

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The **Bugallo-Williams Piano Duo** has been presenting innovative programs of contemporary music throughout North America and Europe for nearly a decade. Helena Bugallo and Amy Williams perform cutting-edge contemporary works and masterpieces of the twentieth century for piano four-hands and two pianos. They have worked directly with dozens of composers, including Lukas Foss, Steve Reich, Jukka Tiensuu, Kevin Volans and Bernard Rands, by commissioning, performing and recording new pieces. As part of their mission to expand the repertoire for piano duet, they have undertaken an extensive transcription project of the Studies for Player Piano by Conlon Nancarrow. This has resulted in a critically acclaimed recording of Nancarrow's music for piano duet and solo piano, released by Wergo in 2004.

Concerts by the Bugallo-Williams Piano Duo represent a diversity of contemporary music styles by such composers as John Cage, Igor Stravinsky, György Ligeti, Steve Reich, Salvatore Sciarrino, György Kurtág and Morton Feldman. They also collaborate with composers who explore new approaches to the piano through multimedia applications, electronics and extended techniques. They perform with additional players in works for multiple keyboards, chamber works with two pianos and instruments, and concertos. They frequently present master classes and lecture-demonstrations at colleges and universities in the United States and Europe.

They have been featured performers at the NUMUS Festival (Aarhus), Teatro San Martin (Buenos Aires), Merkin Concert Hall, 3-2 Festival, Americas Society, Miller Theatre (New York City), North American New Music Festival (Buffalo), Jordan Hall (Boston), Pendulum (Boulder), Rock Hall (Philadelphia), Sound Field Festival (Chicago), Musik aus Solitude Festival (Stuttgart), Spring Festival of New Music (York, UK), Cutting Edge (London), Unerhörte Musik (Berlin), FORUM (Hamburg), Wittener Tage für neue Kammermusik (Witten), and Barber Institute (Birmingham, UK).



Helena Bugallo has performed in the United States, Mexico, Argentina, England, Germany, Sweden, Poland and Japan. She has collaborated with numerous established groups, including the Meridian Arts Ensemble (US), the String Quartet of the University of La Plata (Argentina), Thürmchen Ensemble (Germany), the Slee Sinfonietta (US), and the Birmingham Ensemble (UK). She has received grants from the Nicholas Patterson Perpetual Fund, Fundación Antorchas, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Yvar Mikhashoff Trust for New Music, the Mark Diamond Research Fund, the Hinrichsen and Holst Foundations, and the British Arts Council. Ms. Bugallo's teachers have included Lía Konias, Haydee Schwartz, Yvar Mikhashoff, Stephen Drury and Alan Feinberg. She holds music degrees from the Conservatorio Provincial de La Plata (Argentina) and the State University of New York at Buffalo, where she obtained a master's degree in piano performance and a Ph.D. in musicology. Her doctoral dissertation is on the music of Conlon Nancarrow. Between 2001 and 2003, she was a visiting lecturer at the University of Birmingham (UK). Ms. Bugallo presently lives in Basel, Switzerland.

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Amy Williams has appeared as a pianist and composer at renowned contemporary music venues in the United States and Europe, including Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music, Gaudeamus Music Week (Netherlands), the Logos Foundation and Ars Musica (Belgium), Musikhøst Festival (Denmark), Subtropics Experimental Music Festival (Miami), North American New Music Festival (Buffalo), Sound Field Festival (Chicago), LA County Museum, Mondavi Center (Davis) and Hildegard Festival. Her compositions have been performed by leading contemporary music soloists and ensembles, including the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Emyrean Ensemble, Klang, International Contemporary Ensemble, CUBE, California E.A.R. Unit, North/South Consonance, Monarch Brass Ensemble, Ensemble Aleph, pianists Yvar Mikhashoff, Amy Dissanayake and Luk', soprano Martha Herr, bassist Robert Black, and, most recently, a piano concerto for Ursula Oppens and the Boston Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra. As a pianist, Ms. Williams has recorded for MODE and HAT-ART Records. She has received the Thayer Award for the Arts as well as awards from ASCAP, the American-Scandinavian Foundation, American



Music Center, Meet the Composer, and the 2002 Wayne Peterson Prize in Music Composition. She holds a Ph.D. in composition from the State University of New York at Buffalo, where she also received a master's degree in piano performance. Before her current position on the composition faculty of Northwestern University, she taught at Bennington College. Ms. Williams is currently the Director of New Music Northwestern.

PROGRAM NOTES

Studies for Player Piano

Conlon Nancarrow (1912–1997)

Conlon Nancarrow was born in Texarkana, Arkansas and died in Mexico City. In his early years, he was a trumpet player mainly devoted to jazz. He attended the Cincinnati College-Conservatory and later moved to Boston, where he studied composition and counterpoint with Roger Sessions, Walter Piston and Nicolas Slonimsky. In 1937 he enlisted in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to fight against Franco in the Spanish Civil War. Nancarrow's socialist beliefs and his involvement in the war caused the US government to deny him a new passport shortly after his return. He decided then to move to Mexico City, where he remained, working in relative musical isolation until the 1980s, when he suddenly gained international

recognition. Discouraged by the lack of acceptable performances of his music, Nancarrow turned to the player piano in the late 1940s. His exhaustive exploration of this unusual medium resulted in a series of approximately fifty studies, both highly idiomatic and utterly original. Missing from the original realizations are the harsh sound of the leather and metal hammers of Nancarrow's pianos, the register differentiation of the upright instruments, and the resonant acoustics of the composer's cement studio. The transcriptions are, however, as faithful as they could be to the original pieces in terms of actual pitches, rhythms and tempos. Many salient traits of Nancarrow's mechanical music, in particular his rhythmic language, were strongly influenced by jazz as well as African and Indian musical traditions.

