

UW-Madison Contemporary Chamber Ensemble at the University of Iowa
Monday, 5 May 2008, 8:00pm
Clapp Recital Hall

Program Notes:

From *Los Tangueros* (1996) by Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992), arranged for two pianos by Pablo Ziegler
Milonga del angel
Fuga y misterio
Tangata

Los Tangueros was the brainchild of the composer and the well-known Italian conductor Ettore Stratta. The two were in the planning stages of a compilation of the composer's most famous tangos, to be arranged for orchestra with Stratta conducting. Unfortunately, Piazzolla's sudden death in 1992 stopped the project in its tracks. Stratta was undeterred, however; it was only a few years later when he met Piazzolla's long-time pianist Pablo Ziegler. As he writes,

"An idea struck me with great excitement: what if I could produce an album of Piazzolla's music performed on two pianos? This combination would have an orchestral texture and would meld the technical and virtuosic elements of Astor's playing the bandoneon with his quintet."

The result was *Los Tangueros*; a 1996 release comprised of twelve of Piazzolla's most popular and well-constructed tangos, arranged by Ziegler for himself and Emanuel Ax. The three excerpts selected for this program entail the full spectrum of Piazzolla's style. The sultry "Milonga del angel" evokes a cigar-smoked bar filled with dancers on a hot summer night, while the lively "Fuga y misterio" (originally for duo guitarists) showcases the composer's ability to blend counterpoint and canonic imitation with Latin-infused melody and rhythms. The final entry, "Tangata", is an extended tango; the slow opening leads into a series of jazz-tinged solos for both pianists. The harmonic, rhythmic, and structural intensity then grows as the pianists trade melodic improvisations; look for the return of the 'habanera' rhythm as the work concludes with a rousing chorus that channels the "passion, drama, and sophistication" of Piazzolla's musical legacy.

-Jonathan Kuuskoski

Astor Piazzolla is the most well-known tango composer and bandoneonist in the world. He was born in 1921 in Mar del Plata, Argentina. In 1925 his family left Argentina for New York, where Piazzolla grew up, a fact which was to influence his later musical career.

This spirit of crossing borders followed him throughout his whole life, and he was always searching for new ways of fusing the most varied musical styles which had fascinated him since childhood. In his music he created a synthesis between the traditional danced tango and influences from classical music and jazz. This so-called Tango Nuevo made it possible to reach a new audience, which discovered tango as a concert music. Many of Piazzolla's works have become classics and have been performed worldwide by the stars of the international music scene, such as Gidon Kremer, Daniel Barenboim and Yo-Yo Ma. Piazzolla's works not only inspired countless performers of his music, but also set the course for his musical heirs. Astor Piazzolla died in 1992 in Buenos Aires.

Try Me Good King: Last Words of the Wives of Henry VIII (2001) by Libby Larsen

- I. Katherine of Aragon
- II. Anne Boleyn
- III. Jane Seymour
- IV. Anne of Cleves
- V. Katherine Howard

Jennifer Lien, soprano
Paola Savvidou, piano

Divorce, behead, die, divorce, behead, die. This grade school memory game is how I first came to know about the six wives of Henry the VIII, King of England from 1509 to 1547. Since then, I've been fascinated with the personal consequences of power that befell the Tudor family and the circle of political intrigue of both church and state which caused such a wrenching in the private lives of the seven people—Henry and his six wives.

Try Me, Good King is a group of five songs drawn from the final letters and gallows speeches of Katherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, and Katherine Howard. Henry's sixth wife, Katherine Parr, outlived him and brought some domestic and spiritual peace into Henry's immediate family. Although her written devotions are numerous, and her role in the story of the six wives of Henry VIII is that of a peaceful catalyst. In these songs I chose to focus on the intimate crises of the heart that affected the first five of the six wives. In a sense, this group is a monodrama of anguish and power.

I've interwoven a lute song into each song, including John Dowland's "In Darkness Let Me Dwell" (Katherine of Aragon and Katherine Howard), Dowland's "If My Complaints" (Anne Boleyn), Praetorius' "Lo, how a Rose E'er Blooming" (Jane Seymour), and Thomas Campion's "I Care Not for these Ladies" (Anne of Cleves). These songs were composed during the reign of Elizabeth I, and while they are cast as some of the finest examples of the golden age, they also create a tapestry of unsung words which comment on the real situation of each doomed queen. □ □ Two other musical gestures unify the songs, firstly, the repeated note, which recalls the lute and creates psychological tension. The second device I created is abstract bell-tolling, which punctuates each song and releases the spiritual meaning of the words. It is an honor to create new work for Meagan Miller and Brian Zeger, and contribute to the ongoing vision of the Marilyn Horne Foundation.

