

4-17-2017

Concert: Ithaca College Contemporary Ensemble

Ithaca College Contemporary Ensemble

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Ithaca College Contemporary Ensemble

featuring works by

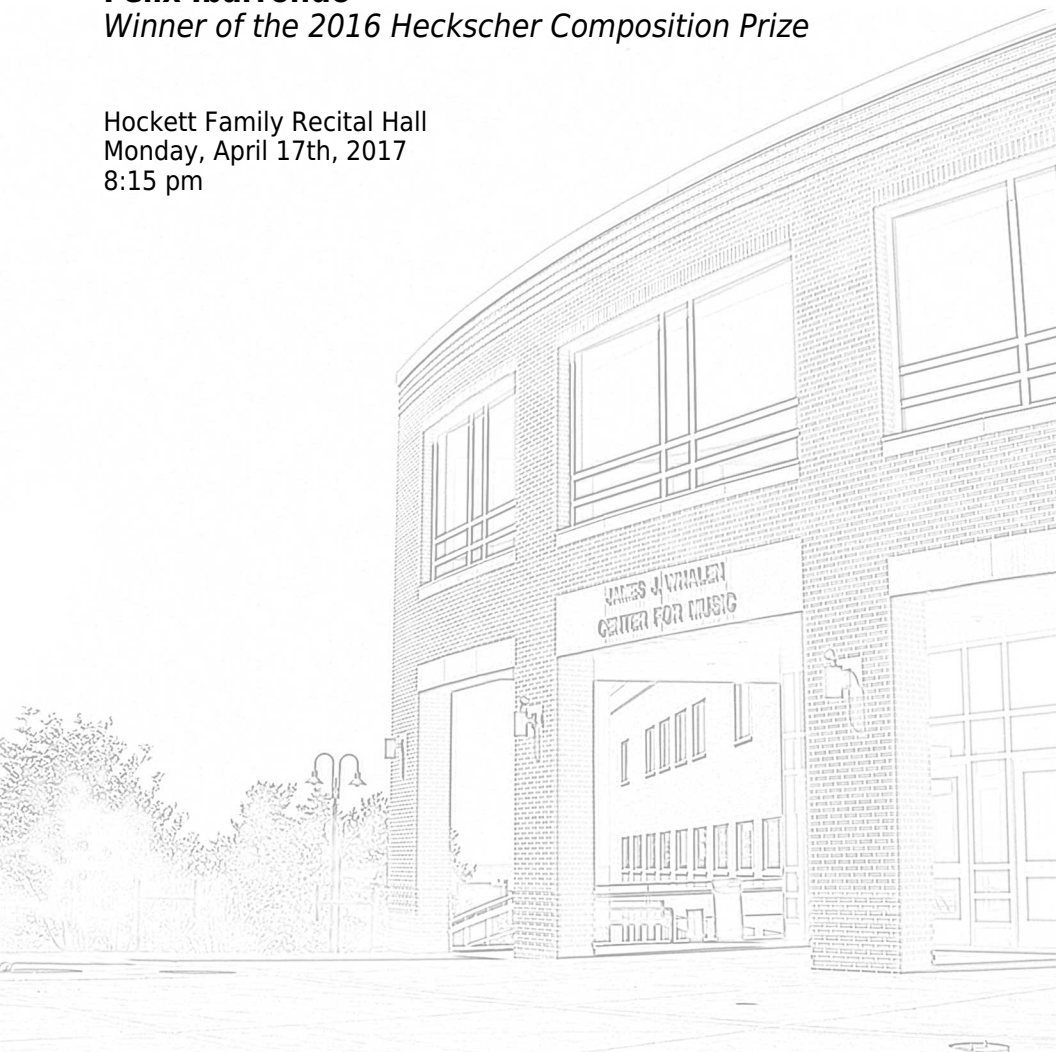
Augusta Read Thomas

Karel Husa Visiting Professor of Composition

Félix Ibarondo

Winner of the 2016 Heckscher Composition Prize

Hockett Family Recital Hall
Monday, April 17th, 2017
8:15 pm



ITHACA COLLEGE

School of Music

Program

Cinco Bagatelas Opacas y
Translúcidas (2009)

Jorge Villavicencio Grossmann
(b. 1973)

- I. Esaltato
- II. Gioviale
- III. Lirico e mesto
- IV. Scorrevole
- V. Statico

Calvin Wiersma, violin
Sammy Lesnick, bass clarinet*
Daniel Pesca, piano

Dancing Helix Rituals (2007)

Augusta Read Thomas
(b. 1964)

Calvin Wiersma, violin
Sammy Lesnick, clarinet*
Daniel Pesca, piano

Eleven Echoes of Autumn, 1965 (1966)

George Crumb
(b. 1929)

