



## **A Luigi Nono U.S. premiere, a Gregory Cornelius world premiere, and works by Giacinto Scelsi**

(May 01, 2012)



The Spring 2012 concert series at Columbia University's Italian Academy for Advanced Studies will conclude on Wednesday, May 9, 2012 at 8 PM when AMP NEW MUSIC and the EKMELES VOCAL ENSEMBLE will present a program of works by Giacinto Scelsi (1905-1988), a world premiere by Gregory Cornelius (born 1977), and the United States premiere of Luigi Nono's 1982 masterpiece *Quando stanno morendo*, diario polacco n.2 - 1982, scored for four female voices, flute, cello, and live electronics.

The Italian Academy at Columbia University presents

AMP NEW MUSIC



Gregory Cornelius and Adam Mirza, Co-Directors

EKMELES VOCAL ENSEMBLE

Jeffrey Gavett, Director

May 9, 2012 at 8 PM

Hô (excerpts) - 1960 - Giacinto Scelsi (1905-1988)

Silvie Jensen, mezzo-soprano

Maknongan - 1976 - Giacinto Scelsi

Michael Ibrahim, saxophone

Pwyll - 1954 - Giacinto Scelsi

Ashley Addington, flute

Friction (Premiere) - 2012 - Gregory Cornelius (b. 1977)

Carl Bettendorf, conductor

Ashley Addington, flute

Leah Asher, violin

Laura Barger, piano

Michael Ibrahim, saxophone

Maribel Roberts, cello

Fred Trumpy, percussion

Gregory Cornelius, sound engineer

Quando stanno morendo, diario polacco n.2 (US Premiere) - 1982 - Luigi Nono  
(1924-1990)

Ekmeles Vocal Ensemble:

Jeffrey Gavett, conductor

Megan Schubert, soprano

Christie Finn, soprano

Amirtha Kidambi, mezzo-soprano



Silvie Jensen, mezzo-soprano

Ashley Addington, flute

Mariel Roberts, cello

Gregory Cornelius, sound engineer

In collaboration with the Ekmeles Vocal Ensemble, Harvestworks Digital Media Arts Center and the Fondazione Archivio Luigi Nono, Venice.

#### PROGRAM NOTES

In 1959, Luigi Nono delivered a polemical lecture to his colleagues at the Darmstadt Summer Courses for New Music, the epicenter of European post-war musical modernism. In the lecture titled “Historical Presence in the Music of Today”, Nono claimed that his fellow composers of the avant-garde were succumbing to an ultimately nihilistic temptation in their newfound fascination for the instancy of the now. He saw this as a blind rejection of the critical role of history and dismissed the “evangelical talk” of “those who thought themselves able to to begin a new era ex abrupto, where are all would be programmatically ‘new’, those who would like to give themselves the convenient possibility of being both principle and end.” The “Darmstadt School” (an affirmative label originally coined by Nono) was turning into an aesthetic free-for-all.

In retrospect it is not surprising that the high-mindedness of the early Darmstadt years would eventually come down to Earth. However one interprets the post-war modernist aesthetic, Nono’s invocation of history as the necessary awareness through which the avant-garde project must face its cultural reality was a prescient insight into the demands of the modern situation.

First: sounds have histories. Sounds are not simply acoustic phenomena but are products or results of actions, natural or human, in various contexts



and always for the sake of something important in those contexts. Sounds carry with them the history of their production as the trace of the performance through which they arise. Second, the organic relationship between process and result (history and presence) becomes an issue in modernity due to the technology question: is modern technology the source or cure to modern alienation? (Does Facebook™ connect us or 'make us lonely'?).

In the audio realm, recording technology dissociates the 'acoustic' sound from its production, but it also draws our attention to the immediacy of sound, its inner-life and fluid variability.

The three composers on tonight's concert have sought new means to musical sound via a personal engagement with its production. This engagement is physical, between the composer and the instrument, as well as collaborative, between composer and performer.

All three make various uses of technology to access the immediacy of improvisational action and to develop spaces of interaction and tradition. In these ways, they attempt to develop through modernism the possibilities of local empowerment.

