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New Music Chicago Impromptu Fest 2021

Sunday, June 27, 2021, 5:00 PM

Nevermore Performance Space, 3411 W. North Avenue, Chicago

[New Music Chicago YouTube Channel](#)

Program

Goddess of the Waters Anthony Davis/Thulani Davis

Moments in Sonder B.E. Boykin/Maya Angelou
 Tears
 A Conceit
 Greyday
 Sounds Like Pearles
 On Diverse Deviations

Cantata: Prelude & Rondo John Daniels Carter

Joelle Lamarre, soprano | Kuang-Hao Huang, piano

String Quartet #3 Eleanor Alberga

 Moderato
 Scherzo
 Adagio
 Allegro

Kate Carter & Rika Seko, violins
Claudia Lasareff-Mironoff, viola
Paula Kosower, cello

Notes

Goddess of the Waters is from Anthony Davis and Thulani Davis' opera ***Amistad*** that was ten years in the making. The composer writes:

“We first discussed the idea of creating an opera on the Amistad Rebellion in 1986, after the premiere of their opera ***X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X***. We were drawn to the drama of the story, a successful uprising of captives on a slave ship, and the implications of the Amistad incident in an understanding of ourselves and the American experience. Through the Amistad, they could revisit the story of the Middle Passage, the contradictions implicit in the ethos of America, and also explore the emergence of the African-American as a cultural entity.

The story presented a special musical challenge: I would have to create distinct and separate musical languages for the divergent cultures represented by the characters in the opera. The challenge would be to differentiate character with music, yet at the same time maintain musical unity and coherence. The libretto, as conceived by Thulani, employs a broad spectrum of language from the poetic, metaphoric language of the Captives to the vulgar exhortations of the Reporters. Similarly, the music reflects this spectrum of language with the violent speech rhythms of the Reporters and the rhapsodic tones of the Captives in Act Two.

In my music the ostinato (repeating rhythmic pattern) takes a pivotal role, as recurring motives denote both character and the physical and psychological environment affecting the characters. I have already mentioned the rhythmic ostinato associated with the Trickster, and there are other recurring motifs for the Goddess of the Waters, Antonio, Adams, the Navigator, and Lewis Tappan, the Abolitionist. Repeating motifs are also employed for the physical and emotional presence of the Ocean and the magical transformative powers of the Bush. **Anthony Davis**

B. E. Boykin writes:

I've always loved Maya Angelou's poetry. Her famous poems, like *Phenomenal Woman* and *Still I Rise*, have resonated with me for as long as I can remember. They were already so widely performed and I was curious about her other works. In finding some of her shorter poems, I eventually organized them by elements that I thought they had in common. I was able to narrow down my selection to fourteen poems that resulted in this work, ***Moments in Sonder***.

Due to the brief nature of the poems, each song is also relatively short. I was intentional on setting them this way so that the poems could be shared like brief moments in time. While these musical moments seem fleeting, I hope that they capture the beautiful and sometimes tumultuous emotions that bring and bind us together as humanity. For this reason, they are not to be performed in any specific order. I have listed them only for cataloging purposes. As the singer, you are allowed the flexibility and freedom of choosing the moments that speak to you. **B.E. Boykin**

John Daniels Carter's *Cantata* was published in 1964. The five-song vocal suite was premiered by soprano Leontyne Price at Constitution Hall in Washington, DC. The composer talked about his work in an interview with famed musicologist Dominique-René de Lerma:

“*Cantata* is based on a few well-known spirituals. I was always curious that Black composers rarely concerned themselves with this music. They’ve been arranged, but Black composers have not cared for their folk music as have Chopin or Bartók, for example... This is what I decided to do with this material, with one movement for each of the five spirituals. The first, for piano alone, is the “Prelude.” Second is a rondo, based on “Peter, Go Ring Them Bells.” “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child” is third, as an air, and then comes “Let Us Break Bread Together.” The last movement is a toccata, “Ride on, King Jesus...” As for the melodies, a lot of spirituals are pentatonic, and twelve minutes of five-note melodies might not be too interesting so I’ve not hesitated to alter the melodies.” **John Daniels Carter**

Eleanor Alberga's *String Quartet #3* is from 2001 and contains four movements.

