

And Then I Remember and Three Immigrant Songs

January 20th and 21st, 2012 8pm
DiMenna Center for Classical Music

KUST TUNNEN KODU (How Can I Recognize my Home) - Veljo
Tormis (1974)
(two sopranos and piano)

THREE IMMIGRANT SONGS - Lembit Beecher (2011)
(mezzo-soprano, horn, cello and piano)

short pause

AND THEN I REMEMBER - Lembit Beecher (2009)
(soprano, double bass, male chorus, chamber ensemble and recorded audio)

Mary Bonhag, soprano
Evan Premo, double bass
Laura Mercado-Wright, mezzo-soprano
Danya Katok, soprano

Marty Coyle, tenor
Matthew Hensrud, tenor
Malcolm Merriweather, baritone
Steven Hrycelak, bass

Roberta Michel, flute
Nicholas Gallas, clarinet
Alma Liebrecht, horn
Mazz Swift, violin
Karen Ouzounian, cello
Kevin Sims, percussion

Paul Vasile, piano
Lembit Beecher, piano

Benjamin Grow, conductor

Video designs and live audio – Kristin Fosdick
Production Assistants – George Lam and Amanda Rutishauser
Publicity and Consulting – Emily Motherwell

Notes

My grandmother, Taimi Lepasaar, came to the United States in 1949 accompanied by her two daughters (including my seven-year-old mother) and her parents. She had been born in Estonia in 1922, escaped as the Soviet Army was invading for a second time in 1944, and spent five years in displaced person camps in Western Europe in the aftermath of World War II. Though I grew up in California, Estonian was my first language and Estonia had a strong, almost legendary presence in my childhood. A central part of this presence were the stories that my grandmother told me of her childhood, coming of age during the war, and immigration to the United States.

So many of us in this country have similar stories, whether it was our parents or our great- great-grandparents who first came to America. My experience listening to my grandmother made me particularly aware of the way that the immigrant experience stays with families and communities across generations through stories and legends, values and world view. And though the pieces on this program share similar themes—they all deal with the idea of home and what it means to be separated from one's homeland—I think my inspiration for writing this music stems as much from my interest in storytelling as it does from the thematic elements.

The concert opens with Veljo Tormis's song, *Kust Tunnen Kodu*, whose words speak of a long journey leading one back home. Tormis bases this work on an ancient rune song, a tradition going back to the Middle Ages and perhaps further. Both Tormis and Jaan Kaplinski, who adapted the lyrics for this song, were some of the first Estonians to look into this deep folklore, past the German-style "folk songs" of the 19th century, which early Estonian nationalists adorned with patriotic lyrics. The narrative style of rune songs is distinctive, with constant alliteration, long lists, and lyrics suggesting hidden meanings stretching far beyond the literal. While preserving the original spirit of the songs, Tormis recreates them, in this case with a piano part that comments on the singers' melodies. The singing style is directly influenced by the folk tradition. Tormis writes: "Very important is the manner of singing, which should be as close as possible to that of the original folk singers. Expressive performance, a typical attribute to the Western culture and organically foreign to the runic song, should be avoided. One should instead strive for a 'magical' impression achieved through monotony. This can be fostered by singing while sitting down and wearing everyday clothing."

The seeds of *Three Immigrant Songs* were planted when I was first introduced to Greek rebetika music many years ago by a classmate of mine in graduate school. I found the songs immediately and intensely moving, even though I had no understanding of what the words meant. When I looked up the translation for one of my favorite songs, *San Apokliros Gyrizo*, I discovered extensive message board debates about its translation. The debates all seemed to end with the conclusion that translating the text is futile. It seemed to me that there was something poetically appropriate about the struggle to understand this text, when the text itself was about struggling in an unfamiliar world with its foreign customs and language.

