



Brooklyn Rider & Soprano Ariadne Greif: Chalk and Soot

Friday, July 26, 2024 7:00 PM

Programme Note

The Brooklyn Rider Almanac:

In 1912, a group of artists in Germany with Wassily Kandinsky at the center known as Der Blaue Reiter (Brooklyn Rider's namesake) published Der Blaue Reiter Almanach. This highly eclectic collection of artwork, essays and music served as an artistic testament to their era while also offering a vision for the future and an open embrace of different artistic traditions, mediums, and aesthetics.

The unquenchable drive for artistic exploration and open embrace of the collective spirit displayed by Der Blaue Reiter have greatly inspired our artistic mission, and The Brooklyn Rider Almanac honors original source of inspiration while being fully in the present. Using new commissions as our project's touchstone, we asked a select group of three unique musical creators to imagine short works for Brooklyn Rider. The composers include Brazilian-American singer, pianist, arranger and composer Clarice Assad, multi-instrumentalist and composer Tyshawn Sorey, and songwriter, singer, pianist, and composer Gabriel Kahane. By design, this project offers new perspectives on string quartet writing, with the composers also operating comfortably in other musical languages outside of classical music. But more significantly, these composers represent some of our favorite musical thinkers, equipped with unique abilities to point the way forward for our medium.

This iteration of the Brooklyn Rider Almanac is the second installment of this project. Ten years ago, we commissioned some fifteen works for the original project, with composers ranging from Bill Frisell to Vijay Iyer to Aoife O'Donovan. The Brooklyn Rider Almanac was released by Mercury Classics in 2014.

- Nicholas Cords



Cinematheque - Clarice Assad

In my music, I often construct visual elements or storylines, and I plant a seed in the minds of those who listen to it. For example, if I write about the Amazon Forest, I evoke sounds of nature, bird calls, and other elements. But in this piece, I turn off my storytelling self to let each listener create their tale and visuals in their imagination, allowing for open interpretation and personal resonance with the music.

With this in mind, picture this work as a fictional film score cue. As you listen, see a narrative unfolding and develop a title for the scene you envision. What moods emerge in the music? In what period or genre do you place this fictional movie excerpt? Is it a silent film, film noir, sci-fi, comedy? Or even a cartoon?

As you listen to this work, your task is to create a title for this fictional film. Let the music spark visuals, characters, and storylines to inspire your cinematic title. There is no correct answer. You are free to invent a unique movie name based on the moods, genres, and visuals you perceive in the music. This collection of unique listener perspectives and interpretations forms the CINEMATHEQUE.

As you experience this piece, relax and let your inner director take over. Your creative vision is an essential part of this interactive listening experience. Thank you for being a part of the CINEMATHEQUE!

- Clarice Assad

(untitled) - Tyshawn Sorey

(To be introduced from stage)

American Studies - Gabriel Kahane

In October of 2020—the final stretch of a year-long hiatus from the internet—I set out to write a song every day for a month. It was a chaotic time, and I wanted to give myself permission to write about small things, rather than trying to distill the enormity of the moment into everything I wrote. But on October 9th, I wrote a song called “To Be American,” which insisted on a large canvas:



CHAMBERFEST

*To be American again,
Teenaged and certain of innocence,
Six lanes of western caravan,
Burn fuel to speed up the renaissance.*

*Before the trench coats and the roped off rooms,
The shell shocked mothers and the TV crews.*

*Foreclosing a grand old dream,
Black motorcade, running on empty,
Big box and a Ponzi scheme,
Drain everything, land of the plenty...*

The song is at once a celebration, and interrogation, of nostalgia: of the naive, pre-9/11 milieu in which I grew up in Northern California. It is from this tune that American Studies, a new string quartet for Brooklyn Rider, developed. Where the song leans into melancholy, the quartet transforms the themes, at least initially, into something sunnier, infused with a folk/string-band sensibility that few groups can dispatch as groovily and convincingly as Brooklyn Rider. (This was not an accident: I've known the guys for a dozen years, and one of the great pleasures of being a composer is writing to the strengths of musicians you know and love.)

After a brief introduction, the piece begins as a fairly straightforward transcription of the song, before spinning out into a series of loose digressions – more marginalia than variations: what if this shard of melody were turned upside down and reharmonized? What if the tune were slowed down 400%? After a slow, sombre episode characterized by shattered, detuned horn calls in the violins, the melody re-emerges; sunrise after a long night. A wild and frenetic coda ensues to close the piece: manic—and tragic—American exuberance, perhaps?

