

# **66<sup>th</sup> OJAIMUSICFESTIVAL**

**ADVANCED MANUSCRIPT**

**2012 PROGRAM NOTES**

**written by Christopher Hailey**

**Ojai In the Park - Free Community Event**  
**Thursday, June 7, 2012**  
**5:00 pm/Libbey Park**

John Luther Adams (b. 1953)  
*Inuksuit*

**This Space, Our Place**

“The whole world is music and all we have to do is tune in.” This is a good starting point for approaching the works of John Luther Adams because he captures here the partnership between listening and environment that lies at the core of his creative being. The landscape that has inspired much of his music is the Arctic expanse that stretches out from his home in Alaska across a continent, a region of extremes of hot and cold, light and dark. In such a place human presence can dwindle to insignificance and this has served to heighten Adams’ awareness of the way our senses can probe the limits of the self.

*Inuksuit* is the word for the stone markers that serve to guide the Inuit peoples on their journeys across this vast, featureless tundra; for Adams these markers are “symbols of human vulnerability and impermanence.” But the title also says something about our interaction with the world at large for in the Inuit language *Inuksuit* also means “to act in the capacity of the human.” “This work,” Adams has written, “is haunted by the vision of the melting of the polar ice, the rising of the seas, and what may remain of humanity’s presence after the waters recede. How does where we are define what we do and who we are? How do we understand the brevity of our human presence in the immensity of geologic time? What does it mean to act creatively with and within our environment?”

For Adams, the composer, such thoughts define an aural landscape and these sounds might well have become a concert work unfolding within a concert hall. *Inuksuit*, however, is written for outdoor performance; it is a “site determined” work in which the “hall” itself unfolds the work and becomes a vital component of the musical experience. The work is scored for percussion not only because such instruments carry well in an outdoor setting and can evoke sounds of the natural world, but also, as percussionist Steven Schick has observed, because “percussion has always had this role of representing something bigger than human-kind—states of mind that are emotionally charged....” The scoring is flexible, from nine to 99 percussion players, and the musicians are widely dispersed, each one a soloist in an ensemble of soloists. Listeners are free to move about and experience the music from any chosen place or indeed from multiple vantage points, “following wherever your ears may lead you, discovering musical moments and spaces that no other listener may ever hear.” Schick has described how *Inuksuit* forces audiences into a multi-dimensional listening experience “so when there are moments of silence, then you hear the wind or you’ll hear birds or ground squirrels in a way that you never really did before,” to which Adams adds, “so we listen to the world and the world listens back.” Adams once posed the question: “Can we listen more deeply and hear more widely the field of sound all around us?” *Inuksuit* asks us to do just that.

**Concert**

**Thursday, June 7, 2012**

**8:00pm / Libbey Bowl**

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano  
Marc-André Hamelin, piano  
Steven Schick, percussion  
Christianne Stotijn, mezzo-soprano

John Luther Adams

*Red Arc/Blue Veil*

Marc-André Hamelin, piano  
Steven Schick, percussion

Dimitri Shostakovich

Six Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva, Op. 143a

Moji stikhi  
Otkuda takaja nezhnost?  
Dialog Gamleta s sovest 'ju  
Po 'et I Car  
Net, byl baraban  
Anne Akhmatovoj

Christianne Stotijn, mezzo-soprano  
Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

INTERMISSION

Charles Ives

Piano Sonata No. 2, "Concord"

I. Emerson  
II. Hawthorne  
III. The Alcotts  
IV. Thoreau

Marc-André Hamelin, piano

*Join us for a special Concert Insights presented by American Public Media's Performance Today host Fred Child with special guests Leif Ove Andsnes and Steven Schick, 7pm at the Libbey Park tennis courts. FREE.*

## Program Notes

Thursday, June 7, 2012

8:00pm

John Luther Adams (b. 1953)

*Red Arc/Blue Veil* (2001)

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

Six Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva, Op. 143a (1973)

Charles Ives (1874–1954)

Piano Sonata No. 2, “Concord” (1909–1915)

## Compass Points

John Luther Adams traces his musical ancestry back to Charles Ives along a “wonderful rich lineage that goes back to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in American music,” adding, “I feel that that’s my heritage more than the European.” But if there is anything distinctly American about Adams’ music it is not what he rejects, but the range and diversity of the sources feeding his musical imagination. In *Red Arc/Blue Veil* Adams cites among those sources Wassily Kandinsky’s meditation on “those inner sounds that are the life of the colors.” This reference to a Russian modernist is a telling reminder that the European heritage is broad, and includes Debussy and Scriabin, Lutoslawski and Ligeti, not to mention today’s French spectralists, with whom Adams shares a love of color and prismatic mass. *Red Arc/Blue Veil* is a case in point. It is written for piano, percussion and processed sounds that are derived from the acoustic instruments. Adams treats this ensemble as a single sonority in which the piano and percussion rise and fall in a single broad arc while the processed sounds proceed in layered tempo relationships of 3, 5 and 7.

The unfettered freedom with which Adams explores his musical universe would have been unthinkable for Soviet composers during most of the last century. In his early years Dmitri Shostakovich forged a path of radical modernism, but all that came to an abrupt halt in 1936 when he ran afoul of Stalinist strictures against musical formalism. For the rest of his life the composer negotiated the narrow line between party orthodoxy and an expressive independence that was often hidden behind a mask of irony. By the end of his life, during a period of relative liberalization, such stratagems were no longer necessary and his last works are searing in their intense candor.

Among the finest of these later works are the six songs on texts by Marina Tsvetaeva (1892–1941), one of the great Russian poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tsvetaeva’s lyric voice was both rebellious and passionate, but like so many creative artists under Soviet rule, her life was marked by disruption and loss, including 17 years in exile in Berlin, Prague and Paris. She returned to the Soviet Union in 1939 but found little resonance for her work and after both her husband and her daughter were arrested for spying, she committed suicide. The six poems Shostakovich selected range from the deeply personal to the broadly lyric, including Tsvetaeva’s moving tribute to a much-admired fellow poet, Anna Akhmatova. Shostakovich’s settings, which take their starting point from the musicality of Tsvetaeva’s poetic language, are remarkable for their transparent simplicity in which the vocal line is often accompanied by little more than a single thread.

In his discussion of his compositional pedigree Adams uses a telling locution: “...all these great composers who gave me permission. You know, as Feldman would have said, Cage gave him permission and as Lou would have said, Henry Cowell gave us permission and Cage would have said, Henry Cowell gave us permission. And Cowell might have said, Charles Ives gave me permission.”

And who gave Ives permission?

