

**MONDAY
EVENING
CONCERTS**

**NICOLAS HODGES:
LEMMA-ICON-EPIGRAM**

March 26, 2018 | 8:00 PM
Zipper Concert Hall

MONDAY EVENING CONCERTS **MARCH 26, 2018**

Nicolas Hodges: Lemma-Icon-Epigram

Peter Ablinger - **A Letter from Schoenberg** (2008) [2']
[Video: Reading Piece with Player Piano]

Brian Ferneyhough - **Lemma-Icon-Epigram** (1981)[14']

Peter Ablinger - from **Voices and Piano** [Piano and CD] (1998-Present) [10']

- i. *Angela Davis*
- ii. *Lech Walesa*
- iii. *Setsuko Hara*

Rebecca Saunders - **Mirror, mirror on the wall** (1994) [10']

intermission

Peter Ablinger - **Deus cantando (God, singing)** (2009) [2']
[video: Computer-Controlled Piano and Screened Text]

James Clarke - **Untitled No. 5** (2007) [6']

Peter Ablinger - from **Voices and Piano** [Piano and CD] (1998-Present) [10']

- iv. *Forough Farrokhzad*
- v. *Pier Paolo Pasolini*
- vi. *Bonnie Barnett*

Rolf Riehm - **Ciao, carissimo Claudio, or The Steel Drums of San Marco** (2017) [12'] World premiere
[Piano and Pre-recorded Material]

Nicolas Hodges, piano

This program is generously underwritten by Don Davis and Randy Newman

PROGRAM NOTES compiled by Jonathan Hepfer

Peter Ablinger (b. 1959) - from the series *Quadraturen III ("Wirklichkeit") Studies for Mechanical Piano*

- 1) *Quadraturen III: A Letter from Schoenberg*
- 2) *Quadraturen III: Deus cantando (God, singing)*

Quadraturen: *Electroacoustic and installation pieces, pieces for player piano, ensemble, and orchestra. The method of Quadraturen (Squarings) can be compared to the phenomenon of grain encountered in photographs. Frequency (f) and time (t) are used as co-ordinates on a screen comprised of a number of small noise fields whose format may, for example, be 1 second (time) multiplied by 1 second (interval).*

(1) The first step is always an acoustic photograph ("phonograph"). This can be a recording of anything: speech, street noise, music.

(2) Time and frequency of the chosen "phonograph" are dissolved into a grid of small "squares" whose format may, for example, be 1 second (time) to 1 second (interval).

(3) The resulting grid is the score, which is then to be reproduced in different media: on traditional instruments, computer controlled piano, or in white noise.

The reproduction of "phonographs" by instruments can be compared to photo-realist painting, or - what describes the technical aspect of the "Quadraturen" more precisely -with techniques in the graphic arts that use grids to transform photos into prints.

When using humanly played instruments the grid has to be enlarged (slowed down) to remain playable - thus the result of the transformation is not so much a reproduction of the original but an approach to or a situation of comparison between instrumental sounds and the original sound source.

Using a smaller grain, e.g. 16 units per second (about the limit of the player piano), the original source approaches the border of recognition within the reproduction. With practice listening the player piano can even perform structures possible for a listener to transpose into/understand as spoken sentences.

Actually however, my main concern is not the literal reproduction itself but precisely this border-zone between abstract musical structure and the sudden shift into recognition - the relationship between musical qualities and "phonorealism": the observation of "reality" via "music". (Peter Ablinger)

*Text of Deus cantando (God, singing):
Declaration of the International Environmental Criminal Court
by Adolfo Perez Esquivel and The XIV Dalai Lama*

Constructor of the Computer Controlled Piano: Winfried Ritsch
Software design: Thomas Musil, IEM Graz
Voice: Miro Marcus (with Additional Voice Recordings by Elias Dorner and Lea Kluffinger)
Production: Berno Odo Polzer

Brian Ferneyhough (b. 1943) - *Lemma-Icon-Epigram*

"Tout est hiéroglyphique." (Baudelaire)

