



College of Music

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

University Chamber Orchestra

Gary Lewis, conductor
Don McKinney, conductor
Johannes Krohn, conductor

7:30 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 26, 2017
Grusin Music Hall
Imig Music Building

Be engaged. Be inspired. Be here.
Be Boulder.

Program

Octandre

Edgard Varèse
(1883-1965)

Variationes ex “Bene quondam”

- I. Holvi (“Cathedral, cupula”)
- II. Blues
- III. Enharmonia
- IV. Tiu’uin (“With bells”)
- V. Liu’uin (“Slidin”)
- VI. Kalifornia (“California”)
- VII. Mosaiikki (“Mosaic”)
- VIII. Mash-up

Juhani Nuorvala
(b. 1961)

U.S. premiere performance

-Intermission-

Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K.550

- I. Molto allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Menuetto. Allegretto—Trio
- IV. Finale. Allegro Assai

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Program Notes

Octandre

Edgard Varèse

“I have always been an experimenter. But my experiments go into the wastebasket. I give only finished works to the public.”

—Edgard Varèse, 1923, in a New York Times interview preceding the first performance of *Octandre*.

Varèse studied in his native Paris during the early years of the last century with Albert Roussel (counterpoint and fugue), Charles-Marie Widor (composition), and Vincent d'Indy (conducting). A subsequent sojourn in Berlin enabled him to make the acquaintance of Ferruccio Busoni and Arnold Schoenberg—to both of whom he remained indebted as informal teachers—and in 1915 he emigrated to New York, his chief residence for the remainder of his life, attracting during his career such modern icons as Milton Babbitt, John Cage, Pierre Boulez, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, who regarded him as a major influence on their work.

Varèse is best known for his pieces centering on percussion, on electronics combined with traditional instruments, and one purely electronic piece, *Poème électronique* for three-track tape, created for the 1958 Brussels World's Fair. His output consisted of only a dozen, painstakingly crafted works, with a few more posthumously completed by his student and literary executor, Chou Wen-chung. The brief *Octandre* is his one “intimate” ensemble work—in terms of the number of players involved, certainly not its sonority or emotional impact.

The first performance of *Octandre*, whose title refers both to its eight-player ensemble and the word's literal meaning, a flower with eight stamens, was given in New York on January 13, 1924, under

the direction of E. Robert Schmitz, founder of the Pro Musica Society, dedicated to the presentation of works by living composers, and a renowned interpreter of the piano music of Debussy.

The first movement is launched by a chant-like oboe phrase—reminiscent of the bassoon melody that opens Stravinsky's *Sacre du printemps*—employing the minor second and its inversion, the major seventh. The clarinet responds with a chattering bundle of repeated notes, succeeded by “pumping” sounds in the brass. The movement ends “with the feeling of the beginning (a little anxious),” the composer notes in the score. The second movement begins as a wind-blown scherzo featuring the piccolo's repeated notes, which are pushed aside by the brass. The final chord is a fierce crescendo, which winds down to the solo double bass leading into the finale, which begins “grave” but blossoms into an energetic fugue with the successive entries of oboe, bassoon, and clarinet. *Octandre* ends with what can perhaps be best described as a screech.
—Notes by Herbert Glass

Variationes ex 'Bene quondam' (2017)

Juhani Nuorvala

My string orchestra piece is a set of variations on a tune from *Piæ cantiones*, a collection of late medieval Finnish/Swedish songs in Latin, first published in 1582. The work was commissioned by the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra as part of the ongoing celebrations of the 100th year of Finnish independence so it was fitting to base it on a Finnish song, although I used a melody that has been sung in Finland for much longer than a mere century. In my variations, this beautiful tune in the Phrygian mode is heard in quite varied settings and disguises; these represent the diversity of idioms in contemporary music—those approaches that I

myself find vibrant, lively and near to my heart.

The most straightforward statements of the theme are heard in the first movement, *Holvi* ("Cathedral") where the tune is immersed in a web of archaic-sounding counterpointal lines, and *Tiu'uin* ("Bells"), which concentrates on the shimmer of natural harmonics. In the movement called *Enharmonia* we take look back to even more ancient times than the medieval origins of the theme suggest. In Ancient Greece, scales were built from diatonic, chromatic, or enharmonic tetrachords. In *Enharmonia*, the intervals of the tune are altered from the original diatonic steps to the microtones of the enharmonic genus of antiquity. In *Blues*, the chromatic tetrachords are used in lieu of the original diatonic ones.

Kalifornia, with its pentatonicism and gentle, gamelan-inspired textures, and its decorous melodic lines, is my homage to the wonderful West Coast composer Lou Harrison, whose Centennial is also celebrated this year. And of course the minimalist tapestries of rapid patterns in *Mosaiikki* ("Mosaic") are inspired by American music, too. In Finland, I have been known for my passion for American Minimalism for decades, and I'm often called a Minimalist myself, so it was about time I wrote some pages in the style!

The *Piæ cantiones* songs were sung by pupils in cathedral schools, and they're known as "teen songs".

In *Mash-up*, the finale of my Variations, I combine the *Piæ cantiones* melody to a popular "teen song" from my own youth, a 1970's hit tune by the British glam rock star Marc Bolan.

