

The Esto-Ugric Project

October 17, 2013 8 pm
The New York Estonian House

Hungarian Peasant Songs

Béla Bartók
(1881-1945)

from Six Estonian Narrative Folk Songs

Kari Kadunud (Herd Lost)

Laevahukk (Shipwreck)

Veljo Tormis
(b. 1930)

These Memories May Be True

I. *Old Folk Song*

II. *The Legend of the Last Ship (and other collective memories)*

III. *Estonian Grandmother Superhero*

IV. *Variations on a Somewhat Old Folk Song*

Lembit Beecher
(b. 1980)

~Intermission~

Three Wedding Dances

I. *A kupuban a szekér*

II. *Hopp ide tisztán*

III. *Csángó forgós*

György Ligeti
(1923-2006)

from Magyar Népzene

Mögizenem az édes anyámnak

A csitári hegyek alatt

Ne búsuljon senki menyecskéne

Zoltán Kodály
(1882-1967)

Estonian Folk Song Miniatures (*World Premiere*)

No. 14

#51

Küla ütөл

fragment on fragments

Hiir hüppas

Karen Ouzounian (b. 1985)

Brad Balliett (b. 1982)

Dan Sedgwick (b. 1981)

Scott Wollschleger (b. 1980)

Evan Premo (b. 1985)

String Quartet No. 1 in A minor

I. *Lento*

II. *Allegretto*

III. *Introduzione. Allegro - Allegro vivace*

Béla Bartók

The Esto-Ugric Project is a concert and commissioning project focused on music inspired by Estonian and Hungarian folk song. Having worked with Estonian folk music for many years, and having been strongly drawn to the music of Bartók and Kodály since I was a child, I have often been fascinated by the similarity of Estonian and Hungarian folk music, perhaps due to deep linguistic connections between these groups of people. This concert seeks to explore the various ways in which composers have incorporated and responded to this wonderful and strange folk material. The range of approaches includes direct settings or arrangements of folk melodies, as can be seen in Kodály and Tormis's songs, as well as Bartók's *Hungarian Peasant Songs*, and much less direct approaches, in which the folk material comes filtered through or hidden in other music, as occurs in Bartók's string quartet as well as my own quartet. This breadth of approaches can also be seen in the *Estonian Folk Song Miniatures*, a set of five small pieces commissioned for this program. Five young, non-Estonian composers were given the task of responding to a collection of folk songs transcribed in 1908 by my great-grandfather, August Kiiss, who was an Estonian violinist, organist, composer and teacher. Perhaps the most exciting thing for me as I put together this program was to observe the emotional dialogue that went on between the composers and the folk songs. In my own writing, I think about my incorporation of Estonian influences not as a use of something, but as a search for something, perhaps a sense of belonging, history or story, rooted deep in the past and lingering on the edge of one's memory.

- Lembit Beecher

Notes for *These Memories May Be True*

My grandmother, Taimi Lepasaar, died right as I was beginning work on *These Memories May Be True*. She had had an amazing life: Taimi grew up in Estonia before World War II, survived both the Soviet and Nazi occupations of her country, escaped as the Red Army invaded Estonia for a second time, and immigrated to the United States, raising two daughters by herself (her husband was lost in the final chaos of the war) while working as a public school music teacher and church organist. Taimi was also a beautiful storyteller and I have written a number of pieces drawing inspiration from her life and her storytelling.

I felt like I had said what I wanted to say musically about my grandmother and I was reluctant to write another piece about her. But the more I worked on this string quartet, the more she entered my mind, and the more I thought about the way her life had defined my sense of identity. Though I grew up in California, I felt as much Estonian as Californian. But because travel to Soviet-controlled Estonia was so limited, my sense of the country was based on a relatively small amount of information, most powerfully the stories my mother and grandmother told me.

As I worked on this piece, I thought about the way stories and memories define us, whether or not they are complete or even true and I thought about the way in which my own musical style had been influenced deeply by Estonian folk music, even though my understanding of this music felt superficial. I also thought about nostalgia and the sense of exile that my grandmother must have felt after she left Estonia. This piece is a little like the image of Estonia that I had while growing up: a few songs, some pictures and a lot of stories, all filtered through many layers of retelling, and all touched by a sense of nostalgia, a sense of something beautiful that has been lost in the wash of time.

I. Old Folk Song

This movement has its origins in an entrancing Estonian song I heard on an old field recording. It is music that can't possibly be notated in the confines of Western notation and it is music that I don't totally understand, but there must be some meaning in it for me since I keep returning to these recordings. Like most Estonian folk songs, this movement consists of repetitions of a short melody, though near the middle of the movement the melody gets a little lost.

