

WEDNESDAYS@7

Anthony Burr



FEBRUARY 24 @7PM

CONRAD PREBYS CONCERT HALL

WEDS@7 Anthony Burr
February 24, 2016 – 7:00 pm
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Impromptu (1989) – Aldo Clementi

Clarinet and String Quartet (1983) – Morton Feldman

Anthony Burr, Clarinet
Erik Carlson & Keir GoGwilt, Violin
Caterina Longhi, Viola
Charles Curtis, Cello

Even for someone who can take a long time to finish projects, this Feldman recording took a long time to complete. Now at some distance, it's rewarding to revisit the project and to think again about how to present the work in performance. While making the recording two considerations became central: how to deal with the question of the strange notational tics that permeate the score, and how to make a rendition that carried as many markers of the instruments and the actions involved in playing them as possible. The importance of the notation is discussed at length below in a reproduction of the liner notes from the release.

The question of the space of the music was harder to get a grip on. It quickly folded back into larger reflections of how this music actually related to classical music. In sifting through the bluster and hectoring of Feldman's writings and interviews, it became clear that he had both a kind of anxiety about the tradition of classical music and a sometimes maudlin attachment to its passing. What concerned him were the surviving trappings of the culture—the instruments, the notational system, notes themselves—and not things like compositional technique or performance practice. It seemed clear that his later music was something more akin to an outsider reconstruction of something that might be like nineteenth century music.

It seemed right, then, to make a recording in a living room that sounded like it was made in a living room to heighten the traces of the materiality of performance and to signal the close relationship between domestic space and chamber music. Shifting back to the concert hall, the problem becomes how to then project or foreground that kind of detail, or to perform the sense of intimacy in a larger space. Strangely enough, I think that the consistently soft dynamics help. In this music the dynamics feel more about proximity than about expression; the quiet and fragility draws the listener closer. It is, I suppose, a dynamic exploited by pop singers since the invention of the microphone.

Aldo Clementi seems also to have been haunted by the legacy of classical music, though in a more direct and obvious way than Feldman. The surface of Clementi's music is more explicitly archaic, pointing towards both pre-modern technique and to a kind of mechanical or automatic sensibility (some pieces sound music box like). *Impromptu* is composed as a somewhat esoteric counterpoint: it consists of a kind of cantus firmus shadowed by double canons in inversion. I don't know that it's really audible, and I don't know that it really matters. The nostalgic affect is further heightened by the use of a simple but very striking effect common to most of his late pieces: the performers are directed to play the piece in a constantly slowing tempo. The dynamic and timbre also shift on each cycle such that the piece begins as unintelligible and gradually recedes from there.

– Anthony Burr

Near the end of the final Contrapunctus in the *Art of Fugue* Bach introduces a new four-note countersubject which, in the German note names, spells B, A, C, H (in our note names, B-flat, A, C, B-natural). To those within Bach's circle, and probably to any attentive musician of his day, the notes thus sounded would have unmistakably articulated Bach's name - an embedded signature, not just a melodic motif but a salutation in musical code.

Morton Feldman begins *Clarinet and String Quartet* with the same four notes in reverse order - H, C, A, B, if you will. These four notes are repeated over and over by the clarinet and the cello simultaneously, the two instruments in minutely different rhythms and phrasings. These notes, however, are given anomalous names: in the cello, B, D-double flat, G-double sharp, A-sharp; and in the clarinet, C-flat, C, A, B-flat. Whether or not Feldman placed the retrograde B, A, C, H motif intentionally, it fits seamlessly into the pitch world of his late music, in which chromatic clusters (often four notes) are obsessively restated in different permutations, like anagrams.

Raymond Roussel generated his narratives by setting in apposition words that sound the same but are spelled differently - *jeunesse* and *genèse* - or that have one divergent sound - *billard* and *pillard* - and then devising actions that link the meanings of these very slightly different words. The same procedure was applied to phrases and entire sentences - *Forban talon rouge* and *fort pantalon rouge*, for example. This is described in his posthumous *How I Wrote Certain of My Books*. Similar to what we call homophones, Roussel coined the term metagram: "I would choose two nearly identical words (suggesting the metagram). For example, *billard* and *pillard*. Then I would add similar words, selected for two different meanings, and I would obtain two identical sentences." Something like puns or *doubles entendres* form the framework of elaborate dramatic actions generated only from the doubled words themselves.

