



FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

in Cooperation with Pacific's Conservatory of Music presents

ARTIST PROFILE



STRATA is a coming together of three extraordinary musical talents all well known to Stockton audiences: Audrey Andrist, piano; Nathan Williams, clarinet; and James Stern, violin and viola. Their combined credits encompass numerous international prizes and performances across four continents including such places as Carnegie Hall, the Marlboro Festival and the Kennedy Center.

STRATA brings "deft ensemble playing" and a "talent . . . that's worth getting worked up about" [*Washington Post*] to a repertoire that combines the great trio and duo repertoire of the past with an ever-growing body of new works written especially for them over the twenty years they have been playing together. Equally capable of winning over an audience with unique renderings of popular music and of making even the most complex works accessible, exciting and meaningful, STRATA has received enthusiastic repeat engagements at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival, New York's historic Maverick Concerts and San Francisco Composers Inc, for which they were listed as one of San Francisco Classical Voice's "highlights of 2005." They have been resident artists at the Banff Centre for the Arts and appeared in New York City under the auspices of the International Society for Contemporary Music.

All holders of the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Juilliard School, the members of STRATA are dedicated to every level of music education, from the mentoring of graduate students and young professionals, to the initial sparking of musical passion in very young children, to the guiding of audiences in what to listen for. Spoken commentary is an integral part of all their concerts. They perform a wide range of specially tailored presentations for K-12 schools, and have done numerous university residencies involving coaching chamber music and both advising and performing the music of young composers. They have appeared as a featured ensemble at the annual conventions of the Music Teachers' Association of California and the International Clarinet Association.

STRATA

AUDREY ANDRIST, piano
NATHAN WILLIAMS, clarinet
JAMES STERN, violin/viola

2:30 PM, Sunday, October 6, 2013
 Faye Spanos Concert Hall
 University of the Pacific

WILLIAM BOLCOM SELECTIONS FROM "AFTERNOON CAKEWALK"
 (b. 1938) The Easy Winners (Scott Joplin)
 Frog Legs Rag (James Scott)
 Graceful Ghost (Bolcom)
 Finale: Incineratorag (Bolcom)

ROBERT SCHUMANN MÄRCHENERZÄHLUNGEN, OP. 132 (1853)
 (1810-1856) Lebhaft, nicht zu schnell
 Lebhaft und sehr markirt
 Ruhiges tempo, mit zartem Ausdruck
 Lebhaft, sehr markiert

INTERMISSION

KENNETH FRAZELLE A BOOK OF DAYS (2012)
 (b. 1955) "all day life itself is bending, weaving, changing"
 "paper and thin air"
 "some nights the stars are raw and brand new"
 "motions racing through, particles and drifts"
 "it was very lovely: and it's lost"

BÉLA BARTÓK CONTRASTS (1938)
 (1881-1945) Verbunkos
 Pihenö
 Sebes

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AFTERNOON CAKEWALK

The Cakewalk is a dance developed from the "Prize Walks" held in the late 19th century, generally at get-togethers on old slave plantations in the Southern United States. Second hand, oral accounts indicate that it was a satire on the manner of dance of the white folks in the "big house", but their masters, who gathered around to watch the fun, missed the point. The cadenced walking and high stepping was usually accompanied by a violin, a drum and a horn of some kind. A towering, extra sweet coconut cake was the prize for the winning couple.

There is a second theory that the cakewalk originated in Florida from the war dances of the Seminoles, and was borrowed by the Negroes who were present as spectators at these dances, which consisted of wild and hilarious jumping and gyrating alternating with slow processions in which the dancers walked solemnly in couples.

Most cakewalk music is notated in 2/4 time signature with two alternate heavy beats per bar, giving it a characteristic rhythm. It was an adapted and amended two-step, which had been spawned by the popularity of marches, most notably by John Philip Sousa. The music of Cakewalks was popularized in America by African-American ragtime composers such as Scott Joplin and James Scott, and internationally by the great French composer Claude Debussy.¹

Born in Seattle in 1938, American composer William Bolcom is a contemporary advocate of ragtime and jazz. Bolcom, a longtime Professor of Composition at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, has composed original ragtime music and arranged the ragtime music of composers from the past. You will hear the fruits of both of these endeavors today.