Coming after the organic incrementalism of *Red Arc/Blue Veil* and the extreme austerity of the Shostakovich songs, the Concord Sonata is a shock and rude awakening. It is a bold, sprawling, maximalist embrace of big themes and grand ideas. In his *Essays before a Sonata* Ives gives a vivid description of Ralph Waldo Emerson: “He hacks his way up and down, as near as he can to the absolute, the oneness of all nature, both human and spiritual, and to God’s benevolence. To him the ultimate of a conception is its vastness....” It was as close as Ives would get to a self-portrait. God help the

Soviet bureaucrat who tried to muzzle this voice! But then Charles Ives probably wouldn't have bothered to put up a fuss because for most of his life he was happy to compose for his own pleasure with little thought of a public performance.

The Concord Sonata, Ives' most personal work, is dedicated to the spiritual free thinkers who, in a sense, gave him the permission to be one himself. Its four movements are devoted in turn to portraits of Emerson, Hawthorne, the Alcott family, and Thoreau, personalities bound by the spirit of transcendentalism that lay at the heart of Ives' own world view. The sonata, written between 1909 and 1915, was first published in 1920, though Ives continued making revisions until the end of his life and never really regarded any version as definitive.

The first movement seeks to capture in music those qualities Ives admired in Emerson's thought, which proceeded "by sentences or phrases rather than by logical sequence. [...] As thoughts surge to his mind, he fills the heavens with them, crowds them in, if necessary, but seldom arranges them along the ground first."

Ives called the second movement an extended fragment whose goal was to convey some of the "wilder fantastical adventures into the half-childlike, half-fairylike phantasmal realms" of Nathaniel Hawthorne's work.

The contemplative third movement is a sketch of the Alcott household, most particularly Bronson Alcott, "an exuberant, irrepressible visionary," and his daughter Louisa May, of *Little Women* fame. Here, as in the other movements, the opening motive from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is a ubiquitous presence, like "the soul of humanity knocking at the door of divine mysteries, radiant in the faith that it *will* be opened—and the human become the divine!"

The finale is devoted to Henry David Thoreau, whom Ives admired for his individuality and his love of nature. This is a quiet, rhapsodic movement that includes a ghostly passage for flute evoking "a mist over Walden Pond," an allusion to Thoreau the musician. But Thoreau, Ives argued, was a musician "not because he played the flute but because he did not have to go to Boston to hear the Symphony," adding, "he was divinely conscious of the enthusiasm of Nature, the emotion of her rhythms, and the harmony of her solitude." It would seem that John Luther Adams' roots go deeper still.

## Concert

Friday, June 8, 2012

8:00pm / Libbey Bowl

Reinbert de Leeuw, conductor and piano

Barbara Sukowa, actress

Norwegian Chamber Orchestra

Leoš Janáček      String Quartet No. 2, "Intimate Letters" (arranged for string orchestra)

Andante—Con moto—Allegro

Adagio—Vivace

moderato—Andante—Adagio

Allegro—Andante—Adagio

INTERMISSION

Reinbert de Leeuw      *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*

I.

1. *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai* (from *Dichterliebe*)

Heinrich Heine/Robert Schumann

2. *Gute Nacht* (from *Die Winterreise*)

Wilhelm Müller/Franz Schubert

3. *Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne* (from *Dichterliebe*)

Heinrich Heine/Robert Schumann

4. *Im Dorfe* (from *Die Winterreise*)

Wilhelm Müller/Franz Schubert

5. *Gretchen am Spinnrade*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe/Franz Schubert

6. *Lied der Mignon*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe/Franz Schubert

7. *Meeresstille*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe/Franz Schubert

II.

8. *Ich grolle nicht* (from *Dichterliebe*)

Heinrich Heine/Robert Schumann

9. *Letzte Hoffnung* (from *Die Winterreise*)

Wilhelm Müller/Franz Schubert

10. *Die Nebensonnen* (from *Die Winterreise*)

Wilhelm Müller/Franz Schubert

11. *Rastlose Liebe*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe/Franz Schubert

12. *Ich hab' im Traum geweinet* (from *Dichterliebe*)

Heinrich Heine/Robert Schumann

13. *Der Erlkönig*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe/Franz Schubert

14. *Der Doppelgänger*

Heinrich Heine/Franz Schubert

III.

15. *Der Leiermann* (from *Die Winterreise*)  
Wilhelm Müller/Franz Schubert
16. *Kennst du das Land?*  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe/Robert Schumann
17. *Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen* (from *Dichterliebe*)  
Heinrich Heine/Robert Schumann
18. *Ständchen*  
Ludwig Rellstab/Franz Schubert
19. *Heidenröslein*  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe/Franz Schubert
20. *Wehmut* (from *Liederkreis*, op. 39)  
Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff/Robert Schumann
21. *Die alten bösen Lieder* (from *Dichterliebe*)  
Heinrich Heine/Robert Schumann

**Program Notes**  
**Friday, June 8, 2012**  
**8:00pm**

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)  
String Quartet No. 2, “Intimate Letters” (1928)

Reinbert de Leeuw (b. 1938)  
*Im wunderschönen Monat Mai* (2003)

**Between Then and There, Here and Now**

Cultural currency is a fragile thing and its coinage can be worn smooth by casual handling. We see it all the time: Munch’s scream, Da Vinci’s smile, Beethoven’s scowl. The icon becomes an artifact that, through familiarity, is rendered invisible, leached of the visceral immediacy that once gave it its power. The arrangements on tonight’s program are acts of translation and transformation that de-familiarize the familiar and jolt us into rethinking what we thought we knew. Purists will wonder, why? Is the original not enough? Certainly it is. But these transcriptions, through distance and refraction, seek to call attention to the inevitable gulf that separates then and there from here and now.

Arranging a string quartet for string orchestra may seem a minor liberty, especially as so many composers have done it themselves in hopes of broadening the appeal of a work otherwise confined to the rarefied preserves of chamber music. It is something else altogether when the work in question so emphatically proclaims its confidential character. Janáček’s second quartet, written toward the end of his life, was inspired by his 11-year infatuation with a married woman, Kamila Stösslová, nearly 40 years his junior. Though it is unclear to what extent she returned his affection, the composer’s 700 letters to her explored every spiritual and physical dimension of his love, for which this quartet was to be the crowning testament: “You stand behind every note...,” he wrote her, “these notes of mine kiss all of you. They call for you passionately....”

The quartet’s rhapsodic, often fragmented character conveys the turbulence of Janáček’s emotion. The opening movement recalls their first meeting at a summer spa. Over an unsettling cello trill, the violins introduce the principal theme, while the viola, which represents Kamila, is set apart by its quiet *sul ponticello* entry, establishing a starkly differentiated texture that will characterize the movement as a whole. The Adagio, with its contrasting *Vivace*, imagines Kamila as the mother of his son and is dominated by the viola’s theme from the first movement. Considering the subject matter of the Adagio it may come as surprise that it is only in the next movement that the composer declares his love. The halting reticence of that declaration is quite touching, though it soon enough acquires genuine ardor. Janáček’s evocation of Kamila’s confused and flustered response is worthy of his psychological gifts as an opera composer. Janáček’s finale, which was to represent the ultimate fulfillment of the composer’s “great yearning,” opens with a vigorous dance-like theme, but it is a movement of contrasting tempos and moods. Amid the return of material from the previous movements Janáček introduces a four-note motive that comes to permeate the texture.

