11-4-2009

**Concert: Ithaca College Contemporary Chamber Ensemble**

Ithaca College Contemporary Chamber Ensemble

Jeffery Meyer

Richard Faria

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ITHACA CONTEMPORARY CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

Jeffery Meyer, Richard Faria, directors

Hockett Family Recital Hall
Wednesday, November 4, 2009
8:15 p.m.
PROGRAM

Lichtbogen (1986) Kaija Saariaho (b. 1952)
Nicholas DiEugenio, Maeve O’Hara, Debra Moree,
Tristan Rais-Sherman, Kyle Kresge, Mira Shifrin, Josh Oxford,
Megan Bledsoe, Elayne Harris
Jeffery Meyer, conductor

Richard Faria, Debra Moree, Heidi Hoffman,
Brad Pipenger, Kyle Kresge

Ad Parnassum (1998) Steven Stucky (b. 1949)
Nicholas DiEugenio, Tristan Rais-Sherman Wendy Mehne,
Richard Faria, Elayne Harris, Josh Oxford
Jeffery Meyer, conductor

INTERMISSION

Part I
1. Mondestrunken (“Drunk with Moonlight”)
2. Colombine
3. Der Dandy (“The Dandy”)
4. Eine Blasse Wäscherin (“A Pallid Washerwoman”)
5. Valse de Chopin (“Waltz of Chopin”)
6. Madonna
7. Der Kranke Mond (“The Sick Moon”)

Katie Cohen, soprano
Part II

8. Nacht ("Night")
9. Gebet and Pierrot ("Prayer to Pierrot")
10. Raub ("Theft")
11. Rote Messe ("Red Mass")
12. Galgenlied ("Gallows Song")
13. Enthauptung ("Beheading")
14. Die Kreuze ("The Crosses")

Sarah Toth, Soprano

Part III

15. Heimweh ("Homesickness")
16. Gemeinheit ("Foul Play")
17. Parodie ("Parody")
18. Der Mondfleck ("The Moon Spot")
19. Serenade
20. Heimfahrt ("Journey Home")
21. O Alter Duft ("O Ancient Fragrance")

Ashley Carver, soprano

Andrea Reges, Brad Pipenger, Mark Martin, Derek Hensler,
Tyler Borden, Elena Nezhdanova
Jesse Livingston, conductor

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Program Notes

*Pierrot Lunaire* by Arnold Schoenberg was a landmark of 20th century music which provoked reactions from many prominent composers. Maurice Ravel commented that *Pierrot* “left me with the most delightful yet terrible and painful feelings,” and afterwards imitated the instrumentation of *Pierrot* in his *Three Mallarmé Poems*. Stravinsky, after hearing Schoenberg’s work, called it "the solar plexus of twentieth-century music".

As the full title suggests ("three times seven poems from Albert Giraud's 'Pierrot lunaire'") *Pierrot Lunaire* (Moonstruck Pierrot) is a setting of 21 poems chosen from a set of 50 poems of the same name by Belgian Poet Albert Giraud published in 1884. Originally written in French, the poems were later translated into German by Otto Erich Hartleben in 1891. The original poems follow an old French "fixed form," the rondelet which is preserved by Hartleben's German translation. The form follows two stanzas of four lines each, followed by one of five. The first two lines are repeated in lines 7–8, and the first line again in line 13.

*Pierrot* originated as a commission from actress Albertine Zehme who, at the time, was singing another song cycle by Otto Wrieslander set to the same poems. She was not satisfied with the substance of Wrieslander's music and approached Schoenberg to set the poems for her evening cabaret performances. Schoenberg responded very quickly and began work on the music shortly after the contract was signed on March 9, 1912. This was the start of a new musical direction for Schoenberg. He wrote in his diary just a few days later:

> I am going, absolutely, toward a new expression, I can sense it. The sounds are here becoming practically animal-like in the direct expression of sensuous and spiritual emotions.

Although *Pierrot* was written before Schoenberg’s innovation of 12-tone serialism, the music creates a new world of colors and expression reflected vividly in the text. This touches on the issue of the relationship between the text and the music which Schoenberg addresses in the preface of his score:

> The performers’ task here is at no time to derive the mood and character of the individual pieces from the meaning of the words, but always solely from the music. To the extent that the tonepainterly representation of the events and feelings in the text were of importance to the composer, it would be found in the music anyway.
Unfortunately, this preface has bred a common misunderstanding that the text and the music have little to no relationship. Schoenberg's lesser known commentary on this very idea in his book "Style and Ideas" sheds some light into the issue:

In my preface to *Pierrot Lunaire* I had demanded that the performers ought not to add moods and illustrations of their own derived from the text...When I asked to not to add external expression and illustration, they understood that expression and illustration were out, and that there should be no relationship whatsoever to the text... What nonsense!

Although this seems to be an obvious remark, it is easy to misunderstand Schoenberg's preface. It is no surprise that the chapter from which the above quote is excerpted is entitled, "This was my Fault".

The basic plot of *Pierrot* involves several characters, Pierrot at the center, some of which are from *commedia dell'arte* ("comedy of the artists"). Pierrot is the stock character of a mime, or a clown, typically very naïve, innocent, trusting, but usually gets the butt of practical jokes. Part one explores theme of love, sex, and religion while interweaving ideas about the power and allure of the moonlight. Part two begins with the fall of night during which a series of sinister events take place such as a profane communion service, thievery, and a beheading. But then Pierrot becomes homesick (Part three) and begins his journey home back to Bergamo, his past haunting him along the way.
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Personnel
Katie Cohen, soprano
Sarah Toth, soprano
Ashley Carver, soprano
Wendy Mehne, flute*
Andrea Reges, flute
Mira Shifrin, flute
Richard Faria, clarinet*
Brad Pipenger, clarinet
Nicholas DiEugenio, violin*
Mark Martin, violin
Maeve O’Hara, violin
Debra Moree, viola*
Derek Hensler, viola
Heidi Hoffman, cello*
Tyler Borden, cello
Tristan Rais-Sherman, cello
Kyle Kresge, bass
Josh Oxford, piano
Elena Nezhdanova, piano
Megan Bledsoe**, harp
Elayne Harris, percussion
Jesse Livingston, conductor
Jeffery Meyer, conductor*

* Ithaca College faculty
** Guest artist