Many of Joplin's and Scott's cakewalks were originally for solo

piano. Bolcom has deftly arranged Joplin's *Easy Winners* (1901) and Scott's *Frog Legs Rag* (1906) for trio. *Graceful Ghost* and *Incineratorag* are Bolcom originals. *Graceful Ghost* is a poignant and pensive rag composed in 1971 originally for violin and piano; the composer rearranged it to include clarinet near the end. *Incineratorag* is animated and rowdy. No dancing in the aisles, please!

MÄRCHENERZÄHLUNGEN

Schumann's later life is a sad tale. He was suffering attacks of insomnia, tentativeness of speech, difficulty controlling his movements, and growing despair. A fleeting moment of inspiration came with the presence of a 20-year-old Johannes Brahms, affording Schumann one final outpouring of creativity. The *Märchenerzählungen* (Fairy Tales) is one of the last works to come from Schumann's pen before his attempted suicide in 1854. It is a consequence of this short-lived, calm, productive, and enjoyable period toward the end of his life and a direct effect of Brahms' youthful genius.

Much of Schumann's work is based in his solo piano works, and he draws ever closer to these roots in the Fairy Tales, making every effort not to be affected by the larger forces at work in his life. Schumann links each movement together with understated thematic allusions. The intimacy of a Trio setting for this work allows complex melodic passages, such as augmented sixth chords, and refined harmonies to develop. This effect remains evident even when the viola or clarinet doubles the piano.

How is your imagination? Are you good at inventing fairy tales? While the title certainly points us in the direction for interpretation of this work, it is still elusive enough to leave much up to the performers, as well as the listeners. The *Märchenerzählungen* is tinged with a disturbing melange of agitation and simultaneous lightheartedness. But compare it to the earlier *Märchenbilder*

("Fairy Pictures"), and you will observe a greater balance between his predispositions for literature-inspired music and Classical absolute music. Schumann often gave very descriptive indications to the underlying program of his music in earlier works. Here, you are left to devise your own fairy tales.

The first movement in B flat major, marked *Lebhaft, nicht zu schnell* ("Lively, but not too fast"), starts with a romantic, arcing melody in the viola escorted simultaneously by staccato arpeggios in the piano. You will hear these two ideas become the motivic seed for the remaining three movements. The prominent element is the lyrical opening melody that lingers and is developed throughout the course of the movement. It creates a truncated, monothematic sonata form.

The following movement, *Lebhaft und sehr markit* ("Fast and very accentuated") moves to the relative minor and takes on the character of a scherzo. The opening chords are portentous and somber, casting a shadow over the movement. A happy nature quickly returns and the middle section dispels the shadows of the opening in a cheery and elegant manner. The first section returns to dampen the mood, with a more complete resolve to push the music into repressive gloom.

The third movement, bright in G major and notated *Ruhiges Tempo, mit zartem Ausdruck* ("Calm tempo with delicate expression"), begins with a penetratingly expressive duet between clarinet and viola. You will hear this duet unimpeded all through the movement accompanied by faraway, wistful arpeggios and affecting rising semitones in the piano.

The Finale, also marked *Lebhaft, sehr markit*, is probably the most frank and honest of the four movements. It begins with marked and rhythmic chords and is both stately and untroubled. This is

¹ Golliwog would surely have taken the cake

followed by a middle section that offers a lithe melody against a rhythmically dynamic piano accompaniment. The opening section returns bringing our fairy tale to an assured and cheerful ending.

A BOOK OF DAYS

Kenneth Frazelle is a composer whose music, according to The San Francisco Examiner, "came straight from—and went straight to—the heart, an organ too seldom addressed by contemporary composers." Frazelle's distinctive voice blends structural and tonal sophistication with lyrical clarity. He has been influenced by his study with the great modernist Roger Sessions. A citation from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, upon presentation of the Goddard Lieberson Fellowship in 2000, stated that "Kenneth Frazelle's music is rooted in the folk melodies of his native North Carolina. But like Bartok and Copland his work finally transcends its simple sources to become high art."

Frazelle's heartfelt compositions have included commissions from such renowned performers as Yo-Yo Ma, Dawn Upshaw, Paula Robison and members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Recent commissions include works for tenor Anthony Dean Griffey, Music@Menlo Festival, Ravinia Festival and the North Carolina Symphony.

In March this year, Strata premiered *A Book of Days*, a large-scale work for violin, clarinet and piano, which the group commissioned with a grant from the Rauch Foundation.

The composer has the following to say regarding his work:

"A Book of Days" investigates passages from American poet A. R. Ammons' *Tape for the Turn of the Year*. "Tape" is a book-length, diary-like poem that was written on a continuous roll of adding machine tape. The poet ruminates on the passing of days and the perception of time, ranging from the everyday to the cosmic.

