Fancy That

Featuring music and video by graduate students
Elliot Cole
Michelle Nagai
Kate Neal
and
Professors Paul Lansky & Dmitri Tymoczko

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2010
8:00 P.M.
Taplin Auditorium
in Fine Hall

Barbara White and Michael Pratt, directors
Fancy That

Music and Video by graduate students Elliot Cole, Michelle Nagai, Kate Neal, and Professors Paul Lansky and Dmitri Tymoczko

The Composers Ensemble at Princeton
Barbara White and Michael Pratt, Directors

THE PROGRAM

Idle Fancies
1. Laughing Matter
2. Soliloquy
4. Repetitive Stress
6. Hop(3)

Svet Stoyanov, marimba

DOVER (Gloucester)

Brad Balliett, bassoon – Doug Balliett, contrabass
Conor Hanick & Margaret Kampmeier, piano
Elliot Cole, harmonium

Pandemonium
1. Ligety-Lix
2. Lullaby
3. Cakewalk (sic)

Josh Quillen, steel drums

~intermission~
Lost Things Found

Kenta Nagai, electric guitar – Matt Marble, baritone
Satoshi Takeishi, percussion – Alex Waterman, cello

Song for a Comb

Kate Neal

Fools & Angels

I. Fle My Fum
II. Strawberries And Cream
III. Bop Lyrics
IV. The Dressing Room
V. Who

Anne Hege, soprano – Mellissa Hughes, alto
Neil Farrell, tenor – Gabriel Crouch, bass

Please join us for a reception downstairs following the concert

PROGRAM NOTES

DOVER (Gloucester)

Elliot Cole

Blinded Gloucester, bent on ending his life, is led by a mad beggar to the cliffs of Dover. The beggar is no beggar -- it is his disguised son, Edgar -- and the cliffs are many miles away. The farcical suicide attempt that follows, as Gloucester falls on his face on level ground, is both bitterly ironic and stunningly sad; our hearts, “too weak the conflict to support... burst smilingly” (V, iii). It is my favorite moment in theater. Dramatically impossible to prepare in isolation, this setting only hopes to be a modest monument to that moment, a small fantasia on descent, and a “proof of concept” for future verse-theater work with Brad and Doug.

Pandemonium

Paul Lansky

Pandemonium was written for Josh Quillen. It consists of three movements: “Ligety-Lix”, “Lullaby” and “Cakewalk (sic)” and is about twelve minutes long. The pieces are meant to be playful and uncharacteristic. (This is the first time I’ve written for steel pans and I wanted to do something that didn’t sound typical.)

Lost Things Found

Michelle Nagai

‘Lost Things Found’ is one scene from an opera work-in-progress. Influenced by the Japanese children’s picture book ‘Nakushita mono mitsuketa’, by Taro Gomi, this scene presents a young farmer as he sets out across his field in the dim, early morning hours of a cold New Hampshire morning. He begins to dig at one place. As the shovel goes deeper, he unearths objects from a childhood long forgotten. A straw hat, a stuffed bear, a child’s sweet cradle...each object carries him farther from the present, drawing him down into the temptation of a dark, quiet, resting place, deep in the earth. He awakens abruptly from the spell of these ‘lost things found’ and, a bit dazed, moves haltingly back to the present.
Song for a Comb
Kate Neal

I wanted to show this (very short) film tonight because I've never seen it on a big screen. It's the first in a 'set' of three short animated films; the next two are currently being completed and will be premiered in Melbourne, January 2011. (I hope to present the next two films at CE concerts at some point).

In the summer of 2009 I was in Melbourne waiting for a UK visa. It was stupidly hot and dry, and my friend Sal and I were sweaty and out of work. We decided to make a back-yard film with no budget and, just for a laugh, submit it to Tropfest, a short film competition. So we made Song for a Comb, and accidentally won best animation.

Hope you enjoy, apologies if you've seen it before.

Fools & Angels
Dmitri Tymoczko

Fools & Angels is a "karaoke madrigal," written for four amplified singers and prerecorded electronic background track. Its five songs are played without pause, and feel a little bit like a George Martin album side. The piece owes a lot to popular music, with its simple melodies, guitar and drum samples, and (I hope) straightforward expressivity. At the same time, there are various incursions from the classical world—through-composed forms, asymmetrical rhythms, more adventurous harmonies, and, in the last song, old-fashioned Renaissance polyphony.

The five poems express two very different sides of the poetic experience. Allen Ginsberg's are exuberant, intoxicated, and slightly embarrassing in their raw self-revelation. ("Fie My Fum" and "Bop Lyrics" are among the first poems he wrote, while "Who?" was written later.) Jeff Dolven's poems, by contrast, are elusive, dreamlike, and cerebral—almost philosophical in their intricate conceptuality. I think of the poets as embodying what Nietzsche described as the perpetual conflict between the Apollonian (dreams) and Dionysian (intoxication).