I began to feel that I could use translation expressively and this idea returned to me last year as I was beginning work on these songs. The first song, *Wandering Exile*, uses the initial two stanzas of *San Apokliros Gyrizo*. My Greek friend Yona Stamatis translated the song and then I used Google Translate to generate the other translations, passing the translations through different languages before arriving at English. I found

that the clumsiness of these electronic translations added poignancy to the texts and preserved the raw expression that I heard in the music. In addition, the alternative word choices suggested different emotional emphases that joined to create an emotional whole.

Angel Island, the second song in the cycle, takes its text from a poem scrawled on the walls of the Angel Island detention center in the early part of the 20th Century. Angel Island was used as a processing and detention center for thousands of very poor Chinese immigrants, who were often detained for months or even years before being allowed entry into the United States or being sent home. Many of the detainees wrote poems on the walls of the center, some bleak, some angry, some grittily cheerful and some resolute. I took a slightly different tack in the translation of this poem. I asked Dale Johnson, Professor Emeritus of Chinese Literature at UCSC, to translate the short four-line poem three times: character by character, literally, but with English grammar, and poetically. I felt this manner of translation reflected the idea of waiting and cyclical repetition that appears in many of the Angel Island poems.

The final song uses an excerpt of the poem *Võõrsil* (In a Foreign Land) by Marie Under. Born in Tallinn, Estonia, in 1883, Marie Under fled the country at the same time as my grandmother but ended up settling in Sweden, where she lived until her death in 1980. Widely hailed as one of Estonia's greatest poets, her lyrical and sparse poems are difficult to translate. To capture her sense of separation from her homeland, I set the song in both the original Estonian and in English translation. Since Under's longing for Estonia never waned, I ended the song in Estonian, not translating the final stanza.

And Then I Remember

My grandmother, Taimi Lepasaar, was born in Estonia in 1922. Four years earlier, in the aftermath of World War I, Estonia had achieved independence for the first time. This independence was short lived. During World War II, Estonia was occupied first by the Russians (1940 – 41) and then the Germans (1941 – 44). In 1944, as the Red Army was encroaching once more, my grandmother escaped Estonia along with her mother and father, husband Ants and two-year old daughter, Merike (my mother). My grandmother left on the last ship out of the country before the Russians returned and sealed the borders. The boat brought her to Germany, and as the war was ending she gradually made her way west. After the end of the war, she spent four years in displaced person camps before immigrating to the United States and beginning a new life here. She found work as a church organist and later also as a music teacher. For 35 years she taught music to middle school students in Providence, RI, where she still resides.

My grandmother has often told me stories about these experiences. She is a marvelous storyteller. A few years ago I asked my her if I could record her stories with the idea of possibly building a piece around them. She kindly agreed to many interviews over several years as the project gradually took shape. During the summer of 2008, as I began to work intensely on this piece, I traveled to Estonia to conduct interviews with family members and old friends of my grandmother's, and to do archival research. My original intent was to emphasize the documentary side of the stories, including text from newspaper clippings and war-time documents (like the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). But as I thought more and more about the project, I began to feel that what was really important was my grandmother's voice and her way of telling stories to me, not the historical details of the events described. The text of the interviews with her is the core of the piece. Portions of the interviews are played back as recorded audio and I have condensed other parts into poems of sorts, which are

sung by a solo soprano.

To supplement the English language interviews texts, I have set portions of the Estonian national epic, *Kalevipoeg*, for a female duo and male chorus to sing. Both *Kalevipoeg* and my grandmother's stories are about a wandering journey of epic nature. Both are permeated by an intense love of homeland, of Estonia, and the ruminations on memory, storytelling and the passage of time that are contained within *Kalevipoeg* seem to be echoed by my grandmother. I sometimes feel that I understand my grandmother's stories in the way that Estonians of an older generation understood *Kalevipoeg*. The experiences my grandmother describes are so far removed from mine, in terms of time, place and intensity, that they acquire the sheen of a fantastic saga, yet at the same time, the stories feel so very personal, emotional and deeply true.

