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A TRADITION OF INNOVATION

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**Alumni Concert Series**

**2011-2012 Season**

Tuesday, March 6

Sara M. Snell Music Theater

7:30 PM

## Music of Alumni Composers

Spike

David Heinick, Piano

Rob Smith

Sonetos

David Dies

No te amo como si fueras rosa de sal, topacio

Es hoy: todo el ayer se fue cayendo

Douglas Rubio, Guitar

c'n'ear

Doug Van Nort, mixing and electronic treatments

Doug Van Nort

*First Performance*

Broad Street Triptych

Kathleen Miller, Soprano

Kirk Severtson, Piano

Brian Vlasak

*First Performance*

Smoke

Josh Mlodzianowski, Alto Saxophone

William Ryan

2011 • 2012

CRANE

I Wonder (selections)

Roger Ames

The Call  
I Wonder  
Dawn

Deborah Massell, Soprano  
Lorraine Yaros Sullivan, Mezzo-Soprano  
Julianne Kirk Doyle, Clarinet  
François Germain, Piano

Memory Fragments  
for solo performer and live electronics

Paul Riker

Paul Riker, Solo  
*First Performance*

## Biographies and Program Notes

The innovative and highly energetic music of **Rob Smith** is frequently performed throughout the United States and abroad. His music has received numerous awards, including those from the Aaron Copland House, ASCAP and the National Band Association. Many of his works are featured on commercial recordings and commissions have come from the Texas Music Festival Orchestra, the American Composers Forum and several nationally renowned university wind ensembles, among many others.

In 1997, he was the recipient of a Fulbright Grant to Australia, which led to a teaching position at the University of Wollongong in 1998. Currently, he is Associate Professor of Music Composition and director of the AURA Contemporary Ensemble at the University of Houston Moores School of Music and serves as one of the artistic directors of Musiqa, a Houston-based contemporary chamber ensemble. Boosey & Hawkes, Carl Fischer, Southern Music, C-Alan Publications, and Skitter Music Publications publish his music.

**Spike** is inspired by the many images that the word invokes: a very large nail, a scoring play in volleyball, the spikes found on shoes (mountain climbing, golf, high heels, etc...), a punk London haircut and the name of a large dog with a leather collar. Written for Christopher Taylor, Spike was premiered by him in 2003 on a Musiqa concert at the Rothko Chapel in Houston, TX.

Albany Records recently released a solo composition CD, *agevolmente*, of chamber music by **David Dies**. His music has been performed in London, New York, Lima, Peru, Chicago, Lenox, Mass., and elsewhere, by soprano Mimmi Fulmer, soprano Judith Kellock, cellist Jakub Omsky, bassoonist Marc Vallon, soprano Catherine Verrilli, guitarist Lynn McGrath, the University of Chicago New Music Ensemble, and the UW-Madison Contemporary Chamber Ensemble. He currently teaches at Lawrence University.

He is currently writing a chamber concerto for bassoon and four strings to be performed at the Universities of Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, Oklahoma, Indiana University, Texas Tech and Melbourne, Australia.

Inspired by two Neruda sonnets, the **Sonetos** incorporate the speech rhythms of their respective sonnet. *No te amo como si fueras* transforms the speech rhythms into a recitative, conveying the simple intimacy of this beloved sonnet. But the poem also presents strange and unexpected metaphors—a "salt rose," "certain dark things,"—and so the music is both intimate and alien to capture these aspects of the poem. *Es hoy: todo el ayer se fue cayendo* is both sensuous and disorienting. The poem presents a timeless and ecstatic "today," and the speech rhythms shape the cascading arpeggios that reflect an overabundant, luminous "now."

**Doug Van Nort** is an experimental musician whose work explores the sculpting and radical transformation of his sonic environment, as well as interaction with/through machines. His instruments are custom-built electro-acoustic systems and digital processes, with an ear towards noise, immersion and free improvisation. VanNort performs solo and in the trio Triple Point with Pauline Oliveros and Jonas Braasch, with the Composers Inside Electronics and recently has collaborated with Francisco López, Chris Chafe, Al Margolis, Ben Miller, Anne Bourne and Judy Dunaway. His music can be found on the Deep Listening, Pogus and Zeromoon labels and his writing in Organised Sound and the Leonardo Music Journal, among other channels. Van Nort is currently research associate in music at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). He previously studied electronic arts at RPI, as well as music technology at McGill and electronic composition at Crane with Dr. Paul Steinberg.