#### THE COMPOSERS AND THEIR WORKS

There are not too many details about the life of Italian composer Giacinto Scelsi (1905-1988). He came from a family of southern Italian nobility which afforded him financial independence throughout his life. In the 1930's and 40s he traveled around Europe and became close with surrealist and symbolist artists in Paris. After a personal crisis and psychological breakdown in 1948 that placed him in a mental institution for several years, Scelsi returned to composition under the guidance of a confluence of spiritual philosophies. Working closely with a small circle of performers, he devised methods of recording and transcribing improvisations that allowed him to hone in on nuances in timbre and microtonal melody. His music only came to

broader attention a few years before his death when his works were performed at the Darmstadt Festival in 1982 (the same year, incidentally, as the premiere of Nono's *Quando stanno morendo*).

About his piece, Amp co-director Gregory Cornelius (b. 1977) writes:

"Friction is only present when two surfaces touch.

The greater the friction between surfaces, which correlates directly to the material nature of the surfaces, the more movement is inhibited and the more force is required to move one surface against the other. When movement does occur, sound waves radiate with the mechanical forces involved in their creation encoded within. Thus, while unseen, friction is easily felt.

Last spring, while glued simultaneously to the television and my laptop, I sat stunned by the emotional scenes broadcast from the Middle East and North Africa. The energy and emotion emanating from both the crowds and the individual voices was captivating, and the friction between the oppressors and those seeking freedom intense. I wanted to react, but instead of writing a piece on a subject of which my only experience was as a remote observer, I ended up writing a more personal piece. I began with a series of recording sessions where I explored the interaction of surfaces. Not only was the amount of friction present between the surfaces frozen in the recordings, but also the physical exertion (often my own) involved in the gestures. Through these experiments and reflecting on the resulting sonic artifacts, the intimate and constrained sonic space of the work bloomed."

Following his critique of the new directions at Darmstadt, Italian composer Luigi Nono (1924-1990) became active in anti-fascist and anti-imperialist liberation movements around the world, and during the 1960s he sought ways to explicitly integrate his dual commitments to artistic abstraction and political engagement. Later in life, Nono turned inward to face the elusive



and fragmentary moments of experience. The featured composition on our program, *Quando stanno morendo: diario polacco n. 2*, is a reflective work from this final period. Like many of these works, the composition involved a process of ‘hands-on’ experimentation with musicians and technicians at one of Europe’s leading music-technology laboratories, the Experimental Studio in Freiburg, Germany. This collaborative working process became itself so woven into the fabric of the resulting works that their scores retain the living fluidity of an oral tradition.

In *Quando*, the central dimension is vocal: four singers share a sober monody, a quiet lament parsed into its component outbursts, tremors and hesitations. The voices interweave and their ramifications are projected by an elaborate interactive electroacoustic setup into a multi-dimensional acoustic space. Singers and instrumentalists use microphones and live electronic processing techniques to shape and color each other’s sounds. Here, repercussions and reverberations acquire their own density, sonically materializing the frustrated political roar behind the composition.

Seven texts by five poets were selected and edited by Nono’s friend and fellow Venetian, Massimo Cacciari. The poems were arranged into two groups of three that surround a single text by Russian Futurist, Velimir Chlebnikov. The outer movements meditate past despair and future hope, while Chlebnikov’s central text, which accuses Moscow of having lost its way, becomes a protest against the authoritarian eastern bloc regime that imposed martial law in Poland on the 13th of December, 1981, just months after Nono had been invited to compose a new piece for a festival in Warsaw. The title of the composition was taken from the final lines of a poem by Chlebnikov which concludes the piece: “quando stanno morendo, gli uomini cantano...” (when they are dying, men sing...).

EKMELES VOCAL ENSEMBLE



Megan Schubert (soprano)

Megan Schubert, soprano, is a devoted ambassador of new and experimental music of the 20th and 21st centuries. She recently created the role of Saint Francis in a world premiere of Sasha Zamler-Carhart's opera *I Fioretti* at La Mama E.T.C., the role of Scientist/Athena in *Likeness to Lily's COMMAND VOICE* at TPAC, sang in the New York Premiere of Robert Ashley's *That Morning Thing* at The Kitchen, in Denman Maroney's new opera *Claudius Smith* at Dixon Place, and performed and produced the NY premiere of Georges Aperghis's *Sextuor: L'origine des espèces* with Avant Media, and again at Joria Productions. Upcoming performances include Jason Cady's opera, *Happiness is the Problem* (5/10/12) at Roulette, and a program of all premieres at Symphony Space produced by Inhyun Kim's *Ear to Mind* (6/16/12). Schubert co-curates Avant Media's annual Avant Music Festival with Randy Gibson at Wild Project.