Kust Tunnen Kodu (How Can I Recognize My Home)

folklore adapted by Jaan Kaplinski; translation by Kristin Kuutma

neiukesed noorukesed	dear girls dear maidens
kus me lähme vastu ööda	where shall we go before the night sets in
vastu ööda vastu põhja	before the night towards the north
vastu helgasta ehada	towards the shining twilight
vastu koitu keerulista	towards the brightness of dawn
meie kodu kauge'ella	our home is far away
viisi verstada vaheta	many miles from here
kuusi kuivada jõgeda	with six dry rivers
seitse sooda sitke'eda	seven sloppy swamps
kaheksa kalamereda	eight seas of fish
üheksa hüva ojada	nine beautiful brooks
kümme külma allikada	ten cold springs in between
meie meel teeb tee minna	we would like to set out on the road
tee minna maale saada	set out on the road and begin to go
osata oma koduje	to go towards home
märgata oma majaje	to find our own house
kust ma tunnen oma kodu	how can I recognize my home
millest märkan oma maja	how can I find my house
küla kümmene seasta	among ten others in the village
talu seitseme taganta	behind seven strange farms
meil on kuu korstenalla	we have the moon on the roof
meil on agu akenassa	we have the dawn on the window
päeva lävepaku päällä	the sun on the door
meil on kijas kullasseppa	we have a goldsmith in the house
tares taalrite taguja	a silversmith on the farm
saunas sangavitsutaja	a carpenter in the sauna
kojast tõuseb kulda suitsu	a golden smoke rises from chimney
tareharjast haljast suitsu	a silvery smoke rises from our farm
saunast sangavitsa suitsu	an alder smoke rises from the sauna
sest ma tunnen oma kodu	that's how I recognize my home
sellest märkan oma maja	that's how I find my house
küla kümmene seasta	among ten others in the village
talu seitseme taganta	behind seven strange farms

Three Immigrant Songs

Wandering Exile (from Greek)

I wander as an exile
In this heartless foreign land
Walking miserable
Far from my mother's embrace

As an outcast I turn
In heartless foreign land
Wandering miserable
Far from my mother's embrace

Dejected I wander
In cursed foreign lands
Wandering unfortunate
Far from my mother's arms

I wander in exile
This hostile foreign country
Walk miserable
Away from the embrace of my mother

Birds cry for air
And trees for water
And I cry for my mother
That I have years to see you

As an outcast turning
In a foreign land heartless
Wandering miserable
Away from my mother to embrace
Like a villain turned outcast in exile
Wandering unhappy
Away from my mother's embrace

Birds cry for air
for water cry the trees
and I cry too my dear mother
for I have not seen you in years

Birds cry for air
Trees over water
my little mother I cry for you
For I have not seen you in so long

And I cry for my mother
That I have time to see you

Angel Island (from Chinese)

徘徊瞻眺倚窗邊
日月盈昃轉改轉
孔懷兄弟難相望
淵澄取映浪拋憐

back forth longing gaze lean window frame
sun moon wax wane turn alter turn
deep concern brothers difficult each see
deep clear cast reflection waves send sympathy

Pacing back and forth, I lean on the window sill and gaze,
The revolving sun and moon waxes and wanes, again and again,
I think about my brothers; we cannot see each other,
The deep, clear water casts reflections as waves churn in sympathy.

Endlessly pacing, I lean longingly at the window
The sun and moon in eternal revolution wax and wane
In vain I deeply yearn to see my brothers;
Deep and clear the waves cast sympathetic reflections.

- Anonymous (translation by Dale Johnson)

Song from Home (From Estonian)

Oh kuulata, mis kostab sääl
ja virgutab mu valust?
Oh ei...oh jaa...see linnuhääl
on minu kodusalust.

Oh listen, what is that I hear
that wakes me from my sorrow?
Oh no...oh yes...I've heard that song
in a grove of trees at home

Kui läksin säält, kuis helkis nii
tee haavalehti punas...
Sestsaadik küsib alati,
meel aina mõtleb: kunas?

