

music we'd like to hear

three concerts on three thursdays curated by three composers

II

curated by Markus Trunk

Robert Schumann
Romanzen op.91 (1849)

4. Das verlassene Mägdlein

Romanzen op.69 (1849)

1. Tamburin 2. Waldmädchen
3. Klosterfräulein 6. Die Capelle

Alvin Lucier
Unamuno

for four equal voices (1994)

Among Robert Schumann's (1810-1856) choral *Romanzen and Ballads* are twelve Romanzen for female voices, which are usually deemed marginal and taken to be occasional works. However, Schumann himself doesn't seem to have shared this view. They may not have been intended for the concert hall and be of inconspicuous, almost artless, appearance but Schumann's subtle transformation of the folk idiom gives these miniatures considerable depth. MT

The work title refers to the Spanish author and admirer of Kierkegaard, Miguel de **Unamuno** (1864-1936), a research specialty of the dedicatee of this work, Roger Sanchez-Berroa. In 1994, Wesleyan University in Connecticut honoured Alvin Lucier with a five-day festival, *Alvin Lucier: Collaborations*, for which he composed twelve new works, many of which were collaborations with, or homages to, university colleagues such as Sanchez-Berroa. (They also include *Theme*, based on a poem by John Ashbery, and *Skin, Meat, Bone*, a collaborative theatre work with Robert Wilson.) *Unamuno* was premiered by a vocal ensemble made up of Wesleyan staff in intimate, convivial surroundings – much like a Renaissance vocal consort. Lucier's preoccupation with microtonal beatings between slowly shifting pitches is concentrated here in a static chromatic cluster. Björn Nilsson has described *Unamuno* as a "poor man's pocket version" of the acoustic intricacies found in prominent works such as *Music for Piano with Slow Sweep Pure Wave Oscillators*, *Fideliotrio* (both featured in past seasons of this concert series) or *Navigations* for string quartet. MT

Alvin Lucier was born in 1931 in Nashua, New Hampshire. He attended Yale and Brandeis and spent two years in Rome on a Fulbright Scholarship. From 1962 to 1970 he taught at Brandeis, where he conducted the Brandeis University Chamber Chorus which devoted much of its time to the performance of new music. Since 1970 he has taught at Wesleyan University. In 1966, along with Robert Ashley, David Behrman and Gordon Mumma, Lucier founded the Sonic Arts Union, for whose concerts he developed numerous live electronic works, exploring echolocation, brain waves, room acoustics and the visual representation of sound. His recent works include a series of installations and works for solo instruments, chamber ensembles, and orchestra in which rhythmic patterns and related spatial phenomena are created by close tunings. In 2001 Lucier's *Ovals* for chamber orchestra was performed at Donaueschingen by the Hilversum Radio Orchestra and, in 2002, *Just Before Dark* was premiered in Vienna by the Soloists of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra. He recently completed *Ever Present* for flute, saxophone and piano and *Almost New York*, for flutist Carin Levine. He has also been working on a collaboration with sculptor Alain Kirili for baritone voice and French horn, commissioned by Thomas Buckner.

Christopher Fox
The Missouri Harmony
for organ (1985)

The Missouri Harmony takes its title from a 19th century treatise on the musical practice of the Shakers, the American religious sect. In Shaker worship music was of paramount importance as an expression of spiritual ecstasy and in hymn singing each member of a Shaker congregation would pursue their own musical path, each singer 'labouring' their own version of the tune, so that the overall result was an inspired heterophony around the original melody. My piece is an attempt to create a compositional equivalent of that process.

Three voices (right hand, left hand and pedals) move independently but similarly: in each voice phrases lengthen and then contract, lengthen and finally contract again, and in all the voices there is a gradual movement upward. Harmonic movement is continuous throughout the piece, but slow so that attention is always divided between enjoyment of single harmonies and awareness of the overall melodic and harmonic progress of the piece, between the individual and the universal. *The Missouri Harmony* was written in 1984 and 1985 for the Dutch organist Huub ten Hacken who gave the first performance on the organ of St. Janskerk in 's-Hertogenbosch on 10th October 1985. CF

Christopher Fox was born in York in 1955, grew up in the north of England and now lives in London. He studied composition with Hugh Wood, Jonathan Harvey and Richard Orton at Liverpool, Southampton and York Universities. Between 1984 and 1994 he was a member of the composition staff of the Darmstadt New Music Summer School. During 1987 he lived in West Berlin as a guest of the DAAD Berlin Artists Programme. In 1994 he joined the Music Department at the University of Huddersfield, eventually becoming Professor in Composition. Since April 2006 he has been Research Professor in Music at Brunel University. Fox's work has been performed and broadcast world-wide and has featured in many of the leading new music festivals. In recent years he has established particularly close relationships with the Ives Ensemble in the Netherlands and with Apartment House in the UK. www.foxedition.co.uk

music we'd like to hear

– INTERVAL –

Anonymous
Jesu Cristes milde moder

Jesu Cristes milde moder / stud biheld hire sone o rode ("Jesus Christ's gentle mother / stood and gazed upon her son on the cross") is a 13th century paraphrase in middle English of the Latin sequence *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem*, in a setting for two equal voices. It has been handed down as part of Arundel 248, a 14th century parchment manuscript and theological miscellany in possession of the British Library. MT