**c'n'ear** results from extensive transformation and sculpting of recorded sounds (acoustic instruments, urban environments) that were captured during a number of improvisational sessions using various digital instruments. In each session this content was sculpted and manipulated in the moment, altering the duration, timbre, pitch and texture of each recording which then led to new, unrecognizable sound objects.

These new forms have suggested a larger structure, so that the material in turn has led me to decide on particular layerings, juxtapositions and further sound transformations in a more refined, studio context. I use this process often in creating electroacoustic pieces, as I find that it can lead to a nice balance between determined macro-structures of the overall piece and organic, gestural inner-structures of each sound element. I strongly believe that the totality of an electroacoustic piece goes beyond the digits that are recorded in computer memory or on a CD, but instead is in dialogue with the space in which it is presented as well as the sound system that delivers it. As such, I will perform this composition (as I often do) in the form of mixing, equalization and reverberation treatments that are determined by this context, within the Snell Theatre.

### **Brian Vlasak**

Brian Vlasak (b. 1979) earned his B. Mus. (2003) and M. Mus. (2004) from the Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam and his Ph.D. (2007) from the University of Iowa, having studied with David Heinick and David Gompper, respectively. While at Iowa, Brian was the 2005-2006 recipient of the Henry and Parker Pelzer Composition Fellowship. Since graduating, he has held a post-doc fellowship at Augustana College in Illinois and taught at the Ithaca College Conservatory of Music. Presently, he lives in Iowa City, IA where he composes, teaches privately, tutors, and is pursuing a B.Sci. in neurobiology with supplemental studies in epidemiology.

The title of **Broad Street Triptych** (2008) reflects not only the street where William Blake wrote, illustrated, and published his poetry collection *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, but also the tripartite arrangement of the poetry on the page and the religiosity of the work. Blake's themes and images are reflected through numerical and pitch relationships throughout the work. In *The Rose-Tree*, where Blake speaks of jealous love, two identical and symmetrical pitch structures sharing two invariant tones are heard. For *Ah! Sun-flower*, the argument centers on the temporal cyclicity of nature and man's imperfect attempts to duplicate it. This idea is represented by providing two hexachords that are identical in their intervallic structure but not in spelling which then undergo a series of transformations that are, just as the original chords, similar but not identical.

In *The Lilly*, the voice and piano once again begin with separate sonorities until they finally unite on the word “Love,” where the seminal septachord for the entire work is at last revealed. Just as in Blake’s self-referential iconography, the selection of a seven-object collection is illustrative of the perfection of the divine love.

I. The Rose Tree

A flower was offered to me:  
Such a flower as May never bore.  
But I said I’ve a pretty Rose-Tree,  
And I passed the sweet flower over.

Then I went to my Pretty Rose-Tree:  
To tend her by day and by night.  
But my Rose turn’d away with  
    jealousy:  
And her thorns were my only delight.

II. Ah! Sun-flower

Ah Sun-flower! Weary of time  
Who countest the steps of the Sun:  
Seeking after that sweet golden clime,  
Where travelers’ journey is done.

Where the Youth pined away with  
    desire,  
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow:  
Arise from their graves and aspire,  
Arise from their graves and aspire,  
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.

III. The Lilly

The modest Rose puts forth a Thorn:  
The humble Sheep a threatening horn:  
While the Lilly bright, shall in Love  
    delight,  
Nor a thorn nor a threat stain her  
    beauty bright.

**Bill Ryan’s** compositions are heard on the concert stage and with dance throughout the country. This season included performances at New York’s (le) Poisson Rouge and the Lincoln Center Out of Doors Festival, Baltimore’s acclaimed Mobtown Modern series, and the premiere of an evening-length collaboration with Karen Stokes Dance in Houston. Also active as a concert producer, Bill has presented over fifty concerts in his Open Ears and Free Play concert series, winning three ASCAP/Chamber Music America Adventurous Programming Awards. In 2006 Bill founded the Grand Valley State University New Music Ensemble, who have released three critically acclaimed recordings and been profiled in numerous publications including Newsweek, the New York Times, Billboard Magazine, and featured on NPR’s Weekend Edition, All Things Considered, and WNYC’s Radiolab. Their first CD, Steve Reich’s Music for 18 Musicians, was named one of the top five classical recordings of the decade by WNYC.

