

Kenny Baik, saxophone

New York Counterpoint
arranged for solo soprano saxophone and tape

Steve Reich (b.1936)

- I. Movement, Fast
- II. Movement, Slow
- III. Movement, Fast

Amour for Saxophone

Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007)

- I. Sei wieder fröhlich (Cheer up!)
- II. Dein Engel wacht über Dir (Your angel is watching over you)
- III. Die Schmetterlinge spielen (The butterflies are playing)
- IV. Ein Vöglein singt an Deinem Fenster (A little bird sings at your window)
- V. Vier Sterne weisen Dir den Weg (Four stars show you the way)

Of Ages Manifest for Unaccompanied Alto Saxophone

Michael Hersch (b.1971)

- I.
- II.
- III.
- IV.
- V.
- VI.
- VII.

Program Notes

New York Counterpoint (arranged for solo soprano sax and pre-recorded tape)

The New York Times describes Steve Reich as “among the great composers of the century” He received the Pulitzer Prize from the generation of composers who introduced the style of minimalism. In the late 1960s and early 1970s had a colossal impact on the music in America and beyond, not only in classical music, but also many other genres. *New York Counterpoint* was designed to be performed by ten musicians playing against a pre-recorded sound plus a soloist who performs a final part to complete the cycle.

According to Reich, “the piece is a continuation of the ideas found in *Vermont Counterpoint* (1982), where as soloist plays against a pre-recorded tape of him or her self... The opening pulses ultimately come from the opening of *Music for 18 Musicians* (1976). The use of interlocking repeated melodic patterns played by multiples of the same instrument can be found in my earliest works, *Piano Phase* (for 2 pianos or 2 marimbas) and *Violin Phase* (for 4 violins) both from 1967.” This piece is in three movements: fast, slow, fast, continuously performed as one after the other. The piece is in the meter 3/2, however, it juxtaposes between 6/4 or 12/8 meters. Reich’s music captures repeated motivic ideas, building a sense of simple line that loops around, and it makes an effect of magnetic tape spinning without no breaks in the middle. *New York Counterpoint*, especially by a shift of accent, is to change the perception of switching meters; yet in fact, is not changing the meter at all. In the end, his music should draw us into simplicity and straightforwardness.

Amour for soprano saxophone

Karlheinz Stockhausen is best known for groundbreaking work in electronic music, thus influencing avant-garde composers in the mid-20th century. His music explored psychological and acoustical aspects of music, which led him to create his principle, an extension of serialism. Later in his career, Stockhausen began to reintroduce more conventional melodic forms works such as *Mantra* (1970). In 1976, *Amour* was composed as a gift to his friends and family. It consists of a group of five pieces; the first which was commissioned by clarinetist, Suzanne Stephens in Stuttgart on January 9, 1978. In 2003, Stockhausen revised it for soprano saxophone. *Sei wilder fröhlich* (Cheer Up!) is a short lyrical movement, showcasing a conventional expedition based on a simple, tonal melody *Dein Engel wagt über Dir* (Your angel watches over you) is the juxtaposition of interacting two melodies: a low voice, soft and legato versus a high voice, sings with disconcerting intensity. *Die Schmetterlinge spielen* (the butterflies play) depicts two butterflies: one with a triplet figure flipping their wings, and the other with fast, closely-spaced sixteenth notes, which depicts the effect of playing against the other butterflies. Stockhausen noted, “The pitches should just speak; one hears diffused fundamentals (unfocused tones) with whistling (profuse overtones) and key noise. The upper pitches should have the same volume as the lower ones.” *Ein Vöglein singt an Deinem Fenster* (A Little bird sings at your window) describes a bird that lived in Stephens’ window. This bird is characterized by high pitches, flutter-tongue, wide vibrato, extreme intervals, and unexpected tempo changes. In the end, gradually, the bird finds the resting point. *Vier Sterne Weisen Dir den Weg* (Four Stars Show You the Way), the final movement represents his four children, where each figure repeats multiple times. The composition transforms its tempi and rhythms to create indeterminacy which introduces chance into a serial form.