The arrangement of Janáček’s quartet doesn’t so much undermine its intimacy as heighten its drama and accentuate its disjointed structure. This is music that speaks more than it sings, but that has less to do with the composer’s obsession for translating speech patterns into music than with the urgency of his message. Something of that same urgency is found in Reinbert de Leeuw’s radical rethinking of the Romantic Lied in *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*.

De Leeuw’s work takes its title from the first song in Robert Schumann’s song cycle *Dichterliebe* (1840): “In the beautiful month of May, as all the buds burst forth, love sprang up in my heart. In the beautiful month of May, as all the birds were singing, I confessed to her my yearning and longing.” These words may remind us of Janáček’s love, but that was an old man’s fantasy, at once poignant and slightly sad. The preserve of the Romantic Lied is youth, and all its yearning, longing, self-pity, and despair are cast against the horizon of the future. This is what gives its ecstasies and terrors their existential edge. This is not the poetry of autumnal reflection; rather its sentiments are cantilevered over the chasm of the unknown.

How to recapture the flood of sentiment and Weltschmerz that swept over Europe in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this Byronic age of the solitary wanderer? That age is gone—its feel and texture, its fashions, mores and habits of speech. Gone, too, are the parlors and salons with their cozy evenings of music, poetry and shared confidence. That kind



of intimacy has disappeared, like faded letters bound with a silken cord. We're harder now, less vulnerable, more impatient. De Leeuw, in acknowledging this cultural shift, has given these songs a more exposed, unpredictable and aggressive edge: It is the world of cabaret.

*Im wunderschönen Monat Mai* conflates 11 songs from two song cycles—Schumann's *Dichterliebe* and Schubert's *Winterreise*—with another 10 of Schubert's best-known individual songs. Twenty-one songs, the 3x7 of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, a work that hovers in the background and even puts in a cameo appearance in the opening bars. Here are some of the most terrifying songs in the repertory—"Ich hab' im Traum geweinet" by Schumann, "Der Leiermann" by Schubert—as well as some of the most innocent. But in "Heidenröslein" and "Ständchen" that innocence is deceptive, the veneer of popularity, for behind the one lurks naked brutality; behind the other, bleak futility.

De Leeuw's arrangements represent a triple transformation: from singer to chanteuse; from piano to ensemble; from musical text to meta-text, in which sometimes only contours and outlines remain. The voice shifts readily between recitation and song to rapid parlando and hints of sprechstimme. Each song becomes a role, a challenge for the consummate actress unafraid to explore the physicality of these songs and underscore drama with histrionics. The ensemble dissects the piano part, pulling out motives, breaking up figures, adding textures and colors. And in the arrangements themselves, De Leeuw freely to accelerates or lingers obsessively on a detail, displaces rhythms, skips beats, or twists harmonies. We hear Mahler in "Der Leiermann" and Kurt Weill in "Gute Nacht;" "Rastlose Liebe" becomes a dizzying spin cycle, "Gretchen am Spinnrade" is pushed toward hysteria, and "Im Dorfe" becomes so tentative that it feels like walking on fragile, crusty snow in the dead of winter. We find ourselves in a strange and bewildering hall of mirrors in which what we see and hear is in constant counterpoint with our own sense of "how it goes." The original? It is as if, after nearly two centuries of layered associations, through the background noise of familiarity, these songs are struggling, half remembered, toward the surface.

**Ojai Late Night concert**

**Friday, June 8, 2012**

**10:30pm / Libbey Bowl**

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

Marc-André Hamelin, harmonium

Christianne Stotijn, mezzo-soprano

Bent Sørensen

*Lullabies*

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

Ferruccio Busoni

*Berceuse élégiaque*

(arr. Arnold Schoenberg)

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

Marc-André Hamelin, harmonium

Members of the NCO: Tom Ottar Andreassen, flute; Bjørn Nyman, clarinet; Per Kristian Skalstad, violin;

Christina Dimbodius, violin; Ellen Nisbeth, viola; Erlend Habbestad, cello; Marius Flatby, bass

Sørensen

*Sigrid's Lullaby*

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

Gustav Mahler

Rückert Lieder

Christianne Stotijn, mezzo-soprano

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

Sørensen

*Sigrid's Cantata*

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

Alfred Schnittke

Piano Quintet

Moderato

In Tempo di Valse

Andante

Lento

Moderato pastorale

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

Members of the NCO: Øyvind Bjorå, violin, Maria Angelika Carlsen,

violin, Ida Bryhn, viola, Audun Sandvik, cello

**Ojai Late Night concert**  
**Friday, June 8, 2012**  
**10:30pm / Libbey Bowl**

Bent Sørensen (b. 1958)  
*Lullabies* (2000)

Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924)  
*Berceuse élégiaque* (1909)  
(arr. Arnold Schoenberg)

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)  
Rückert Lieder (1901/02)

Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998)  
Piano Quintet (1972–76)

### **Lullabies**

A lullaby is an act of separation, a tender witness to a parting – a child drifting off to sleep or, on this evening's concert, a parent slipping into the beyond. Two melodies haunted Bent Sørensen lullabies for his two daughters and as well as for the daughter of Leif Ove and Ragnhild Andsnes (see insert) serve as preludes to each of the works by Busoni, Mahler, and Schnittke. Ferruccio Busoni's *Berceuse élégiaque*, originally written for the piano, was dedicated to the memory of the composer's mother and bears the subtitle "the man's cradle-song at his mother's bier." Busoni's exquisite orchestration – it has been called his masterpiece – appeared later that same year. The present arrangement for chamber ensemble has been attributed to Arnold Schoenberg though it is more likely the work of his student Erwin Stein.

Gustav Mahler gave the premiere of *Berceuse élégiaque* in New York in 1911; it would be his last concert. Ever since he was diagnosed with a heart ailment in 1907, Mahler knew his time was short, but his obsession with man's fragile hold on existence runs like a thread through all his works and is particularly evident in his songs. The Rückert Lieder of 1901 and 1902, originally written for voice and piano and only later orchestrated, contain two of his deepest meditations on existential questions, *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* and *Um Mitternacht. Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder!* and *Ich atmet' einen linden Duft*, on the other hand, have the gentle wistfulness that would not be out of place as lullabies. Mahler wrote *Liebst du um Schönheit* somewhat later as a love song for his wife, Alma, and its mood and content are thus set apart from its companions.

