Eastman Computer Music Center

Concert of Electroacoustic Music

Guest composer:

Rand Steiger

October 27, 8:00

Hatch Recital Hall
Program

Capriccio for violin and two sound tracks
Henk Badings (1907-1987)
Lauren Cauley, violin
7’30"

Tombeau de Messiaen
Jonathan Harvey (1939-2012)
Amy Zhang, piano
9’

roundabout
Allan Schindler, music
Peter Byrne and Carol Woodlock, image
Film/musical composition
7’30"

Light on Water
Rand Steiger (1957-)
Zach Sheets, flute
Wei-Han Wu, piano
17’

A Menacing Plume
Rand Steiger
Members of the Switch~Ensemble:
Zach Sheets, flute
Sammy Lesnick, clarinet
Erin Lensing, oboe
Drew Worden, percussion
Chris Jones, percussion
Daniel Pesca, piano
Lauren Cauley, violin
Alyssa Roggow, viola
Dustin Seo, cello
Boon Hua Lien, conductor
Clay Mettens & Jason Thorpe Buchanan, electronics
16’
Notes on the Program

Music by our special guest composer this evening, Rand Steiger, has been commissioned and performed by many ensembles, including the American Composers Orchestra, Boston Musica Viva, Ensemble Intercontemporain, International Contemporary Ensemble, Lontano, NYNME, Prism Quartet, San Diego Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he served as Composer Fellow. A long list of prominent soloists he has composed for includes Matthew Barley, Maya Beiser, Claire Chase, Daniel Druckman, and Steven Schick.

Throughout his career, Steiger has been involved in computer music research, having held three residencies at IRCAM, and enjoying a long fruitful collaboration with Miller Puckette, the leading computer music researcher of his generation. He was Composer-in-Residence at the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology from 2010 to 2013.

Many of Steiger’s works combine orchestral instruments with real-time digital audio signal processing. They also propose a hybrid approach to just and equal-tempered tuning, exploring the delicate perceptual cusp between a harmony and a timbre that occurs when tones are precisely tuned.

Steiger was also active as a conductor specializing in contemporary works until deciding in 2010 to concentrate entirely on composition. He lead a series of critically acclaimed concerts with the Ensemble Sospeso in New York City in the early 2000’s, and with the California EAR Unit at the Los Angeles County Museum in the 1980’s and 90’s. Among his recordings as conductor are operas by Anne LeBaron, Hilda Paredes and Anthony Davis, and chamber works by Elliott Carter, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Morton Subotnick, Iannis Xenakis and many other prominent European and American composers. He has also conducted many world, New York and California premier performances, including works of Muhal Richard Abrams, Louis Andriessen, Milton Babbitt and Pierre Boulez.

His compositions and performances are recorded on the Centaur, CRI, Crystal, Einstein, Koch, Mode, New Albion, New Dynamic, New World, Nonesuch, and Tzadik labels. Recent works for instruments and electronics are available on Ecosphere a portrait CD/DVD on EMF, and A Menacing Plume, a portrait CD on New World Records. After serving on the Faculty of California Institute of the Arts from 1982 through 1987, Steiger joined the Music Department at U.C. San Diego, where he currently serves as Department Chair. In 2009 he was a Visiting Professor at Harvard University.

Badings : Capriccio for solo violin and two soundtracks (1959)

Henk Badings (1907-1987) was a prolific Dutch composer who wrote more than a thousand compositions, including fifteen symphonies and several concerti. In cooperation with the Philips Corporation he established an electronic music in Eindhoven in
1956. In the 1960s renewed allegations of Badings’ complicity with the occupying Nazi government during the Second World War damaged his reputation and led to a virtual ban on performances of his works by many Dutch musical organizations.

Badings’ 1959 *Capriccio* is among his more important pieces -- a pioneering work for solo instrument with electronic accompaniment, combining a fairly romantic violin part with pitched and timbral material in the electronics that is carefully constructed. The electronic part was realized entirely by means of 12 oscillators.

