Performing new works by graduate students
N. Cameron Britt, Mark Dancigers, Michael Early,
Lainie Fefferman, Sean Friar, Judd Greenstein,
Konrad Kaczmarek, Matt Marble & Jascha Narveson

Tuesday, December 8, 2009
8:00 P.M.
Taplin Auditorium in Fine Hall

Barbara White and Michael Pratt, directors
The Composers Ensemble at Princeton
Barbara White and Michael Pratt, Directors
Presents
NOW ENSEMBLE
Works by N. Cameron Britt, Mark Dancigers, Michael Early, Lainie Fefferman, Sean Friar, Judd Greenstein, Konrad Kaczmarek, Matt Marble, and Jascha Narveson

THE PROGRAM

Where A meets B  
Michael Early

Tippy Toe  
Jascha Narveson

Trapped Arc  
Konrad Kaczmarek

Päröispea Dream  
Matt Marble

Velvet Hammer  
Sean Friar

—intermission—

Green Machine  
N. Cameron Britt

Change  
Judd Greenstein

Ed  
Lainie Fefferman

ReBurst  
Mark Dancigers

NOW Ensemble:
Alex Sopp, flute – Sarah Budde, clarinet – Mark Dancigers, guitar –
Michael Mizrahi, piano – Logan Coale, double bass

Please join us for a reception downstairs following the concert
PROGRAM NOTES

Where A meets B
Michael Early

What do you have in this moment?
What is this moment for?
Look deep; do not miss it;
Look into the very center of this moment,
And find love there.

Do not allow the little entangling underbrush
Of human ruffles hide love.
Press it all gently aside
Until the center of love
In every moment
Is seen and embraced.

Harsh words do not add up.
Love alone is the seed that grows;
Love alone gives life to the heart;
Love alone lives to eternity;
Bring out love, and let it live.

- J. L. Hartz

This piece is dedicated to Aelita, who continues to help me find love everywhere.
This performance is dedicated to my grandfather, John Leslie Hartz, who passed away last month, and brought out love in everything he did.

Tippy Toe
Jascha Narveson

This is one of those pieces that I suspect I will wish I’d given a better title to.

Trapped Arc
Konrad Kaczmarek

The title of the piece refers to the repeating bass line, which inevitably falls back down to the minor tonic after a series of upward leaps and their corresponding hints of other harmonies. Despite variations and brief excursions, it always follows this trajectory: It is trapped there. In my mind it also describes the stop/start nature of the opening section, and forces the question of whether we’ll ever break free from the gravitational pull back to the tonic.

Pärispea Dream
Matt Marble

This piece has a two-fold origin. Springing from a dream I had a year ago (the resulting music I played incessantly the next day) and from time spent on a NE peninsula of Estonia, in the coastal village of Pärispea. Pärispea was like a dream, strewn with the crumbling traces of soviet occupation and filled with a nature that was, for me, both hauntingly beautiful and absolutely intoxicating. The second half of the piece is based on a Russian folk tune I heard performed on an accordion and 2 karmoshkas in Mooste, Estonia. Dream=Reality=Music.

I am so grateful that the Now Ensemble has their hands on this one. I’m the luckiest duck in the fanciest pond. Thanks to Dan, Cameron, Lainie, and Ryan for their feedback.

“There are many who scoff at my exclusive occupation with songwriting, especially the so-called ‘serious’ musicians. And this, because they were, and always will be, incapable of singing. They are like lovelorn people, physically impaired, who shun lovemaking and underrate its importance to justify their atrophic existence.”

Manos Hadjidakis (1925-1994)

Sweet dreams,
Matt
contact: memarble@gmail.com
Velvet Hammer
Sean Friar

Before I started writing this piece, I listened to as much of NOW Ensemble’s repertoire as I could – I wanted to write something that would be a natural fit for them while delving into styles and sounds that don’t tend to come up in what has been written for them. My conclusion: write something heavy metal. Though the piece begins with shimmering and serene textures, it gradually picks up steam and grit, until, by the end, it’s every bit as raucous and over-the-top as the title itself.

Green Machine
N. Cameron Britt

Hey kids, have you heard the story of the green machine?

