



Thursday, June 9, 2022 | 8:00pm

Libbey Bowl

Opening Night

AMOC* and special guests **Mari Yoshinaga** *percussion* | **Gleb Kanasevich** *clarinet* | **Carrie Frey** *viola*

Julius EASTMAN

Prelude to the Holy Presence of Joan d'Arc

Text by the composer | **Davóne Tines** *bass-baritone*

Iannis XENAKIS

Rebonds B

Jonny Allen *percussion* | **Julia Eichten** *dancer and choreographer*

Eric WUBBELS

gretchen am spinnrade

Coleman Itzkoff *cello* | **Conor Hanick** *piano*

Frederic RZEWSKI

Coming Together

Davóne Tines *bass-baritone* | **Emi Ferguson** *flute* | **Miranda Cuckson** *violin*

Matthew Aucoin *piano* | **Doug Balliett** *double bass*

Bob DYLAN

Masters of War (version by Odetta)

Julia Bullock *soprano* | **Miranda Cuckson** *violin* | **Keir GoGwilt** *violin*

Coleman Itzkoff *cello* | **Doug Balliett** *double bass* | **Conor Hanick** *piano*

INTERMISSION

Kate SOPER

The Rose Once Blown from ***The Romance of the Rose***

Text by the composer | **Paul Appleby** *tenor* | **Keir GoGwilt** *violin*

Celeste ORAM

the power of moss

Text by Jo Randerson | **Paul Appleby** *tenor* | **Keir GoGwilt** *violin*

Michael HERSCH

scars plummet to the corners: XIX and XX

World Premiere and AMOC* commission

Emi Ferguson *flute* | **Conor Hanick** *piano*

Orlando GIBBONS (arr. HERSCH)

Fantasia World Premiere

Emi Ferguson *flute* | **Miranda Cuckson** *violin* | **Coleman Itzkoff** *cello*

Matthew AUCOIN

Shaker Dance from ***The No One's Rose*** (arranged for AMOC*)

AMOC* instrumentalists | **Gleb Kanasevich** *clarinet*

Carrie Frey *viola* | **Mari Yoshinaga** *percussion*

This concert is made possible
with the generous support of

Cathryn and Tom Krause

Join us for a Pop-Up Performance

Tom JOHNSON:

Nine Bells excerpt

7:15pm, Libbey Park

Jonny Allen *percussion*

Julia Eichten

dancer and choreographer

Julius EASTMAN (1940-90)
Prelude to the Holy Presence of Joan d'Arc (1981)

Iannis XENAKIS (1922-2001)
Rebonds B (1987-89)

Eric WUBBELS (b. 1980)
gretchen am spinnrade (2016)

Frederic RZEWSKI (1938-2021)
Coming Together (1974)

Bob DYLAN (b. 1941)
Masters of War
(version by Odetta from 1965)

Kate SOPER (b. 1981)
The Rose Once Blown
from *The Romance of the Rose* (2020)

Celeste ORAM (b. 1990)
the power of moss (2021)

Michael HERSCH (b. 1971)
scars plummet to the corners: XIX and XX (2020)

Orlando GIBBONS (1583-1625)
Fantasia arranged by Michael Hersch (2020)

Matthew AUCOIN (b. 1990)
Shaker' Dance (2021)

Invitation to the Feast

The word *festival* originates from a Latin word indicating a religious holiday which made its way into English via medieval French. A web-like growth of associations has led to today's secular connotations (especially in the arts) of celebration and entertainment. But lurking behind all this is the ancient idea of a sacred rite that allows us to participate in something outside the routine of ordinary time, to gain illuminating perspectives on what is normally taken for granted.

The members of AMOC* (American Modern Opera Company) and their colleagues are most at home with such intersections, where meanings proliferate and even different eras overlap. Inhabiting multiple identities and disciplines, they are virtuosos of the polysemous. Their opening concert offers a taste of the extraordinary range of passions that inspire AMOC*'s members.

Julius Eastman's legacy is one of the major underlying themes of AMOC*'s collectively curated festival program. Davóne Tines sets the stage with *Prelude to the Holy Presence of Joan d'Arc*, intoning the repeated, slightly varied fragments with which Eastman builds this solemn invocation. Using a single voice, Eastman provocatively combines contemplation

—the attitude necessary to open the way to spirituality—with an urge to engage and be heard.

Intimations of an enigmatic ritual also animate *Rebonds*, one of Iannis Xenakis' landmark contributions to the percussion repertoire, here presented as a calling card for Jonny Allen. He plays the second of the two independent movements comprising the piece. Xenakis dramatizes the phenomenon of bounce ("rebonds"), generating friction between a "rational" underlying pulse and counter-gestures and accents that push, centrifugally, toward chaos. Another layer is added with the timbral contrast—and attempt at synthesis—between drum skins (bongos, tumba, tom-tom, and bass drum) and woodblocks.

