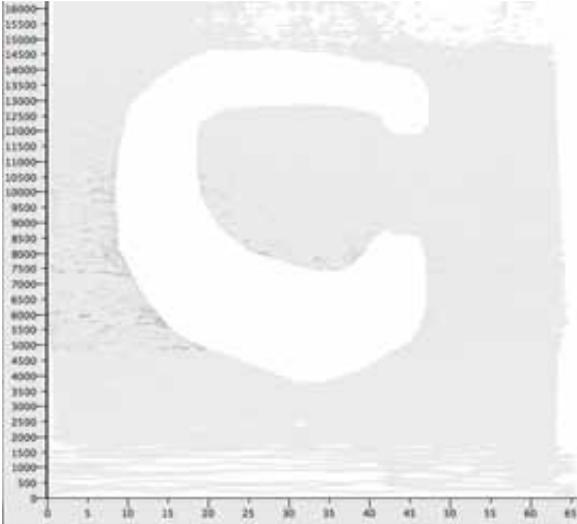
I wanted to find some extremely personal impulse, something hidden deep in myself, which would nourish my ability to convert it into sound. As usual, I was obsessively looking for a text, which could work as a formal background for the music, but everything I was encountering seemed to be dishonest, pretentious or artificial.

After six months of unsuccessful and frustrating struggle with my inability to formulate and express a personal “sound language”, I realized, during a twenty-minute beach walk, that my biggest weakness was my biggest potential. I did not need to create a complete musical syntax -- I was supposed to focus on a process of creating this syntax. And this is how I reached the most obvious and fundamental issue of identity: **What is my name? My name is...** These two simple sentences became my new mantra, my impetus, and the background text for the entire form of *-onym*. In the piece each letter of the Polish alphabet stands for a specific sound “environment”: each letter represents its own measure, pitch center, time signature and number of internal rhythmic pulsations. The orchestration of the letter – its articulation, timbre or dynamic contour might vary, but its pitch center, the time signature and the rhythmic profile always correspond to the fixed distribution. So one could say that the entire form of the piece is a *sonification* of **“what is my name?/my name is...”** sentences in expressed in different languages: Polish, English, Greek and Tibetan.

In my further research on symbols I found out, naming has always conferred identity: in ancient Egypt, mysterious forces associated with a name carried the life of each human being; in Germanic cultures, a newborn child had no right to live without a name; Latin *nomen est omen* implies that our destiny is encoded in our name. The suffix *-onym*, means “word, name,” and words ending in *-onym* refer to an eponymous designation.

When I was composing *-onym*, live electronics were completely new to me, and I was trying to overcome technical challenges in order to find a symbolic, rather than technological, link between this medium and the acoustic instruments. The samples I used in the electronic part are chosen in relation to my name: WOJCIECH BLECHARZ. Each letter of my name is represented by one piano sample, which contains a single pitch played in the lowest register with moderately soft dynamics. I ran a spectral analysis of each sample and then engraved, erased, cut off or extended the outline of a letter of my name directly in the sound, changing the original arrangement of the partials:





The narrative of *-onym* constantly meanders, gets lost, halts, develops without conclusion, searches, breathes, and paces back and forth. I could say that each measure/letter has its own heart beat, pulse or breathing, each measure is a micro-ritual. The piece was composed for Ensemble Court Circuit thanks to the Artistic Stipend from ZAIKS Society.

The internal language, in technical sense, is a state of the faculty of language. Each internal language has the means to construct the mental objects that we use to express our thoughts and to interpret the limitless array of overt expression that we encounter. Each of these mental objects relates sound and meaning in a particular structured form.

--Noam Chomsky, *On nature and language*.

John Cage: Williams Mix (1953) ***Electronic realization by Tom Erbe***

John Cage composed Williams Mix in 1952 for 8 channels of magnetic tape. It was one of the first pieces for tape - an ambitious project with over 2,000 tape shapes drawn onto a 192-page score and resulting in only 4 minutes and 15 second of music. The original version took Cage and a group of his friends nearly one year to complete.

I started work on Williams Mix in January 2012 by carefully measuring and noting all of the events on the score - and in the process, discovered the shape and structure of the piece. I devised a patch in the PD language to play Williams Mix and perform the scored transformations. A group of my friends contributed the 500 - 600 sounds required to perform the piece. Other than the original, this is the first time anyone has realized Williams Mix from the score.

The sounds for this performance of Williams Mix were generously provided by the following musicians, artists and friends:

Bobby Bray, Cooper Baker, Clay Chaplin, Carl Stone, Doug Van Nort, Elaine Lillios, Greg Dixon, Greg Davis, J Lesser, Jeff Kaiser, Kent Clelland, Maggi Payne, Michael Trigilio, Rick Nance, Sam Dunscombe, Scot Gresham Lancaster, Stephan Mathieu, Tom Djil, Tom Erbe

Pierre Boulez: *Dialogue de l'ombre double* (1985)

French composer Pierre Boulez wrote *Dialogue de l'ombre double* to celebrate Luciano Berio's sixtieth birthday in 1985. The title, which translates to Dialogue of the Double Shadow, was inspired by an excerpt from the 1924 play *Le Soulier de satin* by Paul Claudel. Written for live clarinet and its pre-recorded counterpart, it is an atonal tour de force of technical virtuosity and timing. The work is divided into thirteen sections beginning with "Sigue initial" and ending with "Sigue final" with alternating Strophes (live clarinet) and Transitions (pre-recorded clarinet). The "shadow" effect and interplay between the two entities is spellbinding, as the tape serves not only as a reflection of the soloist but also as a means of transformation and magnification. As in other compositions by Boulez, spatial relationships dictated by the placement of performers and audience play an integral part. The soloist is stationed in the center of the hall, surrounded by the audience. They, in turn, are placed between the clarinetist and a six-point speaker system resulting in a fascinating challenge to the listener's acoustical perspective. Because the direction of the sound of the same instrument emanates from various speakers, it is like looking at a piece of sculpture from different sides. From chaos to tranquility, one is struck by the emotional contrasts that transcend the work's disciplined, intellectual bent. As in his larger work, *Repons* (1981), Boulez successfully marries electronic technology with red-blooded, live music.