PROGRAM NOTES

Fear of Tango

Pablo Ortíz (b. 1956)

Pablo Ortíz was first trained in his native Buenos Aires, where he received a degree from the Universidad Católica Argentina. At 27, he moved to New York to study at Columbia University. At present, he is professor of composition at the University of California, Davis. He taught composition and was co-director of the Electronic Music Studio at the University of Pittsburgh from 1990 to 1994. Among those who have performed his compositions are the Buenos Aires Philharmonic, the Arditti String Quartet, the Ensemble Contrechamps of Geneva, Music Mobile, Continuum, Les Percussions de Strasbourg, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, and the Theatre of Voices. His music has been heard at international festivals in Salzburg (Aspekte), Geneva (Extasis), Strasbourg (Musica), Havana, Frankfurt, Zurich, São Paulo and Mexico City. He was a fellow at the Composers' Conference at Wellesley College in 1986 and 1988, and he was commissioned by the Fromm Foundation in 1992. In 1993, he received a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 1996 he received the Charles Ives Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His works include chamber and solo music, vocal, orchestral, and electronic compositions, and music for plays and films. About *Fear of Tango*, Mr. Ortíz says, it "takes its title from the tango gestures that are buried in the music, periodically surfacing for an instant, only to be submerged in contrasting elements. It is a careful hide-and-seek game with my own fascination for the tango. In the process of writing this piece, I became bold enough to surmount my fears. I subsequently wrote a whole series of works based on the idea of tango and memory."

Three Pieces for Two Pianos

György Ligeti (b. 1923)

György Ligeti was born in Dicsöszentmárton, Transylvania and is one of the world's most renowned living composers. In response to a general stylistic crisis in the mid-century avant-garde, Ligeti forged his own musical alternative,

based on texture and sound density, which has become a major influence on contemporary music. He began his varied output in pre-communist Hungary and continued in Western Europe after the Hungarian communist revolution. Ligeti has on several occasions professed a deep admiration for the music of Conlon Nancarrow, describing it as "something great and important for all music history! His music is so utterly original, enjoyable, perfectly constructed, but at the same time emotional." Although *Three Pieces for Two Pianos* precedes Ligeti's encounter with Nancarrow's work, there are several musical and compositional traits that clearly resonate with Nancarrow's *Studies for Player Piano*: the pervasive use of canons, the concern with "temporal dissonances" between different voices or parts, the exploration of polyphonic complexes from a textural viewpoint, and the play with unpredictable processes of repetition and change. Ligeti has defined the first movement, *Monument*, as "a huge, statuesque, imaginary architecture, with the interference of six layers of lattices," and the third movement, *In a Gently Fluid Movement*, as "a 'liquefied' variant of *Monument*." The middle movement, *Self-portrait*, is an homage to his once musical kinship with American minimalist composers Steve Reich and Terry Riley. The presto at the end of this movement alludes to the finale of Chopin's B minor Sonata, an early precursor of "quintessentially minimalistic music," according to Ligeti.

In Black and White

Jorge Liderman (b. 1957)

Born in Buenos Aires, Jorge Liderman began his musical studies at the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem, under Mark Kopitman. In 1988 he received his doctorate in composition from the University of Chicago where he worked with Ralph Shapey and Shulamit Ran. A year later, Liderman joined the composition faculty at the University of California, Berkeley. His works have been commissioned and performed by the London Sinfonietta, the American Composers Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Tanglewood Orchestra, Radio France, the Netherlands Wind Ensemble, the Nieuw Ensemble, the Arditti String

PROGRAM NOTES

Quartet, Cuarteto Latinoamericano, Boston Musica Viva, Milan Divertimento Ensemble, Chicago Pro Musica and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, as well as by individual artists such as Oliver Knussen, Diego Masson, Esa Pekka Salonen, David Tanenbaum and Gloria Cheng. His music has been recorded by CRI and CAMU.

In Black and White is a single-movement work for two pianos. The piece, however, is subdivided into three large sections: the opening section is characterized by interlocking pulsating chords in both pianos; the middle section starts with swirling melodic lines in the highest register of the pianos, which leads to a playful imitative texture between the players; and the last section begins with a

repeated fanfare-like figure which brings back the chord patterns of the opening section at the climax of the piece.

Mr. Liderman says about this piece, “The nature of the music is rhythmic and pulsating, oscillating between gradually unfolding processes and sharp juxtapositions of contrasting musical material. Throughout most of the piece both pianos play similar music, which creates the illusion of a ‘super’ piano. There are times, however, when the music of the two pianos is different in character, yet still shares the same harmonic language. *In Black and White*, funded in part by a Guggenheim fellowship, was written during my stay in Barcelona, Spain (Fall 2003), and its ebullient character mirrors the excitement and intensity of this European city.”



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