NIGHT
DISSERTATION RECITAL
OF
KIRSTEN ASHLEY WIEST, SOPRANO

WITH
DR. KYLE ADAM BLAIR, PIANO

Saturday, April 13, 2019
7:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Program:

Leinolaulut (2007).................................Kaija Saariaho (b.1952)
Phoenix (2016).........................................James Erber (b.1951)
Mara (2019) *world premiere......................Jeffrey Holmes (b. 1971)
Being Beauteous (2018)...............................Gérard Pape (b. 1955)
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Though my soul my set it darkness, it will rise in perfect light;
I have loved the stars too fondly to be fearful of the night.

Sarah Williams

Joseph Bishara (b. 1970) is an American composer, music producer, and actor, best known for his work scoring films such as Insidious, 11-11-11, Dark Skies, and The Conjuring. Bishara's career began with the 1998 Biblical drama Joseph's Gift, though he composes music for mainly horror and thriller films and has collaborated several times with director James Wan. Projects by directors John Carpenter and Joseph Zito, and musicians Ray Manzarek and Diamanda Galás have incorporated Bishara's work. In addition to composing, Bishara frequently appears in films he is involved in, usually made up as a demon or other supernatural creature. He has also functioned as a producer on Repo! The Genetic Opera.

Black Sunday for textless a cappella soprano is a sonic exploration of the microtonal nuances inherent in the human voice. Composed in November 2018 for soprano Kirsten Ashley Wiest, this short piece combines elements of horror film scoring with the resonant acoustics of the concert stage to create a lingering, haunting atmosphere.

Kaija Saariaho (née Laakkonen, b. 1952) is a Finnish composer based in Paris, France. She studied composition in Helsinki, Freiburg, and Paris, where she has lived since 1982. Her research at the Institute for Research and Coordination Acoustic (IRCAM) marked a turning point in her music away from strict serialism towards spectralism. Her characteristically rich, polyphonic textures are often created by combining live music and electronics. During the course of her career, Saariaho has received commissions from the Lincoln Center for the Kronos Quartet and from IRCAM for the Ensemble Intercontemporain, the BBC, the New York Philharmonic, the Salzburg Music Festival, the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, and the Finnish National Opera, among others.

Leino Songs are Saariaho's setting of poems by one of Finland’s most important poets, Eino Leino. He was the most important developer of Finnish-language poetry at the turn of the 20th century, and in his works combined symbolism, mythic tradition and influences from Nietzsche with his own romantic concept of the poet as a truth-seeking visionary. The four songs, entitled “Looking at You”, “The Heart”, “Evening Prayer”, and “Peace”, were written for the Finnish soprano Anu Komsi and are the first set of songs Saariaho has written in Finnish.

1.
Sua katselen silmin ma huikaistuin
kuni kaunista sateenkaarta,
sua silmäni sulkien muistelen kuin
meren laskija lehtosaarta.

Sua katson ma hiljaa henkien
kuin kuvaav äitini armaan
ja uskon, ett' enkelit lapsuuden
nyt lähellä liikkuvat varmaan.

When I open my eyes, I am mesmerized
by a beautiful rainbow.
When I close my eyes, I remember you
as a fisherman remembers his island.

When I look, breathing silently,
like a picture of my graceful mother,
I believe that angels of childhood
stir nearby.
II.

Sydän, mitä sahaat? Heart, what do you saw?
Sahaatko lautaa You are sawing
neljää, joiden four pieces of wood
välissä maata, for me to comfortably
maata mun mieluissa on? lie between.
Sahaan ma rautaa, I am sawing my iron
kahleita katkon, shackles open,
että sun henkesi so that your
vapaa oisi, unhappy spirit
henkesi onneton.

Sydän, mitä kuiskaat? Heart, what are you whispering?
Kuiskitko kummaa You whisper
polkua päivän, the path of the day,
tunturin tietä down the mountain road
tai vahan tähtiä päin? and toward the Heavenly stars.
Kuiskin ma tummaa I whisper dark
runoa Tuonen, poems of death,
kuiluja vaivaa troublesome gaps
virkkamatonta, abound.
autuutta ylpeän. Arrogant blessedness.

III.

Mitä on nää tuoksut mun ympärilläin? What are these scents around me?
Mitä on tämä hiljaisuus? What is this silence?
Mitä tietä vi rauha mun sydämessäin, What does this peace in my heart mean,
Tää suuri ja uoto ja uus? so big and strange and new?

Minä kuulen kuink’ kukkaset kasvavat I hear the flowers growing
ja metsässä puhuvat puut. and the trees talking in the woods.
Minä luulen, nyt kypsyvät unelmat I believe my dreams are growing, too,
ja toivot ja tuo’ot muut. bringing hope and more dreams.