Lemma-Icon-Epigram derives both its form and inspiration from the tradition of "emblemata" popularised in the Renaissance by the poet Andrea Alciato (known as Alciati). This typically consists of three parts: a short riddle, expressed in gnomic form; an illustration related to it, usually a woodcut; and a concluding epigram, which comments on the relationship of the other two, ostensibly illuminating it but often in such a way as to introduce further riddle elements. (This, then, is not the familiar, classicizing Renaissance but its more obscure facet, embracing arcana and speculation, which has tended to be ignored until relatively recently.) (Fabrice Fitch)

An adequate interpretation of this work presupposes three distinct learning processes: (1) an overview of the (deliberately relatively direct) gestural patterning without regard to exactitude of detail in respect of rhythm; (2) a 'de-learning' in which the global structures are abandoned in favour of a concentration upon the rhythmic and expressive import of each individual note (as if the composition were an example of 'punctualistic' music); (3) the progressive reconstruction of the various gestural units established at the outset on the basis of experience gained during the above two stages of preparation. (Brian Ferneyhough)

Peter Ablinger (b. 1959) - from the cycle *Piano and Voices*

- i) **Angela Davis** (b. 1944, USA) Political activist and author
- ii) **Lech Walesa** (b. 1943) Politician and labor activist
- iii) **Setsumi Hara** (1920-2015, Japan) Actor
- iv) **Forough Farrokhzad** (1935-1967, Iran) Poet and film director
- v) **Pier Paolo Pasolini** (1922-1975, Italy) Film director and poet
- vi) **Bonnie Barnett** (b. 1947, USA) Vocal improviser, composers of the TUNNEL HUMs and radio host

I like to think about *Voices and Piano* as my song-cycle, though nobody is singing in it: the voices are all spoken statements from speeches, interviews or readings. And the piano is not really accompanying the voices: the relation of the two is more a competition or comparison. Speech and music is compared. We can also say: reality and perception. Reality/speech is continuous, perception/music is a grid which tries to approach the first. Actually the piano part is the temporal and spectral scan of the respective voice, something like a coarse gridded photograph. Actually the piano part is the analysis of the voice. Music analyses reality. (Peter Ablinger)

* * *

On CD would be speeches of important persons, politicians, film stars, sportsmen, pop musicians, TV-reporters. Well-known voices. One voice per piece. And the piano plays simultaneously a sort of frequency analysis of the CD material. (If you know my Klangforum CD on Kairos, the principle technique of this analysis is like *Quadraturen IV*, there with city noise instead of speeches.) So it is a gallery of portraits, of voice portraits. (...) I don't know much more. Only the sound – how piano and voice go together – and the impression of the whole work. But no more details at the moment.

I know only that the criterion for selection should be the voice. The character of a voice. Not only the importance of a person. At the same time there is always the desire for some personal connection or other. (...) The first idea was to take only well-known voices. Now I think more about a wide spectrum of voice characters (tempo, timbre). But maybe both together is possible. (...) I am thinking about languages. Different languages bring both, linguistic and sonic variability. But also not too much of it. Just as a method to bring in some colour. (...) But sure is: I need not agree with what each voice says!

(From Ablinger's early correspondence with Nicolas Hodges, for whom the cycle was composed)

* * *

I often found myself asking where the music in this situation resides. It is clearly not in the piano part alone, nor is it in the recorded voice. It is in the relationship between the two parts, their counterpoint: sometimes they are subtly different parallel lines, sometimes two interweaving yet independent parts, sometimes the piano is a machine desperately attempting to contain or imitate humanity, sparks flying in the process. (Nicolas Hodges)

Rebecca Saunders (b. 1967) - *Mirror, mirror on the wall*

When composing, I imagine holding the sounds and noises in my hands, feeling their potential between my palms, weighing them. Skeletal textures and musical gestures develop out of this. Then, like pictures placed in a large white room, I set them in silence, next to, above, beneath and against each other. (Rebecca Saunders)

James Clarke (b. 1957) - *Unfilled No. 5*

Since 2006 I have avoided giving titles to my musical works and to a large extent refrained from writing descriptions of them. The purpose of music is to reach parts of the brain, parts of our experience of perception, which can evaluate and appreciate matters in ways beyond the capacity and realm of words. The listener is invited to form his or her own understanding of the relationships within the musical event that takes place. Whereas in some cases it can be helpful to guide the listener through one part of the labyrinth, this is often best avoided, in my view, because it is an invitation to ignore the many other facets of the music. A musical composition, like an abstract work of visual art, should be allowed to speak for itself. (James Clarke)

Rolf Riehm (b. 1937) *Ciao, carissimo Claudio, or The Steel Drums of San Marco*

Epigraphs:

The scent of ancient harmonies permeates the narrow streets of Venice.

