

Friday, January 13, 2017, 8 PM
'62 Center for Theatre and Dance, CenterStage

TAK Ensemble: Currents

Erin Gee (b. 1974)

Mouthpiece 28 (2016)
for soprano, bass flute, bass clarinet,
violin, and percussion

Kate Soper (b. 1981)

*Only The Words Themselves Mean
What They Say* (2010-11)
for soprano and flutes

I.) Go Away
II.) Head, Heart
III.) Getting to Know Your Body

Tyshawn Sorey (1980)

Ornations (2014)
for flute and bass clarinet

Jacob Walls '11 (b. 1989)

Lurking Beyond Thought (2016, rev.)
for soprano voice, flute, violin, bass
clarinet, and percussion

~ intermission ~

John Zorn (b. 1953)

The Tempest (a masque) (2012)
for flute, clarinets, and drum set

Taylor Brook (b. 1985)

Ecstatic Music (2012)
for violin and percussion

David Bird (b. 1990)

Series Imposture (2012)
for soprano, flute, clarinet, and
percussion

TAK

Laura Cocks, *flute*; Liam Kinson, *clarinet*; Charlotte Mundy, *voice*; Marina Kifferstein, *violin*; Ellery
Tafford, *percussion*

About TAK

TAK is a quintet that delivers energetic and virtuosic performances of contemporary classical music. Described as "stellar" (*Oneirics*), and full of "restless strands of ever shifting color and vigor" (*Feast of Music*), TAK concerts are consistently dynamic and engaging. The group frequently collaborates with video artists, installation artists, and experimental theater companies to create immersive concert experiences on a multi-media level. TAK has had the pleasure of working with esteemed composers Mario Diaz de Leon, Lewis Nielson, Tyshawn Sorey, Sam Pluta, Ashkan Behzadi, Natacha Diels, David Bird, and Taylor Brook, among many others.

The members of TAK are each "individual virtuosos" in their own right (Lucy Shelton), and have performed individually across North America and Europe with ensembles such as the London Sinfonietta, International Contemporary Ensemble, JACK Quartet, Wet Ink Ensemble, and Grammy-winning ensemble Roomful of Teeth. TAK has performed throughout New York City in spaces such as Roulette, New Amsterdam Records Headquarters, DiMenna Center for Classical Music, and Issue Project Room. In recent seasons, they have been invited to perform in collaboration with the American Composers Alliance, Innovations en concert (Montreal), the Queens New Music Festival (Queens, NY), and the Public Theater (NYC); they have held artist residencies at Avaloch Farm (New Hampshire) and Mount Tremper Arts (New York).

TAK is dedicated to working with young composers, and has collaborated with a number of university composition programs to produce concerts of new commissions. Among these institutions are the Oberlin Modern Music Guild, the graduate composers of the "First Performance" student organization at New York University, and both the graduate and undergraduate composers of Columbia University for their Columbia Composers Concerts.

Devoted to the commission of new works and direct collaboration with composers and other artists, TAK promotes ambitious programming at the highest level. TAK fosters engagement both within the contemporary music community, through bringing in guest artists and collaborators, and the musical community at large. Through working with installation artists, theater companies, and video artists, TAK aims to broaden the scope and diversity of their audience interaction.

About the Program

ERIN GEE

In January 2014, ERIN GEE was cited by Alex Ross, music critic for *The New Yorker*, as a member of the short list of the most influential composer-vocalists of the 21st century and since then has been awarded the Charles Ives Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a Bogliasco Fellowship. This marks a turning point in the trajectory of international recognition through the performance of her series of compositions entitled *Mouthpieces*, which uses non-traditional vocal techniques, devoid of semantic language, to construct intricate and subtle patterns of a diverse array of vocal sounds. In the *Mouthpieces*, the voice is used as an instrument of sound production rather than as a vehicle of identity. The construction of the vocal text is often based on linguistic structure—vowel-consonant formation and the principle of the allophone—and is relatively quiet, with a high percentage of breath. The *Mouthpieces* began as solo vocal works, devoid of semantic text or language and notated with the International Phonetic Alphabet. In the Mouthpiece series, the voice is used as an instrument of sound production rather than as a vehicle of identity. Linguistic meaning is not the voice's goal.

Mouthpiece 28

38. 'She is ten different Albertines in succession'

59. 'Everything, indeed, is at least double.'