-Libby Larsen

Libby Larsen (b. 24 December 1950, Wilmington, Delaware) is one of America's most performed living composers. She has created a catalogue of over 220 works spanning virtually every genre from intimate vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral and choral scores. Grammy Award winning and widely recorded, including over 50 CDs of her work, she is constantly sought after for commissions and premieres by major artists, ensembles and orchestras around the world, Libby Larsen has established a permanent place for her works in the concert repertoire.

As a vigorous, articulate advocate for the music and musicians of our time, in 1973 Larsen co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum, now the American Composer's Forum, which has become an invaluable aid for composers in a difficult, transitional time for American arts. Currently the holder of the Papamarkou Chair at John W. Kluge Center of the Library of Congress, Larsen has held residencies with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony and the Colorado Symphony. She is currently completing a book, *The Concert Hall That Fell Asleep and Woke Up as a Car Radio*.

Lantern Jaws by Ben Irwin (b. 1982)

Lantern Jaws condenses a lot of musical information into a short space of time through layering of multiple lines with contrasting melodic and rhythmic profiles, and through fast-paced development of musical ideas. At the same time, it explores different ways of looking at similar, and at times the same, material. The piece divides easily into five main sections with distinct textures and rates of motion, describing an arc between dense, *Allegro* outer sections, through medium-tempo second and fourth sections with thinner textures, and across a relatively sparse, *Adagio* middle section. In addition to this progressive alteration in tempo and density of texture, sections two, three, and four undertake a selective distillation of the outer sections' rhythmic texture. Rhythmic counterpoint in sections one and five features both divisive polyrhythms that unfold rapidly and the juxtaposition of different additive groupings of a given pulse rate to form polyrhythms that unfold more slowly, and usually less completely. The intermediate sections, two and four, isolate these two kinds of rhythmic counterpoint, respectively. Section two emphasizes divisive polyrhythms, incompletely articulated to create a liquid, floating rhythmic feel, while section four emphasizes pulse-oriented additive rhythms and their juxtaposition to create complete polyrhythmic cycles. Like the outer sections, section three utilizes both additive and divisive rhythms, but in a texture that emphasizes single lines and sparse counterpoint, rather than the multi-layered rhythmic textures of the other sections. Leading into the return of the opening texture in the fifth section, the fourth section presents a literal retrograde of a dense contrapuntal passage from section one, rhythmically augmented to conform to

section four's additive texture. The retrograde continues as the piece transitions into section five, but the transition is marked by a return to the opening tempo and the opening mix of divisive and additive rhythms. Section five recycles a lot of material from previous sections, particularly the first, but aggressively transforms and recombines these materials, so that it continues to bring the piece into relief until it closes.

-Ben Irwin

Ben Irwin recently completed Master's degrees in composition and clarinet performance at UW-Madison, where he studied composition with Stephen Dembski and Laura Schwendinger. He will be attending UC Davis next fall to pursue a Ph.D. in composition. Ben's compositional interests include musical textures that create a continually shifting set of expectations for the listener, small-scale pitch and rhythmic processes within largely intuitive textures, writing individual melodic lines that imply counterpoint, and incorporating improvisation into textures that also feature a high degree of compositional specificity. He enjoys writing for a wide range of performance situations, but finds chamber music particularly well-suited to the intricate counterpoint that he likes to include in his pieces.

Secret Ground (1991) by Judith Shatin (b. 1949)

Secret Ground was inspired by a phrase in Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, and by his notion of revelation. The music slowly reveals the instruments, when the shadowy sounds of the opening crystallizes around the changing instrumental relationships, with two duets soaring out of the quartet texture, and two extended solos responding before the music comes to rest in a resonant quiet. The title also refers to the traditional musical notion of the "ground," a repeating bass line that weaves the structure together. Here, the "ground" is more hidden, and refers to the underlying pitch structure around which the four instrumental parts are built. The shifting surface relationships flow against the constancy of this background.

-Judith Shatin

Judith Shatin is a composer, sound artist, community arts partner and educator. Her inspirations range from myth, poetry and her Jewish heritage to the calls of the animals around us and the sounding universe beyond. Current projects include a McKim commission from the Library of Congress for a new piece for violin and piano for the 2008 season. Her music has been featured at festivals including the Aspen, BAM Next Wave, Grand Teton, Havana in Spring Moscow Autumn, Seal Bay, Ukraine, Soundways (St. Petersburg) and West Cork. Orchestras that have performed her music include the Denver, Houston, Illinois, Knoxville, Minnesota, National and Richmond Symphonies. Shatin's music can be heard on the Centaur, Neuma, New World and Sonora labels. It has been commissioned by groups including the Ash Lawn Opera, Barlow Foundation, Core Ensemble, Garth Newel Chamber Players, Kronos Quartet, Library of Congress, Music-at-LaGesse Foundation, National Symphony newEar, Hexagon Ensemble, Virginia Chamber Orchestra and Wintergreen Performing Arts, the last through Americans for the Arts.