II. The Legend of the Last Ship (and Other Collective Memories).

A centerpiece of my grandmother's stories was her dramatic account of escaping on the last ship out of Estonia before the Soviets closed the borders in 1944. It is a story that made a strong impact on me as I was growing up, but in recent years it has seemed like every older Estonian that I talk to also escaped on the last ship (sometimes a different last ship than my grandmother)! Though this bothered me for a little while, I soon realized that the important part of these stories, the emotion, was true regardless of the nitty gritty of naval departure times. The movement, built on a call-and-response technique, is a reflection of the storytelling I hear in older groups of Estonian-Americans: a mix of passion, restraint, agreement, and one-upmanship that occurs both in the emotional discussions of war-torn pasts as well as more mundane conversations about the current aches and pains of old age.

III. Estonian Grandmother Superhero

My grandmother often took great pride in discussing the hardships she had overcome in life. And though she faced more struggles than I can possibly imagine, I couldn't help feeling sometimes that her stories were a little exaggerated. But I loved the image of her that I got from these stories: she conquered Soviet officials, American army bases, and the Providence public schools like a comic book character, an Estonian Grandmother Superhero. Of course, even superheroes are not immune to contemplation and melancholy.

IV. Variations on a Somewhat Old Folk Song

The final movement is a set of variations (impressions may be a more accurate term) on a 19th century Estonian folksong, "Meil aiaäärne tänavas," a popular and much loved song in which the singer longs for the simple peace of childhood. The song gradually becomes more distinct through the movement, and then it disappears. Of all the movements, this one contains the deepest sense of nostalgia and through it I feel a connection to the country farms and summer nights of my grandmother's childhood.

Kari Kadunud

Istsin ma ilumäele,
ilumätäste vahelõ,
ilupuu kasvis eele,
iluoksa õlma alla,
ilukaskõ kainõlussõ.
Õmblõsin õbõkübärät,
Pilutasin peiu särki.
Seni kadus kari karjasmaalta,
eest kadus isä obonõ,
vahelt vennä varsukene,
keskelt memme kiutu lehmä,
tagast taadi tarka ärgä.

Ma läksin koju joostessagi,
joostessagi, nuttessagi.
eit tuli vasta värävässe,
taat tuli taga tanavasõ:
“Mis sa nutad, t’itär noori?”
“Mis ma nutan, eidekene.

Istsin ma ilumäele...

“Ärä sina nuta, tädär noori!
saadan orjad otsimaie,
vaesedlapsed vaatamaie,
levälapsed leidmä lehmi.”
“Ei, ei, ei, ei, eidekene,
ori ei otsi obosi,
levälaps ei levä lehmi—
ori aga otsib oolõtumast,
vaenõlapsi vallatumast—
ma lään isi otsimaie.”

Läksin suurõlõ mäele
kõlistasin valjusida.
Eest tuli isä obonõ,
vahelt vennä varsukene,
keskelt memme kiutu lehmä,
tagant taadi tarka ärgä.

Herd lost

I sat on beauty’s mountain,
rested on beauty’s turf,
cuddled on beauty’s tree,
nested in beauty’s branches,
perched in beauty’s birches.
I was sewing a silver hat,
stitching the bridegroom’s shirt.
Meanwhile, the herd scattered,
father’s horse broke loose,
brother’s foal stole away,
mother’s striped cow slipped away,
father’s wise bull went astray.

I went running home,
running and crying.
Mother met me at the gate,
father met me on the street:
“Why do you cry, young daughter?”
“Why do I cry, dear mother.”

I sat on beauty’s mountain...

“Don’t you cry, young daughter!
I’ll send the serfs to seek,
the orphans to look,
the bread-children to find the cows.”
“No, no, no, no, dear mother,
the serf will not seek horses,
the bread-children won’t find the cows—
the serf seeks carelessly,
the orphan without heed—
I’ll go looking myself.”

I went to the great mountain,
I jingled the bells.
Father’s horse came running,
brother’s foal showed up,
mother’s striped cow fell in,
father’s wise bull was back.

Laevahukk

Mõista, mõista, mu õoekene,
mõista minu mõistatused,
arva minu arvamised!
Mis seal mäela tehtaneksa,
Kura kuuskede komule,
Viru haavade vilussa,
Tartu tammede tagaje?
Mis mul sest aga, sössekene,
mis mul sest aga mõistatele!
Laeva mäel aga tehtaneksa,
Kura kuuskede komule,
Viru haavade vilussa,
Tartu tammede tagaje.
Sada saagi saagimassa,
kümme kervest raiumassa,
üheksa hõõveldajat.

