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Contemporary Californian Composers

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C O N T E M P O R A R Y C A L I F O R N I A N

Composers


WEILL RECITAL HALL AT CARNEGIE HALL

Thursday, June 28, 2007 • 8 p.m.

Louise Thomas, *Piano*
Grace Fong, *Piano*
Songa Lee, *Violin*
Su-a Lee, *Violoncello*



Louise Thomas

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PROGRAM

Hallelujah Junction

Grace Fong, piano
Louise Thomas, piano

*Cyan**

Louise Thomas, piano

Sonata (1998) for solo piano

Prelude
Scherzo: *Epicycles, Tap-Dancing and a Soft Shoe*
Postlude

Louise Thomas, piano

Intermission

*Forbidden Etudes**

Etude of Panic
First Etude of Groove
Etude of Will
Etude of Longing
Second Etude of Groove
Damaged Etude (Etude of Remorse)
Third Etude of Groove

Louise Thomas, piano

*Daa Il Hubb (The Malady of Love)**

Hijab (The Veil)
Shillat Ward (Rose Petals)
Hubbak Dawabbny (Your Love Has Melted Me)

Songa Lee, violin
Su-a Lee, violoncello
Louise Thomas, piano

A Complete Wealth of Time

Grace Fong, piano
Louise Thomas, piano

*World Premiere

John Adams
(b. 1947)

Jeffrey Holmes
(b. 1971)

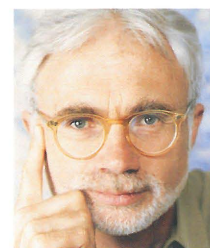
Stephen Hartke
(b. 1952)

Shaun Naidoo
(b. 1962)

John Bisharat
(b. 1964)

Edmund Campion
(b. 1957)

PROGRAM NOTES



John Adams is one of America's most admired and respected composers. A musician of enormous range and technical command, he has produced works, both operatic and symphonic, that stand out among all contemporary classical music for the depth of their expression, the brilliance of their sound and the profoundly humanist nature of their themes. His music has played a decisive role in turning the tide of musical aesthetics away from the theoretical principles of European modernism toward a more expansive and expressive language, so characteristic of his New World surroundings.

Born and raised in New England, Adams learned the clarinet from his father and played in marching bands and community orchestras during his formative years. He began composing at the age of ten and heard his first orchestral pieces performed while still a teenager. The intellectual and artistic traditions of New England, especially the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Harvard University, helped shape him as an artist and thinker. After earning two degrees from Harvard University, he moved to Northern California in 1971 and has ever since lived in the San Francisco Bay area.

Hallelujah Junction is a tiny truck stop on Route 49 on the Nevada-California border, not far from where I have a small mountain cabin. One can only speculate on its beginnings in the era of prospectors and Gold Rush speculators (although a recent visit revealed that cappuccino is now available there). Here we have a case of a great title looking for a piece.

So now the piece finally exists: the 'junction' being the interlocking style of two-piano writing which features short, highly rhythmicized motives bouncing back and forth between the two pianos in tightly phased sequences. This is a technique I first used in the 1982 *Grand Pianola Music* and later expanded in orchestral pieces.

Hallelujah Junction lasts approximately fifteen minutes and is in four parts, linked one to the other. The first section begins with a short, exclamatory three-note figure which I think of as "lelujah" (without the opening "Hal-"). This energized, bright gesture grows in length and breadth and eventually gives way to a long, multifaceted "groove" section. A second, more relaxed part is more reflective and is characterized by waves of triplet chord clusters ascending out of the lowest ranges of the keyboard and cresting at their peak like breakers on a beach.

A short transitional passage uses tightly interlocking phase patterns to move the music into a more active ambience and sets up the final part. In this finale, the "hallelujah chorus" kicks in at full tilt. The ghost of Conlon Nancarrow goes head to head with a Nevada cathouse pianola.



Jeffrey Holmes was born in Los Angeles, California. His music has been described by the Los Angeles Times as "Captivating...the haunting and slightly disorienting sound disrupts and engages the open ear", and "By far the most interesting and musically arresting work on the concert...music to be really heard and deserving of reflection" by the Society of Composers INC.