The day I left, the road shone bright
with aspen leaves – a red-gold fall.
Since then, the question in my mind
again and again is: when?

Sest mõttest sai mu siht ja tee,
ses talund võõra talve,
kui saatsin üle jää ja vee
ma oma vaikse palve

This thought became my goal, my way
through winter in a foreign land,
when I sent forth my quiet plea
across the ice-bound water.

Kas toomeoksalt künnilind
veab oma laululinge?
Oh ei...oh jaa: ma kuulen sind,
mu kodukoha hinge.

Does the song of that nightingale
sound from the bird-cherry tree?
Oh no...oh yes... I hear you now,
the soul of my distant homeland.

- Marie Under, excerpted from *Võõrsil* (In a Foreign Land)
(translation by Merike Lepasaar Beecher)
Bolded texts are those set in the song.

Bios

Lembit Beecher's music focuses on themes of storytelling, memory, nature and the immigrant experience. Born of Estonian and American parents, Lembit grew up under the redwoods in Santa Cruz, California, a few miles from the wild Pacific. Since then he has lived in Boston, Houston, Ann Arbor, Berlin and New York, earning degrees from Harvard, Rice and the University of Michigan. This varied background has made him particularly sensitive to place, ecology and the strong emotional relationships that people forge with patterns in nature. He is also interested in memory and the various ways we tell stories, from emotional personal narratives to crisp and clean documentaries. Recent pieces have focused on integrating recorded interviews with music. While a fellow at the University of Michigan Institute for the Humanities (2008 – 2009), Lembit wrote *And Then I Remember*, a multi-media, documentary oratorio based on the World War II stories of his grandmother. *And Then I Remember* won the 2010 Opera Vista competition leading to a fully staged production in March of 2011 in Houston, Texas. Active also as a pianist and conductor, his work has been performed at the Tanglewood, Aspen and Cabrillo Music Festivals and he has received awards and grants from the American Music Center, ASCAP, New York Youth Symphony, NewMusic@ECU, Society of New Music and Austin Peay State University. Lembit was appointed a Visiting Assistant Professor at Denison University for the fall of 2009 and in the fall of 2011 was appointed the first Composer In Residence of the Opera Company of Philadelphia in collaboration with Gotham Chamber Opera and Music Theatre Group of New York.

Multifaceted musician **Benjamin Grow** is active in many different areas of the musical world. In addition to his recent work as a conductor, he performs regularly on several instruments. He has conducted the Our Silent Canvas ensemble in a world premiere, the Con Vivo ensemble, and Red Light New Music. As a trumpeter, he has performed throughout Mexico and Panama, and at such venues as Bargemusic and The Stone in New York City. His interest in early music has led him to performances on cornetto and harpsichord with both period and modern ensembles. His arrangements and compositions have been performed by the Caravel Quartet, the Toomai Quintet, DZ4 woodwind quartet, Ensemble Counterpoint, and the Strangetet. As a dedicated music educator, Mr. Grow was the founding conductor of the 92nd St. Y Youth Orchestra and currently conducts an orchestra at the School for Strings, where he is also a music theory instructor. Mr. Grow co-presents an annual lecture at the 92nd St. Y, "The Physics of Music," as part of their Mysteries of Science series, and has given pre-concert talks at the Museum of Biblical Art. He received his Bachelor of Music degree at Rice University, pursued graduate studies at McGill University, and was a Fellow at the Conductors Institute at Bard College.

Mary Bonhag made her Carnegie Hall solo debut in 2009 singing scenes from David T. Little's new chamber opera *Dog Days* and in 2007, she created the role of "Eve" for the Pine Mountain Music Festival premiere of *The Diaries of Adam and Eve*, a new chamber opera by Evan Premo. Mary has performed as part of the Fontana Chamber Arts Festival of Kalamazoo, MI, the Maui Classical Music Festival, Strings in the Mountains, Cactus Pear Music Festival, the Lancaster Music Festival, SongFest as a Stern Fellow, Yellow Barn, and with the American Symphony Orchestra. She has also been featured on the NPR shows *Performance Today* and *From the Top*. After studying at the University of Michigan, she earned her Master's degree at Dawn Upshaw's graduate vocal program at Bard College, winning concerto competitions at both institutions. She lives in the woods of Vermont.

