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Music

in the

Pavilion

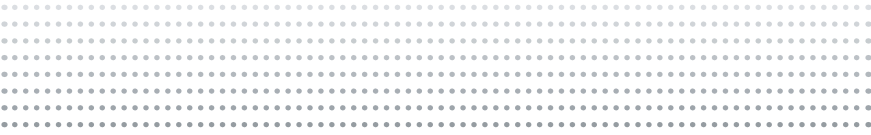


Cello Soundings: Thomas Kraines & Friends

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2019

Class of 1978 Orrery Pavilion
Van Pelt-Dietrich Library

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Cello Soundings: Thomas Kraines & Friends

preconcert talk lead by Erik Broess

Thomas Kraines, cello
Shani Aviram, live electronics
Mike Watson, bass clarinet
Naoko Kikuchi, koto

WITH SHANI AVIRAM:

Petals (1988)

Kajja Saariaho (b. 1952)

Los Minúsculos (2018)

Gabriel Bolaños (b. 1984)

WITH MIKE WATSON:

The Differences (2019)

Mike Watson

Improvisation

Fool's Gold (2019)

Thomas Kraines

WITH NAOKO KIKUCHI:

Stop/Yield (2015)

Amy Williams (b. 1969)

Kirigami II (2015)

Gene Coleman (b. 1958)

Rokudan no shirabe

Yatsunami Kengyo (1614–1685)



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In choosing what to play on this program, I was interested in challenging my own assumptions about what “playing the cello” entails —both in exploring extended techniques and new ways of producing sound, and in combining it with instruments not generally associated with the cello. In learning to play a string instrument, one is taught the “right” and “wrong” way to make a sound; eventually as one explores the possibilities of the instrument, one realizes that “right” and “wrong” are context-sensitive, that a sound usually considered ugly may contain a wealth of emotional and acoustic information.

In practicing and rehearsing this music, I find a few through-lines that might be interesting to the listener: repetition occurring in various ways through most of this music; the (usually gradual) transformation of material over the course of a given piece; and the contrast of order and chaos. However, I encourage you to listen to this music in whatever way occurs to you at the moment. Borges has written that “good readers are poets as singular, and as awesome, as great authors.” The same can be said of listeners.

Thomas Kraines

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***Petals* by Kaija Saariaho**

Petals for solo cello was written abruptly in a few days, but evidently after a long unconscious preparation. The material stems directly from *Nymphéa* for string quartet and electronics. The name of the piece is derived from this relationship. The opposite elements here are fragile coloristic passages, which give birth to more energetic events with clear rhythmic and melodic character. These more sharply focused figures pass through different transformations and finally merge back to less dynamic, but not the less intensive, filigration. In bringing together these very opposite modes of expressions, I aimed to force the interpreter to stretch his sensibility. (Kaija Saariaho)

***Los Minúsculos* by Gabriel Bolaños**

Los Minúsculos is an homage to the over 400 victims who have been killed by the Nicaraguan government since April 2018, and to all my fellow Nicaraguans who have suffered under Daniel Ortega's regime.

The first lady and vice president disparagingly calls protesters "minúsculos grupos alentadores del odio" (minuscule groups inciting hatred). As a reaction, hundreds of thousands of self-proclaimed minúsculos have repeatedly taken to the streets in protest, demanding justice for the victims of oppression.

This piece is an examination of collective movement and growth, a study on how multiple small things can converge, grow, and develop into a larger, cohesive, even uncontrollable whole.

Originally for solo bassoon and electronics, *Los Minúsculos* was written in close collaboration with Dana Jessen and premiered at SPLICE institute. This version, for solo cello and electronics, was developed in collaboration with Tom Kraines. (Gabriel Bolaños)

***The Differences* by Mike Watson**

The Differences was inspired by a poem by Sun Ra which he included on the back of his album "My Brother the Wind," featuring John Gilmore. After composing the melody, I realized that it was really a solo to the changes of "All the Things You Are." Adding a second line for this performance, the composition is meant to create an ethereal world of contemplation: of, as the poem says, "the force that made life be. And since it made life be, it is greater than life. And since it let extinction be, it is greater than extinction." (Mike Watson)

***Fool's Gold* by Thomas Kraines**

Sometimes it seems to me that repetition is essential to the nature of melody. A random set of sounds, heard repeatedly, begin in our ears to take the comforting, or irritating, form of a tune—thus the simple melodies we tend to hear from trains, turn signals, windshield wipers, etc. Repetition is also essential to the nature of rational numbers: the digits of any rational number will eventually repeat, at least partially. In an effort to investigate this, I took a series of rational numbers, the ratios between adjacent members of the Fibonacci sequence, and translated them into the pitches of a ten-note scale. These ratios approach an irrational number, the "golden section." Thus the number of notes within each repeating loop generally grows as one proceeds along the sequence. What starts as a drone becomes a riff and eventually an entire "song."