The opening creeps up on you as a low hum allows a violin to create a warm melodic line, somewhat reminiscent of birds and the sea – just so idyllic. I think this is because, for me it evokes one of William Alwyn's sea and bird themed quartets that I have discussed in the past. With the drone continuing, the violin becomes skittish and random pizzicato cello tones are heard. A further pizzicato section is followed by the cello returning to the bow and we have the beginnings of a serious mood. Cello tones reach out, before it returns to the ensemble and a section increasing in animation is powerful with alluring violin melodies. These are accompanied by further pizzicato cello, which never feels pizzicato to me – I prefer to think of pizzicato cello as sounding like jazz style walking bass. The violins have a wonderful feeling of angst about them until one violin sustains a tone for some time, and the cello responds with scant assertions before taking over. Harmonised cello and violin lines are slightly dissonant, leading to a thoughtful passage. Now the composer returns to the cut and thrust of dueling violins and occasional pizzicato interjections. A sparse, blatantly atonal passage is followed by some more tonal uncertainty and various changes in dynamics. The sound of a soft violin line accompanied by even softer pizzicato cello mutterings leads to a gentle end. This movement is quite long and there is much good music here – in fact, too much to cover. I have a feeling that I shall be listening to this piece again soon.

The second movement, marked *scherzo* (vigorous, light, or playful), again has an air of ambiguity, both tonal and rhythmic. This is a long way from the *scherzo* of a Haydn or Mozart, or even Beethoven. Swirling violin lines seem to dance around the scurrying cello feeling. Strong chords form a pattern which is replicated in gentler, *pizzicato* manner. A melodic motif is repeated and reharmonised to an abstract effect. Roughly hewn cello lines lead the violins into a marginally chaotic duet, with some double stops from the cello. The end is one violin musing to a pause, and a final note from the cello is heard.

An *adagio* movement follows and I am starting to get a handle on the composer's style as two violins edge forward into a passage of consonant harmonies. Strains of dissonance drift in and out as the harmonies subside and the violins are left as they were for the opening. Three strong chords set up a spirited passage as the violins again duet expressively, similar to the previous movement. A resonant, weeping cello underpins the violin's brooding utterances. Now the work moves up an emotional level with a great depth of feeling projected. The end is stunning as the violins form an unusual shrill, harmonised motif that is very fetching. The motif is repeated and a drone is heard before one violin plays just a sweeping phrase from the motif. This is a wonderful touch.

The final movement, marked *allegro* begins in a very formal manner with two violins, but they soon make their way into an abstruse feeling, which is soon supported by the cello. A section of the two violins has them playing the same rhythmic pattern. The formal has now definitely become the abstract until the violins return to the previous rhythmic pattern, this time with dark overtones. The composer chooses this moment for a brief, unexpected section of harmonious music. Notes by **John Hood** <https://sqblog.jhredguitar.com/>

Bios

Eleanor Alberga is a highly regarded British composer with commissions and premieres from the BBC Proms and The Royal Opera. Her work is noted for its emotional impact, depth of craft, and brilliant coloring and orchestration. Native to Jamaica, her cultural includes performing with the Jamaican Folk Singers and as a dancer with an African Dance company. Her catalogue of works includes an opera based on an Isabel Allende story, 'Letters of a Love Betrayed, chamber music, and orchestral mus. Her piano music has a deep connection to her Jamaican heritage, and she has also composed for voice and choir.

B.E. Boykin studied piano at Spelman College under the leadership of Dr. Rachel Chung. During her tenure, Ms. Boykin won 1st place at the 2009 James A. Hefner HBCU Piano Competition at Tennessee State University. She also began to compose and arrange choral compositions while at Spelman. After graduating with a B.A. in Music, Ms. Boykin continued

her studies at Westminster Choir College of Rider University, where she was awarded the R and R Young Composition Prize. In 2013, she graduated with a M.M. in Sacred Music with a concentration in choral studies. She is the Assistant Director of the Spelman College Glee Club, as well as the Director of the Treble Choir at the Georgia Institute of Technology. She is a PhD candidate at Georgia State University with an emphasis in Music Education.

John Daniels Carter (b.1932-1981), African-American pianist and composer, is widely recognized for his only published work *Cantata* for voice and piano. John Carter studied at Florida A&M University and attended Oberlin College, where he studied under Jack Radunsky, before serving in the US Army. While enlisted, he won a piano competition that led to his emergence as a concert pianist where he toured and performed with various artists such as William Warfield, but not before he studied under Olga Stroumillo. In 1966-67, Carter studied with Carlos Surinach, who recommended him for the composer-in-residency post with Rockefeller Foundation. http://africandiasporamusicproject.org/john_carter

Anthony Davis is an internationally known composer of operatic, symphonic, choral, and chamber works. He is also known for his virtuoso performances both as a solo pianist and as the leader of the ensemble Episteme, a unique ensemble of musicians who are disciplined interpreters as well as provocative improvisers. In April 1993, Davis made his Broadway debut, composing the music for Tony Kushner's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*, directed by George C. Wolfe. Davis is best known for his operas: *X*, *Tania*, *Under the Double Moon* and *Amistad*.