Change
Judd Greenstein

*Change* is the complete version of a work that debuted, in partial form, on last year’s NOW Ensemble CE concert. The title word had particular weight in December, 2008, just following that year’s Presidential election; at the time, I wrote: “Obviously, I’ve been inspired by the recent call for change, made by the American people (as well as the dramatic and powerful change in the social and racial landscape that our specific choice represents), but I’m also skeptical about the possibility for change inherent in the systems we inhabit. Change starts with individuals, and at times like these, when many people are feeling self-satisfied and seem ready to entrust those broken systems with their hopes of making positive change, it’s most important to step up and, as Gandhi said, ‘be the change you want to see in the world’. This piece represents my own reminder to myself to always keep that fire lit, though I can’t deny that it also contains a little letting-out of some celebratory spirit that I’ve personally been feeling in the past weeks.”

Given that the dramatic and positive changes in our country’s trajectory, since January of this year, have been balanced by a number of equally dramatic decisions to “stay the course” in particularly galling arenas of American policy, the message of this work resonates, for me, as strongly than ever. In addition, I have been thinking about other kinds of change, extending far beyond the political, particularly surrounding issues of Place. If change starts at home, then thinking about the changing nature of our homes, our cities, and our planet seems like a worthwhile exercise, if not one that is easily discernible in tonight’s ultimately abstract musical gesture. In fact, the change that happens in *Change* is more of a change in spirit than in the notes themselves, which remain similarly oriented over the course of the work’s 13 minutes.

Ed
Lainie Fefferman

Ed is a humble but rigorous little guy. He was fun to write.

ReBurst
Mark Dancigers

ReBurst is the second movement to my last piece for NOW Ensemble, Burst. As in Burst, idiomatic electric guitar writing plays a dominant role. I wanted to really hear blues guitar playing rubbing up against a “classical” sounding piano part, and that’s what happens. *ReBurst* is written in memory of James Duruz, who died tragically in 2006. He was a great actor, director, singer, guitarist, and friend.
THE ARTISTS – THE COMPOSERS – THE PERFORMERS

NOW Ensemble

Hailed as “a deft young group gaining attention” (Alex Ross, The New Yorker), NOW Ensemble is a dynamic young group of performers and composers dedicated to making new chamber music for the 21st century. With their unique instrumentation of flute, clarinet, electric guitar, double bass, and piano, NOW Ensemble brings a fresh sound and a new perspective to the classical tradition, infused with a blend of musical influences that reflects the diverse backgrounds and listening experiences of their members. We play in concert halls and art museums, rock clubs and jazz venues, for large audiences and for intimate gatherings, acoustic and plugged in. Above all, we strive for performances that are as lively and engaging as they are rigorous and technically sophisticated.

NOW Ensemble was formed in 2002, and by 2004, existed in its “modern” form, with the instrumentation as it stands today: Alex Sopp on the flute, Sara Budde on the clarinet, Mark Dancigers on the electric guitar, Michael Mizrahi on the piano, and Logan Coale on the double bass, and with Patrick Burke and Judd Greenstein, along with Mark, as the composers. This idiosyncratic instrumentation is the “NOW Ensemble sound”, and brings an old approach to music-making – the chamber music tradition – to a new combination of instruments.

Today, NOW Ensemble is well-known as one of the brightest stars on the new music scene in New York City. Critics and audiences have taken notice, selling out their shows and filling their halls with enthusiastic fans, many of whom are being introduced to new music, or even classical music, for the first time. NOW Ensemble offers a unique combination of elements. They are a chamber ensemble, with no conductor, and with a deep commitment to internalizing the music that they perform. Having three composers in the ensemble makes all the composers who NOW Ensemble collaborates feel less like “outsiders” to the group, and more like what they are: an integral part of NOW Ensemble’s success. The five performers in NOW Ensemble are each virtuoso players with distinguished solo careers and a wide variety of experience in other ensembles and genres of music. This breadth of experience, rather than distracting from their roles in NOW Ensemble, brings an essential diversity of sound and perspective to the group, something that is required in their interpretations of the widely varied scores and approaches that they encounter when working with today’s best young composers.