Said nad laeva valmieksa,
valmieksa, valgedeksa,
aasid siis laeva meresse,
tõukasid tõrvaku vedeje.
Panid siis vanad sõudemaie,
vanad sõudsid, laev ei jõudnud,
siis panid noored sõudemaie,
noored sõudsid, laeva jõudis.

Tuli tuul ja tõusis torm,
lõi seda kuuti kummuliste.
Siis läksid mehed meresse.
Neiud jähid nutma nina peale,
naised nasva otsa peale,
igaüks hoigas omatega,
kaibas oma kaasakesta.
Ku soli vesi viinud venna,
laine laki läigitanud?

Vesi viand venna Venemaale,
tuul oli puhunud Poolamaale,
sadu oli saatnud Saksamaale.
Seal neid soda sunnitakse,
väe hulka värvatakse,
tulekirge topitakse.

Shipwreck

Try to guess, my little flower,
try to guess my riddles,
find a solution to my puzzles!
What are they doing on that hill,
in the midst of the Kura fir-trees,
in the shade of the Viru aspen,
behind the Tartu oak trees?
This is easy, my dearest sister,
this is easy to make a guess!
They are building a ship on the hill,
in the midst of the Kura fir-trees,
in the shade of the Viru aspen,
behind the Tartu oak trees.
There are a hundred saws there sawing,
there are ten axes doing the cutting
and nine ones are shaving the logs.

When the ship was built and ready,
built and ready, shining white,
then they rolled the ship to sea,
pushed the tarred one to the waters.
Then they put the elders to the oars,
the elders rowed, the ship didn't move,
then they put the youth to the oars,
the youth rowed, and the ship moved.

Then rose a wind and built up a storm
which turned the ship soon upside down.
The men then fell into the sea.
The maidens stood weeping on the bank,
the women on the sandbank,
each one signed for their beloved,
lamented for their spouses.
Where did the water take their brother,
where did the waves send him?

The waters took their brother to Russia,
the wind had blown him to Poland,
the rain had dispatched him to Germany.
There they were forced to go to war,
they were recruited to the army,
and they were put under fire.

Mégizenem az édes anyámnak

Mégizenem az édes anyámnak:
Fehér szoknyát varrasson lányának.
Fehér szoknyát, hat félhajtásosra,
Piros cipőt fekete sarokra.

Gyöngy harmat neveli a búzát,
Édes anya neveli a lányát.
De idővel más viseli gondját,
Más is éli vele a világot.

Bárcsak engem valaki megkérne!
Aki nekem recefátyolt vőnne!
Én nem bánám minden nap még verne,
Úgy belőlem friss menyecske lenne!

A csitári hegyek alatt

A csitári hegyek alatt
Régem leesett a hó,
Azt hallottam kis angyalom,
Veled esett el a ló.
Kitörted a kezedet,
Mivel ölelsz engemet?
Igy hát kedves kis angyalom
Nem lehetek a tied.

Amott látok az ég alatt
Egy madarat repülni,
De szeretnék a rózsámnak
Egy levelet küldeni!
Repülj madár, ha lehet,
Vidd el ezt a levelet!
Mondd még az én galambomnak,
Né sirasson engemet.

Amoda le van egy erdő,
Jaj de nagyon messze van!
Közepibe, közepibe
Két rozsmaringbokor van.
Egyik hajlik vállamra,
Másik a babáméra,
Igy hát kedves kis angyalom,
Tiéd leszek valaha!

I said to my dear mother

I said to my dear mother:
Sew your daughter a white shirt.
Fold up six white skirts,
Red shoes with a black heel.

The gentle dew rises from the wheat,
Dear mother raises up her daughter, But
in time, another will take care of her,
She will experience the world with her.

If only someone would ask me!
Oh who would buy me a white veil!
I wouldn't mind if he beat me each day,
I would still be a fresh young woman!

Below the Csitari Mountains

Below the Csitari Mountains
Long ago the snow was falling,
Then I heard my little angel,
You were thrown off your horse.
Since you broke your arm,
How can you embrace me?
Thus now, my dear little angel,
I cannot be yours.

Yonder I see a bird flying
Beneath the sky,
But I would like to send my rose
A letter!
Fly bird, as you can,
Take the letter!
Tell my pigeon
Do not weep for me.