American Studies is dedicated with love and admiration to Colin, Johnny, Nick, and Michael.

- Gabriel Kahane

The logo for Ottawa Chamberfest features a stylized red '3C' symbol to the left of the word 'OTTAWA' in a vertical, sans-serif font. To the right of 'OTTAWA' is the word 'CHAMBERFEST' in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font.

OTTAWA CHAMBERFEST

Arnold Schoenberg - String Quartet No. 2 in F-Sharp Minor, Op. 10 (1907-08)

The 1908 premiere of Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, Op 10 by the Rosé Quartet and soprano Marie Gutheil-Schoder drew riotous behavior from a deeply divided fin-de-siècle Viennese audience - on the one side, devoted followers of the forward-looking composer and on the other, those who considered his works cacophonous and offensive. The audience's increasingly outspoken response in the premiere tracks the departure from the familiar to the foreign in the work itself. The first movement is a densely packed sonata form movement in f-sharp minor. Apart from a somewhat unusual choice for its key center, the quartet essentially begins in the familiar waters of tradition. The second movement, in the mold of a scherzo, starts with brooding and dangerous figurations, later contrasted with a trio section that quotes a popular Austrian folk song *Ach, du lieber Augustin*. This stark juxtaposition may have drawn one of the first guffaws from the audience, ballooning into downright hostile conditions by the conclusion of the performance, requiring increasingly heroic efforts on the part of the performers to even continue. The third and fourth movements include soprano in settings of texts by the German poet Stefan George. *Litanei* (Litany), the third movement, is a cry for a spiritual balm and the fourth movement, *Entrückung* (Rapture) is the work's most foreign sounding, essentially devolving into an atonal world devoid of key center (apart from the closing chord), as represented in the text by a departure from this world to the next. The beginning quartet figurations, disorienting and weightless, pave the way to the first line of the poem: "I feel the air of another planet." This marks Schoenberg's first full scale departure into an atonal world, though his adoption of the dodecaphonic or twelvetone style was not to come for another decade.

The work was performed many times during Schoenberg's lifetime, but the work's 1911 German premiere in Munich was perhaps one of the most significant. In the audience was the Russian-born expressionist Wassily Kandinsky. Transformed by the experience, Kandinsky's art took a forward bound towards abstraction, seemingly emboldened by Schoenberg's journey into atonality. Kandinsky's landmark painting *Impression III* (painted directly after the concert) is a visual synthesis of the 1911 Munich concert experience. A friendship evolved between these kindred spirits that was to last a quarter century, and Schoenberg was to become associated with the group of artists surrounding Kandinsky known as *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider - our namesake!).

- Nicholas Cords



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Third and fourth movement (*Litanei* and *Entrückung*) texts from *Der siebente Ring*

Stefan George (1868 – 1933)

Litanei

Tief ist die trauer die mich umdüstert,
Ein tret ich wieder, Herr! in dein haus.

Lang war die reise, matt sind die
glieder,
Leer sind die schreine, voll nur die
qual.

Durstende zunge darbt nach dem
weine.
Hart war gestritten, starr ist mein
arm.

Gönne die ruhe schwankenden
schritten,
Hungrigem gaume bröckle dein brot!

Schwach ist mein atem rufend dem
traume, Hohl sind die hände, fiebernd
der mund.

Leih deine kühle, lösche der brände.
Tilge das hoffen, sende das licht!

Gluten im herzen lodern noch offen,
Innerst im grunde wacht noch ein
schrei.

Töte das sehnen, schliesse die
wunde! Nimm mir die liebe, gib mir
dein glück!

Litany

Deep is the sadness that gloomily
comes over me,
Again I step, Lord, in your house.

Long was the ride, my limbs are weary,
The shrines are empty, only anguish is
full.

My thirsty tongue desires wine.
The battle was hard, my arm is stiff.

Grudge peace to my staggering steps,
for my hungry gums break your bread!

Weak is my breath, bringing the dream,
my hands are hollow, my mouth fevers.

Lend your cool, douse the fires,
rub out hope, send the light!

Fires in my heart still glow, open,
inside my heart a cry wakes.

Kill the longing, close the wound!
Take my love away, give me your joy.

Litanie

Profonde est l'affliction qui
m'assombrit,
Je reviens vers Toi, Seigneur.

Long fut le voyage, éreintés mes
membres.
Mes coffres sont vides, mais entière
ma souffrance.