Claudia Molitor
Das Schwein, das Schwein
for three voices (2004)

Das Schwein, das Schwein is a lullaby and was written for my daughter's second birthday. The text uses some of her then favourite words and phrases and also includes a little song I made up for her when she was a tiny baby: Das Schwein, das Schwein steht ganz allein auf der Wiese, auf der Wiese; aber nein, nein, nein das Schwein ist nicht allein denn auf der Wiese sind lauter Kriecher. (The pig stands alone on the meadow, but no, no, no the pig is not alone 'cause on the meadow are lots of creepy crawlies). CM

Claudia Molitor, born in 1974, studied Music and Media at Sussex University, went on to do an MA in Music at City University, London and completed her PhD in Composition with Michael Finnissy in 2004. Together with Sophie Appleton and James Weeks she is founder of the Kürbis ensemble. Claudia is also the festival director of Soundwaves Festival which she founded together with Patrick Harrex. The festival took place in June 2007 for the first time.

In March 2006, *Oh Du Kleines Kabinett*, commissioned by Queens' College Cambridge, was premiered by Anton Lukoszevieve and musicians of Queens' College. This piece was short-listed for a RPS Music Award this year. Claudia has just finished writing, performing and recording her first CD *Lopsided*. She is currently taking part in spnm's 2006/07 Adopt a Composer scheme which pairs amateur ensembles, in this case the City of Southampton Orchestra, with a composer for a year. The resulting piece will be performed at Southampton's Guildhall in November. www.claudiamolitor.org

Alvin Lucier
**Music for Snare Drum, Pure
Wave Oscillator and One or
More Reflective Surfaces**
(1990)

A snare drum is placed on a stand in the performance space. A pure wave oscillator is routed through an amplifier to a single loudspeaker faced away from the snare drum, toward a wall. As the sound waves from the loudspeaker reflect off the wall and flow through the body of the drum the snares are sympathetically vibrated in ways determined by the loudness and frequency of the waves, the position of the crests and troughs of the reflected (standing) waves, and the placement of the drum in space. AL

EXAUDI: Juliet Fraser & Amy Howarth, soprano Ruth Massey & Tom Williams, alto James Weeks, director/organ

Formed in 2002 by James Weeks (director) and Juliet Fraser (soprano), and drawing its singers from among Britain's brightest new vocal talents, **EXAUDI** has received universal acclaim for its innovative, imaginative and fearless approach to a wide-ranging repertoire. The group is flexible in number, varying between four and twelve voices.

EXAUDI's programming typically views contemporary music within larger historical contexts, often combining new music with old, specialising particularly in the music of the early and High Renaissance. The ensemble is also responsible for commissioning and creating brand-new works, and has given many world and UK premières by composers including Richard Ayres, Howard Skempton, Wolfgang Rihm, Michael Finnissy, Salvatore Sciarrino, James Weeks and Claudia Molitor. The ensemble has released critically acclaimed recordings of Michael Finnissy, Elisabeth Lutyens and Christopher Fox on NMC. EXAUDI made its European debut for CDMC Madrid in January 2007, and a fourth disc for NMC, including major works by Howard Skempton, will be released in the autumn. In April 2007 EXAUDI was shortlisted for the RPS Ensemble award for the second year in succession. www.exaudi.org.uk

Born in Blackburn in 1978, **James Weeks** was Organ Scholar of Queens' College, Cambridge from 1997-2000, where he read Music, and recently completed a PhD in composition at the University of Southampton. His music is regularly heard across Europe and has been broadcast on German and Dutch radio and BBC Radio 3, and is promoted by the BMIC's New Voices scheme. Recent works have been completed for Alison Balsom, Bloomsbury Trio, Anton Lukoszevieve, Kürbis and The Hola, and he has been heard at festivals and halls including Purcell Room, Bridgewater Hall, City of London Festival, Kettle's Yard, Gaudeamus and Mafra (Portugal). As a conductor he is known for his championing of both early and contemporary music, particularly with EXAUDI, which he formed in 2002 with the soprano Juliet Fraser. With EXAUDI he performs regularly in many major UK and European festivals and concert venues and made several acclaimed recordings for NMC. He has also worked with BCMG, New Music Players, New London Chamber Choir, IXION, I Fagiolini and Endymion. With Claudia Molitor he founded Kürbis Ensemble in 2006, dedicated to radical and experimental new music; they have performed in London, Cambridge (Kettle's Yard) and Brighton (Soundwaves Festival).

people we'd like to thank

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