Further off there is a forest,
But alas very far away!
In the middle,
There are two rosemary bushes.
One leans on the other,
The other on the first,
So now, my dear little angel,
I will be yours forever!

Ne búsuljon senki menyecséje

Ne búsuljon sënki mënyecskeje,
Hogy az ura nem igën szépecske.
Ha mëghal is mëg ne haljon érte:
Mást hoz neki a tavaszi fecske.

Nekëm olyan embërëcske kéne,
Aki nekëm recefátyolt vënne,
Ëccër, kéccër jól mëgverëgetne:
Úgy belőlem, friss mënyecske lënne.

A young woman should be cheerful

A young woman should be cheerful,
Even though her husband is a pain.
Whether he dies or not:
Spring will bring a swallow to her.

I want a fine young man,
Who would buy me a white veil,
Despite his beatings,
I would stay a fresh young woman.

Bios

Lembit Beecher is currently serving a three-year appointment as the first Composer In Residence of Opera Philadelphia in collaboration with Gotham Chamber Opera and Music Theatre Group of New York. Born of Estonian and American parents, he 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 reflections of the immigrant experience and the integration of recorded interviews with music. While a fellow at the University of Michigan Institute for the Humanities Lembit wrote *And Then I Remember*, a multi-media, documentary oratorio based on the World War II stories of his Estonian grandmother. Winner of the Opera Vista Competition for new opera, *And Then I Remember* will receive its fourth production this fall at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Active also as a pianist, Lembit's work has been performed at the Tanglewood, Aspen and Cabrillo Music Festivals and by the New York Youth Symphony, Del Sol String Quartet, Shepherd School Symphony Orchestra, Sospiro Wind Quintet, the AUROS Group for New Music and pianist Brian Connelly, among others. He has received awards and grants from Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings, Copland House, American Music Center, ASCAP, New York Youth Symphony, NewMusic@ECU and the Society for New Music. Lembit has served as a Visiting Assistant Professor at Denison University and in the coming year he will be in residence at the Copland House and Scrag Mountain Music. His new chamber opera *I Have No Stories To Tell You* will be premiered by Gotham Chamber Opera in February 2014 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Soprano **Mary Bonhag** made her Carnegie Hall solo debut in 2009 singing scenes from David T. Little's new chamber opera *Dog Days*. She is an avid supporter of new music and has worked closely with numerous composers to premiere new works, most recently and frequently with NYC-based composer Lembit Beecher. She has performed as part of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, 21st Century Consort, and participated in two residencies at Yellow Barn on György Kurtág's *Kafka Fragments* and a multi-media production of George Crumb's *Books of Madrigals*. Ms. Bonhag has premiered works by C. Curtis-Smith, Lembit Beecher, Evan Chambers, Shawn Jaeger, and Evan Premo, including his chamber opera *The Diaries of Adam and Eve*, premiered at the Pine Mountain Music Festival in 2007 and reprised in 2010. Ms. Bonhag has a deep-rooted love of chamber music and 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, Yellow Barn, and SongFest as a full-scholarship Stern Fellow, among others. She has soloed with the American Symphony Orchestra, Berkshire Bach Society, and the Lehigh University Orchestra. Ms. Bonhag has been presented in recital at Smith, Goucher, and Dartmouth Colleges, as well as St. Gauden's National Historical Site. 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 currently lives in Vermont where she is the artistic director of Scrag Mountain Music, an innovative chamber music series, with her husband, double bassist/composer Evan Premo.

Double bassist and composer **Evan Premo** is a member of the New York City based chamber music collective DeCoda, with whom he performs in residencies around the world including two he led in Abu Dhabi, UAE. As a member of Ensemble ACJW, Evan 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 Festival 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’s Performance Today. Evan lives in Warren, 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, fishing and simply being with Nature.

Violinist **Miho Saegusa** enjoys an active career as a chamber musician, soloist, and orchestral player, and has performed throughout the United States and abroad. Her passion for chamber music has led to participation at the Marlboro Music Festival, Ravinia Steans Institute, and Music@Menlo, and she has collaborated with world-renowned musicians Mitsuko Uchida, Richard Goode, Arnold Steinhardt, David Soyer, Kim Kashkashian, and Miriam Fried. Miho was appointed Concertmaster of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia in 2011, and is a member of IRIS Orchestra where she often leads as Concertmaster. Highlights of the 2013-2014 season include concerto appearances with both ensembles. She has also toured domestically and internationally with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Miho started violin studies at the age of five, and her principal teachers include Masao Kawasaki and Dorothy DeLay. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University, and completed graduate work at The Juilliard School, earning her Master of Music and Artist Diploma.