Educated at Douglass College (AB, Phi Beta Kappa), The Juilliard School (MM) and Princeton University (PhD), Judith Shatin is currently William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor and Director of the Virginia Center for Computer Music, which she founded at the University of Virginia in 1987. Additional studies included two summers as a Crofts Composition Fellow at Tanglewood, as well as studies at the Aspen Music Festival. Now an advocate for her fellow composers, she has served on the boards of the American Composers Alliance, the League/ISCM, and the International Alliance for Women in Music (IAWM). She also served at President of American Women Composers, Inc. (1989-93).

Shatin has been honored with four National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, as well as awards from the American Music Center, Meet the Composer, the New Jersey State Arts Council and the Virginia Commission for the Arts. A two-year retrospective of her music, and the commission for her folk oratorio, COAL, was sponsored by the Lila Wallace-Readers Digest Arts Partners Program. She has held residencies at Bellagio (Italy), Brahms Haus (Germany), La Cité des Arts (France), Mishkan Amanim (Israel) and in the US at MacDowell, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Yaddo. Shatin's music is published by Wendigo Music, distributed by MMB Music Inc.; and by Arsis Press, C. F. Peters, E. C. Schirmer, Colla Voce and Hal Leonard.

Peripeteia (2002) by Richard Festinger

Peripeteia grew out of my appreciation of the beautiful ways in which the sound color of the clarinet blends so harmoniously with that of string instruments, here violin and cello. At times, as in the opening gestures of the piece, the strings provide an environment, or landscape, in which an active clarinet takes on the role of a protagonist. A little further on, the cello is highlighted, the clarinet and violin providing an accompaniment mostly in parallel fourths. Sometimes the three instruments act almost as a single entity, combining their colors through additive processes. At other times, each takes on its own independent role in a contrapuntal colloquy. Interesting sonorities emerge on those occasions when the clarinet functions as the ensemble's bass. *Peripeteia*'s musical impulses emanate from the opening idea, in which the clarinet, in a floridly melismatic outburst, diverges from, and then re-converges on the initial note sustained by the cello. From that point of departure, the music moves continually through scenarios suggesting divergence and re-convergence, sudden turns of events, and unexpected reversals. New Millennium gave the World Premiere performance of *Peripeteia* on May 11, 2002, at Merkin Hall in New York City.

-Richard Festinger

Richard Festinger's music has been performed throughout the United States, and in Europe and Asia. His works have been composed for innumerable ensembles, including Parnassus, Earplay, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the New York New Music Ensemble, the Alexander String Quartet, the City Winds, the Laurel Trio, the Left Coast Ensemble, the Alter Ego Ensemble, the Miroglio-Aprudo Duo, the Washington Square Contemporary Music Society, and the Redwood Symphony Orchestra, and the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra. His music has been performed by Griffin, the New Millennium Ensemble, Speculum Musicae, Phantom Arts, Composers Inc., the Empyrean Ensemble, the Sun String Quartet, the Alexander String Quartet, the Berkeley and Riverside Symphonies, sopranos Jane Manning and Karol Bennett, the Orchestra da Camera Italiana G.F. Ghedini, the Ensemble Italiano per la Musica Contemporanea, Ensemble Anti-Dogma, the Seoul, Korea Festival of Electro-Acoustic Music, and the Boston Chamber Ensemble.

Mr. Festinger's works have been commissioned by the Jerome Foundation, the Fromm Foundation at Harvard, the Koussevitzky Foundation in the Library of Congress, the Barlow Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trust, the Mary Flagler Cary Trust, the Music Teachers National Association, the Hoff-Bartelson School, Volti, the Ringling School of Design, and the American Composers Forum. He has been a resident artist at the Camargo Foundation, the MacDowell Colony, Cité Internationale des Arts, Yaddo, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Bogliasco Foundation, the Bellagio Study Center, the Couvent des Récollets, the Aaron Copland House, the Oberpfälzer Künstlerhaus, and the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. He has been a fellow at the Wellesley Composers Conference and the June in Buffalo Festival, and has received both the Walter Hinrichsen Award and an Academy Recording Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Mr. Festinger studied composition at the University of California in Berkeley with Andrew Imbrie. Before turning to composing, he led his own groups as a jazz performer, and later founded the contemporary music ensemble Earplay. He has taught at the University of California in Berkeley and Davis, and at Dartmouth College, and since 1990 he has been a professor of music at San Francisco State University. His music is published by C.F. Peters, and his works have been recorded for the Bridge, Centaur, CRI and CRS labels.