"Both the repetition and the difference are so intricately linked, and adjusted with such exactitude, that it's not possible to distinguish which came first, or which is derived. This meticulous connection gives his polished texts a sudden depth wherein the surface flatness seems necessary..."
(Michel Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*)

Feldman: I mean pitch is a gorgeous thing. If you have a feeling, a tactile feeling for the instrument, what you can do with just your finger - something I learned from my teacher that taught the Czar's children. The way that she would put her finger down, in a Russian way of just the finger. The liveliness of the finger. And produce a B-flat, and you wanted to faint.
(“Darmstadt Lecture, July 1984” in *Morton Feldman Says: Selected Interviews and Lectures 1964-1987*)

There is a sort of general understanding that, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, just as spelling became standardized with the rise of the study of grammar and the publication of orthography manuals, musical pitch became increasingly standardized under the regime of equal temperament. Whereas previously the accidental inflecting a note would have suggested an audible difference in pitch, after the widespread adoption of equal temperament accidentals became mere symbols that referred to voice leading and tonal function, not to actual variations in pitch. In a manual for the instruction of young amateurs from around 1850 Czerny explains:

“You will notice, Fräulein, that certain different intervals, when struck upon the keyboard, use the very same key. Thus for example the augmented Second (C - D-sharp) and the minor Third (C - E-flat); or the augmented Fourth (C - F-sharp) and the false (diminished) Fifth (C - G-flat), and so on. But in figured bass these intervals are differentiated from each other in two ways: First, because each of them is accompanied by different notes which consequently build different chords; and Second, because each of them will resolve in a different way. Later you will become better acquainted with this difference.”
(Carl Czerny, *Letters to a Young Lady, on the Art of Playing the Pianoforte*)

Czerny points out that, on a keyboard instrument, the differently-named notes do not differ in pitch; but they differ in function, in the conceptual deployment of the note; thus in one context a note bears one name, in another context a different name, even though it does not sound differently. The notion of intervals “resolving” in different ways is especially evocative of the causality of grammatical functions.

Cage: Morty, you hear the music you write?

Feldman: Yes.

Cage: *This is the difference.* This is not mysterious, it's a fact that you hear it before you write it, right?

Feldman: Sometimes. Sometimes I almost hear it and I can almost write it. I'm not taking dictation.

Cage: You mean you do hear it, or you don't -- or is it that you don't quite hear it?

Feldman: It's in the middle. I write it down in order to hear it.

Cage: But that's how I work. I don't hear a thing.

Feldman: No, I'm not really hearing it. I'm watching it, I'm observing it. I don't believe it; I don't buy it, I don't know what it's supposed to demonstrate.

(Feldman, John Cage, Francesco Pellizzi and Bunita Marcus “Conversation with Morton Feldman” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 6: Autumn 1983)

In his 1967 essay “After Modernism” Feldman recounts the moment of waking up after falling asleep during a visit to Philip Guston’s studio. “I opened my eyes after an hour or so. [Guston] was still painting, standing almost on top of the canvas, lost in it, too close to really see it, his only reality the innate feel of the material he was using. As I awoke he made a stroke on the canvas, then turned to me, confused, almost laughing because he was confused, and said with a certain humorous helplessness, ‘Where is it?’”

The moment captured is a moment of uncertainty, of being half-awake, of having lost something, of searching for it in the dark. Not knowing appears to be a desired state for Feldman. In “After Modernism” he offers an elaborate argument for a concept he calls “the abstract experience,” concluding that it is “a metaphor without an answer.” An image without a **referent**, not grounded or oriented in a known place; or, perhaps, a sequence of pitches that seem more like a cipher than a melody.

(“After Modernism” reprinted in *Vertical Thoughts: Morton Feldman and the Visual Arts*)

Feldman: So that perception of hearing is a very interesting thing. Because, conceptually you are not hearing it, but perceptually, you might be able to hear it... I don’t use it conceptually. That’s why I use the double flats. People think they’re leading tones. I don’t know. Think what you want.

(“Darmstadt Lecture, July 1984” in *Morton Feldman Says: Selected Interviews and Lectures 1964-1987*)

The effect of the unusual spellings is doubly disorienting in the beginning of *Clarinet and String Quartet* because of the instrumental doubling of differently spelled notes. For example, sounding C-flat together with B, or D-double flat with C, and so on, highlights a definite but very slight non-identity of pitch, a kind of not-quite-unison. In playing these passages, the feeling is of an unmooring of the relationship between the written notes and their sound.

Question: I would like to know why you keep saying to get the notes and not get the sounds.

Feldman: Because they’re notes. They’ve got names. They’re pitches. The magic is to make sounds out of pitches. Or the magic is to bring back pitches. They might be sounds... I’m going from pitches to sounds. Again it’s a retranslation.