He earned his BM degree from the San Francisco Conservatory and his MM and DMA from the University of Southern California, where he received numerous awards and was twice named the Outstanding Graduate of the Composition Department. His music has been performed in Europe, the United States, Canada and Mexico, and at festivals in Darmstadt (Germany), Prague (Czech Republic), Microfest 2003 and 2005 in Venice (CA), and as a Composition Fellow at the Chamber Music Conference and Composer's Forum of the East in Bennington (Vermont).

He has received commissions, performances and acknowledgements from groups such as The American Composers Forum, ASCAP, The California Institute of the Arts Orchestra, Society of Composers INC, Piano Spheres, The Society for Chromatic Art, Stanford University, Florida State University, Mark Menzies' *Inauthentica*, The Nimbus Ensemble, The Friends and Enemies of New Music, *ensembleGREEN* and USC Thornton's Symphony, Contemporary Music Ensemble, and Percussion Ensemble. He has been on the faculty at the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California, and currently is an Assistant Professor of Music at Chapman University. His music is published by Doberman-Yppan.

Cyan, for solo piano, was composed during the winter of 2006-2007. The title refers to a particular shade of the color blue and is a description of many aspects of the work. Most literally, there are nine sections that move through various hues from dark to light and back again. These sections are differentiated through diversities of texture, register, and figuration, and are united by the constant use of thematic materials, formal elisions, and harmonic movement. Other illusions implied by the title include a general feeling of the coldness of winter, the motions of water, the darkness of the night, and the nihilism that I see and feel everywhere.



Stephen Hartke has emerged as one of the leading American composers of his generation, whose work has been hailed for both its singularity of voice and the inclusive breadth of its inspiration. Born in Orange, New Jersey, in 1952, Hartke grew up in Manhattan where he began his musical career as a professional boy chorister, performing with such organizations as the New York Pro Musica, the New York Philharmonic, the American Symphony Orchestra, and even two seasons as an understudy at the Metropolitan Opera. Following studies at Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of California at Santa Barbara, interrupted by stints as advertising manager for several major music publishers, Hartke settled in the Los Angeles area, where he is now Distinguished Professor of Composition at the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California.

Hartke's output is extremely varied, from the medieval-inspired piano quartet, *The King of the Sun*, and *Wulfstan at the Millenium*, an abstract liturgy for ten instruments, to the blues-inflected violin duo, *Oh Them Rats Is Mean in My Kitchen*, and the surreal trio, *The Horse with the Lavender Eye*. He has composed concerti for renowned clarinetist, Richard Stoltzman, and violinist, Michele Makarski, and his collaboration with the internationally-celebrated Hilliard Ensemble has produced three substantial works, including his Symphony No. 3, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic. Other major commissions have come from the National Symphony Orchestra, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, the Barlow Foundation, and many others. Stephen Hartke is also the winner of the Rome Prize, the Berlin Prize, and the prestigious Charles Ives Living awarded by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Most of his music is available on CD on Naxos American Classics, CRI, ECM New Series, EMI Classics, and New World Records.

Sonata (1998) for Solo Piano

My piano sonata was composed as a gift for Vicki Ray who has been a dear friend and musical ally for many years. The piece is cast in three movements, the outer two being related both in thematic material and in their essentially somber mood. The central movement is considerably more playful and dance-like. The 'epicycles' of the movement's title refer to two bits of material, one of which starts the movement, that are generated by the nesting of simple rhythmic wheels within wheels, thus producing lively syncopated melodic figures. Some of the resulting motives suggested tap-dancing to me, so I ran with it, going so far as to place a rather idiosyncratic soft shoe as a 'trio' to the tap-dancing's 'minuet.'