Double bassist and composer **Evan Premo** pursues a unique life path. As a member of Ensemble ACJW he has performed many concerts at Carnegie Hall and participated in residencies in Spain and Germany. Along with the Pittsburgh Symphony Chamber Orchestra, Evan premiered his own double concerto for violin and bass, "Simple Mysteries" inspired by

the nature poetry of Mary Oliver. As a soloist, Evan also premiered “Concerto for Bass and Orchestra” by Finnish composer Jukka Linkola. His chamber opera, “The Diaries of Adam and Eve” (text by Mark Twain) was commissioned by the Pine Mountain Music and has been staged several times most recently featuring the Bergonzi String Quartet. Evan has performed at summer chamber music festivals throughout the country and has been featured as a soloist and chamber musician on National Public Radio shows *Performance Today* and *From the Top*. Evan lives in rural Vermont with his wife, soprano Mary Bonhag. Together they are the founders and artistic directors of Scrag Mountain Music, dedicated to presenting innovative, interactive, and affordable performances of chamber music. When he’s not performing and composing, Evan enjoys woodworking, hiking, skiing, and simply being with Nature.

Mezzo soprano **Laura Mercado-Wright** was recently described by the New York Times as “superb” and “dramatically astute” for her world-premiere performance in Charles Wuorinen’s cantata *It Happens Like This*. Ms. Mercado-Wright made her Boston Pops debut in 2010 in *An Evening of Cole Porter*, conducted by Keith Lockhart. She has appeared in performance with the Tanglewood Music Festival, Fort Worth Opera, Santa Fe Concert Association, Fort Worth Symphony, Plano Symphony, Voices of Change, The Chamber Music Society of Fort Worth, Cliburn at the Modern, Utah Festival Opera, and as a Guest Artist of the Janiec Opera Company at Brevard Music Center. Upcoming engagements include the New York City premiere of *It Happens Like This* with Works and Progress at the Guggenheim, *Fours Saints in Three Acts* with the Mark Morris Dance Group, and the world premiere of Shawn Allison’s chamber opera, *Riki-tiki-tavi* to be performed with eighth blackbird and the Pacifica Quartet.

Soprano **Danya Katok** recently made her New York City Opera debut as Max in Oliver Knussen’s *Where the Wild Things Are* at Lincoln Center. Other roles include Judy in Lee Hoiby’s *This is the rill speaking* (Chelsea Opera), Adele in *Die Fledermaus* (New York Lyric Opera Theatre), and the world premiere of the Off-Broadway production of *O Night Divine*. Concert performances include “An Evening of Cole Porter” (Boston Pops), Mahler’s Symphony No. 2 (New York Symphonic Arts Ensemble), and various recitals with New York Chamber Virtuosi. Danya is currently a second-year DMA student at the CUNY Graduate Center where she studies with Rita Shane. She is on the voice faculty at Music Theatre College Auditions and an adjunct faculty member at Bronx Community College.

Matthew B. Hensrud is always eager to participate in the next interesting project. Focusing on small ensemble work in modern and early music, he can be frequently heard on Trinity Wall Street’s concert series, and local ensembles such as Pomerium, the Clarion Ensemble, Antioch, and New York Early Music, among others. Recent projects include the premiere of Paul Dedell’s *Chemistry of Love*, in Brattleboro, Vermont, Bryan Senti’s new work, *From the Margins*, *This, Unmentioned*, and a visit to Moscow joining the chorus of Mark Morris’ *Dido & Aeneas*. Past highlights include multiple performances of BAM’s *St. Matthew Passion*, directed by Jonathan Miller, Nico Muhly and Maira Kalman’s *Elements of Style*, which New York Magazine nominated as one of the best classical music events of 2005, the staged premiere of David Lang’s new opera *Anatomy Theatre*, a recording of Michael Gordon’s *Van Gogh Opera* with Alarm Will Sound, and a recording of Frank London’s *Klezmer musical A Night at the Old Marketplace*. He is a featured soloist on New York Early Music’s recent album, *A Dutch Christmas*

