I/O Fest 2012 - Friday, January 6, 8 pm  
THE BOX—music by living composers: *Grab It!*

David Kechley

David Kechley first became fascinated with the idea of composing music as he heard his father, composer Gerald Kechley, play and refine passages at the piano over and over...and later found himself engaged in precisely the same activity. His early work is highly chromatic and expressionist as exemplified by *Second Composition for Large Orchestra*, premiered by the Seattle Symphony in 1968. Modality and lyricism followed later as did minimalist tendencies in the early 1990s. His music now draws from a variety of sources including classic works of the twentieth century and the more distant past, but also the present including forms of vernacular, popular, and ethnic music. Although these influences are generally integrated into a consistent style, the resulting musical landscapes which create sharp contrasts between lyricism, virtuosity, and dramatic gesture.

*Pogled U Budućnost/Pogled U Prošlost* (Looking Forward/Looking Back) was conceive and mostly written during a stay in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina in the summer of 2010. The title reflects my perceptions of life in that city, but the music itself is less influenced by the sights and sounds of Sarajevo than by themes and motives from two previous works, *At the Dragon’s Gate* and *EPISODES AND SOLILOQUIES: A Sonata for Violin and Piano*. On an upcoming compact disc I plan to place the *Seven Piano Pieces from Sarajevo* between these two “bookend” works because they draw from the musical ideas of both. Each of the seven pieces either looks back to what has already been played or provides a preview of ideas to come. Some of the musical characters are easily recognized in their new roles while others are well disguised. For example the opening of *Prologue* condenses the expansive, gradually unfolding, opening melody from *At the Dragon’s Gate* into a few simple chorale-like phrases. The pitches of the melodic line for *Mirrors Revisited* are exactly the same as *Episode with Variations*, but the chords come from *Episode with Mirrors*, two of the movements from *EPISODES AND SOLILOQUIES*. As the pieces progress the characters and the over-all musical language become more integrated and the connections between the two seemingly disparate bookends are revealed.

Although it may be interesting for listeners to know the origin of the basic ideas in *Pogled U Budućnost/Pogled U Prošlost*, such knowledge is not necessary. As the titles indicate, each piece takes the original idea in a different direction and is quite independent of the work from which it sprang.

*Pogled U Budućnost/Pogled U Prošlost* is dedicated to Doris Stevenson whose artistry, exceptional skill, unconditional support, and so many memorable and expressive performances of my music have led to a richly rewarding collaboration and friendship.

- David Kechley

Jeff Roberts

As composer and improviser, Jeff Roberts integrates different elements of music styles and cultural traditions that sonically and aesthetically resonate. His background in improvisation (jazz, experimental) coupled with his study of *guqin* in China all from a performance-based resource from which he forms his compositional language. His
compositions have been performed in the US, Europe and Asia and he has been commissioned by Philharmonisches Orchester Cottbus, Colorfield Ensemble, Dinosaur Annex, and Boston Chamber Orchestra and has worked with ensembles such as Eighth Blackbird, Ensemble E-mex, Music from China, I/O New Music, Ensemble Interface, Mikrokosmos, Non Sequitur and Ensemble No Left Notes. His music has been presented in multiple festivals including Music09-Switzerland, Città di Udine International Festival, Fresno New Music Festival, I/O New Music Festival, June in Buffalo, Warebrook Music Festival, Wellesley Composer Conference, and Columbia Music Scholarship Conference.

Jeff holds a PhD in composition from Brandeis University and is currently Visiting Assistant Professor of Composition and 20th Century Music History at Williams College. He previously taught at The Beijing Center for Chinese Studies, Brandeis University and Tufts University. He pursued special studies with guqin master Li Xiangting at the Beijing Central Conservatory as a Fulbright Fellow and studied with composer Hans Zender at the Hochschule für Musik Frankfurt am Main, on a grant from the Franz Goethe Stiftung. Jeff is also the Artistic Director at Yishu-8 Art Space in Beijing and founder of the “Music Beyond the Moongate International Chamber Music Festival,” for which he invited Ensemble E-mex as first Festival Ensemble in Residence in March of 2011. http://www.jeff-roberts.org

The title of Breaking Bamboo, Shaking Jade comes from the words of a poet and guqin player who lived in Tang Dynasty China. It describes thin, bright and cutting timbral quality of notes played on the 7th string of the instrument guqin. This comment comes in the context of a poem and reveals the close relationship between emotion, poetic impression, and music timbre. Also, in Chinese music aesthetics, the idea of motion is heard not just in the movement between notes, but the changing vibration of a single note articulated again and again with different timbres on guqin strings. I have attempted to express these qualities in this composition through different sustained timbral resonance of Western instruments and from this timbral “motion,” allow a slowly evolving harmonic and rhythmic momentum to take hold, based in part on my own Western roots in improvisation and composition.

- Jeff Roberts

Brian Simalchik

Brian Simalchik is currently completing his Masters in Composition at The Hartt School, where he studies with Robert Carl and co-directs the Hartt Composers Ensemble with David Macbride. He is active as a pianist, keyboardist and conductor. His particular musical interests include the intersection of space and sound, and he has collaborated with artists in many different disciplines, including dance, poetry, drama and sculpture.

Three Overlooks is in three short movements, played in any order. It is one of a series of pieces in which I attempt to create an acoustic space that reflects my own experience in specific landscapes. Though one can certainly be struck by the physical beauty of a certain landscape, our memory of a place is much richer than just a recollection of physical attributes. In that same way, this piece is not trying to depict landscape literally: rather, it is an attempt to capture moods, emotions, and the pace of passing time I remember when I was in these specific places.