As a teenager Alfred Schnittke (1934-1998) lived and studied in Vienna and grew to love the works of Mahler, which had a continuing influence on his music, as we heard in his trio sonata, performed last year in Ojai. Schnittke's Piano Quintet, like Busoni's *Berceuse élégiaque*, was written after the death of his mother and was intended as a piece "of simple yet earnest character in her memory." Its five movements, played without a break, are largely slow and subdued and make use of a number of expressive effects, including clusters, quarter tones, glissandi, pedal and key noise. The first movement begins with a long keyboard introduction after which the clustered strings arc toward a climax over an insistently repeated pedal point in the piano. The enigmatic waltz that follows makes use of canonic entries of the B-A-C-H motive (B[flat], A, C, B[natural]). Two deeply felt slow movements, an Andante rich in quarter-tone sonorities, and a Lento that moves inexorably from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*, bring the work to its emotional climax. The final movement is a gentle passacaglia consisting of fourteen repetitions of a fourteen-bar horn motive in the quiet upper register of the piano.

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## **Additional notes**

*Lullabies*, *Sigrid's Lullaby*, and *Sigrid's Cantata* are three small piano pieces “for the children” and for the grown-ups humming for the children.

*Lullabies* consists of two small lullabies written for my two daughters, Signe and Anna. The first, a falling melody in four verses, is longer than the other, since it was much more difficult to hum Signe to sleep than Anna. The second lullaby later became the main theme of the last movement of my trombone concerto, *Birds and Bells*.

*Sigrid's Lullaby* is a birth gift for Sigrid, Leif Ove and Ragnhild's daughter. It begins softly (you should not play too loudly if you want your child to sleep), but it becomes even softer, following the “hopefully falling asleep”. In the end it involves a humming part, which could even be played – in the distance – by a mother on a French horn.

The starting point for *Sigrid's Cantata* was four lamento bars from a Bach cantata, which Sigrid was listening to on a beautiful little film sent to me by her parents. The tiny piece will be the starting point for a bigger concert installation for the Bergen International Festival 2012.

## Concert

**Saturday, June 9, 2012**  
**11:00am / Libbey Bowl**

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano  
Martin Fröst, clarinet  
Marc-André Hamelin, piano  
Christianne Stotijn, mezzo-soprano  
Norwegian Chamber Orchestra  
Terje Tønnesen, conductor

Eivind Buene

*Langsam und Schmachtend*

Norwegian Chamber Orchestra  
Terje Tønnesen, conductor

Richard Wagner

Wesendonck Lieder  
(arr. Tarkman)  
*Der Engel*

Marc-André Hamelin, piano  
Christianne Stotijn, mezzo-soprano

Alban Berg

Four Pieces for clarinet and piano, Op. 5  
Mäßig

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano  
Martin Fröst, clarinet

Wagner

Wesendonck Lieder  
(arr. Tarkman)  
*Stehe still!*

Berg

Four Pieces for clarinet and piano, Op. 5  
Sehr langsam

Wagner

Wesendonck Lieder  
(arr. Tarkman)  
*Im Treibhaus—Studie zu Tristan und Isolde*

Berg

Four Pieces for clarinet and piano, Op. 5  
Sehr rasch

Wagner

Wesendonck Lieder  
(arr. Tarkman)  
*Schmerzen*

Berg

Four Pieces for clarinet and piano, Op. 5  
Langsam

Wagner

Wesendonck Lieder

(arr. Tarkman)

*Träume - Studie zu Tristan und Isolde*

*(Wesendonck Lieder and Four Pieces will be performed attacca)*

INTERMISSION

Alban Berg

Four Songs, Op. 2

*Schlafen*

*Schlafend trägt man mich*

*Nun ich der Riesen Stärksten überwand*

*Warm die Lüfte*

Marc-Andre Hamélin, piano

Christianne Stotijn, mezzo-soprano

Ludwig van Beethoven

Piano Sonata in C Major, Op. 53, "Waldstein"

Allegro con brio

Introduzione. Adagio moto - attacca

Rondo. Allegretto moderato - Prestissimo

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

**Program Notes**  
**Saturday, June 9, 2012**  
**11:00am**

Eivind Buene (b. 1973)  
*Langsam und Schmachkend* (2003)

Richard Wagner (1813–1883)  
Wesendonck Lieder (1857/58)

Alban Berg (1885–1935)  
Four Pieces for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 5 (1913)  
Four Songs, Op. 2 (1910)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)  
Piano Sonata in C Major, Op. 53 “Waldstein” (1804)

**After Wagner (and Before)**

In 1839 Richard Wagner, in flight from creditors in Riga, set sail for London only to be caught up in a violent North Sea storm. His ship took refuge among the Norwegian fjords in Tvedestrand (just a few miles down the coast from Risør) and it was this experience that inspired his first great opera, *The Flying Dutchman*. This tale of redemption through love set Wagner on a course that would culminate, 20 years later, in *Tristan und Isolde*, a swirling maelstrom of chromaticism that would prove every bit as terrifying and exhilarating as that maritime tempest. But in the midst of *this* storm Wagner offered a seductive port of refuge in the gently pulsing musical metaphysics of the opera’s second act. This morning’s program attests to the gravitational pull of Wagner’s *Tristan*—and of that nocturnal love scene—by interweaving three works that in one way or another respond to its hypnotic power, as well as a fourth that serves to break the spell.

Wagner began thinking about the Tristan legend as early as 1854 but only started composing his opera in 1857, at the height of his romantic involvement with Mathilde Wesendonck, the wife of a Swiss friend and benefactor. During 1857 and 1858 Wagner set five of Mathilde’s poems, whose texts were preoccupied with the same dichotomies of night and day, love and death, being and nothingness that run through the *Tristan* libretto. Not surprisingly the music of this cycle is permeated with the chromatic language of *Tristan* and two of these songs, *Im Treibhaus* and *Träume*, even served as “studies” for the opera’s second-act love scene and third-act prelude.

Norwegian composer Eivind Buene’s string orchestra piece makes a clear allusion to *Tristan* in its very title, *Langsam und Schmachkend* (slow and languishing), which are the performance directions for the opera’s famous prelude. Buene writes at the safe distance of more than a century and a half and his work is thus as much a commentary upon as it is an homage to Wagner. Alban Berg, born just two years after Wagner’s death, was much closer to the source and he readily succumbed to its allure. Whereas his fellow Vienna modernists, Schoenberg and Webern, seem to have grown out of their Wagnerian phases, Berg never really did, though not for lack of trying. His Four Pieces for Clarinet, Op. 5, written in response to Schoenberg’s withering criticism of his compositional extravagance, seem to emulate his teacher’s radical concision (and Webern’s aphoristic style), but the differences are telling, as Pierre Boulez has observed: “Whereas with Schoenberg it is a question of condensation and with Webern of the perfect microcosm, Berg’s gestures are rather *tantalizing* openings which, one feels, could be continued, developed, multiplied.” Berg’s music aspires to a kind of infinite expansion, if not of length, then of expressive feeling. In today’s performance Berg’s “tantalizing openings” are tucked within the dark folds of Wagner’s songs.