Tenor **Martin Coyle** is fast becoming one of opera’s most sought-after young tenors with his powerful, yet effortless tone. This fall, Martin will sing the role of Manny in Martin Halpern’s opera *Mrs. Middleman’s Descent*. This summer, Martin returned to St. Louis Opera to cover Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*. Last season, Martin was seen as an Oompa Loompa in *The Golden Ticket* at the Wexford Festival Opera in October, in addition to covering the role of Grandpa Joe. In the summer of 2010 he prepared the role of Augustus Gloop in *The Golden Ticket* at St. Louis Opera’s Apprentice Singer Program. Previously, at the Juilliard School, in

February 2010, Martin sang The Prince in Conrad Susa's Transformations in 2010. He was also featured in *Le Nozze di Figaro* as Don Curzio, and in scenes of *L'Elisir d'Amore* as Nemorino. (Nanki-Poo), In the summer of 2009 he covered the role of Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* in conjunction with the Aspen Music Festival and School. While at Pennsylvania State University, Martin sang the title role in *Albert Herring*, along with scenes from *L'Orfeo* (Orfeo), *The Mikado* *Die Zauberfloete* (Tamino), and *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Basilio). As a concert artist, Martin has sung the tenor solos for Handel's *Messiah* and the Graupner *Cantata*. He has also performed Schubert's *Die Schone Mullerin* at Pennsylvania State. This March, he sang the roles of Jesus/Centurion for Thomas Savoy's chancel opera, *The Agon of St. Joseph*. Martin recently completed his Master of Music degree at The Juilliard School as a recipient of the Higley Scholarship. He received his Bachelor of Music degree in voice performance from Pennsylvania State University in 2008.

Malcolm J. Merriweather leads a professional career as a baritone, conductor and teacher. He attended Syracuse University where he earned a Bachelor of Music in music education, *summa cum laude*. Additionally, he was awarded Master of Music degrees in choral conducting and voice performance from the Eastman School of Music. His solo engagements include appearances with the Eastman-Rochester Chorus, New York Choral Society, Norfolk Chamber Choir, Gregory Kunde Chorale, Voices, Bach Vespers Choir and Orchestra and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has been a fellowship recipient with the festivals at Norfolk, CT and Tanglewood Music Center. A supporter of new music, Mr. Merriweather has premiered works by Eve Beglarian, John Liberatore, Ju Ri Seo, Douglas Fisk and James Adler. Malcolm is currently on the faculty at St. Thomas More Play Group, Manhattan and the Third Street Music Settlement, Manhattan. In addition to freelance singing, Malcolm serves as the Bruno Walter Assistant Conductor for the New York Choral Society.

Steven Hrycelak, bass, is equally at home as an operatic, concert, and ensemble performer. Recent operatic roles include Seneca in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* with Opera Omnia, which the NY Times hailed as having "a graceful bearing and depth." Mr. Hrycelak has performed with the NY Choral Artists, the NY Virtuoso Singers, Early Music New York, Vox, TENET, The Green Mountain Project, Equal Voices, Meridionalis, Seraphic Fire, and a vocal jazz quintet, West Side 5. He has also been a frequent soloist at Trinity Church Wall Street, as well as with Musica Sacra, 4x4, the NY Collegium, the Waverly Consort, the American Symphony Orchestra at the Bard Music Festival, Sacred Music in a Sacred Space, and the Collegiate Chorale, with whom he made his Lincoln Center debut. Mr. Hrycelak has degrees from Indiana University and from Yale University, where he sang with the world-renowned Yale Whiffenpoofs. Additionally, he is a coach/accompanist.