Violinist **Zoë Martin-Doike** from Honolulu, Hawaii is a recent graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, where she studied with Pamela Frank. Zoë has been heard on the NPR shows “From the Top,” “A Prairie Home Companion,” and “What Makes It Great,” and has performed as a soloist with notable orchestras including the Honolulu Symphony, Richardson Symphony, Bloomington Symphony Orchestra, and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. She won first place in the Lennox International Young Artists Competition and the Music Teachers’ National Association senior string competition, and she has attended the Sarasota Music Festival, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, and the Keshet Eilon Music Festival in Israel. Passionate about chamber music, Zoë has collaborated in chamber music performances with such artists as Atar Arad, Roberto Diaz, Jonathan Biss and Gilles Apap. Zoë enjoys studying Eastern religion and philosophy in her spare time, and has had the distinct pleasure of performing for His Holiness, the Dalai Lama.

Violist **Ayane Kozasa**, winner of the prestigious Primrose International Viola Competition in 2011, also captured the Competition’s Mozart Award for the best chamber music performance, as well as its Askim Award for her performance of the Competition’s commissioned work. A winner of Astral Artists’ 2012 National Auditions, Ms. Kozasa was also the winner of a 2012 S&R Washington Award and has been a prizewinner at the Irving M. Klein International String Competition. She was

named principal violist of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia in 2013, and has been featured in *The Strad* and *Strings* magazines. Festival appearances include Marlboro Music Festival, the West Cork Chamber Music Festival, Angel Fire's Young Artists Program, and the Steans Music Institute at the Ravinia Festival. A recent graduate from the Kronberg Academy Masters in Germany studying with Nobuko Imai, Ayane also graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music studying with Misha Amory and Roberto Diaz. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Music from the Cleveland Institute of Music, studying with Kirsten Docter and William Preucil, and has worked with notable teachers such as Michael Tree, Nathan Cole, Cyrus Forough, and Philip Lewis.

Described as a "radiant cellist" (*New York Times*), **Karen Ouzounian** has performed as soloist, recitalist and chamber musician throughout North America and Europe. She is a member of counter)induction and *A Far Cry*, and additionally has performed with such ensembles as the Tessera String Quartet, Trio Cavatina, The Knights, IRIS Orchestra, Gotham Chamber Opera, ECCO, the Argento Chamber Ensemble and Continuum. Recent highlights include a Musicians from Ravinia's Steans Music Institute tour, performances on the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts' Rising Stars series, and a solo recital at the Caramoor International Music Festival. She has collaborated with renowned artists Pamela Frank, Miriam Fried, Richard Goode, Gilbert Kalish, Kim Kashkashian, Charles Neidich, Donald Weilerstein, and members of the Guarneri, Juilliard and St. Lawrence String Quartets. Festival appearances include the Marlboro Music Festival, Ravinia's Steans Music Institute, the Open Chamber Music Seminar at Prussia Cove (UK), and Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany). A prizewinner at the 2012 Canada Council for the Arts Musical Instrument Bank Competition, Karen holds Master of Music and Bachelor of Music degrees from The Juilliard School, where she was a student of Timothy Eddy.

Conductor and multifaceted musician **Benjamin Grow** is active in many different areas of the musical world. He has conducted the *Our Silent Canvas* ensemble in a world premiere, the *Con Vivo* ensemble, and *Red Light New Music*, among other groups. Last year, he conducted Lembit Beecher's oratorio, *And Then I Remember*, in "an expert performance" (WKCR) at the DiMenna Center. In addition to his recent work as a conductor, he can be heard performing on several instruments. As a trumpeter, he has performed throughout the U.S., Mexico, Panama, and the West Bank, and at such venues as Bargemusic and The Stone in New York City. His interest in early music has led him to performances on harpsichord, fortepiano, and as a singer with both period and modern ensembles in New York, Montreal, and Houston. For two years, he was the production manager at The Helicon Foundation, an intimate concert series that emphasizes performance on period instruments. His arrangements and compositions have been performed by the Caravel Quartet, the Toomai Quintet, DZ4 woodwind quartet, Ensemble Counterpoint, and the Strangetet. A dedicated music educator, Mr. Grow was the founding conductor of the 92nd St. Y Youth Orchestra and currently conducts the chamber orchestra at the School for Strings, where he is also a music theory instructor. For several years, Mr. Grow co-presented 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.

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This concert is being presented in conjunction with the Vermont-based chamber music series **Scrag Mountain Music**.

For more information, please go to
www.scragmountainmusic.org

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