Some notes on the individual songs:

"Fie my fum" — rocking, slightly goofy, uninhibited. Many of the sounds are manipulations of the final chord of Sgt. Pepper's.

"Strawberries and Cream" — wordless vocalists express the unknowable pleasure of the machine. The machine (loudspeakers) talks, pretending to be human; the humans hum, pretending to be a machine.

"Bop Lyrics" — saxophone samples and a quasi-jazz feel which periodically erupts into dissonant nonsense. Sanity/Insanity = Tonal/Batonal, with the poem suggesting that the latter is in some ways preferable.

"The Dressing Room"—reflects my conflicted, insomniac attitude toward sleep. The dark mood of the opening lifts as we move solidly into the dreamworld. We fade out to rain and weather, and a creak of a bed indicating the dream is over.

"Who"—birds shift subtly between the natural and synthesized realms; one bird is a piccolo, another is a violin-section glissando. Buried within is a sample from the Jeff Beck album Blow by Blow.

TEXTS

I. FIE MY FUM (Allen Ginsberg)

Pull my daisy,
Tip my cup,
Cut my thoughts
For coconuts,
Bone my shadow,
Dove my soul,
Set a halo
On my skull,
Ark my darkness,
Rack my lacks,
Bleak my lurking,
Lark my looks,

Start my Arden,
Gate my shades,
Silk my garden,
Rose my days,

Whore my door,
Stone my dream,
Milk my mind
And make me cream,

Say my oops,
Ope my shell,
Roll my bones,
Ring my bell,

Pope my parts,
Pop my pot,
Poke my pap,
Pit my plum.

expressing subtleties of pleasure I,
it's creator, cannot always discern.
Still, what a comfort when it's working well:
somewhere in its heart a filament thrills
with unreflective pleasure, like a child's.

The opening in front is like a mouth:
just tall and wide and deep enough for each
morning's offering, the silver plate
heaped with berries so fresh they might as well
be pumping still, hanging like little hearts
red in the ripening sunlight. The ruddy bruises
of their sudden transport (a deeper red
drawn up from the blood-soaked soil) are soothed
with a dressing of cool, white, mantling cream.

It savors this fruit it never had to choose;
it does not bore or sicken, grow out or up
or old. It runs a tireless electric tongue
over the skin, the dimples plugged with seeds
like mattress buttons, the wrinkled sheets of cream.
Nothing is diminished or consumed:
the feeling is so pure it can be hard
to tell the thing's turned on at all. Sometimes
I lie for hours, listening to be sure.

II. STRAWBERRIES AND CREAM (Jeff Dolven)

"[As a proof of the impossibility of artificial intelligence] the inability to enjoy strawberries and
cream may have struck the reader as frivolous. Possibly a machine might be made to enjoy this
delicious dish, but any attempt to make one do so would be idiotic."
—Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"

It doesn't make the mmmmmmm you might expect
(the level drone refrigerators dream
in nights of never tasting what's inside),
rather bumps along, its irregular rhythms

III. BOP LYRICS (Allen Ginsberg)

When I think of death
I get a goofy feeling;
Then I catch my breath:
Zero is appealing,
Appearances are hazy,
Smart went crazy,
Smart went crazy.
A flower in my head
Has fallen through my eye;
Someday I'll be dead:
I love the Lord on high,
I wish He'd pull my daisy.
Smart went crazy,
Smart went crazy.

I asked the lady what's a rose,
She kicked me out of bed.
I asked the man, and so it goes,
He hit me on the head.
Nobody knows,
Nobody knows,
At least nobody's said.

The time I went to China
To lead the boy scout troops,
They sank my ocean liner,
And all I said was "Oops!"

All the doctors think I'm crazy;
The truth is really that I'm lazy;
I made visions to beguile 'em
Till they put me in th'asylum

I'm a pot and God's a potter,
And my head's a piece of putty:
Ark my darkness,
Lark my looks.
I'm so lucky that I'm nutty

IV. THE DRESSING ROOM (Jeff Dolven)

You fall asleep in a room in a house that was made for you,
all dressed up and asleep and a bed you didn't make,
asleep in your shirt, in your size, your sleeve and neck and chest.

You wake undressed in another room, a dressing room.
You barely notice the walls are bare. The fatherly clerk
greets you sitting down, his arms asworn with coats.

He's dressed in evening clothes bespeaking another era,
melancholy black long tails between his legs.
He passes the garments one by one. They are unclean.

Sweat and blood and love have worked into the weave.
The stains fall naturally over your scars and your hungriest parts.
He winces at the fit each time, until his arms
are empty and his sleepless eyes confess he's down
to one last hope: is this a dream? Of course it is,
you say. For here you are to blame for everything.