Schubert has performed music by Stockhausen for an audience under umbrellas in a torrential downpour for Make Music New York; world premieres at Carnegie Hall; with robots while locked inside a Van de Graaff Generator at Boston's Museum of Science; on a bike flying by the audience in an installation piece at McCarren Park Pool, Brooklyn; in a giant potato sack while video was projected onto her frontside at Webster Hall; for inmates at a maximum security prison in Ossining, NY; with puppets at E 4th Street Fab! Fest; for Elliot Carter at a celebration of his 100th birthday; and with many ensembles championing art music and experimental jazz of today. Schubert holds degrees from Bennington College and Manhattan School of Music.

Christie Finn (soprano)

A two-time winner of an interpretation prize at the International Stockhausen Concerts and Courses (Kürten, Germany), Christie Finn, soprano, performed the role of Soprano II in the New York premiere of Georges

Aperghis' Sextuor: L'origine des Espèces. In the past year, Finn has sung with VocaallAB (Amsterdam, Netherlands), Haarlem Opera Theater (Netherlands), the Hezarfen Ensemble (Istanbul, Turkey), and several ensembles in New York City. Finn is a founder and member of the experimental music duo NOISE-BRIDGE, collaborating with clarinetist Felix Behringer. She has been an active member of ekmeles since the group's founding concert in September 2010. Finn made her recording debut with the release of the album *The Year Begins To Be Ripe* (Sonic Arts Editions) in works of John Cage and Stuart Saunders Smith. Upcoming performances include Unsuk Chin's *Cantatrix Sopranica* (Apeldoorn, Netherlands), the premiere of a new opera by Koka Nikoladze (Stuttgart, Germany), and Sofia Gubaidulina's *Hommage à T. S. Eliot* with the Asko-Schoenberg Ensemble (Amsterdam, Netherlands). She holds graduate degrees in performance from Manhattan School of Music (Contemporary Performance Program) and Southern Methodist University.

In addition to her career as a professional singer, Finn is also an active poet. Composer Matt Aelmore has set her poetry to music, and current projects include a libretto for a new opera by Brooklyn-based composer Jason Cady and a collaboration with Chicago-based composer Christopher Fisher-Lochhead. More information about her performance and poetry can be found on <<http://christiefinn.com/> [2]> <<http://christiefinn.com/> [2]> <http://christiefinn.com/> [2]> http://christiefinn.com/ [2]> christiefinn.com.

Amirtha Kidambi (mezzo-soprano)

Amirtha Kidambi is invested in the performance and promotion of new and innovative music across a diverse array of styles and genres. As a performer, songwriter, educator, and curator, she strives to draw connections between seemingly disparate musical areas and communities. As a





soloist and ensemble member in projects such as the The Sweat Lodge, the early music inspired band Seaven Teares and the Ekmeles contemporary vocal ensemble, Amirtha has performed in a variety of venues from DIY spaces to concert halls in Brooklyn and Manhattan including Le Poisson Rouge, ISSUE Project Room, Roulette, St. Mark's Church, Death by Audio, Silent Barn, Galapagos Art Space and The Kitchen. Recent performances include a November premiere of Robert Ashley's *WWW III (Just the Highlights)*, a premiere of Charlie Looker's song cycle "Eve's Prayer" with the Brooklyn Philharmonic String Quartet, Robert Ashley's 1969 opera *That Morning Thing* at The Kitchen, and the New York premiere of George Aperghis' *Sextuor: L'Origine des Espèces*.

Amirtha serves on the advisory board for Performers Forum, a monthly series at Exapno that connects performers, composers and music makers of any kind to engage in non-threatening discussion and dialogue. She also acts as an organizer and performer for The Sweat Lodge, the concert series arm of the forum that allows musicians a free range of expression in a casual and inviting atmosphere. In January 2012, Amirtha joined the staff at ISSUE Project Room in Brooklyn as the Operations and House Manager.

Silvie Jensen (mezzo-soprano)

A vocalist of great versatility, hailed by the New York Times as "marvelous," Silvie Jensen enjoys a wide-ranging career, which includes early and contemporary music, opera and musical theater, and ethnic, improvised, and experimental music. She has performed at London's Barbican Centre with Ornette Coleman, Teatro Comunale Ferrara with Meredith Monk, Carnegie Hall with Philip Glass, and Brooklyn Academy of Music. She sang in the New York premiere of Georges Aperghis' *Sextuor: L'origine des Espèces*. Ms. Jensen has also appeared at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Ash Lawn Opera, Stonington Opera House, Riverside Opera, American Chamber Opera, One World



Symphony, Miller Theater, Sacred Music in a Sacred Space, Voices of Ascension, Bang on a Can Marathon, Clarion Society, in Handel's Messiah at Trinity Wall Street, and with the Broadway Bach Ensemble singing Mahler's 4th symphony and Canteloube's Songs of the Auvergne.