The rhythmic language, octave displacement, and harmonization I left up to my own musical instinct, but the pitches themselves are rigorously defined. Of course, this piece could go on forever; I stopped where I stopped because I got tired of doing long division. (Thomas Kraines)

Stop/Yield by Amy Williams

Stop/Yield (2015) was written as a 60th birthday gift for fellow composer and dear friend, Amnon Wolman. Amnon's experimental approach—his willingness to take chances and challenge the status quo—was always on my mind when writing this short piece for cello and piano. I attempted to shed some of my controlling ways, allowing for more flexible performer interaction and involvement. Improvisational materials are juxtaposed with those that are strictly composed. (Amy Williams)

Kirigami II by Gene Coleman

This work was composed in 2014 as a commission from Chamber Music America for Duo Yumeno. The term *Kirigami* refers to folded and cut paper, which the architect Jenny Sabin has used in her research and design process. Taking inspiration from her, I created the piece applying some of my ideas about geometry and sound. Each instrument uses a range of playing techniques that I call geometric actions - the performers create circles, spirals, triangles, squares, and more on their instruments, all of which create an architecture of sound. Further, the work takes passages from Bach and traditional Japanese music as a source code, which can be clearly heard at some key moments. My thanks to Tom Kraines and Naoko Kikuchi for their great skill and dedication in playing this work. (Gene Coleman)

Rokudan no shirabe by Yatsuhashi Kengyo

Rokudan no Shirabe (music of six steps) was composed by the 17th-century blind musician known as Yatsuhashi Kengyo, founder of one of the most influential schools of koto playing. The music is made from six columns, with exactly fifty-two beats in each column, except for the first row, which has four beats more. The piece undergoes a transformation of tempo as it unfolds, eventually returning to the tempo of the first column.



Thomas Kraines

Cellist Thomas Kraines has forged a multifaceted career, equally comfortable with avant-garde improvisation, new music, traditional chamber music, and solo repertoire. Mr. Kraines is the cellist of the Daedalus Quartet, and has also been heard with ensembles such as Music from Copland House, The Transformational Music Ensemble, the East Coast Chamber Orchestra (ECCO), and the Network for New Music. An accomplished composer of chamber music, his works have been performed across the country by artists such as pianists Awadagin Pratt and Wayman Chin, violinists Corey Cerovsek and Jennifer Frautschi, and sopranos Maria Jette and Ilana Davidson. Mr. Kraines has taught at the Peabody Conservatory, the Longy School of Music, the Killington Music Festival, Yellow Barn, and Princeton University, and currently teaches at the University of Pennsylvania. He lives in Philadelphia with his wife, violinist Juliette Kang, and their two daughters, Rosalie and Clarissa.

Born in Sendai, Japan, in early childhood Naoko learned to play Koto from her mother and grandmother. From 1990, she took lessons from Tadao Sawai and Kazue Sawai and received honor prizes from several contests subsequently. In 2007, Naoko received a year-long fellowship from the Japanese government's "Overseas Study Programme for Artists" to work in Frankfurt, Germany, where she currently is a member of IEMA (International Ensemble Modern Academie).



Naoko Kikuchi

Her repertoire is not only classical and contemporary koto music, she is also a versatile artist who participates in a variety of projects, such as "the way in the international Berlin," a project of the Berlin Philharmonic (2012); the new edition of "Barcelona" by Freddie Mercury & Montserrat Caballé (2012); music for silent films, "Page of Madness" by American composer Gene Coleman (2013); and the world premiere of a dance opera by composer Adriana Hölszky at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein (2014, 2017-18).

Shavi Aviram

Shani Aviram (b. Jerusalem, Israel) is a composer, sound designer, and electronic musician currently based in Philadelphia. She works with fragments of memories, conversations, and synthesized sounds, exploring forms of musical collage. Often, she will let the machine run wild. She has performed at The Megapolis Audio Festival, CubeFest at Virginia Tech, and Mills College amongst other institutions.



Mike Watson

Upon hearing the music of Eric Dolphy and his bass clarinet, Watson fell in love with the sound of that horn and it has been his primary means of expression ever since. As a student of Marshall Allen, he has been trained to use the spirit to create form and color with sound. Deeply influenced by the compositions and approach of Sun Ra and Thelonious Monk, he is in the midst of forming a musical collective, "The Great Blue Heron." Watson is an active member of Philadelphia's improvised-music community, performing regularly for the past ten years. Watson plays in the Sun Ra Arkestra and has performed with other luminaries such as William Parker, Daniel Carter, Dave Burrell, Bobby Zankel, and King Britt.

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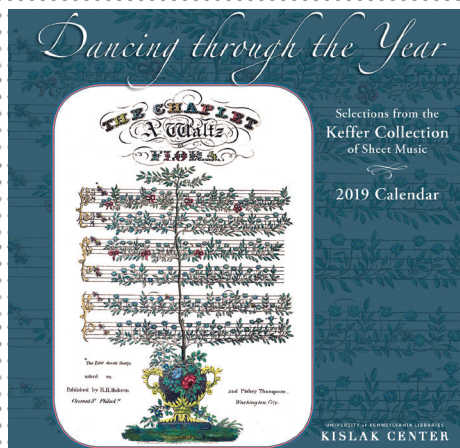
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