Shaun Naidoo's music has been performed throughout the United States, Europe, South Africa and Australia. Born in Ladysmith, South Africa in 1962 he composed extensively for the cabaret, musical theater and modern dance stages during the 1980s. During this period he was closely associated with Shifty Records and released three records in collaboration with Warrick Swinney, including the acclaimed "found" opera *Season of Violence* (1990) which received an Honorable Mention at the Prix Ars Electronica in 1992. In 1990 he moved to Los Angeles and composed numerous ElectroAcoustic works, including *Bad Times Coming* and *Waking in the Dirt*, both of which can be found on the C.R.I. label. In 2004 his CD *Smoke and Mirrors* was released by Evander Music (Oakland, CA). His most recent CD *Electric Fences* (May 2005) can be found on the Capstone label (New York). This CD features the Portland, Oregon based ensemble FearNoMusic. A new CD, *Fiat Lux*, will be released later this year on Capstone.

His music has consistently received critical acclaim. During the late 1980s the Johannesburg Citizen named him "one of the brightest lights in the South African musical firmament" and the Johannesburg Star identified him as "the leading composer for modern dance in South Africa". The Weekly Mail called *Season of Violence* "powerful, inventive and challenging". More recently the Los Angeles Weekly described his music as "a hoot, and a delight" and added that he is a composer "...worth watching".

Forbidden Etudes

Composed for Louise Thomas in 2004 these were not intended to be etudes in the traditional sense. They are primarily an outcome of my interest at the time in exploring new compositional approaches to subjects both musical and non-musical – panic, damage, groove, etc.

Forbidden Etudes are best viewed, perhaps, as compositional etudes that, as a by-product, pose specific technical challenges for the performer.



Palestinian-American composer, **John Bisharat**, has been active professionally in the Film and TV business as a composer, arranger, orchestrator, producer and conductor, for over twenty years.

In 2002, John was selected as a finalist, from over 400 international applicants, to attend American Music Center's "Synergy", an international symposium for composers and conductors led by Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In 2000, he was selected from over a thousand composers to compose a work for a 175 – voice choir and the St. Joseph Symphony Orchestra, which would celebrate the culture and heritage of the city of St. Joseph and the state of Missouri. This commission included a teaching residency in St. Joseph where John was a guest lecturer at virtually the entire school district, ranging from the Pre-school through University level. The program was a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts and American Composer's Forum and was an associate partner of the White House Millennium

Council. Inspired by this foray into music education, John has been involved with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association committee since 2005 to contribute to the design of the curriculum for their education programs. He has also guest lectured the Film Music class at Chapman University.

Bisharat has conducted live performances at such prominent venues as Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center, Los Angeles' Greek Theater, Denver's Red Rocks Amphitheater and the Morton Myerson Symphony Hall in Dallas, among others. He regularly conducts the studio orchestras of Los Angeles in a variety of commercial endeavors and concert music, including CDs, film scores, and advertisement.

He has written the Internet global musical logo for Microsoft Network and composed for the national advertising campaigns of Guess Jeans and Coca-Cola. Film credits include "One Night with the King" (2006) starring Omar Sharif and Peter O'Toole, "Magdalena" (2006), two of Charles Bronson's movies, and several Disney productions including "All Dogs Go to Heaven" and "Doug's First Movie".

As a young musician, John studied cello with Eleonore Schoenfeld and John Walz. He completed the film scoring program at UCLA in 1986. He received full scholarships awarded by BMI and the ASCAP foundations for active participation in each of their film scoring programs in 1992.

Daa Il Hubb (The Malady of Love) is a piano trio written for violinist, Songa Lee, which explores non-even tempered Arabic maqamat (scales).

الحجاب يصنع الوصال
 لكنني اركرك في الليال الطوال
 لا تنساني فقل انك نبي حياتي
 اموت ورناني فقلن لحن الزكدياتي

The original poem, written in 1932 by Emily Bisharat, speaks of an unrequited love, and closes with the words, "my ashes will sing forever the lament of our love."



A native of Dallas, Texas, **Edmund Campion** did his doctoral work in composition at Columbia University and attended the Paris Conservatory where he worked with composer Gérard Grisey. In 1993 he was selected to work at IRCAM and was later commissioned to write a large-scale piece for interactive electronics and MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) grand piano. The resulting *Natural Selection* received its premiere with the composer at the piano in 1996. After his return from Paris, Campion joined the composition faculty at U.C. Berkeley, where he is also Composer in Residence at the Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (CNMAT).

