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Christopher Gross, cello

Lehigh University Music Department

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Lehigh University Music Department presents

Faculty Recitalist

Christopher Gross, *cello*

with

Steven Beck, *piano*

Sunday, April 6, 2014

3 pm

Baker Hall

Zoellner Arts Center

Friends of Zoellner Arts Center
2013-2014 Season

PROGRAM

<i>Sonata for Violoncello and Piano,</i> op. 6 (1932) <i>Allegro ma non troppo</i> <i>Adagio</i> <i>Allegro appassionato</i>	Samuel Barber (1910-1981)
<i>Sonata for Violoncello and Piano</i> (1948) <i>Moderato</i> <i>Vivace, molto leggiero</i> <i>Adagio</i> <i>Allegro</i>	Elliott Carter (1908-2012)
-Intermission-	
<i>Projection I</i> for solo cello (1950)	Morton Feldman (1926-1987)
<i>More Melismata</i> for solo cello (2006)	Milton Babbitt (1916-2011)
<i>Fantasey</i> for solo cello (2014)	Jonathan Dawe (b. 1965)
<i>Fast Fantasy</i> for cello and piano (1977)	Charles Wuorinen (b. 1938)

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PROGRAM NOTES

"...One of the city's most admired young pianists..." -the New Yorker, Steven Beck made his debut with the National Symphony



Orchestra, and has toured Japan as soloist with the New York Symphonic Ensemble. Other orchestras with which he has appeared include the New Juilliard Ensemble (under David Robertson), Sequitur, the Jupiter

Symphony Chamber Players, and the Virginia Symphony. Mr. Beck has performed as soloist and chamber musician at the Kennedy Center, the Library of Congress, Alice Tully Hall, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, Miller Theater, Steinway Hall, as well as on the New York Philharmonic Ensembles Series and WNYC; summer appearances have been at the Aspen Music Festival, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, and the Monadnock Music Festival. He is an Artist Presenter and regular performer at Bargemusic. He has worked with composers Elliott Carter, Henri Dutilleux, George Perle, and Pierre Boulez. In addition to the Talea Ensemble, Mr. Beck has performed with ensembles such as Speculum Musicae, New York New Music Ensemble, Ensemble 21, Mosaic, Ensemble Sospeso, and S.E.M. Ensemble. His recordings are on the Albany, Bridge, Boston Records, Monument, Mulatta, and Annemarie Classics labels.

Today's program offers selections from American classical music of the past century. In its limited way, I imagine this program as a very rough sketch representing the trend of American classical music in the twentieth century away from a Euro-centric orientation. It is shocking to remember that when Elliott Carter was born, Gustav Mahler was just beginning his term as music director of the New York Philharmonic. And while this fact is a great testament to Elliott Carter's astounding longevity and vibrancy, it is also a reminder of how the world of American high culture has radically shifted from being one of recruiting European stars to becoming a cultural destination in and of itself. Of course, part of this transformation was due to the tragedy of World War II. Waves of Europeans made their way overseas and any account of twentieth-century American composers would have to include the influence of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, whose emigration directly influenced an entire generation of young American composers. But another part of this transformation speaks to the general attitude of the American composer, a vibrancy and an optimism for what is possible to achieve, and the development of a huge variety of compositional and aesthetic approaches.

The program is a trio of pairs. The first pair is comprised of the sonatas of Barber and Carter, both in traditional multi-movement formats. Both are considered 'early' works - Barber's sonata was written while he was still a student at Curtis, and Carter's sonata contains the first seeds of what would become his mature style (though he was already age forty). Both seem to reference Brahms: Barber through his motivic saturation and often turbulent character, and Carter through his rhythmic structure and treatment of the instruments. Carter is especially ingenious in using a variety of rhythmic relationships that both push the work organically forward - each new idea literally evolving from the previous - but also bring it back full circle, an especially classical ideal.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Feldman and Babbitt are often thought of as living on opposite poles: Babbitt the mathematician, Feldman the artist. And it is true that Babbitt's piece *More Melismata* is highly notated whereas Feldman's *Projection I* is a graphic spatial diagram, with mere suggestions of range and space. Still, I hear similarities. Feldman's work is much more rigorous than one might think, with important relationships between range, timbre, and duration. Babbitt's formalistic structures have a light and playful surface as well, with endlessly inventive interactions between myriad different figures. Both harken back to the creation of counterpoint on a solo instrument, *à la* J. S. Bach, and in these pieces it is often helpful to listen to the melodic lines within the different ranges of the instrument.

Finally, the program ends with two fantasies. Charles Wuorinen's *Fast Fantasy* is a combination of tonal and atonal elements, and the virtuosic rhythmic drive of the work can be exhilarating. 'Fantasy' in this setting, I believe, is a reference to the highly integrated counterpoint of the two instruments ('fantasies' being a contrapuntal genre in the Baroque era), as well as the alternation of fast virtuosic and slower melodic playing typical of these earlier models. But an element of 'fantasy' also exists here from the more common use of the term, as a sort of magical tale of great variety and imagination. Jonathan Dawe's *Fantasey* is inspired by one of Wuorinen's techniques of composition, used here on a Purcell theme. Dawe expands the dimensions of a Purcell song to span the entire work and then recursively inserts the proportions of the original material within, creating a structure analogous to that of fractal geometry. While the piece is reminiscent of a certain Purcell pluck, it is also distinctively Dawe.

No two-hour concert can check all the boxes of the American Century (no Ives? no Gershwin? no Cage? Not to mention no blues or jazz, no minimalism, no rock and roll, and no women or minorities). But I believe the works here are great music - EXCITING music - and in their own way, each exemplifies the excitement of the American artists who created them.

-Christopher Gross

Following **Christopher Gross'** performance of Brian Ferneyhough's *Time and Motion Study II* for solo cello at the Lincoln Center Festival,



the *New York Times* wrote: "... for twenty minutes this skinny young cellist with a punkish hair cut seemed like a musical master of the universe..." As an active freelance performer of contemporary music in New York City, Mr. Gross has premiered works by composers as diverse as Pierre Boulez, Milton Babbitt, Olga Neuwirth, and Anthony Cheung.

He is a founding member of the Talea Ensemble, whose recording of works by Fausto Romitelli on the Tzadik label was named one of 2012's Top 10 Classical releases by *Time Out New York*. The ensemble was also featured at the 2012 Darmstadt International Festival, the 2012 Harvard

Summer Composition Institute, and 2013 Kingston Chamber Music Festival. He was also a founding member of the iO Quartet, Quartet-in-Residence at SUNY Purchase from 2006-2008, recipients of the 2008 Chamber Music America Commissioning Grant and prize-winners at Chamber Music Yellow Springs. In 2006 he premiered Milton Babbitt's *More Melismata* for solo cello. In his work as an educator Mr. Gross teaches at Lehigh University and is on the Teaching Artist faculty of The New York Philharmonic. He is also a certified Suzuki Instructor and has had articles published in the *Journal of the Suzuki Association of America*. He holds degrees from Juilliard and Oberlin College, and is currently a C.V. Starr Doctoral Fellow at Juilliard in New York.

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