- Eco 1. Fantastico
- Eco 2. Languidamente, quasi lontano
- Eco 3. Prestissimo
- Eco 4. Con bravura
- Eco 5. Cadenza I (for Alto Flute)
- Eco 6. Cadenza II (for Violin)
- Eco 7. Cadenza III (for Clarinet)
- Eco 8. Feroce, violento
- Eco 9. Serenamente, quasi lontano
- Eco 10. Senza misura
- Eco 11. Adagio ("like a prayer")

Stephanie LoTempio, alto flute
Mikaela Vojnik, clarinet
Daniel Angstadt, violin
Daniel Pesca, piano

Intermission

Clair-Obscur (1974)

Félix Ibarondo
(b. 1943)

*Richard Faria, clarinet
Vadim Serebryany, piano*

Winner of the 2016 Ithaca College International Heckscher Composition Prize

Dviraag (2009)

Asha Srinivasan
(b. 1980)

*Wendy Herbener Mehne, flute
Elizabeth Simkin, cello*

this rough magic (2016)

Daniel Pesca
(b. 1985)

*Madeline DeNofio, clarinet
Andrew Meys, bassoon
Shaun Rimkunas, trumpet
Eric Coughlin, trombone
Hiromu Nagahama, percussion
Daniel Angstadt, violin
Zane Carnes, bass
Brian Diller, conductor*

Biographies

The music of **Augusta Read Thomas** (b. 1964 in New York) is nuanced, majestic, elegant, capricious, lyrical, and colorful — *"it is boldly considered music that celebrates the sound of the instruments and reaffirms the vitality of orchestral music."* (*Philadelphia Inquirer*)

In February 2015, music critic Edward Reichel wrote, *"Augusta Read Thomas has secured for herself a permanent place in the pantheon of American composers of the 20th and 21st centuries. She is without question one of the best and most important composers that this country has today. Her music has substance and depth and a sense of purpose. She has a lot to say and she knows how to say it — and say it in a way that is intelligent yet appealing and sophisticated."*

The New York Times article of March 6, 2015 states that Thomas had the distinction of having her work performed more frequently in 2013-2014 than any other living ASCAP composer, according to statistics from the performing rights organization. Former Chairperson of the American Music Center, she serves on many boards, is a generous citizen in the profession at large, and, according to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, *"has become one of the most recognizable and widely loved figures in American Music."*

A Grammy winner, her impressive body of works embodies unbridled passion and fierce poetry. *The New Yorker* magazine called her *"a true virtuoso composer."* Championed by such luminaries as Barenboim, Rostropovich, Boulez, Eschenbach, Salonen, Maazel, Ozawa, and Knussen, she rose early to the top of her profession.

An influential teacher at Eastman, Northwestern, Tanglewood, and Aspen Music Festival, she is only the 16th person to be designated University Professor at the University of Chicago (one of only seven currently holding the title). Augusta said, *"Teaching is a natural extension of my creative process and of my enthusiasm for the music of others."*

Thomas was the longest-serving Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony, for Daniel Barenboim and Pierre Boulez, from 1997 through 2006. This residency culminated in the premiere of *Astral Canticle*, one of two finalists for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Music. During her residency, Thomas not only premiered nine commissioned orchestral works, but was also central in establishing the thriving MusicNOW series, through which she commissioned and programmed the work of many living composers.

Recent and upcoming commissions include those from the Boston Symphony, the Utah Symphony, Wigmore Hall in London, JACK quartet, Third Coast Percussion, Tanglewood, Spektral Quartet, Chicago Philharmonic, Eugene Symphony, the Danish Chamber Players, Notre Dame University, Janet Sung, Lorelei Vocal Ensemble, and the Fromm Foundation. She won the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, among many other coveted awards. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Ms. Thomas studied composition with Oliver Knussen at Tanglewood (1986,

1987, 1989); Jacob Druckman at Yale University (1988); Alan Stout and Bill Karlins at Northwestern University (1983-1987); and at the Royal Academy of Music in London (1989). She was a Junior Fellow in the Society of Fellows at Harvard University (1991-94), and a Bunting Fellow at Radcliffe College (1990-91). Thomas has also been on the Board of Directors of the American Music Center since 2000, as well as on the boards and advisory boards of several chamber music groups. She was elected Chair of the Board of the American Music Center, a volunteer position that ran from 2005 to 2008. She is University Professor (one of six University Professors) at The University of Chicago. Augusta was MUSICALIVE Composer-in-Residence with the New Haven Symphony, a national residency program of The League of American Orchestras and Meet the Composer. Augusta has been on the Board of the ICE (International Contemporary Ensemble) for many years; is a member of the Advisory Committee of the Alice M. Ditson Fund; is on the Board of Trustees of The American Society for the Royal Academy of Music; is a Member of the Conseil Musical de la Fondation Prince Pierre de Monaco; and is on the Eastman School of Music's National Council.

