



The Department of Music presents  
*Ensemble X*  
*Xak Bjerken, Director*  
*20th Anniversary Concert*

BARNES HALL  
CORNELL UNIVERSITY  
Sunday, April 15, 2018 – 8:00 PM

Timothy Weiss, Guest Conductor

*Bird Concerto with Pianosong* (2001)

Jonathan Harvey  
(1939-2012)

Ryan McCullough, piano solo

--- *Intermission* ---

*True North* (2015)

Christopher Stark  
(b. 1980)

*Ship of State* (2017)\*

Stephen Hartke  
(b. 1952)

Xak Bjerken, piano solo

\* East Coast Premiere

## Ensemble X:

Timothy Weiss, Guest Conductor

Wendy Mehne, flute/piccolo  
Paige Morgan, oboe  
Richard Faria, clarinet 1  
Nikhil Bartolomeo, clarinet 2  
Christin Schillinger, bassoon  
Frank Campos, trumpet  
Alex Shuhan, horn  
Ryan Zawel, trombone  
Steve Wilkinson, tuba  
Susan Waterbury, violin 1  
Lucia Barrero, violin 2  
Jason Kim, violin 3  
Victoria Miskoczy, viola 1

Jacob Shur, viola 2  
Michelle Metty, viola 3  
Elizabeth Simkin, cello 1  
Melanie Sadoff, cello 2  
Malachi Brown, cello 3  
Nicholas Walker, bass  
Elizabeth Mahood, harp  
Red Wierenga, accordion  
Miri Yampolsky, piano  
Becky Lu, keyboards  
Simon Bjarning, percussion 1  
Ben Cordell, percussion 2  
Sound diffusionists for Harvey: Kevin Ernste,  
Christopher Stark, Piawat Louilarpraser

### Notes

Ensemble X's first concert here in Barnes Hall featured a premiere by director Steven Stucky, "Salute," plus music by Kaija Saariaho, Jacob Druckman, Chris Theofanidis, and the East Coast Premiere of John Adams' *Gnarly Buttons*. An auspicious beginning indeed! As Stucky wrote that day, "Ensemble X is devoted to bridging gaps: between composer and performer, between composer and audience, between past and present." Over the last twenty years we have presented some 225 works performed by a core group of musicians and friends from the faculties of Cornell and Ithaca College – hands across the gorge. Tonight's program is both retrospective and forward looking, presenting a rarely-heard late work by Jonathan Harvey, a brand new piano concerto by Stephen Hartke, co-commissioned by Ensemble X, and a recent work by our friend and Cornell alum, Chris Stark, whose music we champion as he gains exposure internationally. We honor these composers, we celebrate our friendships as performers, and we thank the Ithaca community that has supported us over these many years. My partner in crime, Rick Faria, and our wonderful new Events Manager in the Music Department, Laurel Gilmer, compiled the complete repertoire list for Ensemble X from the last twenty years – feel free to take a look. And please stay after the concert for a reception on stage.

– Xak Bjerken

### **Harvey: *Bird Concerto with Pianosong***

Indigo bunting, orchard oriole, golden crowned sparrow – these are some of the 40 colorful Californian birds whose songs and cries sparked the ignition of this work as I started it in the brilliant light of California. 'Real' birdsong was to be stretched seamlessly all the way to human proportions – resulting in giant birds – so that a contact between worlds is made. When I started to transpose them and slow them down to our natural speeds of perception they began to reveal level after level of ornamentation – baroque curlicues and oriental arabesques. They were put on a triggering keyboard and combined in dialogue with instruments – particularly solo piano, who connects closely by playing birdsong samples and piano simultaneously, and so incorporated in the pitch and time of our own song-world. Birds embody not only the joy of endless singing but also the freedom of the body's flight. The orchestra, like the birds, would have to wing its way through the bright air. Birds also use quasi-electronic frequency modulation in their cries and songs. I took their hint and copied their tricks in the electronic modulations of the orchestra. If the songs and objects of the score can bring some inkling of how it might feel to be a human in the mind of a bird, or vice-versa, then I would be happy. The *Bird Concerto with Pianosong* was written in response to a request from Joanna MacGregor, and commissioned by Sinfonia 21, with whom I have a happy association, together with GRAME/Ensemble Orchestrale Contemporain and the French Ministere de Culture.

– Jonathan Harvey

### **Stark: *True North***

The inspiration for *True North* comes directly from the work of Surrealist painters Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, and Salvador Dalí. I wanted to try to create a musical analogy to their discordant forms and warped imagery, and I found my muse in software I developed that allowed me to stretch and compress the overtone series in different ways. Using these new and strange harmonies, I attempted to construct a dynamic and eclectic form that moves through materials in an elusive and dream-like way. The title refers to the geographic North Pole, as opposed to the magnetic, and I used this as a guiding principle while composing this piece, challenging myself to stay true to the strange sounds I was developing in my software and hearing in my head.

– Christopher Stark

### **Hartke: *Ship of State***

The metaphorical comparison of the perils and tribulations of government to that of a ship at sea in a storm may be as old and persistent as Western Civilization itself, from the 6th century BCE Greek poet, Alcaeus, to Sophocles, and later the Roman odist Horace. In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates most notably invokes it in a parable on the dangers of mob rule. In 1849, the American poet and ardent abolitionist Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote *The Building of the Ship*, a long poem on the shipwright's craft that in its peroration christens the ship with the name "Union" and shifts into allegory. The beginning of this section is well-known, frequently quoted, having famously shored up the resolve of such figures as Lincoln, Roosevelt and Churchill:

Sail on, O UNION, strong and great! Humanity with all its fears, With all its hopes of future years, Is hanging breathless on thy fate!

