

I/O Fest 2012

Thursday, January 5, 9:30 pm

AFTER HOURS: *Disquiet*

some notes on the program

David Lang is one of America's most performed composers. Passionate, prolific, and complicated, he embodies the restless spirit of invention. Lang is at the same time deeply versed in the classical tradition and committed to music that resists categorization, constantly creating new forms.

Many of Lang's pieces resemble each other only in the fierce intelligence and clarity of vision that inform their structures. His catalogue is extensive, and his opera, orchestra, chamber and solo works are by turns ominous, ethereal, urgent, hypnotic, unsettling and very emotionally direct. Much of his work seeks to expand the definition of virtuosity in music - even the deceptively simple pieces can be fiendishly difficult to play and require incredible concentration by musicians and audiences alike.

Little Eye - Small children get bored easily when traveling long distances by car. One way to distract them is to play the game I spy with my little eye, in which you look out the window and describe something you have noticed. In my experience this does work, not in a very subdued way - it is not the most exciting way to pass the time. Eventually, however, time does pass.

- David Lang

Morton Feldman (1926-1987) was an American composer best known for his mature instrumental works. These are frequently scored for unusual groups of instruments and feature isolated, carefully chosen, predominantly quiet sounds, and are often very long.

Feldman was born in New York City. He studied piano with Madame Maurina-Press, a pupil of Ferruccio Busoni, and later composition with Wallingford Riegger and Stefan Wolpe. He did not agree with many of the views of these composition teachers, and he spent much of his time simply arguing with them.

In 1950, Feldman went to hear the New York Philharmonic give a performance of Anton Webern's Symphony. At the concert, he met John Cage, and the two became good friends. Under Cage's influence, Feldman began to write pieces which had no relation to compositional systems of the past, such as the constraints of traditional harmony or the serial technique. Through Cage, Feldman met many other prominent figures in the New York arts scene, among them Jackson Pollock, Philip Guston and Frank O'Hara. He found inspiration in the paintings of the abstract expressionists, and through the 1970s wrote a number of pieces of around twenty-minutes in length, including *Rothko Chapel* (1971, written for the building of the same name which houses paintings by Mark Rothko) and *For Frank O'Hara* (1973).

Later, he began to produce his very long works, often in one continuous movement, rarely shorter than half an hour in length and often much longer. These works include *Piano and String Quartet* (1985, around eighty minutes), *For Philip Guston* (1984,

around four hours) and, most extreme, the *String Quartet II* (1983), which is over five hours long without a break. Typically, these pieces do not change in mood throughout and tend to be made up of mostly very quiet sounds. Feldman said himself that quiet sounds had begun to be the only ones that interested him.

Feldman wrote *Why Patterns?* for himself to play with Eberhard Blum, flute(s) and Jan Williams, glockenspiel. The score consists of three completely notated but metrically unaligned parts. Theoretically one could say the notation is thus fixed but in playing the piece many times, one discovers a fair degree of latitude concerning vertical coincidence. The musical material consists largely of differentiated, overlapping ostinatos, hence the title. Originally it concluded when the last player completed his part. This was always Feldman, not only because the piano part is the longest but also because he invariably played the slowest. The present ending (the vertically aligned pulsing with the glockenspiel playing a descending chromatic scale) was added after the first performance.

- Nils Vigeland

Silent Isle is the solo project of Anastasia Clarke, in which she uses a rainbow of effects and loopers to stretch and smear her songs for voice and guitar. The results are massive, madrigal-like, piercing and wavering sonic collages, often described as "hazy" and "trance-inducing." As Silent Isle, she performs regularly in New England and New York experimental and songwriting circuits, and has put forth two full-length releases, *Scales of Erosion* (CD-R, self-released) and *Sylvan Pass* (self-released CD-R & split cassette with Belltonesuicide, released on Gilded Throne). In addition to her solo work, she has performed with the Hudson, NY-based improvisation collective Summer Mummy since 2009, and has recently collaborated as a guitarist with Al Margolis (If, Bwana/Pogus Productions) and multi-media artist and instrument builder, Brian Dewan. She currently resides in Hudson, NY, and plans to relocate to New York City in early 2012.