In Berg’s Four Songs, Op. 2, the allusions to Wagner are more direct. Written just after completing his studies with Schoenberg these works take the chromaticism of *Tristan* to its limits and, in “Warm die Lüfte,” beyond those limits into atonality. Berg was courting Helene Nahowski when he wrote these songs and the texts he selected are replete with *Tristan*-like references to love, death, sleep, and night. There are even several specific motivic and harmonic

allusions to *Tristan*, as well as a gestural language that recalls the “O sink hernieder, Nacht der Liebe” (O sink down upon us, night of love) of the opera’s second act. As Theodor Adorno wrote, this is music that “fills Tristan’s night with floating mists.”

Wagner saw himself as Beethoven’s successor, his operas the necessary consequence of the Ninth Symphony. But this is only one part of Beethoven’s legacy. It would be difficult to imagine a work further removed from the ethos of *Tristan* than the Waldstein sonata. Where the one seeks the dark mysteries of night, the other basks emphatically in the light of day; surrender there, defiant assertion here. Beethoven’s sonata is a work of Enlightenment reason infused with the eruptive energies of revolution, a self-confident individualism that has not yet tasted the weary withdrawal of Romanticism. It combines the intellectual rigor of 18<sup>th</sup>-century classicism with a visceral muscularity that masks its wit with aggression. Just take the opening bar: For any other composer this series of pounding eighth notes would be an accompaniment awaiting a melody. But this *is* the theme, a spring-loaded rhythmic idea that derives its propulsive energy from its syncopated beginning, the right-hand downbeat that is an eighth-note rest: [eighth rest symbol] [3 eighth-notes] [4 eighth notes]. Yet for all their energy these relentless C-Major chords fail to establish C as the tonic. The meaning of this opening measure becomes clear only much later when an unexpected A-flat deceptive cadence delays the recapitulation by six bars and then transforms that downbeat rest into an emphatic return to the tonic. In other words, the beginning of the piece is a cadence we don’t hear until 173 measures later! The whole movement is a giddy tightrope act of such interlocking rhythmic, motivic and harmonic ideas that continue to surprise until the very end.

From the start the second movement feels like an interlude: harmonically unstable, always circling around the tonic, never quite sure of its goal. There is mystery here, but not the mystery of shadowy metaphysics. Rather, it is a kind of patient probing that pushes ever so gently toward revelation, a magical parting of the clouds that opens upon an endless expanse of C Major. It is a moment at once serene and sublime, a breathtaking surprise that has the natural inevitability of a sunrise. This final movement, with its trills and hovering stasis, looks forward to the composer’s late works. But we’re not there yet because in his coda Beethoven gives us a rollicking stretto that is a whoop of affirmational joy. This, too, is transcendence, but not the transcendence of Wagnerian renunciation. It is the full embrace of life.



## Concert

**Saturday June 9, 2012**  
**8:00pm / Libbey Bowl**

Martin Fröst, clarinet  
Leif Ove Andsnes, piano  
Antoine Tamestit, viola  
Norwegian Chamber Orchestra

Haflidi Hallgrímsson      *Poemi*  
Norwegian Chamber Orchestra  
Terje Tønneson, violin

Bent Sørensen      Piano Concerto No. 2, “La Mattina” (American premiere)  
  
Lento lugubre—Luminoso, quasi allegro—Lento misterioso—  
Andante—Presto  
  
Leif Ove Andsnes, piano  
Teag Reaves, horn  
Norwegian Chamber Orchestra  
Per Kristian Skjalstad, conductor

### INTERMISSION

Anders Hillborg      *Peacock Tales* (solo clarinet and tape)  
  
Martin Fröst, clarinet

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart      Trio in E-flat, K. 498, “Kegelstatt”  
  
Andante  
Menuetto  
Rondeaux: Allegretto  
  
Leif Ove Andsnes, piano  
Martin Fröst, clarinet  
Antoine Tamestit, viola

György Kurtág      *Hommage à Robert Schumann, Op. 15d*  
  
*Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler's Curious Pirouettes*  
*Eusebius: the Delimited Circle...*  
*...and again Florestan's lips tremble in anguish...*  
*I was a cloud, now the sun is shining...*  
*In the Night*  
*Farewell (Master Raro discovers Guillaume de Machaut)*  
Antoine Tamestit, viola  
Martin Fröst, clarinet  
Leif Ove Andsnes, piano

## Program Notes

Saturday June 9, 2012

8:00pm

Hafliði Hallgrímsson (b. 1941)

*Poemi* (1983)

Bent Sørensen (b. 1958)

Piano Concerto No. 2, “La Mattina” (2009)

Anders Hillborg (b. 1954)

*Peacock Tales* (1998–2000)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Trio in E-flat, K. 498, “Kegelstatt” (1786)

György Kurtág (b. 1926)

*Hommage à Robert Schumann*, Op. 15d (1990)

## Twice-Told Tales

“It reminds me of something I’ve never heard,” a colleague once said of Bent Sørensen’s music. This is the paradox of tonight’s concert, a program of works containing elusive trace elements of things familiar but just beyond our grasp, twice-told tales that seem to hover between looking back and breaking free, forever lingering on the edge, at the periphery, of some elusive source. These three concertos and two trios all contain echoes of other works, other styles, other media; they are emanations, like the aura of a halo.

*Poemi* is the work with which Icelandic composer Hafliði Hallgrímsson first won international recognition—a violin concerto whose virtuoso demands draw upon the composer’s years as a professional cellist with an intimate knowledge of string effects. *Poemi*’s impetus comes from art: three Old Testament paintings by Marc Chagall depicting Jacob’s dream of a ladder to heaven, Abraham’s sacrifice of his son Isaac, and Jacob’s wrestling match with the angel that lasted through the night until daybreak. In three continuous movements Hallgrímsson, himself a gifted painter, evokes Chagall’s swirling fields of blue with their highly charged accents of red and yellow, images for the eye as imagined by the ear.

If Hallgrímsson’s concerto ends by morning light with the angel’s blessing upon Jacob, Bent Sørensen’s second piano concerto “La Mattina” (morning) conjures up another dawn. High above in the violins, the whisper of a tone, barely audible; below, in the piano’s deepest registers, a persistent grumble, hints of a Bach chorale—suggested, we learn, by hearing Leif Ove Andsnes play a Busoni transcription one evening in a piano bar in Vienna. Andsnes has called Sørensen’s concerto a “dreamlike landscape,” but it is a landscape tinged with melancholy. In this Lento lugubre sounds emerge, the composer tells us, “with eyes closed.” These are images of the mind.

The concerto’s five movements are performed without a break. The pulsating chorale gives way to surging masses, slashing shafts of light—Luminoso, quasi allegro—and the jarring introduction of claves, wooden cylinders that are struck together to produce a percussive sound not unlike a throaty castanet. In the Lento misterioso and Andante that follow, the sun is still low on the horizon, Sørensen introduces deep brass, whooshing string glissandi, and returns the strings to their extreme upper register. Piano tremolos and Bachian counterpoint have the air of desperation; thin slivers of sound alternate with blinding outbursts. These are moody, inward-looking movements that give way to a bright, brittle presto with the high spirits of a Mozartian rondo.

