

# Today's program

SETH KNOPP, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

# Yellow Barn

## Summer Residency Concert

August 1, 2020 | 7:30 | The Big Barn, Putney, VT

**John Cage (1912-1992)** Solo for Voice 22 from Song Books (1970)

Lucy Shelton

**Georges Aperghis (b.1945)** Récitation No. 9 for Female Voice (1978)

Elaine Daiber, soprano

**Liza Lim (b.1966)** Inguz (1996)

Yasmina Spiegelberg, clarinet; Coleman Itzkoff, cello

**John Cage (1912-1992)** Solo for Voice 23 from Song Books (1970)

Anthony Marwood and Walter Van Dyk

**Matthew Aucoin (b.1990)** Dual (2015)

Coleman Itzkoff, cello; Lizzie Burns, double bass

**Philippe Manoury (b.1952)** Le Livre des Claviers II (1987-88)

Ayano Kataoka, Eduardo Leandro, marimbas

**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)** Partita No. 1 in B Minor, BWV 1002 (1720)

Allemande—Double

Courante—Double

Sarabande—Double

Tempo di borea—Double

Alice Ivy-Pemberton, Adelya Nartadjieva, violins

Tonight's wall program was created by Ann Glazer.



Much of his subsequent work used operations based on pages from the *I Ching* to which Cage would randomly flip, including *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (1951) for 12 radio receivers, *Music of Changes* (1951) for piano, and, later, *Cheap Imitation*. He also composed using star charts in his *Etudes Australes* (1975) for piano and *Atlas Eclipticalis* (1962) for orchestra. Cage's most ambitious work involving chance procedures was *Europas I & 2* (1987), which uses the *I Ching* to generate every aspect of the production—libretto, score, costumes, sets, lighting, “plot”—based on a database of over 100 classic European operas. According to Cage, his use of the technique allowed a piece to be performed in chaotically different ways, and also fulfilled his intention to “let things be themselves.”

In 1970 Cage took a commission to write two sets of songs for Cathy Berberian and Simone Rist. He consulted the *I Ching* to determine how many songs would go into each book: 56 and 34 were the responses. Now he had the ambitious goal of writing ninety new pieces for a solo singer, and he had only three months to do it. Running to 317 pages of manuscript score, the songs are incredibly diverse, a cornucopia of musical invention.

The heterogeneity of the *Song Books* was the result of the method that Cage set up to guide the construction of the ninety solos. This was a method that would help him to find his way through the challenge of writing ninety solos in ninety days, and that would simultaneously take him on a host of unknown compositional adventures: not an architect's blueprint, but the hero's instructions in a fairy tale, full of riddles and secrets. For each song Cage had to ask three questions and receive the answers by tossing coins and consulting the *I Ching*. The answers would provide him instructions on how to discover this solo.

The first question: “Is this solo relevant or irrelevant to the overall theme of the *Song Books*?” For his theme, Cage took a line from his diaries: “We connect Satie with Thoreau.” Relevant solos include references to either Satie or Thoreau or both; irrelevant songs do not. The second question: “What kind of solo is this?” There were four categories: song (that is, a primarily sung piece), song using electronics, theatre (that is, *not* involving singing, but instead consisting of actions), and theatre using electronics. The third question, the open-ended one, the key that opened the treasure chest of invention: “How will I compose this solo?” There were three possible answers: compose it using a method that Cage had used before, compose it by making a variation to a method already used, or invent an entirely new method of composition. If the answer was to use or vary an existing method, chance also determined exactly which method. Thus armed with a theme, a format, and this general direction, Cage set forth to figure out exactly how to

make the solo. He did this for each of the ninety solos, one after the other, until the work was completed, the journey ended.

*Song Books* is a piece that is impossible to characterize in any brief description—a piece which juxtaposes the old and the new, determinacy and indeterminacy. Cage's description is as good as any: "To consider the *Song Books* as a work of art is nearly impossible. Who would dare? It resembles a brothel, doesn't it?"

—James Pritchett

**Georges Aperghis (b.1945) Récitation No. 9 for Female Voice (1978)**

Technical obstacles are applied very consciously in 14 Recitations. The order of syllables, the progression of colours, the combination of vocal expressions I choose form a barrier and are a hassle to perform, and these difficulties in turn create little musical and theatrical situations which distinguish the work. We see and hear a singer realizing a musical score, but at the same time we witness somebody who can't speak properly, someone who is very nervous, restless or hunted, etc. That is the human dimension of this work. We see people in their daily life struggle, people who are fragile, people who have trouble expressing themselves - elusive mental portraits en miniature. I had many such imaginary stories in mind when I wrote 14 Recitations. A free-floating chain of associative stories, just as our mind happens to create them. —Georges Aperghis

Georges Aperghis was born in Athens in 1945, and has lived and worked in Paris since 1963. His work is characterized by a questioning of language and its meaning, and explore the boundaries of the intelligible.