(“Darmstadt Lecture, July 1984” in *Morton Feldman Says: Selected Interviews and Lectures 1964-1987*)

In a normative understanding a “note” is probably a concept triggered by hearing an instrument play a pitch - an acoustic event, and for the listener, a listening experience. A note in the score, then, is both a signifier of that concept and an instruction to produce it. Pitches themselves don’t “mean,” but the “note” as abstraction was the necessary basis for the larger abstractions that defined European tonal composition. Notions of music as language in the 19th or 20th centuries revolved largely around pseudo-semantic understandings of pitch relationships: harmonic progressions, modulation of key,

tonal closure, the resolution of dissonance, antecedent / consequent phrases and so on. Feldman hated the idea that music worked in this way; but he remained obsessed with fragments of the material traces of its production: a B-flat played in isolation by the Czar's daughter's teacher, a B-flat scrawled on the page by Chopin, a system of writing notes that didn't quite work any more, the instruments of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet. The abstract function of the notes he has rejected, but the notes themselves as material traces of history and lived experience remain.

Feldman: But I do in a sense mourn something that has to do with, say, Schubert leaving me.
("Prolog: About Jiddishkeit" in *Essays* ed. Walter Zimmerman)

In some of its aspects Feldman's late music seems entirely legible as 19th century chamber music: the instruments, the return to pitch notation, the general affect. The willful fraying of pitch relations, the uncertainty of the sounds in relation to their notated forms, might paradoxically have brought him closer to the past and to the tradition he loved. He could use the materials of the past to generate a music that was uncertain and unfixed, maybe even unheard by him - "a metaphor without an answer." And there were all the other things at play: people, the scene of performance, the act of copying music, the fixing of the moment of hearing in memory, the listener's experience of the concert, the pianist's experience of hearing himself practice. One senses that it is these things that Feldman was interested in. Or that these are what mark his relationship to the music of the past.

Feldman: And it begins with [Feldman goes to the piano and plays]... Cage. C-A-G-E. One of the oldest devices [laughs] in music.
("For Philip Guston" in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*)

In fact, *For Philip Guston* begins with the notes C, G, A-flat, E-flat. Even here, even where he is openly copying Cage's name into his piece, he feels the need to rewrite it in a different spelling.

"In December 1803, he became incapable of signing his name ... from irretention of memory, he could not recollect the letters which composed his name, and when they were repeated to him, he could not represent the figure of the letters in his imagination."
(Thomas De Quincey, *The Last Days of Immanuel Kant*)

– Anthony Burr & Charles Curtis

ANTHONY BURR has enjoyed a distinguished career as an exponent of contemporary music. He has performed this repertoire with many leading groups, including Elision, Either/Or, Klangforum Wien, Ensemble Sospeso, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. As soloist he has worked with many leading composers in presenting their music including Alvin Lucier, Helmut Lachenmann, Brian Ferneyhough, Chaya Czernowin and Liza Lim. He has worked extensively outside of classical music with Jim O'Rourke, John Zorn, Laurie Anderson and many others. Ongoing projects include a duo with Icelandic bassist/composer Skúli Sverrisson that has released several albums, *The Clarinets* (a trio with Chris Speed and Oscar Noriega), a series of recordings with cellist Charles Curtis and a series of live film/music performances with experimental filmmaker Jennifer Reeves. Burr also maintains an active career as recording engineer and producer. At UCSD, he has taught grad seminars on musical aesthetics, undergraduate classes in music theory and popular music, and regularly performs classical repertoire in the Camera Lucida chamber music series. His primary clarinet teachers were Larry Combs, David Shifrin and Floyd Williams.

Violinist **ERIK CARLSON** has performed as a soloist and with many chamber and orchestral ensembles throughout Europe and the Americas. He is a highly active performer of contemporary music and has had works written for him by numerous composers, including Christian Wolff, Georges Aperghis, Jürg Frey, Peter Ablinger, Charles Wuorinen, Michael Finnissy, and Tom Johnson. Carlson is an enthusiastic proponent of interdisciplinary collaboration, and performs frequently with dancers, poets, and film. Carlson's past and present ensemble memberships include the International Contemporary Ensemble, the Talea Ensemble, the Trinity Bach Players, the New York Miniaturist Ensemble (of which he was the founder) and the Theatre of Eternal Music String Ensemble. He has been featured on many recordings, ranging from violin concertos of Antoine Beuger and Aldo Clementi, to chamber music of Milton Babbitt and Iannis Xenakis, to solo works of Johannes Kreidler and Zoltán Jeney. Also a composer, Carlson has had his musical compositions performed in a wide variety of venues.