Many of Campion's works explore the relationships between sound and space—explorations that combine cutting-edge technology with sheer imagination. In his ambitious cycle for instruments and quadrophonic tape *Quadrivium* (1995-98), premiered by David Milnes and EARPLAY, Campion surrounds his audience with sound sources, enveloping them in the piece and inviting a kind of listening that is multidimensional and ear-opening. In some cases, his sonic experiments have sprung from music for specific events in specific sites. For example, when working on *Flood Stage*, a collaborative project with John Campion and sculptor Terrisa J. Mabrey, the composer developed a framework of expanding and collapsing rhythmic phrases to meet the challenge of writing music that audience participants could move in and out of—through both time and space.

The composer writes about **A Complete Wealth of Time**: "The title of the work derives from a memorable dream I had while working on the piece. It was night at the famous Natural History Museum of the Jardin des Plantes in Paris. I found myself in the Great Hall of Time, which displays the march of evolution by way of a fabulous parade of skeletons—with a human one heading the macabre, weirdly homogeneous assembly. I realize that Death is in the room. He wears a French Policeman's uniform and is working as the night-guard for the exhibition. Being young and foolish, and realizing that no force could possibly know more about life, I attempt to strike up a conversation. The Grim Reaper cooperated and a lengthy exchange followed. Death informed me that his role as celestial janitor is a restricted one, that organic material is only processed according to strict guidelines. This seemed comforting and eventually we arrived at some of the metaphysical issues. 'Is the life that strives in the Romantic sense against hopeless odds and personal limitations, a life that has meaning, or is it in light of Death, an absurd waste of energy—a defunct ego-centric western cultural fallacy?'"

"Death was coy. He lowered his head and responded in an almost inaudible voice. He might have said 'It is a complete waste of time,' but I heard 'It is a complete wealth of time.'"



Louise Thomas, piano

Pianist Louise Thomas is Director of Keyboard Collaborative Arts at Chapman University in California. She received her doctorate in piano performance from the University of Southern California where she studied with John Perry and Alan Smith. A native of Ireland, Louise Thomas has performed widely throughout Europe, North America and Asia at such notable concert venues as the Tchaikovsky Conservatoire in Moscow, the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing and Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

After completing undergraduate musicology studies at Trinity College, Dublin where she had developed a passion for contemporary music, Louise was offered a German Government scholarship to study piano performance at the Hochschule in Hannover, Germany. While a student there, she won second prize at the Ibla-Ragusa competition in Sicily where she was also awarded the Béla Bartók Prize. In 1998, she won the concerto competition at the University of Southern California and played under the baton of the late Sergiu Comissiona. A recording of this concerto is currently available on Classical KUSC's "Musical Moments" CD.

An active collaborative pianist, Dr. Thomas has made CD recordings in Germany, as part of the chamber music festival, "Schwetzingen Festspielen", at the Banff Center for the Arts in Canada with the Irish Contemporary Music group, Nua N6s, as well as appearing on numerous radio broadcasts for RTE (Irish) Radio, BBC Radio Northern Ireland, Moscow Radio, K-USC and K-MZT in Los Angeles. She has also played live and recorded many times for RTE (Irish National Television) and the nationally distributed Ovation Arts Channel in Los Angeles. Selections of her recordings are available at iTunes.com.

Louise Thomas has been invited onto the faculty of several summer programs. She was the vocal coach at the summer program, "La Fabbrica" in Tuscany and since 2003, has been the Festival pianist and vocal coach at the summer program of Idyllwild Arts Academy in California. Her commitment to the music of today remains undimmed and she is delighted this evening to perform a program of some ground-breaking contemporary Californian composers.