—Notes by Juhani Nuorvala

Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K 550

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

There is much of Mozart the opera composer in his late symphonies and in the Symphony No. 40 of 1788 we hear some of his most dramatic, emotionally charged music. Descriptions of the piece vary greatly. Robert Schumann called it a work of "weightless, Hellenic grace" while historian Charles Rosen called it "a work of passion, violence and grief." There is great distance between Schumann's Grecian lightness and the outright pathos of Rosen's comment but little doubt that Mozart's G-minor masterpiece is filled to its limits with vitality and expression. Mozart's music is often noted for its superficiality, even while the genius and ease of his creativity is lauded. Symphony No. 40 is nothing if not an anecdote to this sort of thinking. Mozart not only shows his capacity for depth and darkness, he shines light on a new path later taken up in earnest by Beethoven, Bruckner and Mahler. There is an urgency in the score of No. 40 that is best captured by the late Michael Steinberg's inspiring prose. "The first movement raises questions, posits instabilities, opens abysses." Of the finale, he feels it "must at last be the force that stabilizes, sets solid ground under our feet, seeks to close wounds, and brings the voyager safely—if bruised—into port."

—Notes by Jeff Counts

Biographies

Juhani Nuorvala (b. 1961) studied composition at the Sibelius Academy under Eero Hämeenieni. He also studied in Paris under Tristan Murail and in New York under David Del Tredici. A notable variety of influences—microtonality, American minimalism, New Romanticism, popular music, techno—has been regarded as a special feature of Nuorvala's idiom. Despite this he is not a collage artist; instead he has blended various ingredients to create a mode of expression entirely his own. Nuorvala's works are often marked with frenzied rhythmic drive. He makes music using elements and materials that both the mind and the body respond to. He finds these elements not only in old or new classical music but in various forms of urban popular music, such as the electronic music of modern dance clubs. Nuorvala has composed chamber, orchestral and electronic works. The orchestral *Pinta ja säe* ("Surface and Phrase") received a special commendation in the Vienna Modern Masters Competition in 1991. The *Notturmo Urbano* for chamber orchestra (1996) resounds with urban night life and is one of his most popular works. The *Clarinet Concerto* (1998) contains references to jazz, film music, minimalism and techno. The strong rhythmic element is also present in the string quartet *Dancescapes* from 1992. The Second String Quartet (1997) includes some of Nuorvala's most romantically soaring pages and has been adapted for string orchestra under the title *Sinfonietta*. During recent years Nuorvala has created the music and sound for several plays at the Finnish National Theatre, in addition to writing an opera (*Flash Flash*, 2005) based on the life of Andy Warhol. His other chamber works include *Prelude and Toccata* for accordion as well as *Boost* for cello and synthesizer. His most recent large-scale work is *Septimalia* (2014), commissioned and premiered by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Personnel

University Chamber Orchestra

Violin 1

Karen Van Acker
Ryan Jacobsen
Autumn Pepper
Stephanie Yu
Ben Ehrmantraut
Paul Kim
Grace Harper
Ida Findiku

Violin 2

Ava Pacheco
Jessica Chen
Lea Mattson
Natalie Smith
Sophia Thaut
Kendalia Spencer
Kashmira Tata

Viola

Erin Napier
Allyson Stibbards
Andrew Keeve
Dragana Loncar
Abigail Dreher
Jordan Holloway
Javier Chacon
Benjamin Barron
Sophia Wonneberger

Cello

Roberto Arundale
Haley Slaugh
Christine Sears
Ernie Carbajal
Nicholas Johnson
Dylan Howard

Double Bass

Dante Ascarrunz
Sélyne Tibbetts-Pagán
Eleanor Dunlap
Jordan Walters

Flute

Joshua Hall
Julio Zabaleta

Oboe

Heather Macdonald
Michael Ochoa

Clarinet

William Bond
Margaret Greenwood
Annaka Hogelin

Bassoon

Jay Million
Kristina Nelson

Horn

Chandler Spoon
Clark Stewart

Trumpet

Brandon Norton

Trombone

Aaron Zalkind

56th Annual Madrigal Festival

Wednesday, Nov. 1
Macky Auditorium

Join Dr. Amanda Quist and 26 high school choirs in a day of choral music rehearsals and performances.



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Upcoming Events at the College of Music

Thompson Latin Jazz Ensemble

7:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 2
Grusin Music Hall

Vocal Jazz and Madrigal Singers

7:30 p.m., Monday, Nov. 6
First Presbyterian Church

African Drum Ensemble

7:30 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 4
Grusin Music Hall

Thompson Jazz Combos

7:30 p.m., Monday, Nov. 6
Old Main Chapel

Japanese Ensemble

2:00 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 5
Grusin Music Hall

Percussion Ensemble

7:30 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 8
Grusin Music Hall

Gamelan Ensemble

4:30 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 5
Grusin Music Hall

Concert Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Ensemble II

7:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 9
Grusin Music Hall

CU Choirs

7:30 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 5
Grusin Music Hall

Early Music Ensemble

7:30 p.m., Friday, Nov. 10
Grusin Music Hall

Learn more at colorado.edu/music

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