La Prisonnière p.362

KATE SOPER

Only The Words Themselves Mean What They Say

KATE SOPER is a composer, performer, and writer whose work explores the integration of drama and rhetoric into musical structure, the slippery continuums of expressivity, intelligibility and sense, and the wonderfully treacherous landscape of the human voice. She has been hailed by *The Boston Globe* as "a composer of trenchant, sometimes discomfiting, power" and by *The New Yorker* for her "limpid, exacting vocalism, impetuous theatricality, and...mastery of modernist style." Soper has received awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters (The Virgil Thomson and Goddard Lieberson awards and the Charles Ives Scholarship), the Koussevitzky Foundation, Chamber Music America, the Lili Boulanger Memorial Fund, the Music Theory Society of New York State, and ASCAP, and has been commissioned by ensembles including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the American Composers Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, the Tanglewood Music Center/BUTI, the MIVOS string quartet, and Yarn/Wire. She has received residencies and fellowships from the Civitella Raineri Foundation, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, the Camargo Foundation, the Macdowell Colony, Tanglewood, Royaumont, and Domaine Forget, among others.

I wrote *Only the Words Themselves Mean What They Say* out of a determination to test my limits as a vocalist and performer and an itch to make something out of Lydia Davis' fabulously quirky, slyly profound texts. Writing as a composer/performer opens up the pre-compositional realm to lots of useful improvisatory tangents and fresh timbral discoveries, and working closely with flutist Erin Lesser led to many happy surprises that eventually made their way into the final score. Lydia Davis' words suggested an unhinged virtuosity and idiosyncratic, multi-layered musical reading that took me from screwball comedy to paired musical gymnastics: the flute becomes a kind of Iron Man suit for the voice, amplifying it to new planes of expressivity, intensity, and insanity as the two players struggle, with a single addled brain, to navigate the treacherous labyrinth of simple logic.

—Kate Soper

TYSHAWN SOREY
Ornations

TYSHAWN SOREY is an active composer, performer, educator, and scholar who works across an extensive range of musical idioms. As a percussionist, trombonist, and pianist, Tyshawn has performed and/or recorded nationally and internationally with his own ensembles and with artists such as Muhal Richard Abrams, Steve Coleman, Butch Morris, Peter Evans, Misha Mengelberg, John Zorn, Vijay Iyer, Wadada Leo Smith, Dave Douglas, Anthony Braxton, Steve Lehman, and Tim Berne, among many others. Tyshawn's work has been favorably reviewed in *Traps*, National Public Radio, *JazzTimes*, *The Village Voice*, *The Wire*, *The New York Times*, *Modern Drummer*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Downbeat Magazine*.

JACOB WALLS
Lurking Beyond Thought

Philadelphia-based composer/trumpeter JACOB WALLS writes music that explores the intersections of color, lyricism, and abrasion—often drawing on familiar musical elements, other times cutting against them sharply. Walls is a Benjamin Franklin doctoral fellow in composition at the University of Pennsylvania, where he studies with James Primosch, Anna Weesner, and Jay Reise. Recent projects include *Tachygenesis* for the PRISM Quartet, *Piano Stretch* for pianist Karl Larson, and *Lurking Beyond Thought*, a trio for soprano voice, flute, and bass, written for the 2016 soundSCAPE Exchange (Italy). This season he is writing music for Bearthoven (NYC) and for a tenor sax and electronics commission from Matthew Levy (Philadelphia).

Lurking Beyond Thought employs an excerpt from a fragmentary and evocative novel written entirely in the first person by the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector entitled *Água Viva* (often referred to in English as "Live Water"). In this excerpt, the speaker makes repeated attempts to state an intensely felt desire about how to live. I was drawn to this passage for the way it turns on a dime from the most abstract psychology to the most concrete details of personal history. Each sentence signals a unique intent or mood, and yet they all drive at the same urgent desire, albeit one difficult to state with precision.

Stating that desire with absolute clarity might actually defeat the point of summoning each of these moods. Instead, with this music I'm trying to draw out the urgency of what is being confessed with each new sentence, each new attempt to get closer to the singer's meaning. The words are sometimes torn apart in the voice or fragmented or echoed in the instruments so that the struggle evident in the written word is also evident in the sung word. Other times they are treated as plainly and directly as they function on the page. Throughout, the musical treatment suggests a way for these conflicting registers to join the same fundamental expression.

—Jacob Walls

text

Yes, I want the last word which is also so primary that it gets tangled up with the unattainable part of the real. I'm still afraid to move away from logic because I fall into instinct and directness, and into the future: the invention of today is the only way to usher in the future. Then it's the future, and any hour is your allotted hour. So what's the harm of moving away from logic?

I deal in raw materials. I'm after whatever is lurking beyond thought.

...

It's like moments I had with you, when I would love you, moments I couldn't go past because I descended into their depths. It's a state of touching the surrounding energy and I shudder. Some mad,

mad harmony. I know that my gaze must be that of a primitive person surrendered completely to the world, primitive like the gods who only allow the broad strokes of good and evil and don't want to know about good tangled up like hair in evil, evil that is good.