Because of their unique instrumentation, NOW Ensemble relies on composers for new works to increase their repertoire. Over the five years since we established our permanent instrumentation, NOW has premiered over 50 new pieces that were written for the ensemble, nearly all of which were newly created by our friends and peers. While many young ensembles solicit works from established composers to augment their own reputation, NOW Ensemble has cast its lot with the exciting voices in our own generation of composers. This decision has made NOW a critical element in any discussion of the up-and-coming composers who are quickly rising to prominence in New York and around the country.

N. Cameron Britt

N. Cameron Britt is a third year student in the Graduate Composition program. He has recently written for Janus, So Percussion, Ensemble Klang, and PLOrk (a collaboration with fellow third 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. He worked with percussionist, improviser and composer Anders Astrand as a Fulbright Scholar in Sweden in 2005. He holds degrees from Northwestern University and University of South Carolina.

Mark Dancigers

Mark Dancigers is a composer and electric guitarist from Virginia beach, VA. He grew up playing all kinds of guitars in rock, jazz, and church bands, and studied music at Yale and the Yale School of Music under Martin Bresnick, Ezra Laderman, and Aaron Jay Kernis. For the fall of 2005 he joined the composition faculty at Yale University. His music has been performed by the Minnesota Orchestra, the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, the Albany Symphony’s Dogs of Desire, the Yale Philharmonia, the New York Youth Symphony, Opus 21, and others in such venues as Carnegie Hall, Symphony Space, Merkin Hall, the Bang on a Can Marathon, the Virginia Arts festival, the Carlsbad Festival, the Festival International Chihuahua, Cal Arts, the University of Akron, Ohio, the University of Maryland at Baltimore, Sarasota’s New College, the University of Connecticut, the Percussive Arts Society International Conference, and Washington DC’s Corcoran Gallery. As an electric guitarist he has premiered over 40 chamber works, including Kathryn Alexander’s electric guitar concerto. He recently recorded Scott Johnson’s electric guitar duo Bowery Haunt with the composer for an upcoming Tzadik release. He is currently pursuing a PhD at Princeton University under advisor Steve Mackey.
MICHAEL EARLY

Michael Early grew up in Maryland and Connecticut, and feels most at home on the elusive borders between the popular, the traditional, and the avant-garde. He continues to enjoy performing and improvising, though he spends most of his time these days creating concert music. Most recently he has composed music for the Nash Ensemble of London, the Princeton Laptop Orchestra, and the Princeton University Orchestra. Michael holds degrees from Yale College and the USC Thornton School of Music, and is a fifth-year doctoral student in composition at Princeton University.

SEAN FRIAR

Born in Los Angeles in 1985, composer and pianist Sean Friar’s first musical love was rock and blues piano improvisation, and piano bad-boy Jerry Lee Lewis his first musical idol. While his focus shifted toward classical composition in high school when he began studies with Sean Morris, his music still maintains the raucous energy, accessibility and directness of those early musical influences, now along with a diverse classical sensibility. He is currently a Roger Sessions Fellow in his 3rd year the Ph.D. program in composition at Princeton.

Sean graduated summa cum laude from UCLA in 2007 with B.A.’s in Music and Psychology; he studied composition there as a Regents Scholar with Roger Bourland, Paul Chihara, and Ian Krouse. He has also worked with Robert Beaser, Martin Bresnick, Michael Gordon, John Harbison, Christopher Rouse, Roberto Sierra, Alejandro Viñao, and Julia Wolfe at the Aspen Composition Master Class, Bang on a Can, Bowdoin and Norfolk Music Festivals.

His past honors include the Aaron Copland Award and Residency at Copland House; the Lee Etelison Composers Award (Composers, Inc.); three ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards; an NMC New Works Commission; fellowships to Aspen, Bang on a Can, Norfolk and Bowdoin; selection for the ACO/Penn Presents New Music Readings and Lab; 1st place (Regional) in the SCU/ASCAP Composer Commission Competition; 1st place in the Hawaii Institute of Contemporary Music Competition; the Perkins Prize at Princeton; the Lalo Schifrin Scholarship at UCLA; and 1st prize in composition in the National PTA Reflections Contest.