Augusta Read Thomas is the 2016-2017 Karel Husa Visiting Professor of Composition.

Félix Ibarrodo was born in Oñati-Guipúzcoa, Spain, on June 12, 1943 from a family of musical tradition. He began his musical studies in solfeggio and harmony with his father, Antonino. While studying philosophy and theology, he studied musical composition with Juan Cordero Castafío, and piano, and he obtained diplomas in both majors from the Conservatories of San Sebastián and Bilbao.

Residing in Paris since 1969, he studied with Max Deutsch in the framework of the *Grands Concerts de la Sorbonne*, and Henri Dutilleux and Maurice Ohana at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure de Musique*. He was introduced to electroacoustic music within the GRM.

Ibarrodo has received the Oscar Esplá Prize, the Lili Boulanger Prize, the Silver Harp Award at the CECA (Spain), the Young Composer's Award from SACEM, the Lili Award and the Nadia Boulanger from the Académie Française. He speaks of his close relationship with composers Maurice Ohana and Francisco Guerrero as instrumental in both music and humanity. His abundant and varied work, in which orchestral and vocal music prevail, is interpreted by the most prestigious ensembles and performers in Europe.

The musicologist and critic Harry Halbreich writes about his personality and music: "Ibarrodo is a prime example of the independent composer, who is alien to every clique, but who has gradually imposed himself by his power of communication with audiences and performers. Passionately Basque, he deeply embodies the qualities of his people, the vehemence of expression—which can go as far as violence—, the priority of expression lived through abstraction, and systems, generosity and openness in the perspective of a humanism without concessions or complacency. The solidity of his writing, a branding image of all disciples of Max Deutsch, is at the service of an expressive message whose inflamed generosity does not retreat, if need be, to the harshest accents." — *trans. Emmanuel Berrido*

Félix Ibarrodo is the winner of the 2016 Ithaca College International

Program Notes

Thomas: **Dancing Helix Rituals**

Somewhat of a cross between "Jazz" (Monk, Coltrane, Tatum, Miles Davis, etc.) and "Classical" (Bartok, Stravinsky, Varèse, Berio, Boulez) **Dancing Helix Rituals** can be heard as a lively dance made up of a series of outgrowths and variations, which are organic and, at every level, concerned with transformations and connections. Each player serves as a protagonist as well as fulcrum point on and around which all others' musical force-fields rotate, bloom and proliferate. There is refined logic to every nuance, which stems from the sound, in context, on its own terms and the form is that of an 8-minute crescendo.

Dancing Helix Rituals should be performed in conjunction with dancers when feasible. The early Stravinsky ballets are works Augusta studies, holds in great reverence, loves, and embraces. Augusta sings, dances, moves, and conducts as she composes. As a result, she tends to hear and feel most of her music as music suitable for dance.

The score is marked with words including: *passionate, bright, driving, with flair and ritualistic energy, clock-like and mechanical, scurrying and playful, majestic and stately, funky, romp-like, syncopated, jazzy, colorful, fanfare-like, light and bouncy.* Varied, colorful, unexpected musical crosscuts are virtuostically performed in a manner so as to feel spontaneous and yet inevitable.

Commissioned by the Verdehr Trio and Michigan State University and dedicated with admiration to the Verdehr Trio, **Dancing Helix Rituals** was composed in 2006 and premiered by the Trio on October 21 at the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. Music reviewer Stephen Brookes of *The Washington Post* wrote: "The standout piece was Augusta Read Thomas's **Dancing Helix Rituals** from 2006. It's a dance, certainly—but a wild, driving, exhilarating dance that hurtled out of the gate and built into a riot of jazzy rhythms and colorful gestures. Like all good rituals, it was intoxicating—and the trio brought it off with a fine, eloquent frenzy." — *Augusta Read Thomas*

Crumb: **Eleven Echoes of Autumn, 1965**

Eleven Echoes of Autumn, 1965 was composed during the spring of 1966 for the Aeolian Chamber Players (on commission from Bowdoin College). The eleven pieces constituting the work are performed without interruption. Each of the *echi* exploits certain timbral possibilities of the instruments. For example, *eco 1* (for piano alone) is based entirely on the 5th partial harmonic, *eco 2* on violin harmonics in combination with 7th partial harmonics produced on the piano (by drawing a piece of hard rubber along the strings). A delicate aura of sympathetic vibrations emerges in *echi 3* and *4*, produced in the latter case by the alto flute and clarinet playing into the piano strings. At the conclusion of the work the violin achieves a mournful, fragile timbre by playing with the bow hair completely slack.