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JOHN ZORN

The Tempest (a masque)

Drawing on his experience in a variety of genres including jazz, rock, hardcore punk, classical, klezmer, film, cartoon, popular and improvised music, JOHN ZORN has created an influential body of work that defies academic categories. A native of New York City, he has been a central figure in the downtown scene since 1975, incorporating a wide range of musicians in various compositional formats. He learned alchemical synthesis from Harry Smith, structural ontology with Richard Foreman, how to make art out of garbage with Jack Smith, cathartic expression at Sluggs and hermetic intuition from Joseph Cornell. Early inspirations include American innovators Ives, Varese, Cage, Carter and Partch, the European tradition of Berg, Stravinsky, Boulez and Kagel, soundtrack composers Herrmann, Morricone and Stalling as well as avant-garde theater, film, art and literature.

TAYLOR BROOK

Ecstatic Music

TAYLOR BROOK is a composer of concert music for large and small ensembles, both acoustically as well as using electronics and new technologies. Brook also writes music for video produced by visual artists, and music for theater and dance. Described as “gripping” and “engrossing” by the New York Times, his compositions have won numerous awards and prizes. His music has been performed around the world by ensembles and soloists such as the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, Quatuor Bozzini, JACK Quartet, MIVOS quartet, Talea Ensemble, Ensemble Ascolta, and others. Brook has won several SOCAN Young Composers awards, including two first place prizes and the grand prize in 2016 for his solo cello piece, Song. His current projects include a new string quartet for JACK Quartet, a piece for Talea Ensemble, a solo piece for oboe d’amore and electronics for Catherine Lee, and a percussion octet for the Manhattan School of Music.

Ecstatic Music attempts to portray the performers in a state of ecstasy, channelling the music from an unknown source. This type of sublime experience may be impossible to embed in the notation and is more connected to the theatricality of a performance (memorization on the part of the performers is key), but never the less this is what I’ve attempted. A physical theatricality has been embedded in the notes on the page along with an obsessive treatment of the musical materials. Furthermore, occasionally I call for techniques that are unstable and elicit unpredictable results from the instruments. For example, playing a violin with extra bow pressure while performing a glissandi of harmonics will always create a rich overall sound, but the exact result cannot be repeated precisely.

The violin and percussion are closely linked throughout the work as the two parts are most often playing in rhythmic unison, functioning as a single compound instrument. The violin as well as the two guitars played by the percussionist are all retuned to obtain a precisely-tuned palette of microtonal pitches. Although the harmonies are often obscured, the piece is in an extended just intonation harmonic system rooted on E.

—Taylor Brook

DAVID BIRD
Series Imposture

DAVID BIRD is a composer and producer from Laguna Beach, California. He is a graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and currently studies composition at Columbia University. His work frequently employs the use of live electronics with aims to strengthen the relationships between acoustic and electronic instruments. His music has been a "Staff Pick" on Vimeo and featured on their homepage, as well as publications such as The Atlantic and The Plain Dealer. A review from Pitchfork's Altered Zones has described his expansive sound as, "vibrant, shirt-stain- ing, color squirting... amidst swirling layers of white noise and choir... I do believe a lie-down is in order." His work has been performed internationally, at venues and festivals such as the MATA festival in New York City; the Wien Modern Festival in Vienna, Austria; the SPOR festival in Aarhus, Denmark; the IRCAM Manifeste Festival in Paris, France; the Festival Mixtur in Barcelona, Spain; the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.; the Bodo Sinfonietta in Bodo, Norway; the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) in Indianapolis, Indiana; and the SEAMUS electroacoustic music festival in Appleton, Wisconsin

Series Imposture was inspired by the "Rosenhan experiment," a famous experiment done to test the validity of psychiatric diagnosis. It was conducted by the psychologist David Rosenhan and published by the Science journal in 1973 under the title "On being sane in insane places." The study involved the use of healthy associates or "pseudo-patients" who faked auditory hallucinations in an attempt to gain admission to different psychiatric hospitals across the United States. Bizarrely enough, all pseudo-patients were admitted and diagnosed with mild-to-serious psychiatric disorders. After admission, the pseudo-patients attempted to make a public "show" of their sanity, yet they were unable to wholly convince their caretakers of this reality. All were forced to admit to having a mental illness and agree to ingest antipsychotic drugs as a condition of their release. The average time that the patients spent in the hospital was 19 days, one patient remained for nearly two months. All of the patients but one were diagnosed with schizophrenia "in remission" before their release.

—David Bird