

Other Minds Festival: OM 7: Artist Forum and Concert 1, March 8, 2001 (video), 3 of 3



Identifier

OMF.2001.03.08.c2.C

Object Type

Digital Moving Image

Musical Selections

String Quartet No. 2, "Sketches on Pendulums, Loss, Autism, and Nine Places" (1996-97) (14:34) / Aleksandra Vrebalov -- The Adnan Songbook: I had a gypsy ; The sun came in ; Became ; I went to the drugstore ; No one asked you to be an angel ; You are a white cloud ; You are under my hands ; White as an unfolded tree ; My hand on your hand, for soprano and instrumental ensemble [texts by Etel Adnan] (1996) (28:25) / Gavin Bryars

Description

The 7th Other Minds Festival of New Music (OM 7) began with a concert held on March 8, 2001, at the Cowell Theater of the Fort Mason Center, in San Francisco. Beginning a new tradition the night's festivities began with a panel discussion, moderated by Other Minds Executive and Artistic Director, Charles Amirkhanian, who introduces a number of the evening's featured composers and performers. Pianist Eve Egoyan, talks about the challenges of performing the works of Alan Hovhaness and Alvin Curran as well as relating her personal experience as a musician of Armenian parents growing up in Canada. Serbian composer Aleksandra Vrebalov

describes her collaboration with the Kronos Quartet, who been instrumental in introducing her works to Western audiences. Chris Brown, best known for his electronic and computer music, discusses his work with turntablist DJ Eddie Def. Percussionist and composer Glen Velez then talks about his interest in frame drums and how he has been influenced by North African and other types of world music. British composer Gavin Bryars and poet Etel Adnan conclude the panel with their description of their collaboration in which Bryars has set eight of her poems to music.

In part two of this program the concert proper begins with:

Ancient World

Glen Velez performs a suite of work featuring a variety of frame drums and other instruments from around the world. These include: "Bendir" which features a Moroccan frame drum with snares and added inner vocalizations to expand and contract the silence. "Temple of Moonlight" a solo on bodhran, the Irish frame drum. This instrument is pitched in the range of the cello. The present piece is an improvisation using a wide palette of timbres and hand movements, also with overtone singing. "Shakers" of which Velez says "with the voice as the anchor, I synchronize my pulsing limbs." "Rain" a solo for the Middle Eastern tambourine or riq. The solo exploits the dual nature of this instrument, as a drum and as a cymbal.

Khaldis Concerto

This work is in seven movements; Overture (Noble & Majestic) ; Transmutation ; Three Tones ; Bhajana (Adoration) ; Jhala with Drum ; Processional ; Finale (Allegro)

Khaldis was the Supreme God Of The Universe of Urardu or pre-Armenia. The title has deep significance in this case, since the entire concerto is conceived as an adorational piece. The trumpets serve almost as might a chorus (the writing for them is of a vocal variety that is unmistakable) and their music is that of praise. Although the work is not a concerto in the true classical sense, it follows the tradition of pitting a solo instrument against an instrumental body by creating what might be termed a rhythmic war between the piano and the trumpets. The percussion—tympani, tam-tam, and suspended cymbal—are used in counterpoint rather than as a reinforcement. Byzantinian in quality and texture, the spiritual source for the piece seems to be much farther back in time. Symbolically, it is a poetico-musical picture of the religious atmosphere of an ancient pagan culture. The seven movements each seem to represent a contrasted secular activity of life. As each impression concentrates itself, it spirals up to be swept into the sudden song of presence of the supreme god. And that presence always seems serene (even when the overriding juggernaut of sound as the trumpets appear represents the hymn of praise in bustling, polytonal dissonance). - Edward Cole

Part three of this program includes:

String Quartet No. 2

In the summer of 1996, I met David Harrington in New York. We talked about music, life, weather, food, and friends. Soon after that, I had a dream with a string quartet soundtrack. This materialized in the form of the last, fourth section of the work and led me to begin it in the first place. It took me eight months to finish it. At that time, I was moving back to Yugoslavia after a year spent in San Francisco, and in that transitional and restless phase of my life, work on the quartet was the only stable and permanent anchor. The subtitle of the piece, "Sketches on Pendulums, Loss, Autism and Nine Places," encompasses many of the feelings with which I dealt at that time: the necessity to leave the people and place whom I came to love so much, the feeling of being trapped in a hermetic world of memories, and pendulum-like life happenings, in which light and dark constantly shift. The "nine places" are quite literally the locations in which I composed the quartet, and each of them left its imprint on the piece: New York, San Francisco, Menlo Park, Novi Sad, Sombor, Amsterdam, Fruska Gora National Park, the Kopaonik Mountains, and Belgrade. The Quartet was premiered by the Kronos Quartet (for whom it was written) at the Vienna Staatsoper, in July 1997, incidentally with then First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton in attendance. - Aleksandra Vrebalov

The Adnan Songbook

The songs in The Adnan Songbook set a group of eight "Love Poems" by the Lebanese writer Etel Adnan. Etel left Beirut many years ago and now lives and works in California and Paris. I collaborated with her on Robert Wilson's large scale operatic project, the CIVIL WarS in 1984, and one aria from that opera to words by Etel, "La Reine de la Mer," forms part of my cantata "Effarene." We worked together, with a number of other performers and designers, in the isolated setting of the Monastery of La Sainte Baume in the mountains above Marseilles in a bitterly cold winter. The first of the poems to be set was the fifth one, which was written for Mary Wiegold and the Composers Ensemble in 1992. The first and second, sung by Sarah Leonard, were written in 1995, commissioned by the BBC for the 'Songbook' series as part of their 'Fairest Isle' season. The remainder were commissioned by the Almeida and written in 1996 for performance by Valdine Anderson with my ensemble. She gave the first complete performance in July 1996.

The instrumentation is a restrained one using only six players, but with a combination of instrumental sonorities that characterize my ensemble: two violas, cello, double bass, electric guitar (doubling acoustic guitar) and bass clarinet (doubling clarinet). The vocal part, being for a high lyric soprano, was written for Valdine. In all cases, the music is written with my own performers in mind. The bass-clarinet, for example, has long been one of my favorite instruments and I enjoy the possibility of its extreme ranges. With the electric guitar, I generally prefer it to be played without attack, allowing sustained chords or melodic lines to complement those of the strings, and this grainy combination of electric guitar and low strings was one which I first used with Bill Frisell in After the Requiem (1990). The formation of the strings here provides in effect a kind of string quartet, transposed substantially downwards. For the last three songs the bass-clarinet moves to B flat clarinet, and the electric guitar changes to the classical acoustic instrument.

There are many cross-references between the songs, as there are between the poems, and three of them are extended by instrumental epilogues—viola for numbers two and eight, clarinet for number six. The first two songs are played together without a break. The Adnan Songbook is dedicated to my friends Jane Quinn and Martin Duignan. - Gavin Bryars

People

Other Minds Festival (features)
Onyx Quartet (features)
Other Minds Ensemble (features)
Vrebalov, Aleksandra, 1970- (features)
Bryars, Gavin (features)
Adnan, Etel (features)
Presler, Anna (features)
Kamrin, Phyllis (features)
Rohde, Kurt (features)
Fong, Leighton (features)
Jenkins, Tammy (features)
Josheff, Peter, 1954- (features)
Riley, Gyan, 1977- (features)
Lee, Charlton (features)
Stenberg, Kate (Violinist) (features)
Fromme, Randy (features)
Bouchard, Linda (features)

Related Collection

OMA.COL002.OMP.01

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IM.OM.FP.0007.001

[Tammy Jenkins, Gavin Bryars, Charlton Lee, Kate Stenberg, & Linda Bouchard, performing during OM 7, San Francisco CA, \(2001\)](#)

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