**Harvey : Tombeau de Messiaen (1994)**

"This work is a modest offering in response to the death of a great musical and spiritual presence. Messiaen was a protospectralist, that is to say, he was fascinated by the colours of the harmonic series and its distortions, and found therein a prismatic play of light. The tape part of my work is composed of piano sounds entirely tuned to harmonic series - twelve of them, one for each class of pitch. The âtemperedâ live piano joins and distorts these series, never entirely belonging, never entirely separate." (Notes by Jonathan Harvey)

British composer **Jonathan Harvey** (1939-2012) held teaching positions at several European and American universities, including Princeton, Sussex, Stanford, St. John’s College, Cambridge and the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin. During the 1980s he produced several highly regarded electroacoustic works in the IRCAM studios in Paris. In addition to his many compositions, Harvey authored two books, one on inspiration and the other on spirituality.

**Schindler, Byrne, Woodlock : roundabout (2010)**

"roundabout is one of two musical/film compositions I have created in collaboration with video artists Peter Byrne and Carole Woodlock, following upon our 2007 work Passage. The work is an inquiry into landscape and memory, movement and flow. Live action footage, with hand-drawn and computer generated composite animation sequences come together to establish a shifting and layered sense of time and place. A fragmented sense of place evokes a shifting center and viewpoint in which we seek to unearth the interaction and collapsing of virtual and real spaces."

"Despite occasional use of ambiguous tempi (seemingly fast and slow at the same time) and passages employing two or more simultaneous tempi in different layers, the music is designed to convey a sense of continuous motion and gravitation, perhaps analogous to the current of a river or, alternatively, of tidal-like fluctuations in inflow and outflow. The music employs 19 tone equal temperament tuning throughout, so some of the chordal progressions and melodic lines initially may sound 'pinched,' or piquant, or hollow (or perhaps simply 'offkey' to some listeners). (Notes by Allan Schindler)

2014-15 will be **Allan Schindler**'s final year as Director of the Eastman Computer Music Center and Professor of Composition at the Eastman School, and he is looking forward to pursuing several long-deferred professional and personal activities.
**Steiger : Light on Water** (2012)

"I live near the Los Peñasquitos marsh in San Diego, and walking past it every day I have been struck by how many different ways light reflects off the surface of the water. Sometimes it mirrors dull morning grayness; at other times, when the sun is bright and the water high, it produces brilliant, sparkling flecks. These conditions can create a sense of disorienting beauty, and these feelings and images were on my mind as I developed the material for the piece."

"Light on Water was written for Claire Chase and Jacob Greenberg who gave the premiere performance in November 2013 at Miller Theater in New York City." (Notes by Rand Steiger)

**Steiger : A Menacing Plume** (2011)

"From the moment I read about the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil platform (April 20, 2010), I was filled with a sense of dread. I thought immediately of the strange, unworldly creatures that thrive in the ocean’s depths, as well as those that swim near the surface or fly above it. My feeling of horror grew as we read day after day of the massive, uninhibited flow of oil from the sea floor, and the unregulated use of chemical dispersants (which we now know will linger longer than the oil itself, with as yet unknown consequences.) After a few weeks, news reports described huge plumes of oil gathering in the gulf and drifting out into the Atlantic Ocean. It was impossible to know how large these were or how deadly they would be, but that image of a menacing plume, obliterating life in its wake, stayed with me. Although in many of my earlier works I have reflected on the natural world, I have never before attempted so directly, almost literally, to narrate something like this event in musical terms."

"My piece begins with an image of the vast undisturbed surface of the sea as the blinding, bright morning light first arises, followed by a flock of seabirds that soar above. Then layers of material emerge though all the instruments, inspired by the diversity and complexity of undersea life. Finally, an ominous darkness enters and ultimately squeezes out all life. In addition to the conventional instruments on stage, you will hear two vibraphones with specially tuned bars that enable just intonation. We will also be deploying digital signal processing to transform the sound of the instruments in a variety of ways (just-tuned harmonizing, delays, filters, etc.)"

"A Menacing Plume was written for the Talea Ensemble who gave the premier performance, with Miller Puckette and I running the electronics, in March 2011 at Merkin Hall in New York City. City." (Notes by Rand Steiger)