Kaikk’ on niin hiljaa mun ympärilläin, Everything is so quiet around me,
kaikk’ on niin hellää ja hyvää. everything is so tender and good.
Kukat suuret mun aukeevat sydämessäin The flowers bloom inside my heart
ja tuoksuvat rauhaa syvää. and the fragrance is deep peace.

IV.

Unat, unta, unta Dream, dream, dream,
syvää uinumaan deep sleep.
Lunta, lunta, lunta Snow, snow, snow
pääle mustan maan. on black earth.

 Yössä, yössä, yössä In the night, in the night, in the night,
oiset lunnut lentää. fly the birds of the night.
Työssä, työssä, työssä In work, in work, in work
lepää tuskat sentään. my pains do rest.

Lennä, lennä, lennä Fly, fly, fly
aatos ine hmon! thoughts!
Mennä, mennä, mennä Go, go, go
aika maata on. it’s time to sleep.

James Erber (b. 1951) is a British composer of the New Complexity school. Born in London, he studied music at the universities of Sussex (BA, 1973) and Nottingham (MA, 1975), and worked in music publishing from 1976 to 1979. In the early 1980s, he undertook serious studies in composition, first with Jonathan Harvey at Sussex (MPhil 1983), and then with Brian Ferneyhough at the Hochschule für Musik
Freiburg. In addition to composing, Erber lectured for three years at Goldsmiths College, London (1991–94), and has written articles and given guest lectures throughout Europe.

The two songs which make up **Phoenix** are settings of sonnets, both concerned with the subject of love, from "De gli eroici furori" by the 16th century hermetic philosopher **Giordano Bruno**. In the first, "Unico augel del sol", the lover compares himself with the mythical Phoenix. He himself burns with transitory earthly love, while the flames which periodically consume the Phoenix (the symbol of divine love) cause him to be reborn to new life. The second sonnet "Ben ch'a tanti martir" is a paean to love, which has caused the poet to suffer unimaginable torments but has also rewarded him with transcendental vision.

The music of **Phoenix** shows Erber’s love of the music of the early Baroque, in particular the solo motets which occur throughout Monteverdi’s *Vespers of 1610*. In both sonnets, the piano part consists of a two-part invention, which both supports and contrasts with the (more freely composed) vocal line. The end of the second sonnet is a vocalise: the voice (symbolising the voice of the Phoenix) and the two piano lines become one, as earthly and divine love merge.

**Phoenix: Two Sonnets by Giordano Bruno** was composed in December 2016 for Kirsten Ashley Wiest, and is dedicated to her and Jeffrey Holmes.

I.

Unico augel del sol, vaga Fenice,  Only bird of the sun, fair Phoenix,
Ch'appareggi col mondo gli anni tui,  Whó equals the world’s years with your own,
Quai colmi ne l'Arabia felice,  Which you live out in Arabia Felix,
Tu sei chi fuste, io son quel che non fui.  You are what you were, I am what I was not.
Io per caldo d'amor muoio infelice;  I die unhappy from the heat of love,
Ma te ravviv'il sol co' raggi sui.  But the sun revives you with his rays.
Tu braggi 'n un, ed io in ogni loco;  You burn in one, and I in every place.
Io da Cupido, hai tu da Febo il foco.  I have my fire from Cupid, you from Apollo.

Hai termini prefissi  You have fixed terms
Di lunga vita, e io ho breve fine,  Of long life, and I have a short course,
Che pronto s'offre per mille ruine;  Which readily reveals itself in a thousand ruinings;
Né so quel che vivrò, né quel che vissi:  Neither do I know what I shall I've out, nor what I have lived:
Me cieco fato adduce,  Blind fate leads me,
Tu certo torni a riveder tua luce.  While you will surely return to see your light again.

(adapted from the translation by George Kay)

II.

Ben ch'a tanti martir mi fai suggetto,  I thank you and am grateful to you, o Love,
Pur ti ringrazio, e assai ti deggio, amore,  For you opened by breast with so generous a wound
Che con si nobil piaga apristi il petto,  And have so mastered my heart,
E tan impadronisti del mio core,  That it adores a divine and living object,
Per cui fia ver, ch'un divo e viv'oggetto  The most beautiful image of God on earth.
Di dio piu bella imago in terra adore.  Let him who will think that my fate is cruel,
Pensi chi vuol, ch'il mio destin sia rio,  For it kills in hope and revives in desire.
Ch'uccide in speme, e fa vivo in desio!  While you will surely return to see your light again.

Pascomi d'alts impresa;  I am nourished by my high enterprise,
E ben ch'il fin bramato non consegua,  And even if the soul does not attain the desired end,
Et in tanto studio l’alma si dilegua,  And is consumed by so much zeal,
Basta, che sia si nobilmente accesa,  It is enough that it burns in so noble a fire;
Basta, ch'alto mi tolisi,  It is enough that I have been raised up on high
E da l’ignobil numero mi sciolsi.  And delivered from all ignoble ties.