Grace Fong, piano

Praised as a "true musical colourist," an artist of "rare eloquence and grace," Grace Fong's performances have been hailed as "positively magical" with "enormous style and taste." Her piano performances have gained critical acclaim in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Asia. Grace Fong's studies in piano took place at the Colburn School of the Performing Arts in 1994, and later at USC where she was awarded the USC Renaissance Scholar Prize Award. Dr. Fong received her Master's of Music and Doctorate of Musical Arts degrees at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Radio/television broadcasts have been included in programming on the British Broadcasting Corporation, WCLV-FM 104.9, KUSC 91.5 FM in Los Angeles, the "Emerging Young Artists" series in New York, and "Performance Today" on National Public Radio. Performances with orchestra have included the Halle Orchestra in the United Kingdom, Music Academy of the West Festival Orchestra, the Olympia Philharmonic Orchestra, The Shreveport Symphony, the Peninsula Symphony, the Musica de Camera Orchestra, the Los Angeles Debut Orchestra, and the Chamber Orchestra of Southwest Virginia, and the New Hampshire Music Festival Orchestra.

In 1997, Grace Fong won the Grand Prize in piano from the National Foundation for the Advancement of the Arts Talents Search and was selected by the White House Commission to perform at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. Thereafter, Ms. Fong was named a "Presidential Scholar in the Arts", and was presented a medallion by former President Clinton at the White House.

Grace Fong was recently a prizewinner of the prestigious Leeds International Piano Competition 2006 in the United Kingdom. She was also a prizewinner of the 2007 Bosendorfer International Piano Competition and the 2006 San Antonio International Piano Competition, winning the award for Best Performance of a classical composition. Dr. Fong was the Gold Medalist for the 2003 Wideman International Piano Competition, the winner of the 2002 Music Academy of the West Concerto Competition and the winner of the 2002 Cleveland Institute of Music Concerto Competition. In December 2003, Grace Fong gave her debut recital at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. The Washington Post remarked: "Fong played with an easy elegance. . . painting impressionistic landscapes with hardly any drips or smudges, Fong landed her notes gently on the ear like snowflakes." Dr. Fong has had the privilege of working with distinguished teachers, artists, and performing pianists including Mitsuko Uchida, Stephen Hough, Jerome Lowenthal, Gilbert Kalish, and members of the Emerson Quartet.

Grace Fong has served as guest artist and teacher at the New Hampshire Music Festival and the first Salt Spring Piano Festival. She now joins the Chapman University Conservatory of Music as Director of Keyboard Studies.



Songa Lee, violin

Korean-born Songa Lee grew up in England and began playing the violin when she was six. The following year she won a scholarship to one of Europe's most renowned conservatories, Chetham's School of Music.

At the age of seventeen, Songa was signed to Encore Concerts Ltd., and after giving her recital debut at the South Bank Centre in London came to the United States as part of the group, the British Virtuosi. In 1994 she went on to study with Robert Lipsett at USC, completing her Bachelor's and Master's degrees. She studied concurrently with L.A. Philharmonic Concertmaster Martin Chalifour. During her time at USC, Songa performed concertos with both the USC Symphony and USC Chamber orchestras and also in Korea with the KBS Orchestra at the Seoul Arts Centre. Developing an interest in contemporary music, she performed extensively with USC's Contemporary Music Ensemble, introducing many new works including the premiere of Naomi Sekiya's violin concerto, Dance in the Wilderness.

Involvement in various music festivals such as Sarasota, the Schleswig-Holstein Masterclass series in Germany, and a residency at the Banff Centre in Canada led to concert tours in Canada and Britain. She has received numerous grants and awards for performances in Europe and North America. Songa Lee currently lives in Los Angeles and, while working extensively as a studio musician, enjoys active involvement in a number of solo and chamber music projects.



Su-a Lee, cello

Born in Seoul, Korea, Su-a was given a full-scholarship to attend Chetham's School of Music in Manchester at the age of 9. She was then given a full-scholarship place to study with Harvey Shapiro at the Juilliard School in New York, where she received her Bachelor's degree. Whilst there she performed regularly with a piano trio and a string quartet, often performing for Juilliard showcase events. Since graduating from the Juilliard School, she has been a member of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra for almost ten years. She is also a founder member of the group Mr McFall's Chamber, which started as a string quartet whose initial idea was to introduce classical music to non-classical listeners by taking contemporary music to the late night club scene in Edinburgh. After huge success the group has since expanded to eight members including bass, piano, percussion and vocals, performing a diverse repertoire, ranging from cartoon classics, through progressive rock and tango nuevo.

Photography, audio or video recording of any kind is not permitted.