

AN OMINOUS FOUR

New and Old Music for Medieval Dance Trio

DEPARTMENT *of* MUSIC AT PRINCETON

The Band:

Tina Chancey
Christa Patton
Glen Velez

The Composers:

Cameron Britt
Lainie Fefferman
Sean Friar
Jascha Narveson

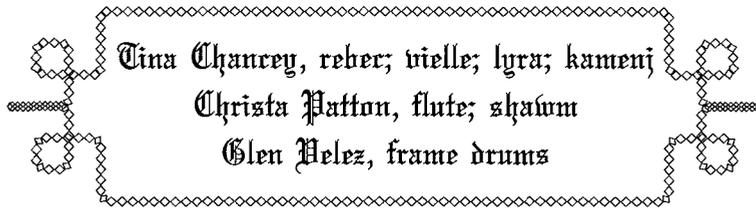
Tuesday
April 28th
8pm
Taplin



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COMPOSERS ENSEMBLE
DEPARTMENT *of* MUSIC AT PRINCETON

Composition Generals Concert

~Program~



<i>Chominciamento di gioia</i>	London, British Library, Additional 29987
<i>Hop or Go Phut</i>	N. Cameron Britt
<i>Lamento di Tristano / La Rotta</i>	London, British Library, Additional 29987
<i>Dance Music for Listening</i>	Sean Friar
<i>Saltarello</i>	London, British Library, Additional 29987

~Intermission~

<i>Quinta Estampie Real</i>	Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 844c
<i>Saltarelling</i>	Lainie Fefferman
<i>Saltarello</i>	London, British Library, Additional 29987
<i>Blocks</i>	Jascha Narveson
<i>Istampita Belicha</i>	London, British Library, Additional 29987

Program Notes:

Cameron Britt: *Hop or Go Phut*

Hop or Go Phut is my version of a saltarello. Formally, saltarelli consist of a common refrain preceded by different introductory phrases, or puncti. The saltarello was apparently a lively medieval dance and its name is derived from the word “saltare” meaning to jump. Not satisfied with the one definition (and in search of a title), I ran “saltare” through Google Translate and got back a list of translations including hop, leap, skip, go phut, blow up, spring, vault and bound. “Go phut” was not an expression I was familiar with, but according to the OED it means “fail to work properly or at all.” Works for me.

Bio:

N. Cameron Britt is a second year student in the Graduate Composition program. He has recently written for So Percussion, Ensemble Klang, and PLOrk (a collaboration with fellow second year, Sean Friar). As a percussionist Cameron performs with the improvisation duo Dithyramb, post-Post (when they get around to it), and he still does the occasional orchestra gig. You can hear him on the title track of John Fitz Rogers’s new Innova release, *Once Removed*.

Lainie Fefferman: *Saltarelling*

For my “medieval” generals piece, I chose to respond specifically to the saltarello dance form. There are four saltarellos in a manuscript at the British Library in London (Additional 29987) that were recorded by New York’s Ensemble for Early Music on their album *Istanpitta* (put out on Lyrichord Discs). I listened to these four and, after picking apart the score a bit, distilled the compositional elements that make these dances so incredibly appealing.

The form of the saltarello goes like this:

ABxAByBxBByCBxCBByDCBxDCByEDCBxEDCBBy

where “B” acts like a refrain, “x” and “y” act as first and second endings to B, and “A,” “C,” “D,” and “E” are short additive melodic fragments.

Firstly, though the amount of pure, literal, large-scale repetition would be something I’d normally question on an abstract level in my own work, in these pieces I find the relentless returns to the refrain filled with energy and excitement. I think the two main contributing factors to this excitement are the large number of phrases of irregular length and the several unlikely final cadential notes. I tried to incorporate these two factors as much as possible into my writing.

