

Jonathan Nussman, baritone
SONGS AND DRONES

Hölderlin-Gesänge, Op. 35a

György Kurtág (b.1926)

An...
Im Walde
Gestalt und Geist
An Zimmern
Der Spaziergang
Paul Celan: Tübingen, Jänner

Elixir (Night & Mystery) - world premiere

Anahita Abbasi (b. 1985)

*Eric Starr, trombone
Bryan Smith, tuba*

★ PAUSE ★

Songs, Drones and Refrains of Death

George Crumb (b. 1929)

La Guitarra
Casida de las Polomas Oscuras
Canción de Jinete, 1860
Casida del Herido por el Agua

*Boaz Roberts, guitar
Kyle Adam Blair, piano and harpsichord
Matt Kline, contrabass
Ryan Nestor, percussion
James Beauton, percussion
Johannes Regnier, sound design*

★ ★ ★

Please visit the new sound and video installations on display next door in the Recital Hall:

A Drone for Mary Hamilton - multi-channel sound, 12 minutes
Daily Verses - silent film, 15 minutes

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Today's performance is presented with deepest gratitude to Philip Larson, Susan Narucki, Jessica Flores, Daniel Ross, David Espiritu, David DeFilippo, Aleck Karis and the performance faculty, Nancy Guy, Pamela Narbona, Anahita Abbasi, Roger Reynolds, and Katharina Rosenberger.



Hungarian composer **György Kurtág** composed the individual songs that make up *Hölderlin-Gesänge* at various times between 1993 and 1997. The first five songs in the cycle are settings of poems by German Romantic poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843), whose inventive, elusive style was infused with the speculative philosophy of German Idealism. Most of Hölderlin's adult life was plagued by illnesses, real and imagined, and he spent his last several decades in Tübingen, in the care of a kind carpenter and his family, quite literally sequestered in a tall tower where he continued to write his formally inventive, often fragmentary poetry. The short poem which comprises the fourth song in the cycle is dedicated in gratitude to the Zimmer family, his generous caregivers during his decades of increasing mental instability.

For the final song in the set, Kurtág selected a poem by 20th century Romanian-born Paul Celan (1920-1970). Highly influenced by Hölderlin's fragmentary style, "Tübingen, Jänner" is Celan's tribute to Hölderlin's years of creative madness in Tübingen, and evokes the limitations of language as a means of deeply inspired expression. Celan quotes Hölderlin's poetry directly, and alludes to both his towering lodgings and the carpenter who served as his caregiver. The final quotation of the poem ("Pallaksch! Pallaksch!") is a reference to a nonsense expression invented by Hölderlin, which means sometimes yes and sometimes no, purportedly used by the poet with increasing frequency as his insanity progressed.

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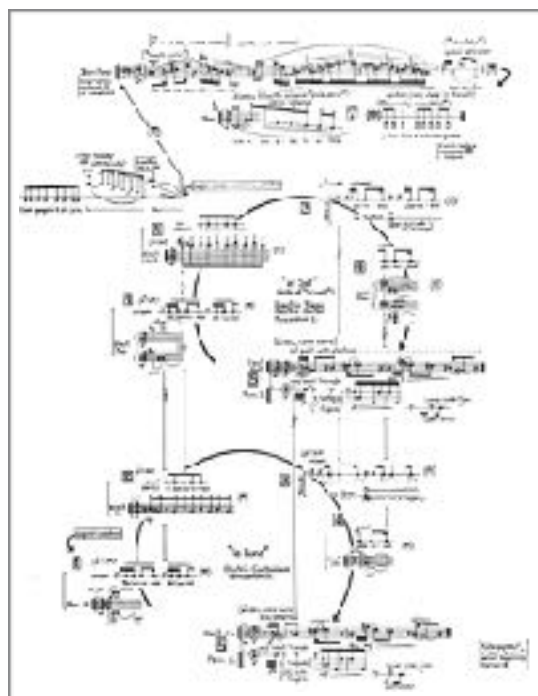
The text for *Elixir* is excerpted from the second act of Henry Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*, an operatic adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which premiered in 1692. *Elixir* is a manifestation of a "falsch Musical", incorporating both humor and seriousness within its musical context. As the piece unfolds, preposterous and absurd elements appear which develop in their own course through to the last moment of the piece. Within the dramatic framework of this short musical, two spirits, personifications of Night and Mystery, speak about themselves and their role as Elixirs of love.

-Anahita Abbasi

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George Crumb composed *Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death* in 1968, the largest of his many works which draw upon the texts of Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (1898-1936). Crumb evocatively sets four of Lorca's poems, each of which offers haunting depictions of death's inescapable and mystical qualities. The work is built upon the framework of key structural elements referred to in its title. Crumb presents Lorca's surreal poetry as distinct and self-contained songs, each an extended exploration of its own unique timbral world. These songs are then linked together by the more sonically cohesive refrains. The four refrains, which precede each of the songs, are continuous developments of the piano's opening theme and feature phonetic vocalizations from the entire ensemble. Three "death-drones" in the contrabass underscore important dramatic and poetic moments in the work.

In *Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death*, Crumb establishes and explores many of the ideas and textural elements he would continue to develop in works of the following decade. It contains an early example of his use of symbolic circular notation, which would become important in later works like his *Makrokosmos*. Here, he divides the instrumentalists into two groups with separate circular material representing the sun and moon, images drawn directly from Lorca's enigmatic poetry.



an excerpt from the score for song no. 2,
"Casida de las Polomas Oscuras"

English translations of Lorca's poems are by Stephen Spender, J. L. Gili and Paul Archer. Translations of Hölderlin and Celan are by Jonathan Nussman with the aid of Katharina Rosenberger.