Daniel Durney writes:

*By the time Georges Aperghis was writing Récitations in 1978, he had already commenced experimenting with the unlikely blending of sounds and words. The music seemingly finds its strength as the words gradually fade in*



**Liza Lim (b.1966)** Inguz (1996)

Liza Lim is a composer, educator, and researcher whose music focuses on collaborative and transcultural practices. The roots of beauty (in noise), time effects in the Anthropocene, and the sensoria of ecological connection, are ongoing concerns in her compositional work. Her four operas: *The Oresteia* (1993), *Moon Spirit Feasting* (2000), *The Navigator* (2007) and *Tree of Codes* (2016), and the major ensemble work *Extinction Events and Dawn Chorus* (2018) explore themes of desire, memory, ritual transformation and the uncanny. Her genre-crossing percussion ritual/opera *Atlas of the Sky* (2018), is a work involving community participants of all abilities that investigates the emotional power and energy dynamics of crowds.

*Inguz* (fertility) refers to the Viking rune symbolizing fertility, which is associated with “the moon, intuition and the desire for harmonization in personal relationships”. Lim conceives of the work as being like the alap of an Indian raga, in which the music functions to tune the instruments and to establish a mood.

Lim has received commissions and performances from some of the world’s pre-eminent orchestras (Los Angeles Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Orchestra, BBC, WDR, SWR) and was Resident Composer with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 2005 & 2006. Her work has been featured at the Spoleto Festival (USA), Miller Theatre New York, Festival d’Automne à Paris, the Salzburg, Lucerne, Holland, Venice Biennale Festivals and all the major Australian festivals. She has had a 30-year collaboration with the ELISION Ensemble and has regularly worked with Ensemble Musikfabrik, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Ensemble Modern, Klangforum Wien, International Contemporary Ensemble, Arditti String Quartet, and JACK Quartet amongst others.

*meaning, a process which endows these compositions with a haunting beauty.*

**Matthew Aucoin (b.1990)** Dual (2015)

Matthew Aucoin is an American composer, conductor, writer, and pianist. He was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in 2018, and is both Artist-in-Residence at Los Angeles Opera and co-artistic director of the newly-formed American Modern Opera Company.

Aucoin is currently at work on a new opera, *Eurydice*, which is a collaboration with the playwright Sarah Ruhl. *Eurydice* has been co-commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera and the Los Angeles Opera. The role of Artist-in-Residence at Los Angeles Opera, created for Aucoin, fuses his work as composer and conductor. Aucoin has conducted LA Opera mainstage productions in addition to his own works. In addition to his work in Los Angeles, Aucoin regularly guest-conducts nationally and internationally. This past summer, Aucoin made his Santa Fe Opera conducting debut leading John Adams's *Doctor Atomic*, in a new production by Peter Sellars.

Aucoin's American Modern Opera Company (AMOC) has an annual festival at Cambridge's American Repertory Theater, and has been in residence at the Park Avenue Armory and Harvard University. Aucoin's orchestral and chamber music has been commissioned and performed by Zurich's Tonhalle Orchestra, Salzburg's Mozarteum Orchestra, the Brentano Quartet, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and Chanticleer.

Of his work *Dual* Aucoin writes:

Yo-Yo Ma, for whom *Dual* was written, has often reminded us in recent years of the vitality and potency of this combination, often with his regular collaborator, double bass virtuoso Edgar Meyer. The cello and the double bass, being two strapping, well-built brothers from the same instrumental family, share a number of genetic traits – a warm, dark timbre in the lower register; a uniquely earthy quality to the very sound of the bow being drawn across the instrument – that are doubly satisfying when the two instruments speak together.

**Philippe Manoury (b.1952)** *Le Livre des Claviers II* (1987-88)

“Le Livres des Claviers (The Book of Keyboards) includes six pieces for keyboards, relatively short, for the various types of percussion keyboards. Techniques related to keyboards have developed greatly during the twentieth century. If we compare the use of the xylophone in Debussy, to that in Messiaen and Boulez, there is an obvious breakthrough, bringing it (both the marimba and xylophone) to a true solo role.

The most motivating element for me (in composing *Le Livres des Claviers*) was the discovery of the Sixxens (a metalophone built for Iannis Xenakis) whose sound characteristics escape the standards usually encountered in Western violin-making. The strongly inharmonic sounds of these instruments suggested

completely different methods of composition to me, since the pitch (hence the harmony, the interval) is no longer an element of identification.

—Philippe Manoury