



Faculty Tuesdays Series

Contrasts, Dreams and Prayers: Masterworks of Bela Bartók and Osvaldo Golijov

Daniel Silver, clarinet

With:

Charles Wetherbee and Marisa Ishikawa, violin

Erika Eckert, viola

David Requiro, cello

David Korevaar, piano

7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 23, 2018
Grusin Music Hall
Imig Music Building



College of Music
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

CU ★ PRESENTS

Program

Contrasts for Clarinet, Violin and Piano

- I. Verbunkos (Recruiting Dance)
- II. Pihenő (Relaxation)
- III. Sebes (Fast Dance)

Bela Bartók
(1881-1945)

Intermission

Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind

- I. Prelude, Calmo, Sospeso
- II. Agitato-Con Fuoco-Maestros-Senza Misura, Oscillante
- III. Teneramente-Ruvido-Presto
- IV. Calmo, Sospeso-Allegro Pesante
- V. Postlude: Lento, Liberamente

Osvaldo Golijov
(b.1960)

Program Notes

Contrasts for Clarinet, Violin and Piano

Bartók's *Contrasts* was written in 1938 and commissioned by Benny Goodman who, in addition to his legendary work as a big band leader and jazz performer, commissioned countless works from classical composers such as Copland, Hindemith and Bartók. The work was performed and recorded by Goodman, violinist Josef Szigeti and and Bartók himself at the piano. It has been a staple of the repertoire ever since.

A trio for five instruments, the work draws on Hungarian and Romanian elements and dances and has virtuoso turns for the violin and clarinet, with a clarinet cadenza in the first movement and a violin cadenza in the last. The "second" violin is used in the finale, tuned in the *scordatura* mode (a "retuning") adding to the folk-like quality, and the clarinet performs on both the clarinet in A and the clarinet in B-flat.

While only running about eighteen minutes in performance, the work has a gravity and power that stamps it as a major chamber music work by most any standard.

—*Daniel Silver*

Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind

Eight centuries ago Isaac the Blind, the great kabbalist rabbi of Provence, dictated a manuscript in which he asserted that all things and events in the universe are product of combinations of the Hebrew alphabet's letters: "Their root is in a name, for the letters are like branches, which appear in the manner of flickering flames, mobile, and nevertheless linked to the coal." His conviction still resonates today: don't we have scientists who believe that the clue to our life and fate is hidden in other codes?

Isaac's lifelong devotion to his art is as striking as that of string quartets and klezmer musicians. In their search for something that arises from tangible elements but transcends them, they are all reaching a state of communion. Gershon Scholem, the preeminent scholar of Jewish mysticism, says that "Isaac and his disciples do not speak of ecstasy, of a unique act of stepping outside oneself in which human consciousness abolishes itself. Debhequth (communion) is a constant state, nurtured and renewed through meditation." If communion is not the reason, how else would one explain the strange life that Isaac led or the decades during which groups of four souls dissolve their individuality into single, higher organisms, called string quartets? How would one explain the chain of klezmer generations that, while blessing births, weddings and burials, were trying to discover the melody that could be set free from itself and become only air, spirit, *ruakh*?

The movements of this work sound to me as if written in three of the different languages spoken by the Jewish people throughout our history. This somehow reflects the composition's epic nature. I hear the prelude and the first movement, the most ancient, in Aramaic; the second movement is in Yiddish, the rich and fragile language of a long exile; the third movement and postlude are in sacred Hebrew.

The prelude and the first movement simultaneously explore two prayers in different ways: The quartet plays the first part of the central prayer of the High Holidays: "We will observe the mighty holiness of this day...", while

the clarinet dreams the motifs from *Our Father, Our King*. The second movement is based on *The Old Klezmer Band*, a traditional dance tune, which is surrounded here by contrasting manifestations of its own halo. The third movement was written before all the others. It is an instrumental version of *K'vakarat*, a work that I wrote a few years ago for Kronos and Cantor Misha Alexandrovich. The meaning of the word *klezmer*—instrument of song—becomes clear when one hears David Krakauer's interpretation of the cantor's line. This movement, together with the postlude, bring to conclusion the prayer left open in the first movement: "...Thou pass and record, count and visit, every living soul, appointing the measure of every creature's life and decreeing its destiny."

But blindness is as important in this work as dreaming and praying. I had always the intuition that, in order to achieve the highest possible intensity in a performance, musicians should play, metaphorically speaking, "blind." That is why, I think, all legendary bards in cultures around the world, starting with Homer, are said to be blind. "Blindness" is probably the secret of great string quartets, those who don't need their eyes to communicate among them, with the music, or the audience. My homage to all of them and Isaac of Provence is this work for blind musicians, so they can play it by heart. Blindness, then, reminded me of how to compose music as it was in the beginning: an art that springs from and relies on our ability to sing and hear, with the power to build castles of sound in our memories.

—Oswaldo Golijov

About the Performers

Daniel Silver, Charles Wetherbee, Erika Eckert, David Requiro and David Korevaar are all faculty members at the CU Boulder College of Music.

Marisa Ishikawa, born in Boulder, is a current graduate student of Charles Wetherbee and a teaching assistant in the violin studio. Ishikawa received an MM degree from the University of Texas-Austin while studying with Brian Lewis and has participated in major music festivals such as the Aspen Music Festival and the National Repertory Orchestra. The faculty is delighted to collaborate with her for this special program that allows faculty and students to play side-by-side

Upcoming Performances

💰 Ticketed events 📺 Live broadcast at cupresents.org

Thursday, Oct. 25

Chamber Orchestra 📺

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall

Friday, Nov. 2

Artist Series

Venice Baroque Orchestra 💰

7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium

Sunday, Nov. 4

CU Choirs 📺

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall

Sunday, Nov. 11

Ekstrand Competition Finals 📺

2 p.m., Grusin Music Hall

Wednesday, Nov. 14

Symphonic Band 📺

7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium

Thursday, Nov. 15

Wind Symphony 📺

7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium

Friday, Nov. 16

Artist Series

Sarah Chang, violin 💰

7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium

Thursday, Nov. 29

Symphony Orchestra 📺

7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium

Saturday, Dec. 1

African Highlife Ensemble 📺

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall

Sunday, Dec. 2

Japanese Ensemble 📺

2 p.m., Grusin Music Hall

Gamelan Ensemble 📺

4:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall

Dec. 7-9

Holiday Festival 💰

Macky Auditorium

Monday, Dec. 10

Concert Band and

Campus Orchestra 📺

7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall

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