Interestingly, Longfellow's original draft ended with fears of the ship being "wrecked upon some treacherous rock" or "rotting in some noisome dock," but he thought better of it, changing the final lines to:

Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears, Our faith triumphant o'er our fears, Are all with thee – are all with thee!

My one-movement chamber concerto for piano and twenty players, *Ship of State*, offers its own such sea voyage, each of its four main sections bearing a heading taken from Longfellow's poem. These are, with their tempo markings:

1. "Hanging breathless" (Foundering)
2. "In spite of false lights on the shore" (Edgy, potentially explosive)
3. "The anchors of thy hope" (Gently – a rueful lullaby)
4. "What Workmen wrought" (Lively, resurgent)

– Stephen Hartke

### **Bios**

Born in Warwickshire in 1939, **Jonathan Harvey** was a chorister at St Michael's College, Tenbury and later a major music scholar at St John's College, Cambridge. He gained doctorates from the Universities of Glasgow and Cambridge and, on the advice of Benjamin Britten, also studied privately with Erwin Stein and Hans Keller. An invitation from Boulez to work at IRCAM in the early 1980s resulted in seven realisations at the Institute, including *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco* – the celebrated tape piece – *Bhakti*, for ensemble and electronics, and *Advaya* for cello, live electronics and pre-recorded sounds. Harvey composed for most other genres: orchestra – *Tranquil Abiding*, *White as Jasmine*, and *Madonna of Winter and Spring*; chamber – including four string quartets, and *Death of Light*, *Light of Death*. He wrote many widely-performed works for choir, as well as the large-scale cantata for the BBC Proms Millennium, *Mothers shall not Cry* (2000). His stage works include the church opera *Passion and Resurrection* (1981); *Inquest of Love* (1993), commissioned by ENO; and *Wagner Dream* (2007), commissioned by Nederlandse Oper in association with the Grand Théâtre de Luxembourg, the Holland Festival, and IRCAM. Harvey was Professor of Music at Sussex University between 1977 and 1993, and Professor of Music at Stanford University (1995-2000), Visiting Professor of Music at Imperial College, London and was an Honorary Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge.

**Christopher Stark**, whose music *The New York Times* has called, “fetching and colorful,” has been awarded prizes from organizations such as the Guggenheim Foundation, Chamber Music America, ASCAP, and the Fromm Foundation at Harvard. Named a “Rising Star” by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, his music has been performed by ensembles such as the American Composers Orchestra, Alarm Will Sound, Buffalo Philharmonic, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, LA Piano Quartet, Momenta Quartet, FLUX Quartet, and New Morse Code. In 2012, he was a resident composer at Civitella Ranieri, a fifteenth-century castle in Umbria, Italy, and in June of 2016 he was in residence at the Copland House. Recent highlights included performances at the 2016 Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and at the Whitney Museum of American Art as part of the 2016 NY Phil Biennial. Stark recently completed a three-month residency in Bergen, Norway where he worked with the BIT20 Ensemble from the Bergen Philharmonic on a new string quartet, and in 2019 he will write a new work for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, to be conducted by John Adams at Walt Disney Concert Hall. His film score for the feature-length film *Novitiate* premiered at Sundance in January 2017 and was theatrically released by Sony Pictures Classics later that year. Stark is currently Assistant Professor of Music at Washington University in St. Louis.

Winner of the 2013 GRAMMY Award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition, **Stephen Hartke** is Professor and Chair of Composition at Oberlin Conservatory. Born in Orange, New Jersey, in 1952, Hartke grew up in Manhattan where he began his musical career as a professional boy chorister, the going on to study at Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of California at Santa Barbara, interrupted by stints as advertising manager for several major music publishers. Hartke’s output is extremely varied, with major commissions from the New York Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Kansas City Symphony, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the IRIS Chamber Orchestra, Carnegie Hall and the Harvard Musical Association, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Library of Congress, the Barlow Endowment, Chamber Music America, the Fromm Foundation, the Institute for American Music at the Eastman School of Music, Meet The Composer, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, among others. Most of Hartke’s music is available on commercial CDs released by Albany, Bridge, Cedille, Chandos, CRI, Delos, ECM New Series, EMI Classics, Genuin, Naxos American Classics, New World Records, and Soundbrush Records.

Conductor **Timothy Weiss** has earned critical acclaim for his performances and bold programming throughout the United States and abroad. His repertoire in contemporary music is vast and fearless, including masterworks, very recent compositions, and an impressive number of premieres and commissions. For more than two decades, Weiss has directed the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble, bringing the group to a level of artistry and virtuosity in performance that rivals the finest new music groups. Recent engagements include the Arctic Philharmonic in Norway, Orchestra 2001 in Philadelphia, Eastman Broadband Ensemble, BBC Scottish Symphony, Britten Sinfonia in London, International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), and the Melbourne Symphony in Australia. A committed educator, Weiss helped create and mentor the ensembles Eighth Blackbird and ICE. He also serves as a faculty member and conductor of the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble at the Aspen Music Festival and School, and he is music director of the Arctic Philharmonic Sinfonietta in Bodø, Norway.

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In the event of an emergency, walk – do not run – to the exit located nearest to your seat. Do not use elevators. Please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices during the performance. Latecomers will be seated during designated program pauses. Food and beverages are not allowed in the auditorium. Thank you for your cooperation.