- Brian Simalchik
Jacob Ter Veldhuis

Dutch “avant pop” composer JacobTV (Jacob Ter Veldhuis, b. 1951) started as a rock musician and studied composition and electronic music at the Groningen Conservatory, where he was awarded the Composition Prize of the Netherlands in 1980. He became a full time composer and soon made a name for himself with melodious compositions, straight from the heart and with great effect. “I pepper my music with sugar,” he says. The NRC called him the “Jeff Koons of new music” and his “coming-out” as a composer of ultra-tonal, mellifluous music reached its climax with the video oratorio Paradiso, premiered the day after 9-11 and released on CD and DVD by British record label Chandos.

In the last decade Jacob TV’s boombox music, for live instruments with a grooving sound track based on speech melody, became internationally popular. Although JacobTV is one of the most performed European composers, he is still an outlaw in the established modern classical music scene, and was recently accused of “musical terrorism” after a premiere at the World Harp Congress in Amsterdam.

JacobTV lives in the Dutch countryside. Currently he is composing a video opera called The News about the credit crunch and other world events, while touring with his JacobTV Band and the multimedia show Cities Change The Songs Of Birds.

Growing up in the sixties with blues, jazz, and rock, American music had a strong impact on my work. In Grab It! I tried to explore the no-man’s-land between language and music. I believe that language is one of the origins of music. The musical quality of speech increases by the power of emotion, which is one of the reasons I use audio from people in extremely emotional situations. Grab It! is based on voice samples from life-sentenced prisoners. Their world, on the fringe of society, with its heartbreaking verbal assaults moved and inspired me. The rough vitality of these shouting men formed a perfect unity with the harsh and powerful sound of the tenor saxophone, for which Grab It! was originally conceived. Grab It! is a kind of duet, a “dual” if you like, for instruments and soundtrack. The soloist competes with a perpetual range of syllables, words, and sentences, which demands intense endurance from the performer. The meaning of the lyrics becomes gradually clear during the piece, as well as the hopeless situation for the prisoners. In jail suicide is not uncommon: “He tied one end around the pipe, and he hung himself. So he went out the back door rapped up in a green sheet with a tag on his toe...You lose everything!” Death row is a metaphor for life. Yet the piece is not just sad, but can also be understood as a “memento vivere.” Life is worth living: Grab It!

- JacobTV

Michael Taylor

Michael Taylor (b. 1991) grew up in England and the USA. He has received several national awards including the Jack Kent Cooke Young Artist Award, the MTNA 1st place in senior composition, and the YoungARTS Gold Award; in 2010, he was named a Presidential Scholar in the Arts. He is currently earning a B.A. at Harvard University and an M.M. at New England Conservatory, where he studies composition with John Mallia and piano with Victor Rosenbaum. Other composers he has worked with include Simon Sargon, David Tcimpidis, Gabriela Frank, Martin Amlin, Nico Muhly, and Allain Gaussin. He is a lifelong choral singer and violinist.
Three Scenes for Viola and Piano was originally conceived as a set of six short character pieces, out of which three emerged fully developed. Scene I morphs from a light dance to a jazzy hoedown. Scene II is lyrical and melancholy, never quite resolving its emotional ambiguity. Scene III briefly reminisces the first scene before beginning a race uphill punctuated by contrasts but always filled with energy.

- Michael Taylor

Kaija Saariaho

Born in Helsinki, Kaija Saariaho studied there before leaving for further training at the conservatory in Freiburg with Brian Ferneyhough (from 1981 to 1982) and at the computer studio IRCAM in Paris. There, in a sense, she became a French composer, engaging in the adventure of "spectral" music—music creating and exploring harmonic spectra. Since the late 1980s, though, she has developed a personal style, more intimate, reposed, and warmly expressive, yet still probing—a style that reached a culmination in her first opera, L'amour de loin (Salzburg, 2000), to a libretto by Amin Maalouf.

She went on to compose a second opera with the same librettist, Adriana Mater, to which the present work is related, as she explains in her note:

Je sens un deuxième cœur is a piece born in the middle of composing my second opera. The title, as well as the names of the five sections, comes directly from the libretto. My original idea was to write musical portraits of the four characters in the opera, but when I began reworking the material in the context of chamber music, concentrating on developing the ideas to fit the three instruments of my trio, the piece grew further from the opera. Compositionally, I started from concrete, high profile ideas and advanced towards abstract, purely musical concerns. So, for example, the title of the first section, Je dévoile ma peau, became a metaphor: the musical material introduced was orchestrated to reveal the individual characters of the three instruments and their interrelations. The second and fourth parts both start from ideas of physical violence. In the context of this trio the violence has turned into two studies on instrumental energy. Part three is a color study in which the three identities are melded into one complex sound object.

The last section brings us to the thematic starting point of my opera, again very physical: the two hearts beating in a pregnant woman’s body. I am fascinated by the idea of the secret relationship between a mother and an unborn child. Musically, the two heartbeats and their constantly changing rhythmic polyphony have already served as an inspiration in my music; now the connections between the two minds added another layer of communication. These ideas guided the musical development how to share the intense dually-constructed material among the three trio instruments and to let it grow within their specific characters. Finally the title became also a metaphor for music making: isn’t it with the “other” we want to communicate through our music? As written over the last movement, "Doloroso, sempre con amore."

- Kaija Saariaho 2004