Joelle Lamarre is a soprano specializing in new works by leading contemporary composers like Pulitzer Prize winner Anthony Davis in his opera, “Central Park Five” and Guggenheim Fellow George Lewis, in his experimental opera “Afterword: The AACM”. Joelle is the Playwright of the one act, *The Violet Hour*, which explores the early beginnings of Leontyne Price’s career up to her final performance of the opera *Aida* (currently being rewritten). Performing across genres in theatre and opera, Joelle is a multi-faceted artist who pushes boundaries leading *Opera News* to write: “Joelle Lamarre’s soprano has a glorious, lyrical bloom.”

Pianist **Kuang-Hao Huang** is most often heard as a collaborator, performing recitals and radio broadcasts with Chicago's finest musicians, from instrumentalists of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to singers with the Lyric Opera. An advocate of new music, Mr. Huang is a member of Fulcrum Point New Music Project and has given numerous premieres, including solo works by Louis Andriessen and Chen Yi at Weill Hall as part of Carnegie Hall’s Millennium Piano Book Project.. Mr. Huang serves on the faculties of the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University and Concordia University-Chicago. Mr. Huang can be heard in recordings on the Cedille and Naxos labels. For more information, go to www.khpiano.net.

Dr. **Kate Carter** enjoys a varied career as a chamber musician, recitalist, and teacher. Kate has performed chamber music with members of Fulcrum Point New Music Project, the Lyric

Opera Orchestra, Chicago Philharmonic, International Chamber Artists, and the Grossman Ensemble, and is a founding member of critically acclaimed Blue Violet Duo. She has toured internationally with orchestras including Camerata Chicago (2013) and the Lucerne Festival Academy (2009). She appears regularly with orchestras including Music of the Baroque, the Grant Park Symphony, and as Assistant Concertmaster of the Elmhurst Symphony. Kate holds degrees from Northwestern University and the Eastman School of Music.

Paula Kosower is an active performer and teacher currently residing in Chicago. She frequently performs for the Chicago Philharmonic Chamber Music Series, the University of Illinois Tuesdays-at-One series, North Park University Faculty Concerts, Bach Week Festival Concerts, for events at the Music Institute of Chicago, and for live performances on WFMT 98.7. Other concert appearances include the Chicago Symphony Chamber Music Series, Fulcrum Point New Music Project, Rembrandt Chamber Players, Rush Hour at St. James Cathedral, Art Institute of Chicago, Classical Mondays at Preston Bradley Hall, Mostly Music, Fourth Presbyterian Church, Music of the Baroque, Dempster St. Pro Musica, Bach Aria Society of Kansas City, Kansas City String Quartet Program and Wisconsin Public Radio FM 89.7. She has appeared on faculty recitals performing with colleagues at Roosevelt University, Northwestern University, University of Chicago, North Park University, University of Illinois at Chicago, Wheaton College, Carthage College, and UWMadison.

Violist **Claudia Lasareff-Mironoff** has premiered many works. A Northwestern University alumna she has performed with members of the CSO, the Pyrenean String Quartet, Roger Chase, Mathias Tacke, William Wolfram, and Eighth Blackbird. She has performed with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Grant Park Music Festival, Santa Fe Opera, Chicago Philharmonic and has been the principal violist of the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra (S.Africa), Colorado Music Festival, Chicago Opera Theater, the Joffrey Ballet and Fulcrum Point. Featured performances include the Ravinia Festival, Ear Taxi Festival 2016, Music Now, Present Music and Chamber Music Milwaukee, WFMT broadcasts and Dame Myra Hess Recitals.

Rika Seko has been an active freelance violinist in the Chicago area since 1996. Currently she is Concertmaster of the Elmhurst Symphony and a member of the Grant Park Music Festival Symphony, Music of the Baroque Orchestra, Chicago Philharmonic, Fulcrum Point New Music Project and Camerata Chicago, as well as Ivy Lane and Pyrenean string quartets. In the pandemic of 20-21, as many of the activities are put on hold, Rika has been enjoying a variety of chamber music activities with friends, colleagues and family.

Created in 1998 by Stephen Burns, the mission of **Fulcrum Point New Music Project** pushes the boundaries of the musical experience globally by: supporting new compositions, creating and performing new music experiences, and educating audiences to imagine the possibilities of music. Its programs are influenced by popular culture, literature, film, dance, jazz, Latin and world music. Through multi-disciplinary programs, Fulcrum Point encourages audiences to make cross-cultural connections between new music, art, and technology, gaining greater insight into today's diverse world. Fulcrum Point's *AuxIn: Connected* and *Discoveries: Hear & Be Heard* are co-curated by Angel Bat Dawid and Dalia Chin.



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