Ages of Manifest for unaccompanied saxophone

Michael Hersch, a leading voice among American composers of his generation, has his own and difficult to associate particularly with conventional compositions. In 2012, *Of Ages Manifest* for unaccompanied saxophone was premiered at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University by one of the leading saxophone virtuosos of our time, Gary Louie, who performed it exclusively both in the United States and abroad. *Of Ages Manifest* is on the threshold of a major breakthrough in extreme sonic property of the instrument, particularly sounds that encompass breathy whispers, a relentless competition between complexity versus simplicity, as well as the juxtaposition of life and death. The work begins very softly, as quiet as possible, and the softness continues throughout the piece, and the ferocious characters are foreshadowed from the very beginning.

Movements IV and VI have some of the fastest and most powerful gestures that embrace all aspects of clarity tones, as well as, sounds of impenetrable obscurity. All other movements suggest to move very slowly, which draws partly from imagery connected with the indefinite continued events in the past, present, and future regarded as a whole.

Of Ages Manifest has a selection of poems by Jean Follain that has been set to each movement. Although that wasn't Hersch's introduction to Follain's work, it probably was the moment he realized he was destined to set his poems to music.

Jean Follain- Poems 1947-1971- Selected and Translated by Christopher Middleton

Excerpt from the Introduction

Poems in this book from the tumultuous period between the Second World War and Follain's death in 1971, rarely refer, frontally, to upheavals of that period... Yet the poems do often allude to powers, and to war, to the perishing of things... Another feature, one that enables us to consider Follain in the "modernist" context, is his simultaneism. Frequently his poems entail a witty juxtaposition of references to events simultaneous in time but far apart (though not mentally so) in space. Futurism and Dada had romped with at least four different modes of simultaneism. In the ebb-tide of early avant-garde, the 1930s, the period during which he began to publish, Follain begins to cultivate his very own mode, the simplest possible. Shocking or surprising, the juxtapositions are phrased in the nakedest terms. No furor, no flourish, as space-time instants are split open to show their simultaneous elements... indeed, the poems are carried by a voice that is sober, by fresh perception, by a dynamic intelligence... Vivid instantaneity, intimacy, freshness—those are the persistent overall features. Some of the poems must have been written during wartime. In their economy, sobriety, even tenderness they are quite unlike any other poems of their time, in any other European language. One of several enigmas posed by Follain's poetry is this: casual as many of the poems may seem, aren't they highly subtle distillations from large fields of experience? So by what sorcery does experience imagined afresh involve transformations that are such freshness felt still on our pulses?

1. *One speaks as it happens
a few words for oneself
alone on this strange earth
while the white flowerlet
the pebble like any in time past
the straw from thatch
again connect
down by the barrier
one slowly opens
to enter the house of clay
but then chairs, table, the armoire
are aglow with a glory of sun.*
2. *In any uncertain century ...
the veil of the rain
unshaken walls
the shining roofs.*
3. *... on button came off
and the stream in a gutter
went and deposited it
in a private garden
where a plaster Pomona
laughing and naked
was crumbling away.*
4. *Red beside the sweet apple
powerless
to imitate the bird
the rag hangs from the branch
the bird flown the apple fallen
it stays put
making the cold of ages manifest
and the color in silence;
in a somber epoch
some men do reason
not far from this tatter
uniquely marking space.*
5. *It is a purplish pebblestone
ill-set inside cement
dissolves when it freezes
whereas the simple person
will hold himself together
every dawn
turning the key in its lock
walking across his floor
throwing a bone to the black dog
dying alone stuck to his wall
while he sees the smoke rise
on horizons that disappear.*
6. *Are these the days for our exegeses
when the wind is uprooting
trees on the hill
and across the fields its gusts
could equally well carry off
pages of theology dropping them
in the cold marshland water?
nevertheless the clockmaker ...
he who holds between two fingers
the needle as needs be
dividing up his time
means to go on with his work
till the end of the world*
7. *Back and front of the house
don't brighten at the same time
shade from sunlit foliage ...
but the time may come
when all that's left is rock
under the rain
with no flesh trembling
as in this time of people shot.*