----- in the Frari church; suddenly at the grave of Monteverdi

When the Clauses Are Draped in Mourning

[This is a reference to musical phraseology and to Nicolas Roeg's film *Don't Look Now*, which is set in Venice and known in German as *Wenn die Gondeln Trauer tragen* - *When the Gondolas Are Draped in Mourning*.]

Origin of the piece:

----- in the Frari church; suddenly at the grave of Monteverdi

At the base of a pompous memorial statue to one of the Doges in a chapel on the left side of the Frari church, I noticed a simple plaque on the floor: the grave of Monteverdi. Later, as we drank our *caffè* in the piazza, the sound of a street musician's steel drums filled the air. The whole thing had a magical yet oddly melancholy atmosphere. We wandered through the city. I could not get Monteverdi's haunting madrigal *Interrotte speranza a doi tenori* out of my head. Ciao, Claudio - hail and farewell.

More specifically:

We were recently in Venice. Monteverdi was for many years musical director of St. Mark's Basilica and died in the city. I tried to let the strong and contradictory impulses of this mysterious place determine the course of my composition: a multifarious mixture of busy squares and intimate alleyways, a brash yet tender atmosphere, and always the awareness of a mythical aura surrounding daily life. (Monteverdi himself used mythological images to depict the concerns of his time, as in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*.) One wanders through narrow streets filled with the smells of cooking and suddenly finds oneself in front of a blindingly white, classical façade with the inscription "Teatro la Fenice": the theater of the rising phoenix. (During the Biennale in 1969, my piece *Leone und und* was performed there - it is written for high soprano, tenor, baritone, and orchestra; Ettore Gracis conducted.) Then the virtuoso architecture of the palaces along the Grand Canal! And surpassing all this, the Doge's Palace: for me, an epiphany in stone of the paradox between brutal power (the gigantic dimensions, its function as the palace of the Signoria and the Doge) and incredible beauty.

This is where Monteverdi lived. One of his heartbreaking madrigals, *Interrotte speranza*, became part of the aesthetic "froth" of my piece. In addition, I took it as a suggestive omen that the steel drum music - which we recorded on our friend's smartphone while drinking coffee - was in the key of d, just like *Interrotte speranza*! These two spheres weave themselves as recorded inserts into the piano texture, sometimes more, sometimes less. The piano texture either takes up what it hears or else vehemently rejects it because it still wishes to emphasize something from the previous section.

In my homage to Monteverdi, it was not only important to me to achieve a restrained tone of reverence, but also to enter into the enormous contrasts and expressive range of his music.

It is an homage, a threnody (***When the Clauses Are Draped in Mourning***), but also a kind of protocol of my reactions to Monteverdi's music, and all of this in the intoxicating atmosphere of Venice (***The Scent of Ancient Harmonies Permeates the Narrow Streets of Venice***) - I tried to work toward such a complex conglomerate.

(Rolf Riehm)

BIOGRAPHIES

An active repertoire that encompasses such composers as Beethoven, Berg, Brahms, Debussy, Schubert and Stravinsky reinforces pianist **Nicolas Hodges'** special prowess in contemporary music. As Tempo magazine has written: "Hodges is a refreshing artist; he plays the classics as if they were written yesterday, and what was written yesterday as if it were already a classic."

Born in London and now based in Germany, where he is a professor at the Musikhochschule Stuttgart, Hodges approaches the works of Classical, Romantic, 20th century and contemporary composers with the same questing spirit, leading the Guardian to comment that: "Hodges' recitals always boldly go where few other pianists dare ... with an energy that sometimes defies belief."

Cooperating closely with major and very different contemporary composers such as John Adams and Helmut Lachenmann is an important part of Nicolas Hodges' work. Many of them have dedicated their works to him, including Thomas Adès, George Aperghis, Gerald Barry, Harrison Birtwistle, Elliott Carter, James Clarke, Francisco Coll, Hugues Dufourt, Pascal Dusapin, Luca Francesconi, Beat Furrer, Isabel Mundry, Brice Pauset, Rolf Riehm, Wolfgang Rihm, Rebecca Saunders, Salvatore Sciarrino and Miroslav Srnka.