Cellist **CHARLES CURTIS** has been Professor of Music at UCSD since Fall 2000. Previously he was Principal Cello of the Symphony Orchestra of the North German Radio in Hamburg, a faculty member at Princeton, the cellist of the Ridge String Quartet, and a sought-after chamber musician and soloist in the classical repertoire. A student of Harvey Shapiro and Leonard Rose at Juilliard, on graduation Curtis received the Piatigorsky Prize of the New York Cello Society. He has appeared as soloist with the San Francisco, National and Baltimore Symphonies, the Symphony Orchestra of Berlin, the NDR Symphony, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the BBC Scottish Symphony, the Janacek Philharmonic, as well as orchestras in Italy, Brazil and Chile. He is internationally recognized as a leading performer of unique solo works created expressly for him by composers such as La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, Éliane Radigue, Alvin Lucier, Christian Wolff, Alison Knowles and Tashi Wada. *Time Out New York* called his recent New York performances "the stuff of contemporary music legend," and the *New York Times* noted that

Curtis' "playing unfailingly combined lucidity and poise... lyricism and intensity." Recent seasons have included solo concerts at New York's Issue Project Room and Roulette, the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, the Sub Tropics Festival in Miami, the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, the Angelica Festival in Bologna as well as solo performances in Brussels, Metz, Paris, Mexico City, Athens and Los Angeles. Last summer Curtis led four performances of the music of La Monte Young at the Dia Art Foundation's Dia:Chelsea space in New York City.

Hailed as a "violinist...perfectly capable of playing clean transitions" ("The Acoustics of the Violin: a Review"), **KEIR GOGWILT** has established himself as a fine specimen for physicists interested in the acoustics of the bowed string. As a recitalist and chamber musician he has performed at festivals and venues including the Spoleto Festival in Italy, the Rockport Chamber Music Festival, Dumbarton Oaks, National Sawdust, and Miller Theatre. He has soloed with orchestras including the Chinese National Symphony, Orquesta Filarmonica de Santiago, the Manhattan School of Music Orchestra, and the Bowdoin International Music Festival Orchestra, collaborating closely with composers including Matthew Aucoin, Tan Dun, and Tobias Picker. He has served as associate concertmaster of the Canadian Opera Company and recorded for Tzadik records. Keir is a MA/PhD candidate in the Music Department; his scholarly work draws on critical theory to re-imagine the various nics and tics (tech-nics, hermeneu-tics, etc.) of musical composition and performance.

CATERINA LONGHI is a member of The San Diego Symphony, which she joined in 2015 after completing her Master of Music at The Juilliard School. A native of New York, Ms. Longhi received her Bachelor's degree at Juilliard and attended its Pre-College Division for 3 years. Her primary teachers were Heidi Castleman, Hsin-Yun Huang, Misha Amory and Steven Tenenbom. Prior to moving to San Diego, Ms. Longhi was a member of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra and served as principal viola with The Juilliard Orchestra, New Juilliard Ensemble, Verbier Festival Orchestra, Spoleto Festival USA and Schleswig- Holstein Music Festival. She has also attended The New York String Orchestra Seminar, Taos School of Music, Heifetz Institute, Perlman Music Program and Music Academy of the West.

Production Staff

David Espiritu, Jr., Public Events Manager

Stage Crew: Chenjun Liu, Cindy Salmeron, and Gigi Yip

Josef Kucera, Chief Recording Engineer

Forest Reid, Recording Assistant

Kimberly Vazquez, Box Office Lead

Front of House Crew: Daniel Barbarita, Nhuxuan Ho, and Reina Ishii

Jennifer Bewerse, Promotions Design

Rachel Beetz, Program Design

Contact us for information on upcoming concerts:

Music Box Office: (858) 534-3448 | <http://music.ucsd.edu/concerts>

Audience members are reminded to please silence all phones and noise generating devices before the performance. As a matter of courtesy and copyright law, no unauthorized recording or photographing is allowed in the hall. UC San Diego is a non-smoking campus.

Upcoming Events:

Intercultural Music Conference

February 26-28, 2016
icm2016.wordpress.com

Camera Lucida

March 14, 2016 – 7:30 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Telematics: Changing Tides III

April 10, 2016 – 4:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Music Center
Experimental Theater

WEDS@7 Erik Carlson & Aleck Karis

Perform Jurg Frey
April 27, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

WEDS@7 Takae Ohnishi

May 4th, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

WEDS@7 Animated Preparations presented by Stephanie Richards and collaborators

May 18, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Music Center
Experimental Theater

WEDS@7 Roscoe Mitchell, saxophone

March 2, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Music Center
Experimental Theater

Erik Carlson & Aleck Karis Perform Morton Feldman

April 5, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

WEDS@7 Formosa Quartet

April 20th, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Cathy Kautsky, Solo Piano Recital

May 1, 2016 – 5:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

WEDS@7 kallisti presents “Noon at Dusk” a new Chamber Opera by Stephen Lewis

May 11, 13, 14, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Music Center
Experimental Theater

A black and white photograph of a city skyline at night, with numerous skyscrapers illuminated and their lights reflecting on the water in the foreground. The sky is dark, and the water shows a soft, blurred reflection of the city lights.

KPBS™
evening | edition

Weekdays at 6:30 p.m. on KPBS-TV

KPBS™

KPBS is a public service of San Diego State University.