Her performance in Hildegard von Bingen's chant opera Ordo Virtutum, as well many of her performances as a vocal soloist with the Christopher Caines Dance Company, have been critically acclaimed by the New York Times. She has commissioned and premiered works created for her, and has presented solo recitals at Weill Hall, Steinway Hall, Symphony Space, Americas Society, Liederkrantz Club, the Stone, Bonhams, Nicholas Roerich Museum, and the Cell Theater. She has recorded for ECM, London, Koch, Helicon, MSR Classics, and Soundbrush Records labels.

Jeffrey Gavett (conductor)

Jeffrey Gavett, baritone, is dedicated to the creation and presentation of new music as composer, performer and improviser. He has performed with a broad range of collaborators, from the indie rock group Clogs to new music groups Ensemble de Sade, ICE, New Juilliard Ensemble, SEM Ensemble, Signal, Talea Ensemble, and Wet Ink Ensemble. His own mixed ensemble loadbang has premiered more than 40 new works in the past three years. In 2010 he founded the contemporary vocal ensemble Ekmeles, lauded by Alex Ross as "virtuosically adventurous". He has worked with composers such as Nick Didkovsky, Reiko Fütting, Liza Lim, Somei Satoh, Steven Takasugi, David Lang, and Terry Riley, performing the music of the latter two at the 2008 Bang on a Can Summer festival, where he was a fellow.

Mr. Gavett has sung many premieres, including Somei Satoh's The Passion and Matt Marks's The Adventures of Albert Fish; US premieres of Liza Lim's Chang-O, Philip Maintz's Fluchtlinie, and Steven Takasugi's Strange Autumn; and works by Nils Vigeland and Susan Botti in a performance at Zankel Hall.



He has performed at Merkin Hall with Signal, under the direction of Brad Lubman. In this performance he sang the US premiere of Harrison Birwistle's scena The Corridor and the premiere of Nico Muhly's Stabat Mater, and was praised for his "attractive" voice by the New York Times.

Mr. Gavett holds degrees from Westminster Choir College and Manhattan School of Music's Contemporary Performance Program, where he studied with Lucy Shelton.

#### PERFORMER BIOS

Ashley Addington (flute)

A versatile and engaging performer, flutist Ashley Addington performs regularly with ensembles throughout the Boston area, most recently with Cape Cod Symphony, The Orchestra of Indian Hill, the contemporary sinfonietta Sound Icon, and as a Guest Artist on Composer's Concerts at Tufts University. Ashley holds a Master of Music degree in Flute Performance and a Bachelor of Music in Music Education from Butler School of Music at The University of Texas at Austin. Her primary teachers are Marianne Gedigian and Robert Willoughby.

Leah Asher (violin)

Violinist and visual artist Leah Asher is an avid performer of contemporary music and creator of new artistic works. As a recipient of the Jacob K. Javits fellowship, she is currently studying with Curtis Macomber in the Contemporary Performance program at Manhattan School of Music. Leah has performed with the Grammy award-winning ensemble, eighth blackbird, soloed with Oberlin Conservatory's Contemporary Music Ensemble, and participated in the Lucerne Festival Academy under the direction of Pierre Boulez. She has premiered chamber works by such composers as Frederic Rzewski, Rebecca Saunders, and Lewis Nielson. Leah bridges her two artistic worlds as a

member of the interdisciplinary ensemble SoundPlay, and is sought out as a collaborator in other cross-genre work.

Laura Barger (piano)

New York-based pianist Laura Barger is increasingly sought after for her dedication to contemporary music and for her energetic and committed performances. She has performed internationally both as a soloist and chamber musician at The Lucerne Festival (Switzerland), The National Gallery of Ireland, Västerås Konserthus (Sweden), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco), and the Darmstadt International Summer Festival for New Music (Germany). Active in New York's new music scene, she can be heard performing everywhere from John Zorn's downtown experimental mecca The Stone to the Kaufmann Center's Merkin Hall. Laura is also one of the founding member of Yarn/Wire, a piano and percussion quartet committed to exploring and expanding the body of works for that instrumentation since Bartok.