Highlights of the past seasons were the premiere of the award-winning piano concerto by Simon Steen-Andersen as part of the Donaueschingen Festival in 2014 with Francois-Xavier Roth and the SWR Symphony Orchestra Freiburg Baden-Baden, as well as the world premiere of Variations from the Golden Mountains (Birtwistle) in London's Wigmore Hall. Hodges played the Berlin premiere of Elliott Carter's Dialogues for piano and orchestra with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the German premiere with the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Daniel Barenboim. He also performed the world premiere of Thomas Adès' Piano Concerto In Seven Days with the London Sinfonietta followed by further performances with the London Symphony and Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestras.

As a concerto soloist, Nicolas Hodges' engagements include regular performances with the BBC Symphony, Boston Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, hr-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt, London Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Melbourne Symphony, MET Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg, Philharmonia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, St Louis Symphony, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Philharmonic, Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, WDR Sinfonieorchester Cologne and Ensembles such as ASKO/Schoenberg Ensemble Amsterdam, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Contrechamps Geneva, International Contemporary Ensemble Chicago and the Remix Ensemble in Porto. Among the distinguished conductors with whom Nicolas Hodges collaborates are Thomas Adès, Daniel Barenboim, George Benjamin, Martyn Brabbins, Sylvain Cambreling, James Levine, Susanna Malkki, Cornelius Meister, Jonathan Nott, Emilio Pomarico, David Robertson, Pascal Rophé, François- Xavier Roth, Peter Rundel, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Pierre-André Valade, Ilan Volkov and Ryan Wigglesworth.

As a recitalist, he has performed in Berlin (Musikfest), Brussels (Ars Musica), Hamburg (Ostertoene), Helsinki (Musica Nova), London (Wigmore Hall and BBC Proms), Lucerne (Festival), Madrid (INAEM), Melbourne International Arts Festival, New York (Carnegie Hall and Mostly Mozart), Paris (IRCAM and Festival d' Automne), Rom (IUC), Salzburg (Festival and Biennale), Strasbourg (Musica), Stuttgart (Eclat), Tanglewood (Festival), Tokyo, Vienna (Wien Modern) and Zurich (Tage für Neue Musik). In chamber music Nicolas collaborates regularly with the Arditti Quartet, Adrian Brendel, Colin Currie, Ilya Gringolts, Anssi Karttunen, Michael Wendeborg, Carolin Widmann and as a member of the Trio Accanto.

Highlights of the 2016/2017 season include engagements with the Aarhus Symphony Orchester (Baldur Brönnimann), the Göteborg Symphony Orchestra (François Xavier Roth) and the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra (Michael Wendeborg) performing the piano concerto by Simon Steen-Andersen. Nicolas Hodges will further perform Miroslav Srnka's piano concerto with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra (Tomáš Netopil) at the Rudolfinum Prague and with the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra (Christian Vasquez) at the Lindberg Festival. Furthermore Nicolas Hodges will perform the world premiere of Hans Thomalla's piano concerto with the Symphony Orchestra of the Bavarian Radio (Johannes Kalitzke) at Musica Viva in Munich. At the closing concert of the Festival "Wien Modern" (Wiener Konzerthaus) Nicolas Hodges will perform another world premiere, James Clarke's piano concerto „Untitled No. 8“, with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra (Ludovic Morlot).

In chamber music, Nicolas Hodges will perform works by Pascal Dusapin with Anssi Karttunen at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Return engagements and recitals include Konzerthaus Berlin, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, „Wien Modern“ Festival, SWR Festival Eclat Stuttgart, Wigmore Hall and Festival Présences in Paris.

Nicolas Hodges' discography includes Adès piano concerto In Seven Days with the London Sinfonietta and Thomas Adès (Signum Classic). In 2015, a CD with works by Harrison Birtwistle as well as a live recording of Luca Francesconi's piano concerto with the Orquestra Sinfónica Casa da Musica and the Remix Ensemble Porto were released. In autumn 2016 a new CD „Voces Abandonadas“ was released with works by Walter Zimmermann (Wergo)

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