—Mona DeQuis (© All Music Guide)

Milton Babbitt: *Phonemena* (1970)

"...about *Phonemena*: the circumstances are very simple [...] Bethany [Beardslee] decided that she would like to have an encore piece after *Philomel*, because when *Philomel* had a great success with her... then she thought she came out of sort of a letdown. But she certainly wasn't going to repeat *Philomel* as an encore, so she wanted a little encore piece. So it was really for Bethany who never performed it. But the idea was to extend and, particularly, carry into the electronic realm, a piece I had written for Bethany, which almost nobody knows, called *Sounds and Words*. And that's a piece that was in a collection of modern American songs, published by E. B. Marks...which [addressed] phonemes and piano. It was for Bob Helps and Bethany Beardslee. And I decided I wanted to do what she had done in this very much shorter piece. Though *Phonemena* is short, the other piece is only about two and a half minutes. And I wanted now to be able to use—as I could not because that piece was written back in the mid-fifties—I wanted to do a piece [with the RCA Mark II Synthesizer]."

—Milton Babbitt

The inscription to Babbitt's score, *Phonemena* reads: "dedicated to all the girl singers I have known". The piece itself is made up of "phonemes" presented in a glittery, fast paced, speech-like declamation. Dedicating such a difficult score with such open-ended content to "girl singers" as a general population definitely draws an eyebrow raise at the least from any woman who decides to perform it. Of course no encore piece should be written without the folly of showmanship. However, taken out of that context *Phonemena* carries a tongue-in-cheek attitude towards the personalities (musical and otherwise) of the brave lady singers who courageously accept the challenge to learn Babbitt's exceedingly complex works for voice and tape.

—Bonnie Lander

Luigi Nono: A Pierre. Dell'azzurro silenzio, inquietum (1985)

A Pierre, for bass flute, bass clarinet, and live electronics, [was written in 1985 and is dedicated to Pierre Boulez on his 60th birthday. It produces] a swarm of harmonic resonances like the sound of many choral groups—Nono indicates “a piú cori” in his title, [though it] is in fact not for voices. In 1955, Nono had dedicated another work to Boulez “for his humanity,” but withdrew it later for political and other reasons. It is difficult to tell if *A Pierre* represents Nono’s idea of Boulez’s music, as it suggests a more soothing, less angular, and hard-edged pointillistic composer. In any case, the sounds of the piece are very gentle: breath tones deep in reverberation, non-corporeal harmonics, deep and enveloping bass line waves, lovely transparent chordally tuned electronic resonances, clarinet bleeps, and overblowings like whale and dolphin songs underwater (is the “blue silence” sky or sea, or an imagined heaven?).

—“Blue” Gene Tyranny, Rovi

John Luther Adams: The Light Within (2007)

Sitting in silence at their meetings, Quakers seek to “greet the light within.” Artist James Turrell (a Quaker himself) says that he aspires in his work to address “the light that we see in dreams.”

On a crisp autumn day sitting inside *Meeting*—Turrell’s skyspace at PS1 in Queens—I experienced my own epiphany of light. From mid-afternoon through sunset and into night, I was transfixed by the magical interplay of light and color above and within. Over the hours, the sky descended through every nameless shade of blue and finally to the heaviest black. The light within the space rose from softest white through ineffable yellows to deepest orange. Just after sunset, there came a moment when outside and inside met in perfect equipoise. The midnight blue of the sky and the burnished peach of the room came together, fusing into one vibrant yet intangible plane ... light becoming color, becoming substance.

Out of this experience came *The Light Within*. A companion to *The Light That Fills the World* (1999–2001), the harmonic colors of this new piece are more complex and mercurial than those of its outward-looking predecessor. Within this more introspective sonic space, the light changes more quickly, embracing darker hues and deeper shadows.

—John Luther Adams, November 2007

Tonight's concert is dedicated to Elliott Carter

(December 11, 1908 – November 5, 2012)

Special thanks to Dean Seth Lerer, for hosting this evening's concert,
and to the members of the NEW MUSIC SOCIETY,
for their continued support of and commitment to
to the creation and performance of new music at UC San Diego.



Antonio C. Estrada, Event Manager

Josef Kucera, Recording Engineer

Michael Ricca and Daniel Ross, Recording Assistants

Stage crew: Lana Graves, Victoria Harris, Jennifer Kim, Susan Park, Joel Polizzi

Box Office: Sarah L. Schwartz, Peter Ko, Daniel Kim

Trevor Henthron, Manager of Audio Computing

Jessica C. Flores, Production Manager

Audience members are reminded to please silence all phones and noise generating devices before the performance.

As a matter of courtesy and copyright law, no unauthorized recording or photography is allowed in the Concert Hall. The Conrad Prebys Music Center is a nonsmoking facility.

A black and white photograph of a city skyline at night, with numerous skyscrapers illuminated and their lights reflecting on the water in the foreground. The sky is dark, and the overall mood is serene and urban.

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