In my piece, I decided to take on the saltarello form without any deviation -- this meant creating a refrain that would be so cool as to hold my interest for the full ten times it would repeat in the piece. I decided to inject my normal style and penchant largely into this aspect of the composition: I chose four notes (E-F-G-A) and made a table of the 24 permutations of those notes. Then, according to my own wit and whim, I arranged the permutations and rhythmicized them in an approximately medieval sounding manner (I used as reference the medieval rhythmic modes, but chose to break them in a few key places). I think it turned out pretty cool

Bio:

Lainie Fefferman has wanted to write medieval music for years and is thrilled finally to get the chance to write for such an amazing trio! For information on her non-medieval music, go to: www.lainietunes.com

Sean Friar: *Dance Music for Listening*

As I began soaking up the sounds of medieval dance repertoire in preparation for writing this piece, what I found myself wrestling with more than anything was deciding how functional a piece of music I wanted it to be. I couldn't decide if I should make music that fundamentally had the same cultural purpose as the music I was responding to—that is, something that could actually be danced to—or, if I should take into account that it would inevitably be a piece of concert music that no one would likely ever dance to, and instead focus on other aspects of the music to engage with.

Though I was still asking myself these questions throughout the writing process, I eventually decided to compromise between the two. I start with musical material that is essentially danceable, but then proceed to tug at its seams. Sections often begin in simple, familiar ways, only to become increasingly off-kilter and foreign as the harmonies, meters and modes of repetition and development depart from their origins. The result is a piece that takes musical kernels from medieval repertoire (the gestures, forms, modality, and improvisatory nature) and stretches, refocuses, and recontextualizes them.

Bio:

Sean Friar grew up in Los Angeles and graduated summa cum laude from UCLA with B.A.'s in Music and Psychology. He is currently a second-year in the composition doctoral program at Princeton.

His music has been performed by ensembles such as the American Composers Orchestra, So Percussion, Ensemble Klang, the New Pacific Trio, the Formalist Quartet, the New Millennium Ensemble, and members of the Bang on a Can All-Stars. He recently became involved with computer music, as well, and wrote a piece for the Princeton Laptop Orchestra this year (a collaboration with composer, Cameron Britt).

His past honors include the Lee Ettelson Composers Award (Composers, Inc.), three ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards; fellowships to the Aspen, Bang on a Can, Norfolk and Bowdoin music festivals; selection for the ACO/Penn Presents New Music Readings and Lab; 1st place (Regional) in the SCI/ASCAP Competition; 1st place in the Hawaii Institute of Contemporary Music Competition; the Regents and Lalo Schiffrin Scholarships at UCLA; and 1st prize in composition at the state and national levels in the PTA Reflections Contest. This summer, he'll take part in the Aspen Music Festival Composition Master Class.

Also a pianist, Sean has given performances at the Los Angeles Convention Center, the Gamper Festival of Contemporary Music, Princeton, UCLA and at many new music venues throughout Los Angeles.

Jascha Narveson: *Blocks*

Blocks is inspired by the istanpitta, which is a medieval Italian dance form. In particular, it is inspired by “Chominciamento di Gioia,” which is my favorite of the handful of pieces in the instrumental dance repertoire. This istanpitta is quite typical of the form of these dances, consisting of several different sections each repeated twice and ending with a common refrain followed by either an ‘open’ or ‘closed’ ending, like so (R = refrain, R' = modified refrain, o = open, x = closed):

ARo ARx • BRo BRx • CRo CRx • DR'o DR'x • ER'o ER'x

Although the form is simple, I loved the ways in which the form was somewhat obscured by having material from the refrains and the five sections echo and quote each other and elide in sometimes curious ways.

For my piece *Blocks* I tried to write with formally repeating sections, which is something I don't normally do. Instead of thematic sections and refrains,

I arranged them in an echo of the istanpitta form in which everything comes around multiple times, like so:

A
BAB
CBABC
DCBABCD
EDCBABCDE
FEDCBABCDEF
||: a series of repeated rhythmic figures :||
BAB

The repetition is often not literal, with written-out variations of each block adding variety to the piece. The material which makes up the blocks is written in a quasi-medieval style, but with enough of a modern inflection that it doesn't sound too derivative.