His music has been performed by such ensembles and performers as the American Composers Orchestra, So Percussion, Ensemble Klang, Janus, the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, the Formalist Quartet, the New Pacific Trio, the New Millennium Ensemble, TRANSIT, members of the Bang on a Can All-Stars, and 4-time Grammy-winning percussionist, Glen Velez. Also active in computer music, Sean recently composed a work for the Princeton Laptop Orchestra (PLOrk) and the inimitable electronic duo, Matmos, which received its premiere at the Kitchen in New York. He has upcoming performances with ensembles including Newspack and New Music Collective (NMC).

As a performer, Sean has given performances at the Kitchen, the Los Angeles Convention Center, TheaterLab, the Gamper Festival of Contemporary Music, Princeton, UCLA and at many other venues throughout Los Angeles.

For more information, please visit him at www.seanfriar.com

LAINIE FEFFERMAN

Lainie Fefferman is a third year student in the Princeton composition program. She loves writing music for talented friends like NOW ensemble. For more information, go to: www.lainietunes.com

JUDD GREENSTEIN

Composer Judd Greenstein was born and raised in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City, where he began his compositional life by writing hip hop beats as a teenager. His concert works reflect those origins, as well as his traditional piano background, combining an urban, beat-oriented sensibility with a late Romantic classical harmonic language. A passionate advocate for the indie classical community in New York, Judd most frequently has his music performed at a diverse array of that city’s venues, from Carnegie Hall and Symphony Space to clubs such as Joe’s Pub, Bam Café, and the Knitting Factory. Outside of New York, recent performances took place at the Bumbreshoot festival in Seattle, the Festival Internacional de Chihuahua in Chihuahua, Mexico, and the Bang on a Can Summer Festival Marathon at Mass MoCA in North Adams, MA. Judd holds degrees from Williams College and the Yale School of Music, is the managing director of NOW Ensemble and the co-director of New Amsterdam Records, and is engaged in the process of completing his PhD in Music Composition at Princeton University.
KONRAD KACZMAREK

Konrad Kaczmarek is a composer/musician/programmer working primarily in live audio processing and improvisation. His work has been performed at the Stanley Glasser Electronic Music Studio in London, the Sonorities Festival at Queens University in Belfast, The New Zealand International Arts Festival in Wellington, the Sound Bytes festival in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the Chelsea Art Museum in New York, Brooklyn College, The Extensible Toy Piano Project at Clark University and the University of Albany, and at the Princeton Composer’s Ensemble. He has been awarded residencies at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, The Banff Centre in Canada, and STEIM in The Netherlands, and also received the Stanton Wheeler prize for jazz performance at Yale University.

MATT MARBLE

Matt Marble has had swine flu. And yet he still loves bacon. All is well.

JASCHA NARVESON

Jascha Narveson is in the third year of the doctoral composition program here at Princeton. For more information, go to: http://www.jaschanarveson.com

Remaining 2009-2010 Composers Ensemble Performances:

January 24 (Da Capo Chamber Players)
February 1 & 2 (Works in Progress)
February 16 (New Works)
March 2 (Newspeak and “Beat Therapy”)
March 30 (New Works)
April 3 (PLOrk)
April 27 (Composition Generals)
May 4 (Very New Works with MUS 534)
May 11 (New Works)

Next Department of Music Performances:

December 11 and 12
Princeton University Orchestra, Michael Pratt, conductor
Richardson Auditorium, 8:00 p.m.

December 13
Princeton University Glee Club & Chamber Choir, Robert Isaacs, conductor
Richardson Auditorium, 3:00 p.m.

December 17
MUS 215 concert, Ralph Bowen, instructor
McAlpin Rehearsal Hall, 3:00 p.m.

Princeton University Sinfonia, Ruth Ochs, conductor
Richardson Auditorium, 8:00 p.m.
Princeton University Department of Music

Steven Mackey, chair
Ernest Clark, concert coordinator
Bryan Fitzwater, technical support specialist
Marilyn Ham, department manager
Cynthia Masterson, office assistant
Gregory Smith, academic programs manager
Kyle Subramaniam, business manager
Alexandra Jerez-Fernandez, student usher
Joseph Vizzini, piano technician

Production Personnel

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

The department expresses its gratitude to John C. Baker Recordings, LLC for technical assistance with this evening’s program.

Student Ushers

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