( adapted from the translation by P. E. Memmo Jr.)
Jeffrey Holmes (b. 1971) composes post-spectral, teleological music incorporating elements of mysticism and lyrical expression. His creative inspiration is rooted in primitive myths, transcendent legends, and dramatic elemental landscapes in their primal and violent natural states. He has received commissions, performances, and awards from the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, Carnegie Hall, American Composers Forum, the Guitar Foundation of America, Talea Ensemble, JACK Quartet, and many others. He holds a Doctorate in Music Composition from the University of Southern California, and is Associate Professor of Composition at Chapman University.

Mara, for soprano and piano, is comprised of three sections or images, each preceded by an instrumental introduction, all culminating in a final closing section. Each of the three sections or images portrays a dream state with text by the composer: a winter landscape; night falling; the abyss or chasm of the primordial sea. These three dreams are then recapitulated in reverse order, but now the dreams have passed from psychological fantasy to the physical realm, by being conjured through the recitation of a magick runic formula. Each of these images manifest in contrasting, though related, intertwined musical materials: non-octave harmonies for the freezing mist and silent lake; polyrhythmic scales for the serpent-like turbulent river; arpeggios across wide registers for the violent sea. Mara is a highly virtuosic and dramatic work that is neither a song-cycle nor theater, but instead exists beyond reality, as a union of the cerebral and the imagination. Mara was composed during the winter of 2019 in Lake Arrowhead, California, for Kirsten Ashley Wiest.

I. Ór Vetrinn
Hljóðr vatn blár skikkja
Herfligir kala póka
Dauði vindr galagaldr

II. Ók Nátta
Ǫlfossa tunglskin ormr
Sky dreyrug bylgja
Úrvedr kala

III. At Gap
Ægir meinsamr ríkr dreki
Þrymja færa dœðarorð
Snjár högg helgrind bardagibani hefnad

Gérard Pape (b. 1955) is a composer of electronic music, author, and psychologist. He studied clinical psychology and music at University of Michigan, and works as a Lacanian psychoanalyst and composer. After moving to France at the beginning of the 1990s, his compositions came under the influence of the Mexican composer Julio Estrada, with the two sharing an interest in psychoanalysis and focus on "sound fantasies"—fantasies that occur "inside the head of the composer and take the form of sequences of sounds" (Estrada). Pape extended Estrada's conception by treating chaos as a formal concept, composing highly-notated chaos into his works. In 1991, Pape became the director of Les Ateliers UPIC (now CCMIX), and created the CLSI ensemble (Circle for the Liberation of Sounds & Images) in 2007.

Being Beauteous was composed in October 2018 for soprano Kirsten Ashley Wiest on text of the same title by Arthur Rimbaud. In this work, all harmonies, durations, pulsations, and microtonal patterns of vibrato are composed based on the rhythmic structure of Rimbaud’s poetry. The meaning and resulting sound of the French text inspired the notated vocal timbres and dynamics, which vary over the course of the piece. While voice and piano play in different tuning systems, they work as one to create a dramatic space for the work, filled with shimmering colors and unexpected twists and turns.
Devant une neige un Être de Beauté de haute taille.
Des sifflements de mort et des cercles de musique
sourde font monter, s’élargir et trembler comme un
spectre ce corps adoré: des blessures écarlates et
noires éclatent dans les chaires superbes. Les
couleurs propres de la vie se foncent, dansent, et
se dégagent autour de la Vision, sur le chantier.
Et les frissons s’élèvent et grondent, et la
saveur forcenée de ces effets se chargeant avec
les sifflements mortels et les rauques musiques
que le monde, loin derrière nous, lance sur notre
mère de beauté, - elle recule, elle se dresse. Oh!
nos os sont revêtus d'un nouveau corps amoureux.

In front of the snow stands a tall Beauteous Being.
The hissing of death and circles of muffled music
make this adored body climb, expand, tremble:
black and scarlet wounds
burst in the superb flesh.
The proper colors of life darken, dance,
and give off around the vision, upon the yard.
And the shudders rise and fall, and
the maniacal flavor of these effects being charged
with the mortal hissing and raucous music
that the world, well behind us, hurls on our
mother of beauty-she withdraws, she stands up. O!
Our bones are dressed again in a new amorous body.

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Bishara, and Jeffrey Holmes; and for their continued commitment to making every concert a special
experience: Jessica C. Flores, David Espiritu, and the audience here today. It truly does take a village to
raise a soprano, and I am deeply honored to have found such an incredible community in all of you!
With lots of love and deep gratitude,
Kirsten