This is also the first time I've written a concert piece where I didn't notate everything fully. The musicians are mostly all looking at the same line of music and making their choices of accompaniment based on things worked out during rehearsals, so I'd like to thank them for being amazing - if this piece provides any aesthetic enjoyment this evening, it's due in large part to them.

Bio:

Jascha Narveson sometimes wishes he was a free-jazz drummer, but likes writing music well enough. The curious can hear more of his music at <http://www.jaschanarveson.com>

Performer Bios:

Glen Velez is an internationally acclaimed soloist and seminal figure in the history of the frame drum. Over two decades ago he brought a new genre of drumming to the Western world by creating his own compositional style inspired by years of drumming studies from various cultures. After 15 years performing and recording with the Steve Reich ensemble and the Paul Winter Consort, Velez records for the Sounds True label as well as working as a soloist and continuing to collaborate with prominent artists in many styles, including Pat Metheny, Richard Stoltzman, Zakir Hussain and Sonny Fortune.

Tina Chancey is a founding member and director of HESPERUS, the world-traveled early/traditional music ensemble dedicated to bringing the past alive through collaborations between early music and film, theater, dance and world music. She plays bowed strings: Old Time and Irish fiddle; kamenj, lyra, rebec and vielle; viola da gamba; and French baroque pardessus de viole. On these instruments she plays roots music from Sephardic and blues to early music and jazz standards. Dr. Chancey attended Oberlin College, received a BA in Music and an MA in Viola da Gamba from Queens College, an MA in Musicology from New York University, and a PhD from the Union Institute. A frequent guest artist with Ex Umbris and the Terra Nova Consort, she is a former member of the Folger Consort, the early music/rock band Blackmore's Night, and the multi-media music theater ensemble QUOG. She teaches, performs, records, produces recordings for others, and directs the SoundCatcher workshop--teaching amateur musicians how to play by ear. Her newest solo recording is *The Versatile Viol: Tina Chancey plays Scottish and Irish Music*.

Christa Patton, specializing in early wind instruments as well as historical harps, is a member of Piffaro the Renaissance Band and has also been a guest with Ex Umbris. She has recorded with both groups on the Dorian label. Christa has also toured the US,

Europe and Japan with New York's Ensemble for Early Music with whom she has recorded *Istampitta* on the Lyrachord label. As a baroque harpist Christa has appeared with Apollo's Fire, The King's Noyse, The Toronto Consort, Seattle Baroque Orchestra, and ARTEK as well as productions of Monteverdi's *Ulisse*, *Poppea*, and *L'Orfeo* with the New York City Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Tafelmusik, and Opera Atelier.

Christa has led workshops at the Madison Early Music Festival, Pinewoods Early Music Camp, and the Medieval Summer Institute at the Longy School of Music. A former Fulbright scholar, Christa studied the Italian baroque harp at the Civica Scuola di Musica in Milan, Italy with historical harp specialist, Mara Galassi. She is currently pursuing a Doctorate at SUNY Stony Brook with early keyboard specialist, Arthur Haas.

Final 2008-09 Composers Ensemble Concert

Tuesday, May 12

Freelance: "Groundswell"

Works by Konrad Kaczmarek, Steven Mackey, Sean McClowry, Michelle Nagai, and Dmitri Tymoczko

Taplin Auditorium in Fine Hall, 8:00 p.m., free admission

Princeton University Department of Music

Steven Mackey, chair
Ernest Clark, concert coordinator
Marilyn Ham, department manager
Alexander Kass, technical director
Cynthia Masterson, office assistant
Gregory Smith, academic programs manager
Kyle Subramaniam, business manager
Joseph Vizzini, piano technician

Production Personnel

Christopher Gorzelnik, production supervisor
John Burton, production technician
Liz Lammer, production technician
Bill Pierce, production technician

Student Ushers

Daniel Jaffe, head usher
Alison Carey
Yudai Chiba
Mike DiStefano
Martha Ferguson
Alexandra Jerez-Fernandez
Mengsi Li
Megan McPhee
Wensheen Tong
Lija Treibergs