Sørensen’s concerto ends in broad daylight “with eyes wide open” and it is good thing, too, because what follows is nothing short of eye-popping. *Peacock Tales* by Swedish composer Anders Hillborg is a clarinet concerto written for tonight’s soloist, Martin Fröst. The work’s popularity has led the composer to create no fewer than five distinct iterations of the piece ranging from the original half hour concerto with full orchestra to tonight’s eight-minute version for clarinet

and tape. This multiply-told tale is a dazzling piece of performance art, a witty parable of strutting vanity and pride that incorporates choreography and mime alongside instrumental virtuosity. Hillborg is known for his stylistic pluralism and *Peacock Tales* is no exception; listen carefully and you'll hear sly allusions to Puccini and Bernstein.

Another twice-told tale is Mozart's reimagining of the piano trio in which the violin and cello are replaced by the clarinet and viola, two of the composer's favorite instruments for the velvety timbre they share. Mozart's infatuation with the clarinet came late in life, but he was quick to incorporate the instrument in his concertos, symphonies and operas, as well as writing a concerto, a quintet and the present trio. Legend has it that he wrote this work over a game of skittles (a *Kegelstatt* is a bowling alley) and although this is unlikely, both he and his clarinetist, Anton Stadler, were avid players of the game. Mozart's three movements contain many features that are atypical for the period: an opening Andante rather than the more standard Allegro, a minuet of unusual seriousness, and an uncommonly complex seven-part rondo (hence Mozart's designation "rondeaux"). The most striking feature of the trio, however, is its scoring, which has had enduring appeal with Mozart's successors, including Robert Schumann, whose collection of *Märchenerzählungen* (Fairy Tales), Op. 132, served, in turn, as the starting point for György Kurtág's *Hommage à Robert Schumann*.

Kurtág is a miniaturist who has been drawn to the works of Franz Kafka, Anton Webern and the 18<sup>th</sup>-century aphorist Georg Christoph Lichtenberg. He has a similar affinity for the Romantic character piece, a genre lovingly cultivated by Schumann, who had the uncanny ability to capture a mood or draw a portrait in a few deft strokes. Five of the six titles of Kurtág's *Hommage* are directly linked to Schumann, though his musical references are more wide ranging.

The first movement's title evokes E. T. A. Hoffmann's fictional alter ego, the hyper-sensitive composer Johannes Kreisler, immortalized in Schumann's collection of keyboard fantasies, *Kreisleriana*. Kurtág's musical allusion here is to the clarinet's seduction motive in Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin*. Movements two and three—one serene, the other violent—refer to Schumann's own alter egos: the dreamy Eusebius and the fiery Florestan. "Eusebius: the Delimited Circle..." is based on Kurtág's own *Kafka-Fragmente* ("the delimited circle is pure"). The title of fourth and shortest movement, "I was a cloud, now the sun is shining..." is drawn from a poem by the Hungarian poet Attila József. This leads directly to the fifth movement, "In the Night," a reference to the fifth piece of Schumann's *Fantasy Pieces*, Op. 12.

After these five miniatures, each less than a minute long, Kurtág concludes his *Hommage* with an expansive *Farewell* in which Schumann's wise Master Raro, who mediates between Eusebius and Florestan, is given the last word. Here Kurtág pays tribute to yet another composer, the late medieval master Guillaume de Machaut. The effect is striking. Time slows and each instrument emerges as if from another world—the piano crawling out of the depths, the violin descending from on high, the clarinet materializing out of the mists of the middle register. It is a slow-motion convergence, a steady crescendo that builds and then dissolves into silence, the end a soft but implacable thud from a bass drum.

**Ojai Late Night concert**  
**Saturday, June 9, 2012**  
**10:30pm / Libbey Bowl**

Norwegian Chamber Orchestra  
Theodore Jansen, actor

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)      String Quartet No. 1, “Kreutzer Sonata”  
With readings from Tolstoy (arranged for string orchestra and actor)

Adagio con moto  
Con moto  
Con moto. Vivace—Andante  
Con moto (adagio). Piu mosso

**Ojai Late Night concert**  
**Saturday, June 9, 2012**  
**10:30pm / Libbey Bowl**

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)  
String Quartet No. 1, “Kreutzer Sonata” (1923)

**Music and Passion**

Leoš Janáček had a lifelong fascination with Russian culture; he spoke the language, visited Russia on several occasions and even started a Russian cultural circle in Brno, where he spent most of his life. Russian literature was a constant companion and the source for many of his works, including an early melodrama *Death* (on a poem by Lermontov), the orchestral rhapsody *Taras Bulba* (after a story by Gogol) and the operas *Katka Kabanova* and *From the House of the Dead* (based, respectively, on a play by Ostrovsky and a novel by Dostoevsky). Most unusual, however, was Janáček’s decision to base his first string quartet on Tolstoy’s novella *The Kreutzer Sonata* of 1889, a story of a broken marriage, adultery and a husband’s murder of his wife. It is material that could easily have suggested an opera or perhaps a tone poem, but the novella’s intimacy and its musical focus on Beethoven’s violin sonata make Janáček’s choice of chamber music seem wholly appropriate.

The quartet was written quickly, in just over a week: “Note after note fell smoldering from my pen...,” the composer wrote in a letter to Kamila Stösslová. “I had in mind a miserable woman, suffering, beaten, wretched.” The quartet is largely faithful to the outlines of Tolstoy’s story, but is in no sense a programmatic retelling in musical terms. Rather, the composer seeks to capture the story’s emotional and psychological contours by using short, frequently repeated, though often varied expressive motives deployed like jagged fragments within a constantly shifting rhythmic, dynamic and textural landscape.

The first movement introduces two contrasting motives, one anguished, another agitated, that may well represent the wife’s emotional state. A livelier third idea, derived from the first motive and followed by high swooping figures, like the flight of birds, suggest the kind of escape to be found in flights of the imagination.

The second movement, *Con moto*, suggests the wistful frenzy of dance, but its rhythmic assertiveness is unsettled by frequent stops and starts, and the interruption of some nasty-sounding tremolos performed *sul ponticello* in the violins. Janáček’s use of rhythmic and motivic ostinatos adds to a feeling of frightened prey ensnared in a trap.

The *Vivace—Andante* is the quartet’s most affecting movement. Moments of hushed lyricism are undermined by agitated ostinatos (often played *sul ponticello*) and threatened by lacerating blows that rain down with singular violence. We come full circle in the last and longest movement with a return to the despondent mood of the *Adagio*. That movement’s opening motive re-enters in a tragic, mournful variant, but soon regains its original guise and comes to

dominate the musical narrative. With the help of insistent ostinatos Janáček creates a searing emotional climax that leads to the story's tragic and deadly denouement. In Tolstoy's story the repentant husband, though acquitted of the crime, spends the rest of his life seeking atonement, an epilogue that Janáček suggests with a few brief, moving gestures.