Ma langue assoiffée implore du vin.
Rude fut la bataille, raide est mon
bras.

Accorde le repos aux pas chancelants,
Avec l'affamé partage ton pain !

Faible est mon souffle convoquant les
chimères,
Mes mains sont vides, ma bouche
enfiévrée.

Offre-moi ta fraîcheur, étouffe
l'embrassement,
Anéantis l'espoir, envoie la lumière !

En mon cœur brûlent encore des
braises,
Au plus profond de moi sourd encore
un cri.

Tue le désir, referme la blessure,
Ôte-moi l'amour, accorde-moi ta paix.



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Entrückung

Ich fühle luft von anderem planeten.
Mir blassen durch das dunkel die
gesichter
Die freundlich eben noch sich zu mir
drehten.

Und bäum und wege die ich liebte
fahlen Dass ich sie kaum mehr kenne
und du lichter Geliebter schatten—rufer
meiner qualen--

Bist nun erloschen ganz in tiefern gluten
Um nach dem taumel streitenden
getobes
Mit einem frommen schauer
anzumuten.

Ich löse mich in tönen, kreisend,
webend,
Ungründigen danks und unbenamten
lobes
Dem grossen atem wunschlos mich
ergebend.

Mich überfährt ein ungestümes wehen
Im rausch der weihe wo inbrünstige
schreie
In staub geworfner beterrinnen flehen:

Dann seh ich wie sich duftige nebel
lüpfen
In einer sonnerfüllten klaren freie
Die nur umfängt auf fernsten
bergesschlüpfen.

Rapture

I feel wind from other planets.
I faintly through the darkness see
faces
Friendly even now, turning toward me.

And trees and paths that I loved fade
So I can scarcely know them and you
bright
Beloved shadow—summon my
anguish--

Are only extinguished completely in a
deep glowing
In the frenzy of the fight
With a pious show of reason.

I lose myself in tones, circling,
weaving,
With unfathomable thanks and
unnamed love
I happily surrender to the great breath.

A violent wind passes over me
In the sway of commitment where
ardent cries
In dust flung by women on the ground:

Then I see a filmy mist rising
In a sun-filled, open expanse
That includes only the farthest
mountain hatches.

Eloignement

Je perçois l'aura de l'autre planète.
L'obscurité voile les visages amis
qui à l'instant encore se tournaient
vers moi.

Et les arbres et chemins que j'aimais
s'estompent
à devenir méconnaissables, et toi,
flambeau des
Ombres aimées -- messenger de mes
tourments --

Tu es désormais éteint au cœur du
brasier
Pour, après le tourbillon des fureurs
combattantes,
Irradier la fièvre sacrée.

Je me dissous en sons, tournoyants,
entremêlés,
En remerciements sans fond et
louanges sans nom
Me livrant, comblé, à l'Eternel.

Un souffle tumultueux me transporte
Dans l'ivresse de la bénédiction d'où
s'élèvent
Les supplications ferventes des
implorantes devenues poussières :

Alors je vois monter les nuées
parfumées
Dans l'immensité claire et ensoleillée
Qui embrasse les moindres recoins
des plus lointaines montagnes.



OTTAWA CHAMBERFEST

Der boden schüffert weiss und weich
wie molke.

Ich steige über schluchten ungeheuer.
Ich fühle wie ich über letzter wolke

In einem meer kristallinen glanzes
schwimme--
Ich bin ein funke nur vom heiligen feuer
Ich bin ein dröhnen nur der heiligen
stimme.

The land looks white and smooth like
whey,

I climb over enormous canyons.
I feel as if above the last cloud

Swimming in a sea of crystal
radiance--
I am only a spark of the holy fire
I am only a whisper of the holy voice.

Le sol se dérobe, blanc et doux
comme du petit lait.

Je m'élève au-dessus des gorges
abyssales
Et passé l'ultime nuage, je me sens
nager

Dans l'éclat d'une mer de cristal --
Je ne suis qu'une étincelle du feu
sacré
Je ne suis qu'un écho de la voix
sacrée.

Colin Jacobsen - Chalk and Soot (2012-13)

Born out of a close collaboration with choreographer John Heginbotham and his company Dance Heginbotham, Chalk and Soot is an extended song cycle by our very own Colin Jacobsen that uses text from a book of prose poetry and woodcut illustrations by the painter Wassily Kandinsky called *Klänge* (Sounds). Originally performed with vocalists Shara Nova (of My Brightest Diamond) and Gabriel Kahane as muses, Colin sets the absurd, colorful, figurative, and pastoral scenes of Kandinsky's proto-Dadaist poetry from 1912 (during the time of the *Der Blaue Reiter* – inspiration for our quartet's name) in an eclectic manner, mirroring the diverse artistic inspirations of Kandinsky and his circle of artists that also included composer Arnold Schoenberg.