We move from solos to a duo with New York-based Eric Wubbels's *gretchen am spinnrade*, written in the fraught time of the U.S. presidential election in the fall of 2016. Referring to the figure of Schubert's angst-ridden Gretchen at her spinning wheel, uncertain of her lover, Wubbels superimposes the "wheel of karma," with its "turning of cause and effect." His spinner is trapped in "compulsive loops of thought and action, repetitive behavior and cycles of history"—though their details

and textures change kaleidoscopically as the music alternates between "relentless motoric circuits [and] plateaus of regular, 'idling' motion."

With *Coming Together* by the late Frederic Rzewski, AMOC* taps into a vein of protest music that intersects with Minimalism. A letter written during confinement by Sam Melville, one of the prisoners killed by police during the Attica prison uprising of 1971, inspired Rzewski to create a "musical treatment" using open instrumentation and recitation of the text by the players. The entire ensemble performance sprouts from a bass line of perpetual 16th notes (piano or bass)—the only notated part of the score—as Rzewski plays expressive ad-libbing against dogged inflexibility.

The spontaneity of reinterpreting a "fixed" text is a quintessential facet of Bob Dylan's art, as anyone who has experienced him in live performance knows. Layered over this foundation is the light that the singer and civil rights activist Odetta shed, with her trailblazing 1965 album of cover versions, on early Dylan songs. Julia Bullock in turn contributes her voice to this tradition with an account of *Masters of War*, Dylan's oracular Cold War protest song (released on 1963's *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*)

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COMING TOGETHER

text from a letter written by Sam Melville while imprisoned at Attica:

I think the combination of age and a greater coming together is responsible for the speed of the passing time. It's six months now, and I can tell you truthfully, few periods in my life have passed so quickly. I am in excellent physical and emotional health. There are doubtless subtle surprises ahead, but I feel secure and ready. As lovers will contrast their emotions in times of crisis so am I dealing with my environment. In the indifferent brutality, the incessant noise, the experimental chemistry of food, the ravings of lost hysterical men, I can act with clarity and meaning. I am deliberate, sometimes even calculating, seldom employing histrionics except as a test of the reactions of others. I read much, exercise, talk to guards and inmates, feeling for the inevitable direction of my life.

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INVITATION TO THE FEAST

that unfortunately has become more topical than ever.

Kate Soper's exploration of the intersection of language, theatricality, and the human voice harmonizes well with the AMOC* aesthetic and comes to the fore in *The Romance of the Rose*, her new opera for seven voices, chamber ensemble, and electronics loosely adapted from the eponymous 13th-century poem. Soper describes her work as a fusion of "medieval and contemporary allegory to dramatize the ways in which love, sex, and music wreak havoc on our sense of self." Its premiere has been delayed by the pandemic, but the brief selection *The Rose Once Blown* offers a teaser. Soper's idiosyncratic combination of wry, self-aware erudition and tenderness reimagines early music idioms from a luminously contemporary angle.

the power of moss, by New York-based Celeste Oram, is for voice and "any 12-tone instrument." She sets a poem by her fellow New Zealand writer Jo Randerson, rejecting "the power of the sword" in favor of "the oldest plant EVER," which "just quietly and softly persists/and is known in every continent." Oram encourages the musicians to "ornament and personalize their parts ad libitum" in a way that expresses the interests they bring to the table.

scars plummet to the corners is another work whose premiere has been delayed by the pandemic. Michael Hersch left an indelible impact on Ojai audiences with his elegy *I hope we get a chance to visit soon* at the 2018 Festival curated by Patricia Kopatchinskaja. Hersch's 29-movement cycle for AMOC*, which takes its title from

a line in the poem "Ibeji" by the late English writer Christopher Middleton, is an epic cycle for flute and piano, from which we hear movements XIX and XX.

Emi Ferguson explains that she chose these movements because they form a highly contrasting pair—as antipodal as Samsara and Nirvana—and demand the gamut of virtuosity, from rapid-fire articulation (XIX) to the focus needed to evoke a "sparse, still, crystalline world" (XX). The latter she compares to the image of an oubliette, a closed-off room "where you put people, or yourself, to forget about them."

Hersch shares with AMOC* an affinity for thinking of early music in new contexts. We encounter this aspect of his creativity in his arrangement of an organ fantasia by Orlando Gibbons for flute, violin, and cello.

We close with music Matthew Aucoin wrote for his fellow AMOC* members. The company's largest undertaking to date, *The No One's Rose* was created in collaboration with the Bay Area-based Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and premiered last August at Stanford. Aucoin has described the work as "a *Canterbury Tales* of the pandemic," though its rituals and visions extend beyond that communal crisis. After the pandemic's strictures, the joy that comes with being able to celebrate live music together again reinforces the dynamics of a festival. The material for *Shaker Dance* originated as a section of *The No One's Rose*. Welcome to the feast.

—THOMAS MAY

This concert is approximately 100 minutes.