The most important generative element of **Eleven Echoes** is the "bell motif"—a quintuplet figure based on the whole-tone interval—which is heard at the beginning of the work. This diatonic figure appears in a variety of rhythmic guises, and frequently in a highly chromatic context.

Each of the eleven pieces has its own expressive character, at times overlaid by quasi-obbligato music of contrasting character, e.g., the "wind music" of the alto flute and clarinet in *eco 2* or the "distant mandolin music" of the violin in *eco 3*. The larger expressive curve of the work is arch-like: a gradual growth of intensity to a climactic point (*eco 8*) followed by a gradual collapse.

Although **Eleven Echoes** has certain programmatic implications for the composer, it is enough for the listener to infer the significance of the motto-quote from Federico Garcia Lorca: "... y los arcos rotos donde sufre el tiempo" ("... and the broken arches where time suffers"). These words are softly intoned as a preface to each of the three cadenzas (*echi 5-7*) and the image "broken arches" is represented visually in the notation of the music which underlies the cadenzas.

Ibarrondo: **Clair-Obscur**

This work for clarinet and piano was composed in 1974—it deals with confrontation in between both instruments: provocations, conflicts, and agreements.

Clair-Obscur ("*Light and Darkness*") features a musical narrative that breathes a free and spontaneous spirit, however articulated through thematic elements that confer coherence. The approach to treatment on the instruments does not veer from traditional writing: even when the clarinet player will need to demonstrate virtuosity, this work does not intend to be seen as virtuosism for the sake of itself. Contrastingly, the treatment on the piano part did not employ the kind of overly technical writing that was common at the time.

In **Clair-Obscur**, it seems, that the calmness of some passages collides with roughness, or even violence, that emanates from Félix Ibarrondo's sonic language. The sound world of this work features a marriage between primitivism and refinement, with a touch of ingenuity. — *Félix Ibarrondo, trans. Emmanuel Berrido*

Srinivasan: **Dviraag**

Dviraag is a fabricated word taken from the Sanskrit prefix "dvi" meaning "two" and the word "raag" loosely meaning "melodic mode." The pitch material for this piece is entirely based on a combination of two complementary pentatonic modes. The primary rhythmic material, introduced towards the beginning by the cello, was derived from a Carnatic vocal exercise I fondly remember learning as a child, in India. Of all the beginner's exercises I learned, this one always stood out as being surprisingly challenging and unusual in its subdivisions. This exercise has become the basis for an exploration of intricate rhythmic subdivisions grouped into salient short phrases that recur throughout the piece in various contexts. — *Asha Srinivasan*

Pesca: **this rough magic**

I composed **this rough magic** in January 2016, for the NYC-based ensemble Deviant Septet. The ensemble has the same instrumentation as Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat*, and has devoted itself to expanding the repertoire for that particular combination of players. I have long admired *L'histoire*, so I had to deliberately banish the sound of the piece from my head to find a constructive way of moving forward. Two decisions early in the composing process helped me mark out my own sonic territory: I settled on using only keyboard percussion (marimba and vibraphone), rather than Stravinsky's drums and metals; and I decided to explore the possibilities of brass mutes. I also resolved to face head-on the challenge of writing for the ensemble as a whole, rather than creating any extended sections for the countless possible subsets.

The title **this rough magic** comes from one of Prospero's soliloquies in *The Tempest*, just before he breaks his staff and renounces his power ("this rough magic/I here abjure"). The image of the shattering staff—violent, wooden, and dry—informs the opening double attack of the piece, which returns time and time again in the first section. Tendrils of magic evaporate from this act of destruction, branching out into the piece. The piece develops as a search for order in a landscape that is sometimes chaotic and volcanic.

this rough magic has four broad sections:

1. *Anxious, restless, volatile*. The double attack returns time and time again, tethering the music to the earth. Improvisatory lines in the clarinet, violin, and marimba try to escape this gravity, but are thwarted.

2. *Blended, suspended*. Finally—and suddenly—the music breaks out of the guttural space of the first section. Here, everything is liquid, with long solos for clarinet and trumpet dancing around a silvery unspooling thread in the vibraphone. This is an illusion of order—a dream. Towards the end of the section, the piece comes to quiet stasis.

3. *Spiky, disjunct*. The marimba takes the lead at the beginning of this long section, which starts as a series of fragmented phrases. Eventually, the texture fills out into a consistent buzz of motion—a humming mass of repeated notes, trills, tremolos, and flamboyant arabesques.

4. *Stately, ritualistic — languid, loose — exalted, ecstatic — flowing, ethereal — light, fanciful*. In this last series of phrases, the seven instruments finally begin acting as a unit. This seems to be the elusive order that the whole piece has journeyed towards—but, despite the exuberance of the climax that's achieved, it proves to be fragile, disappearing into the ether. — *Daniel Pesca*