**Concert**

**Sunday, June 10, 2012**

**11:00am / Libbey Bowl**

Øyvind Aubert Bjorå, violin  
Martin Fröst, clarinet  
Marc-André Hamelin, piano  
Christianne Stotijn, mezzo-soprano  
Norwegian Chamber Orchestra  
Terje Tonneson, leader  
Per Kristian Skalstad, leader

Béla Bartók

*Contrasts*

Verbunkos  
Pihenő  
Sebes

Martin Fröst, clarinet  
Øyvind Bjorå, violin  
Marc-André Hamelin, piano

Edvard Grieg

From *Holberg's Time*; Suite in Olden Style, Op. 40

Praeludium (Allegro vivace)  
Sarabande (Andante)  
Gavotte (Allegretto)  
Air (Andante religioso)  
Rigaudon (Allegro con brio)

Norwegian Chamber Orchestra  
Terje Tonneson, leader

INTERMISSION

William Bolcom

Cabaret Songs

*Fur*  
*He tipped the waiter*  
*Places to live*  
*The Actor*  
*Song of Black Max*

Marc-André Hamelin, piano  
Christianne Stotijn, mezzo-soprano

Aaron Copland

Concerto for Clarinet, Strings, Harp and Piano  
*Slowly and expressively—cadenza—Rather fast*

Martin Fröst, clarinet  
Norwegian Chamber Orchestra  
Per Kristian Skalstad, leader

**Program Notes**  
**Sunday, June 10, 2012**  
**11:00am**

Béla Bartók (1881–1945)  
*Contrasts* (1938)

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)  
Holberg Suite (1884)

William Bolcom (b. 1938)  
Cabaret Songs (1977–85)

Aaron Copland (1900–1990)  
Clarinet Concerto (1947/48)

### **Contrasts and Connections**

This concert of contrasts pits a number of predictable dichotomies—classical and modern, high and low, cosmopolitan and provincial, Old World and New—but just below the surface are connections so sundry and myriad as to suggest the hand of an impish god of serendipity or the clever eye of an imaginative programmer.

In 1938 Béla Bartók's old friend and collaborator Joseph Szigeti suggested he write a piece for violin and clarinet in which Benny Goodman, the King of Swing, would be his partner. Bartók originally planned a work in two movements, a *verbunkos* (a slow Hungarian recruiting dance) and a lively *sebes*, and it was in this form, under the title Rhapsody, that the work was given its premiere in 1939. In the meantime Bartók had composed a third movement entitled *pihenő* (literally: rest) to bridge the first two, and this three-movement version, renamed *Contrasts*, is the work we hear today.

The contrasts in question begin with the dissimilar sonorities of the violin and clarinet, which Bartók exploits through pervasive imitative textures, extremes in range and dynamics, as well as special effects in the violin, including pizzicato, glissando and multiple stops. Moreover, each instrument is given a cadenza, the clarinet in the first, the violin in the last movement. The piano, on the other hand, plays a largely subservient role, providing rhythmic support through accents and ostinatos, as well as a range of atmospheric effects, especially in the “night music” of the slow second movement.

Further contrasts include the distinctively individual character of the movements, a shift in tonal centers (the work begins in A and ends in B-flat), and even a switch in instruments when, in the third movement, the clarinetist alternates between A and B-flat clarinets and the violinist uses a second violin with a scordatura tuning. That tuning—G-sharp-D-A-E-flat—makes use of tritones, an interval of irreconcilable difference that is a central melodic and harmonic building block of the piece. In deference to Goodman, there are hints of jazz in the second movement, though Bartók was largely unfamiliar with the idiom and probably derived his ideas from Ravel's jazz-inflected works. On the whole, the work has a rustic, Eastern European flavor that includes a traditional Bulgarian rhythm (3+2+3+3+3) in the central trio of the *sebes*.

Edvard Grieg's *From Holberg's Time; Suite in Olden Style* was written for the bicentennial of Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754), widely hailed as the founder of Danish-Norwegian literature and the first to establish Danish as a literary language. Holberg was a well-traveled and widely read Enlightenment thinker whose interests ranged from history, religion, and international law to medicine, moral philosophy and the arts. He is particularly noted for a series of comedies that even today place him in the company of Voltaire, Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope as one of the supreme satirists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Grieg's suite, originally composed for piano and later adapted by the composer for string orchestra, makes use of 18<sup>th</sup>-century dance forms, all the more appropriate as Holberg was himself a flute player and violinist. Grieg may have used historical forms, but his musical language has the upholstered respectability of the Victorian age. It opens with an energetic prelude followed by an earnest sarabande, an importunate gavotte, an Italianate Andante religioso (shades of Albinoni!), and a Rigadoun, a Provençal dance whose distinctly rustic flavor may be Grieg's only miscalculation as Holberg, a decidedly cosmopolitan figure, showed little interest in nature or country life.

Transported to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Holberg, the urban satirist, would have felt an immediate kinship with the poet and playwright Arnold Weinstein (1927–2005), who wrote the texts for William Bolcom’s Cabaret Songs. In the popular imagination cabaret is associated with sexy Parisian nightspots with names like Le Chat Noir and Moulin Rouge, or the iniquitous dens of 1920s Berlin immortalized in the musical *Cabaret*. There is, however, a distinctly American strain of cabaret that is less focused on sexual innuendo and corrosive political caricature than on the quirks and foibles of modern life, a vein mined with brilliance by Bolcom and Weinstein. Bolcom’s music is stylistically eclectic, gleefully evoking everything from jazz to Tin Pan Alley, Latin rhythm to Broadway glitz, Puccini to Kurt Weill. These Cabaret Songs have become American classics. Their mixture of whimsy and wistfulness suggests a cross between Al Hirschfeld and Jules Feiffer, with perhaps a smidgen of Willem de Kooning, whose childhood memories of Rotterdam form the basis for one of the gems of the Bolcom/Weinstein collaboration: “Black Max.”

When de Kooning slipped into this country as a stowaway in 1926 America was entering its jazz age. That same year Benny Goodman made his New York debut and Aaron Copland wrote his jazz-inspired Piano Concerto. For Copland, fresh from three years of study in Paris, where he had acquired European modernist allures, jazz was a means of declaring his independence, of establishing the American voice that would become his hallmark. Copland would return to jazz 20 years later in his clarinet concerto. The commissioner was again Benny Goodman, who had established his crossover credentials with Bartók’s *Contrasts*. In fact, when Szigeti, Goodman and Bartók recorded *Contrasts* in 1940 Copland sat in on the sessions as a guest.