**Smoke** is part of a series of pieces I’ve written for solo performer and pre-recorded material. In this work the soloist introduces material which is then taken over by the other voices. This creates a virtual ensemble in which I try to blur the line between what is live and what isn’t. *Smoke* was commissioned by Jonathan Nichol and premiered at the 2010 North American Saxophone Conference.

**Roger Ames**, Class of '67 and Pulitzer Prize nominated composer, has written musicals and operas for the Hartford Stage, Roundhouse Theater, Berkshire Ensemble for Theater Arts, the London Fringe, incidental music for Off-Broadway plays, and has been commissioned to compose works for Central City Opera, Colorado, Utah Opera, Boston Lyric Opera Company, Lake George Opera, Equity Fights Aids, and numerous schools and universities.

His recent work includes TAKE JOY at the Strathmore Music Center, Silver Spring, Maryland; REMEMBER WARSAW, with the Oratorio Society of Minnesota; and ANCIENT SONGS OF THE UNIVERSE, premiered by the Long Island Masterworks Chorus, Frances Roberts, (Class of '65) conducting.

He is currently Resident Composer for Central City Opera, Great Neck North High School, and Artist in Residence at New Dramatists, New York City. He has been a student of Robert Washburn, Samuel Barber, Carl Druba, Carlisle Floyd and Helen Hosmer, gratefully.

He has appeared on EMI and GIA recording labels, and is published by Hinshaw Music and GIA Publications, Chicago, and is a principle author of the GIA textbook series, "Music! Words! Opera!"

**I Wonder** was commissioned by the American Chamber Players, and premiered at the Paris Opera House and the Metropolitan Museum of New York. The piece won Second Prize at the International Clarinet Society Composition Competition, 1999. The poetry was written by patients at Chestnut Lodge, near Washington, D.C., a hospital for the emotionally disturbed, with special treatment for schizophrenia. It is used here with permission, although the poets asked that their names not be used. The piece was written as a short opera, and its original version was for soprano, viola and piano. It contained 7 short scenes. This version, containing 3 movements, serves the original intent of the piece – two singers playing the same role, one as alter ego to the other, with the clarinet and piano providing subtext.

**Paul Riker** writes music and sounds for instruments, electronics, and multimedia. His works have been presented recently by the VideoX Experimental Video and Film Festival (Zurich), the European Media Art Festival (Onasbruck, Germany), 12 Nights (Miami), FEMF, SEAMUS, SCI, Black Mariah Film Festival, and others, with performances by ensembles including Cygnus and ICE. He taught music theory, aural skills, keyboard, and computer music at Queens College, CUNY from 2005-2010. He also taught theory and ear training at Nassau Community College on Long Island, and served as an Instructional Technology Fellow in Harlem at City College, CUNY (via Macaulay Honors College). Currently, Paul is an Audio Systems Developer/Engineer for the Visualization Lab at King Abudullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia. Paul is the co-founder and co-director of the New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival (NYCEMF).

### **Memory Fragments:**

*“What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow*

*Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,*

*You cannot say, or guess, for you know only*

*A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,*

*And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,*

*And the dry stone no sound of water.”*

- excerpt from T.S. Eliot “The Waste Land”

Grains of sound act as windows to hazy memories, perforations in time that reveal past spaces. As the windows increase in density and size, underlying sonic elements are clarified and combined to create colored soundscapes. This piece utilizes a brain-to-computer interface. Concentrated thoughts on discreet spatial operations (forward, back, up, down, etc.) trigger sonic events and decide the flow of the piece.

In order to ensure a pleasant concert experience for both performers and audience, please refrain from:

- Entering or leaving during the performance.
- Bringing food or drink into the concert hall.
- Taking flash photographs.
- Using electronic devices (please remember to turn off your cellular phone, pagers and watches that chime on the hour).

Children who are able to sit quietly during the performance are welcome to our concerts.

Tape/video recording of performances is strictly prohibited without permission of the performers!

Thank you!

**In Case of Fire Emergency**

In case of fire, leave the building immediately by walking to the nearest safe exit. Once outside, please move fifty feet away from the building and safely away from emergency traffic. Do not return to the building until authorities indicate that it is safe to do so.

Please bear with us during the construction phase of the new Performing Arts Building. Parking is limited in front of Snell Theater. Additional parking may be found in Lot 2 or Lot 1, near the front entrance of Raymond Hall.