Carl Christian Bettendorf (conductor)

Carl Christian Bettendorf is a New York-based composer and conductor. Born in Hamburg, Germany, he studied composition with Hans-Jürgen von Bose and Wolfgang Rihm in Munich and Karlsruhe before moving to New York, where he received his doctorate from Columbia University under Tristan Murail. His works have been played at many prestigious venues and festivals on four continents, and he has received numerous awards, among them a six-month residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris and a Fromm Foundation commission.

As a conductor, Mr. Bettendorf has worked with new-music ensembles in Germany and New York and served as assistant conductor for the Columbia University and American Composers orchestras, Miller Theatre, and the Munich Biennale. He has recorded for Albany and Carrier Records, ArtVoice, Cybele,



and Tzadik and his music was broadcast on German, Swiss, Canadian, U.S. and Australian radio.

Gregory Cornelius (composer, sound engineer)

Gregory Cornelius is an emerging composer who is fascinated by the nature in which technology can expand and transform musical expression. Whether using software he has developed to aid in performance and composition or using a mixture of microphones, loudspeakers, and audio editors to listen into the sound, Gregory strives for clarity of idea and a sense of vitality in his creative work. His works often incorporate aspects of both acoustic and electroacoustic music.

Some of the recognition that Gregory has received for his works include a residency prize in the 34e Concours Internationaux de Bourges in 2007 and an honorable mention in the 2008 ASCAP/SEAMUS Student Commission Competition, which were both received for his electroacoustic composition Earth and Green (available on Volume 18 of the Music of SEAMUS CD series). In 2007, he also was invited to participate in the Composers Conference at Wellesley College, which included the premiere Handwoven for fourteen players.

Michael Ibrahim (saxophone)

Michael Ibrahim is a Canadian saxophonist based in West Virginia and New York City. His performances of concertos, recital repertoire, and new music have attracted much attention in North America and Europe. Noted for his "sheer virtuosity and musical intensity" (Calgary Herald), he has performed throughout North America, Austria, England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, and Russia. In praise of his solo Bach recording, Saxophone Journal wrote, "The listener is in for an exciting musical ride."

As a freelance performer at the center of New York City's contemporary



classical scene, Ibrahim has worked with Amp Music, Either/Or, Fireworks Ensemble, International Contemporary Ensemble, Manhattan Sinfonietta, PRISM Quartet, Red Light New Music, SEM Ensemble, and Wet Ink. His solo and chamber music performances have taken place in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Merkin Hall, Miller Theater, Symphony Space, and the Kitchen. In New York, Ibrahim gave the US Premiere of solo pieces such as Stockhausen's *Edentia*, Boulez's *Dialogue de l'ombre double*, and Robin Hoffmann's *Birkhahn-Studie* for black grouse hunting call.

#### Mariel Roberts (cello)

New York-based cellist Mariel Roberts is quickly gaining recognition as a deeply dedicated interpreter and performer of contemporary music. She holds degrees from both the Eastman School and the Manhattan School of Music, where she specialized in contemporary performance practice while studying with Alan Harris and Fred Sherry. Mariel has performed with a variety of ensembles in venues around the world as a champion of living composers, including TACTUS ensemble, SIGNAL ensemble, Wet Ink, the Eastman Broadband, and NouveauClassical. Furthermore, she has been a participant in the Bang on a Can Festival, the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, and the Lucerne Summer Festival led by Pierre Boulez. This spring Mariel just recorded her first solo album, a record of all new pieces for solo cello which she commissioned from some of New York's most promising young composers, which will be released in June of 2012.

#### Fred Trumpy (percussion)

Fred Trumpy attended the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College where he earned Bachelors of Music in Percussion performance, graduating Magna Cum Laude. He has performed with groups such as Talujon Percussion Quartet, Time Table Percussion, Iktus Percussion, LoadBang, Ursula Oppens, Lucy Shelton, Marcy Rosen, Antonio Hart, Michael Mossman, David Berkman,



Face the Music, One World Symphony, Merrick Symphony, Merrick Choral, Astoria Symphony, Creative Ministry Performing Art Center, the Airport Playhouse, and has performed on the award winning film score Body/Antibody. Fred is a member of the Indy bands The Marine Electric and Living Room, and New York's Most Dangerous Big Band.

#### COLLABORATING PARTNERS

Amp New Music is a new music group based in New York City that focuses on the experimental and avant-garde in the context of musical modernism. Without fixed ensemble, we draw from the rich new music scene in New York to organically develop a few concerts each year, each usually featuring a particular composer or nexus of compositions. Amp is directed by Adam Mirza and Gregory Cornelius.

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