V. WHO (Allen Ginsberg)

From Great Consciousness vision Harlem 1948 building standing in Eternity
I realized entire Universe was manifestation of One Mind—
My teacher was William Blake—my life work Poesy,
transmitting that spontaneous awareness to Mankind.
THE ARTISTS – THE COMPOSERS – THE PERFORMERS

ELLIOT COLE

Elliot Cole grew up in the earnest musical ferment of Austin, Texas, studied cognitive linguistics and music at Rice University, and is now a first year composition student at Princeton. He has been collaborating with Brad and Doug Balliett for almost five years: their hip-hop opera “The Rake” is in production with the Metropolis Ensemble, and their group The Oracle Hysterical presents private music/literature events in New York City.

GABRIEL CROUCH

Gabriel Crouch is a Senior Lecturer at Princeton University where he directs the famous Princeton Glee Club and teaches a course in conducting. He began his musical career as a boy in the choir of Westminster Abbey, where he performed a solo at the wedding of HRH Prince Andrew and Miss Sarah Ferguson, and after taking up a choral scholarship at Cambridge University, became a member of The King’s Singers in 1996. In the next eight years he made a dozen recordings on the BMG label, and gave more than 900 performances in venues from the Lincoln Center in New York to Tokyo’s Suntory Hall. Since 2005 he has lived in the USA, serving as Director of Choral Ensembles at DePauw University, Indiana, before taking up his current position. His conducting work takes him all over the world, with recent engagements in China, Indonesia and Australia, and 2010 brought his first invitations to lead a choir at an ACDA convention, and his first appointment as an all-state conductor (in Kentucky). He retains a special passion for early music, and his professional ensemble ‘Gallicantus’ is currently attracting rave reviews for its first two commercial releases on the Signum label. His musical achievements led to his name appearing recently in the London Times’ list of ‘Great British Hopes’.

MELISSA HUGHES

Most recently hailed as “A versatile soprano who excels in both standard classical repertory and modern works” (New York Times) of her leading role in Matt Mark’s electronic opera The Little Death: Vol. 1, Soprano Melissa Hughes enjoys a busy career in both contemporary and early music. Performances this season include concerts in Moscow with the Mark Morris Dance Group, soloist with the Brooklyn Philharmonic, a recording with Cantelope, Alarm Will Sound, and Louis Andriessen’s De Staat under the baton of John Adams. A dedicated interpreter of living composers, Miss Hughes has worked closely with Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon, David Lang, Steve Reich, Neil Rolnick, and has premiered works by Caleb Burhans, Missy Mazzoli, Ted Hearne, Jacob Cooper, Matt Marks, and Frederick Rzewski. Recently, Melissa was invited to be an Artist in the Carnegie Hall Dawn Upshaw and Donnacha Dennehy Professional Training Workshop. In the classical concert hall she has performed Mozart’s Vespers and Requiem under the baton of Sir Neville Marinner, Handel’s Dixit Dominus with Sir David Willcocks, and the role of Dido under the direction of Andrew Lawrence King. Future engagements include Reich’s Music for 18, Proverbs, and Tehillim with SIGNAL, Shelter a video opera by Bang on a Can composers Michael Gordon, Julia Wolfe, and Pulitzer Prize winner David Lang. Miss Hughes has recorded for Nonesuch, Cantelope, and Naxos Records, and performs regularly with ensembles Alarm Will Sound, The Wordless Music Series, Clarion Music Society, Newspeak, Vox Vocal Ensemble, Signal, The Long Count, and Trinity Wall Street. Ms. Hughes holds degrees from Westminster Choir College, Princeton; and Yale University.

MICHELLE NAGAI

Michelle Nagai is a third year graduate composer at Princeton. She is currently working on a large-scale multi-modal performance work to be staged in the US and Japan. Next year she will travel to Japan to conduct research for this project. Tonight’s performance is a first step toward beginning to develop that work. Visit www.michellenagai.com for more information on recent work and ideas.

KATE NEAL

Kate studied Early Music Instruments at the Victorian College of the Arts graduating with a Bachelor of Performance 1996. Kate received a NUFFIC scholarship from the Dutch Government in 1998 and moved to The Netherlands to study composition with Louis Andriessen, Martijn Padding and Gilius van Bergeijk at the Koninklijk Conservatory, and Carnatic (Sth Indian) music studies with Rafael Rainer at the Sweelinck Conservatory, Amsterdam. In 2006 Kate was the recipient of the Hephzibah Tintner Fellowship, affiliated with the Australian Ballet, Sydney Dance Company, Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Kate has enjoyed working as an
orchestrator and arranger for many pop and rock bands as well as feature and independent films. She is the recipient of various awards and fellowships.

NEXT COMPOSERS ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCES:
FEBRUARY 16 AND 18, 2011. PSAPPA RESIDENCY FEATURING WORKS BY STEVEN MACKY AND GRADUATE STUDENTS.

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