- Nicholas Cords

Suite from Chalk and Soot

Texts from *Klänge* by Wassily Kandinsky (1912)

Look

Why are you watching me through the white curtain? I didn't call after you, I didn't ask you to look through the white curtain at me. Why does it hide your face from me? Why can't I see your face behind the white curtain? Don't watch me through the white

The logo for 3C Ottawa Chamberfest. It features a stylized red '3C' on the left, with the word 'OTTAWA' written vertically in black to its right. To the right of 'OTTAWA' is the word 'CHAMBERFEST' in a large, bold, black sans-serif font.

curtain! I didn't call after you. I didn't ask you. Through closed eyelids, I see how you watch me, when you watch through the white curtain. I'll pull back the white curtain and see your face, and you won't see mine. Why can't I pull back the white curtain? Why does it hide your face from me?

Still?

You, wild foam. You, good-for-nothing snail, you who don't love me. Empty silence of endless soldiers' steps, that here cannot be heard. You, set of four windows with a cross in the middle. You, windows of the empty hall, of the white wall where no one leans. You, speaking windows with inaudible sighs. You ignore me: you weren't built for me.

You, true mortar.

You, meditative swallow, you who don't love me. Self-consuming silence of rumbling wheels that chase and shape the figures. You, thousands of stones that weren't laid for me and sunk down with hammers. You hold my feet in a spell. You are small, hard and gray. Who gave you the power to show me the glittering gold? You, speaking gold. You wait for me. You invite me: you were built for me.

You, soulful mortar.

Sounds

Face.

Far.

Cloud

....

....

There stands a man with a long sword. The sword is long and also broad.
Very broad.

....

....



CHAMBERFEST

He tried to trick me many times and I admit it: He succeeded too- at
tricking. And maybe too many times.

....

.....

Eyes, eyes, eyes... eyes.

.....

.....

A woman, who is thin and not young, who has a cloth on her head, which is
like a shield over her face and leaves her face in shadows.

With a rope the woman leads the calf, which is still small and unsteady on
its crooked legs. Sometimes the calf walks behind her very obediently.

And sometimes it doesn't. Then the woman pulls the calf by the rope. It
lowers its head and shakes it and braces its legs. But its legs are weak and
the rope doesn't break.

The rope doesn't break.

.....

.....

Eyes look out from afar.

The cloud rises.

.....

.....

The face.

Afar.

The cloud.

The sword.

The rope.

Song

A man sits in

A narrow ring.

A narrow ring

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Of thinness.
He is content.
He has no ear.
And doesn't have his eyeballs.
He cannot find
What's left behind
Of red sounds of the sun ball.
Whatever falls
Stands up again.
And what was dumb.
It sings a song.
Until the man,
Who has no ear,
And doesn't have his eyeballs,
Will start to find
Signs left behind
Of red sounds of the sun ball.

Curtain

The rope went down and a certain curtain went up. We have all waited so long for this moment. A certain curtain hung. A certain curtain hung. A certain curtain hung. It was hanging down. Now it's up. When it went up (started up), we were all so very pleased.

Exit

You clapped your hands. Don't lean your head toward your joy.
Never, never.
And now he's cutting again with the knife.
Again he's cutting through with the knife. And how the thunder rolls in the sky.
Who led you in deeper?



OTTAWA CHAMBERFEST

In the dark deep quiet water the tops of the trees point down.
Always. Always. And now he sighs. A heavy sigh. Again he sighed. He sighed. And
the
stick hits against something dry.
Who then will point to the door, the exit?

Seeing

Blue fell.
It seemed. It seemed. It seemed. It seemed. It seemed
For all eternity.
You must open your arms wider.
Wider. Wider.
And you must cover your face with red cloth.
White leap after white leap.
And in this white leap another white leap.
And in this white leap a white leap.
But that's not good at all, that you don't see the gloom: in the gloom is
where it is.
That's where everything begins.....
With a.....Crash.....

Table

Once there was a long table. Oh, a long, long table.
Right and left at this table sat many, many, many people.
people, people,
people.
Oh, a long, long time at this long, long table sat people.