Flutist **Roberta Michel** is an active freelancer in New York. Recently described in the *New York Concert Review* as a "solid craftsman" who "riveted with her performance, inspiring one to want a repeated hearing", Michel is a winner of the Artists International Competition and was presented in her debut recital in Carnegie Hall's Weill Hall. Dedicated to promoting today's music, Michel has premiered numerous works and is a founding member of The Cadillac Moon Ensemble (cadillacmoonensemble.com), which can be heard on Innova and New Dynamic record labels. She holds degrees from the University of Colorado at Boulder and SUNY-Purchase College and is currently a doctoral candidate at the City University of New York Graduate Center. Her teachers include Robert Dick, Tara Helen O'Connor, and Alexa Still.

Clarinetist **Nicholas Gallas** has performed with a diverse range of artists and ensembles, including the Axiom Ensemble, Symphony in C, the Washington Ballet Orchestra, The National Repertory Orchestra, Metropolis Ensemble, the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic, the Asia-Pacific United Orchestra, Con Vivo, Syzygy New Music, the New Juilliard Ensemble, and as a substitute with the Cleveland Orchestra. In 2009 he became a

member of the Quintet of the Americas, a woodwind quintet that was founded in 1979 in Bogotá, Columbia and is currently in residence at New York University. He has performed in festivals including the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, the Focus! Festival for Contemporary Music, Aurora Music Festival (Sweden), and the Sarasota and Kent/Blossom festivals. Nicholas received his Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School and his Bachelor of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Hornist **Alma Maria Liebrecht** performs with a wide variety of musical groups in New York City and beyond. Alma has performed with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the declassified, Jupiter Chamber Players, Argento Chamber Ensemble, and the Richmond, Delaware, and Harrisburg Symphonies. Alma is a founding member of DZ4, a wind quartet performing new music by young composers and string quartet repertoire. A former fellow of The Academy, Alma holds degrees from the Curtis Institute of Music and the Yale School of Music. Alma also enjoys running and playing the violin.

Solo performing artist **Mazz Swift**, is a singer and Juilliard-trained violinist who brings her passion for improvising true compositions in the spur of the moment to audiences around the world. She has recorded and performed with a wide variety of artists including Whitney Houston, Perry Farrell, Dee Snider, James “Blood” Ulmer, the great Irish balladeer Paddy Reilly, Vernon Reid, DJ Logic, William Parker, Butch Morris, Kanye West and Budapest Bár and recently was Musical Director and co-Curator for the Hungarian gypsy/Black American collaboration **Fire + Fire (Gypsy Meets Black)** in Budapest, Hungary. She lives in Jersey City, NJ where she splits her time between her solo project **MazzMuse** and her international improvisational trio **HEAR in NOW**.

Cellist **Karen Ouzounian** has performed as soloist, recitalist and chamber musician throughout North America and Europe. She has performed with such ensembles as Trio Cavatina, the Tessera Quartet, The Knights, ECCO, A Far Cry, SONYC, the Argento Chamber Ensemble and Continuum, and will tour with Musicians from Ravinia’s Steans Music Institute in 2013. She has collaborated with Kim Kashkashian, Gilbert Kalish, Roger Tapping, Charles Neidich, Vera Beths, and members of the Guarneri, Juilliard and St. Lawrence String Quartets. Festivals include Marlboro, Ravinia, the Open Chamber Music Seminar at Prussia Cove (UK), and Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany). She was a top prizewinner at the Zara Nelsova Competition for Canadian Cellists in 2011. Currently residing in NYC, Ms. Ouzounian holds Master of Music and Bachelor of Music degrees from The Juilliard School, where she was a student of Timothy Eddy.

Kevin Sims studied percussion at the Manhattan School of Music and the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany. He has performed as a soloist and collaborator in Germany, Switzerland, Ukraine, Russia, Korea and throughout the United States. Kevin is a founding member of Red Light New Music. He continues his musical pursuits from his home in Millheim, Pennsylvania.

Thanks

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