The Clarinet Concerto, like *Contrasts*, has two dissimilar outer movements—one slow and expressive, another fast and assertive—linked by a third. But whereas Bartók’s connecting bridge is all rest and stasis, Copland’s is a cadenza that introduces the jazz elements and thematic material that dominate the highly syncopated rondo finale. For Copland, who had begun the concerto in Rio de Janeiro, this finale represented “an unconscious fusion of elements obviously related to North and South American popular music,” among which he lists “Charleston rhythms, boogie woogie, and Brazilian folk tunes.” In a curious afterlife the concerto became the basis of a 1950 ballet by Jerome Robbins called *The Pied Piper*, a connection surely not lost on this morning’s dancing soloist, Martin Fröst.



**Concert**  
**Sunday June 10, 2012**  
**5:30pm / Libbey Bowl**

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano  
Ida Aubert Bang harp  
Marc-André Hamelin, piano  
Norwegian Chamber Orchestra  
Reinbert de Leeuw, conductor

Claude Debussy *Danse sacrée et danse profane*

Ida Aubert Bang, harp  
Norwegian Chamber Orchestra

John Adams *Shaker Loops*

Shaking and trembling  
Hymning slews  
Loops and verses  
A final shaking

Norwegian Chamber Orchestra  
Reinbert de Leeuw, conductor

INTERMISSION

John Luther Adams *Dark Waves* (for two pianos and electronic sounds)

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano  
Marc-André Hamelin, piano

Igor Stravinsky *Le sacre du printemps*

Part I. Adoration of the Earth

Part II. The Exalted Sacrifice

Leif Ove Andsnes, piano  
Marc-André Hamelin, piano

**Program Notes**  
**Sunday June 10, 2012**  
**5:30pm**

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)  
*Danse sacrée et danse profane* (1904)

John Adams (b. 1947)  
*Shaker Loops* (1977–78; 1982–83)

John Luther Adams (b. 1953)  
*Dark Waves* (2007)

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)  
*Le sacre du printemps* (1913)

### **Sacred and Secular Dances**

Dance is the common thread running through the works on this program, but that thread is more properly the notion of music as the embodiment of the rhythms of nature and the pulse of the divine. Dance is all about incarnation, spirit taking form, but communing with the gods and nature is also a form yielding, giving up material control—floating free, letting loose, being swept away, or possessed. Debussy's ethereal dances, Stravinsky's earth-bound ballet, John Adams' pulsing energy, and John Luther Adams' swelling sea are all expressions of what it means to surrender to the physical and spiritual forces that animate our existence.

Music is immaterial but it needs a medium—a voice or an instrument—in order to be translated into sound. Claude Debussy's *Danse sacrée et danse profane* celebrates just such an intermediary. The work was commissioned by Pleyel & Wolff, the Parisian piano manufacturer, to demonstrate the advantages of the firm's latest invention, a cross-strung harp with two intersecting sets of strings capable of playing all chromatic pitches without recourse to pedals. Though it is rare today to hear this work on the instrument for which it was written (the firm ceased its manufacture in 1930), Debussy was careful to make it playable on pedal harps, as well. Written soon after the premiere of his *Pelleas et Mélisande*, *Danse sacrée et danse profane* shares something of the opera's veiled elusiveness. The first dance is a muted exploration of chromatic nuance within a generally modal texture. The second dance, which follows without a break, is a series of free variations in a gentle triple meter.

*Shaker Loops* is an altogether more robust work. Its title refers both to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century religious community of Shakers, known for their ecstatic forms of physical worship, as well as to the more strictly technical meaning of shake (a trill) and the tape loops of electronic music. Written at a time when “minimalism” might still be usefully applied to Adams' music, *Shaker Loops* contains a good deal of the obsessive repetition associated with that style, but it is also a work with a striking expressive range. The first movement, *Shaking and Trembling*, derives its rhythmic energy from measured tremolos and trills and has the feel of one long crescendo that suddenly drops away. This leads directly to *Hymning Slews*, in which isolated pitches and discrete glissandi come and go over sustained strings. An imploring cello solo introduces *Loops and Verses*, the work's emotional center. *A Final Shaking* is a tentative finale whose tight nervous energy gradually intensifies, then dissipates into nothing.

In *Shaker Loops* John Adams, his punning title notwithstanding, is more concerned with exploring purely musical energies than evoking the religious raptures of a bygone sect. John Luther Adams, on the other hand, is a composer who relishes musical metaphors and seeks to exploit their deeper resonance. “As I composed *Dark Waves*,” he has written, “I pondered the ominous events of our times: terrorism and war, intensifying storms and wildfires, the melting of the polar ice and the rising of the seas. Yet even in the presence of our deepening fears, we find ourselves immersed in the mysterious beauty of this world.” *Dark Waves* was originally scored for large orchestra but is heard here in the composer's arrangement for two amplified pianos and a recorded “aura” of electronic sounds: “Waves of perfect fifths rise and fall, in tempo relationships of 3, 5 and 7. At the central moment, these waves crest together in a tsunami of sound encompassing all 12 chromatic tones and the full range of the pianos.”

John Luther Adams calls his piano version of *Dark Waves* “a different journey across the same sonic sea.” One might say the same for the two-piano version of *The Rite of Spring* except that for Stravinsky the piano was more than a compositional tool; it was a source of his inspiration. He loved the instrument’s clarity and percussive power and relished the physical act of composing at the keyboard. During the yearlong gestation of *The Rite of Spring* he often played portions of the work for friends and colleagues, including Pierre Monteux, who would give the ballet its premiere:

Stravinsky sat down to play a piano reduction of the entire score. Before he got very far I was convinced he was raving mad. Heard this way, without the color of the orchestra which is one of its greatest distinctions, the crudity of the rhythm was emphasized, its stark primitiveness underlined. The very walls resounded as Stravinsky pounded away, occasionally stamping his feet and jumping up and down, to accentuate the force of the music.

Debussy, who heard a similar read-through in Paris a short time later, recalled, “It haunts me like a beautiful nightmare and I try in vain to retrieve the terrifying impression it made.” One can well imagine the scene in which Stravinsky, hammering at the repeated chords of the Dance of the *Young Girls in Part I*, was interrupted... by Diaghilev who asked: “Will it last a very long time this way?” To which the composer replied: “Till the end, my dear!”

Stravinsky’s own four-hand piano arrangement of *Le sacre du printemps* was published in 1913 (a version we heard in Ojai in 2005). Today’s performance transfers this arrangement to two pianos so that many orchestral lines and details that Stravinsky was forced to omit can be reincorporated and given greater resonance through the power of two instruments. Leif Ove Andsnes has remarked that this two-piano version is like an X-ray of the work that throws its skeletal structure into sharp relief. But Andsnes also points out that this version emphasizes the work’s mechanical quality, a kind of “machine aesthetic” that Stravinsky would explore a decade later when he scored his *Les Noces* for four pianos to create a sound that was “perfectly homogenous, perfectly impersonal, and perfectly mechanical.” With this arrangement we hear *The Rite of Spring* through the instrument that was the midwife of its creation and the inspiration for much that was yet to come.