The five movements investigate the following passages:

1. "all day life itself is bending, weaving, changing"—contrasting ideas come and go, reflecting the fleeting nature of daydreams.

2. "paper and thin air"—thinking about adding machine tape, music manuscript paper, and the everyday nature of objects and their ephemerality. A very quick piece, where each instrument passes around a skittering idea.

3. "some nights the stars are raw and brand new"—a slow, pulsating adagio that sometimes breaks into playful, sometimes terrifying outbursts.

4. "motions racing through, particles and drifts"—dancelike, with irregular meters, exploring the idea of the Classical Muses, who tease the artist—inspiring one day and absent the next.

5. "it was very lovely: and it's lost"—the work ends with a slow, spare movement, each instrument moving in different time patterns.

I've admired Strata's sublime and virtuosic performances for a decade, and am very excited to have written this work for them."

CONTRASTS

What may have begun in August 1938, as a casual conversation between József Szigeti, the leading violinist of the time, and Benny Goodman, the world-renowned jazz clarinetist, quickly morphed into a substantial chamber work by one of the world's leading composers, Béla Bartók. Szigeti sent the request to Bartók, and Goodman paid \$300 for the work. Szigeti's original request was for a duo for clarinet and violin with piano accompaniment, comprising two contrasting movements, about 6 minutes in duration, with cadenzas for both instruments.

The expectation was probably for a brief, flamboyant tune with a notable melody; the result was much more than they bargained for: a chamber music piece that is a peer of string quartets, following the rules of chamber-music form in both material and structure.

At nearly three times the duration of the original request, "Contrasts" is a three-movement work that is an abstraction of Hungarian folk music joined with Rumanian dance melodies, Bulgarian and Greek meters, and an exceedingly individualized, superb

grasp of 20th-century compositional savvy.

The first movement, *Verbunkos (Recruiting Dance)*, is based on a dance, and characterized by an energetic dotted eighth-sixteenth rhythmic form and episodes that alternate between slow resolve and medium agitation. Listen for the brilliant clarinet cadenza at its end.

The second movement, *Pihenő (Relaxation)*, lacks the strong pulse and powerful contrasts of the driving beats that occur in both the outer movements. It is arching with a climactic center wandering slightly beyond relaxation. Listen for the piano imitating the traditional hammer dulcimer of gypsy bands. The movement concludes with the clarinet and violin assuming the piano's traditional responsibility for the bass line. The second movement was omitted from the first performance. Perhaps Bartók was trying to adhere strictly to the original commission for two movements.

The final movement, *Sebes (Fast Dance)*, is a feverish sprint. Listen for an off-balance, quick-moving segment in 13/8, an uncommon meter where Bartók divides the 13 into (3 + 2 + 3) + (2 + 3). The start of this movement specifies the use of a violin with several of its strings tuned unconventionally² yielding a cruder, coarser sound suggestive of the playing of a folk musician. Finally, the violin enjoys a rowdy digression before being rejoined by the others for a rollicking finale.

It was recorded in 1940 by Bartók at the piano, József Szigeti on the violin and Benny Goodman on the clarinet.

—notes by Dr. Michael Spencer

² Scordatura, literally Italian for "mistuning"

58TH SEASON

2013-2014

*Presented in Cooperation with
University of the Pacific Conservatory
of Music; Giulio Ongaro, Dean*

Strata

2:30 PM Sunday, October 6, 2013
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
RECEPTION FOLLOWS

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2:30 PM Sunday, October 20, 2013
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
RECEPTION FOLLOWS

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2:30 PM Sunday, November 24, 2013
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
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Peabody Trio

2:30 PM Sunday, February 9, 2014
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
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Ying Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, April 6, 2014
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
RECEPTION FOLLOWS

TO OUR AUDIENCE

- The use of cameras and recording devices of any kind is forbidden.
- There is no smoking in the building.
- Please turn off cellular telephones and disengage audible alarms on pagers and watches during concert.
- Concert programs are subject to change without notice.
- Seating is unreserved for the 2013-14 Season.
- Contributions, including memorials, are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Tickets are available at the door.

Adult: Single \$25, Season \$100
Children 12 and younger & students: Free
UOP/Delta Faculty: \$10, Spouse \$15

FOCM welcomes children to our concerts. However, an adult must accompany children ten years of age and younger (please, no babes in arms). At the request of artists, children should not sit in the first four rows.

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