

JACK
Quartet

March 15 2008
the Tank
NYC

Presented by AMP
Thanks to Mike and the rest of the staff at the Tank

program

St/4-1,080262 (1962).....Iannis Xenakis
(1922-2001)

Gran Torso (1972).....Helmut Lachenmann
(b. 1935)

- break -

String Quartet no. 3 "Im Innersten" (1976).....Wolfgang Rihm
(b. 1952)

The **JACK Quartet** formed with an appetite for today's most demanding string quartet repertoire. Comprised of violist John Pickford Richards, violinists Ari Streisfeld and Christopher Otto, and cellist Kevin McFarland, the quartet has given high-energy performances in Europe and North America including appearances at Carnegie Hall, the Lucerne Festival, University of California at San Diego, and Festival Internacional de Música Contemporánea de Michoacán.

The members of the JACK Quartet met while attending the Eastman School of Music where in addition to learning standard repertoire, they pursued period, non-western, and popular performance styles. The quartet has studied with the Arditti Quartet at the Pro-Bio Foundation Summer School Contemporary Quartet Music and members of the Ensemble Intercontemporain at the Lucerne Festival Academy and has worked closely with composers Helmut Lachenmann, Matthias Pintscher, Samuel Adler, and Robert Wannamaker.

JACK Quartet

John Pickford Richards (viola)
Ari Streisfeld (violin)
Christopher Otto (violin)
Kevin McFarland (cello)

- ABOUT THE PERFORMERS -

John Pickford Richards holds degrees from the Interlochen Arts Academy and Eastman School of Music where his primary teachers were David Holland and John Graham. He is a member of Payton MacDonald's Super Marimba Project and Alarm Will Sound, bringing him into close contact with such composers as John Adams, Wolfgang Rihm, Meredith Monk, and Steve Reich at venues including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and The Roxy. John has performed as soloist with the Pasadena Symphony Orchestra, Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra, Ossia New Music, The All-American Rejects on MTV's TRL, and recently performed the solo part to Luciano Berio's *Chemins II* at the Lucerne Festival Academy under the direction of Pierre Boulez. He taught for three years at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and has also taught at summer camps, in city and rural public schools, and in continuing education.

Ari Streisfeld began playing the violin at age six. He grew up to the sounds of the Philadelphia Orchestra, studying with members Paul Arnold and Yayoi Numazawa, and went on to study with Zvi Zeitlin at the Eastman School of Music, where he worked with such composers as Steve Mackey, Bernard Rands, Robert Morris, Carlos Sanchez Gutierrez, Ricardo Zohn Muldoon, and David Liptak. As a member of Chicago-based Dal Niente, Ari has performed Morton Feldman's Piano and String Quartet at the 2006 Chicago Sound Field Festival and Salvatore Sciarrino's *Six Caprices* at New Music Chicago's Sonic Impact Festival. Ari attended the Music Academy of the West, New York String Orchestra Seminar, Kent/Blossom Music, and the Lucerne Festival Academy. As a composer, he was a recipient of the 2000 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award. Ari currently studies at the Northwestern School of Music with Almita Vamos.

Christopher Otto studied composition at the Eastman School of Music with Martin Bresnick, David Liptak, and Robert Morris and has been pursuing a degree at the University of California at San Diego. As a violinist, Christopher has premiered many compositions and worked with such composers as Harrison Birtwistle, Pierre Boulez, Helmut Lachenmann, and Steve Reich. Christopher has participated as composer and performer in such contemporary music festivals as the Lucerne Festival Academy, Internationale Musikinstitut Darmstadt, Karlheinz Stockhausen Courses, Institute and Festival for Contemporary Performance at the Mannes College of Music, June in Buffalo, and Festival Internacional de Música Contemporánea de Michoacán.

Kevin McFarland received a Bachelor's Degree in Composition from the Eastman School of Music. While a student there he was a highly active performer of contemporary music, including frequent concerts with the school's Ossia New Music and Musica Nova ensembles, and over one hundred premieres of works by faculty and students. He is a member of the Tarab Cello Ensemble, a group dedicated to the commissioning and performance of new music for cello octet. He currently lives in Pennsylvania where he works as a math tutor and enjoys making electronic music in his free time.

- ABOUT THE WORKS -

Notes on *ST/4 - 1,080262* by Iannis Xenakis

This quartet belongs to a series of compositions for which **Xenakis** used stochastic (ST) processes to control nearly all aspects of tone production including frequency, timbre, dynamics, and rhythm. Stochastics is a mathematical theory of probability and random distributions, an idea that in its application to music starkly contrasts the serialism and strict determinism of Xenakis's European contemporaries. In the 1955 article entitled "La crise de la musique sérielle" (The crisis of serial music) Xenakis writes:

Linear polyphony is self-destructive in its current complexity. In reality, what one hears is a bunch of notes in various registers. The enormous complexity prevents one from following the tangled lines and its macroscopic effect is one of unreasonable and gratuitous dispersion of sounds over the whole sound spectrum. Consequently, there is a contradiction between the linear polyphonic system and the audible result, which is a surface, a mass.

In the years that followed the publication of this article he explored stochastics (with aid of a computer) as a means of directly controlling sounds as masses or surfaces as opposed to combinations of individual lines.

ST/4 is an arrangement of another composition entitled *ST/10 - 1,080262* for ten instruments : completed in the same year (the numbers after the comma refer to the date of final calculations of both compositions.) As an arrangement for far fewer instruments the composition reaches moments of incredible density in which all four parts constantly juxtapose glissandi, pizzicati, tremolo, col legno battuto, and tapping on the body of the instrument. Other moments are more spacious, such as a plucked descending chromatic scale with sparse accompaniment that continues far beyond the listener's expectations. One can not listen to such a composition with the same ears as other classical music or even other contemporary classical music. It has an internal logic that operates in a completely different manner than most listeners are accustomed to hearing. It is not music of antecedents and consequents, counterpoint, or even emotional climaxes. Rather, Xenakis's stochastic music is a force to be reckoned with, a force of nature, beautiful in its sheer magnitude, density, complexity.

(from by Kevin McFarland)

Notes on String Quartet no. 1 “Gran Torso” by Helmut Lachenmann

“*Gran Torso*” (1972, rev. 1976, 1988) is a work constructed from sounds produced at the thresholds of instrumental possibility. Indeed many of these methods of tone production still appear and sound radical today. In the beginning of the composition the first violinist plays exclusively on the back of the instrument, using pressure to produce a brutal noise that resonates in such a way as to suggest the instrument is being rend apart. In sharp contrast to this, later in the work the violist plays a solo entirely on the tailpiece; the sound hovers liminally, at the edge of perception.

This work is far from a mere catalog of experimental effects, however. The many extended techniques that are employed are to be carefully controlled by the players and executed with utmost precision. When it succeeds, the result is a sound world that does not hold it self up as some polemical or political critique of tradition, but an abstract world that is comprised of material that lies in the instruments themselves as raw potential, sounds previously marginalized by the dogma of traditional playing techniques and now allowed to speak. These sound objects that are transformed and integrated into a cohesive whole are often mischaracterized as noises. The careful listener will note that many of these "noises" resonate around specific pitches, and also contain rhythms, beatings, or modulations that are extremely subtle and variegated. What ultimately is communicated in a successful performance of the work is a kind of sublime beauty, unhindered by more traditional definitions of what beauty is and what sounds are beautiful. Rather than destroy the traditional concept of the string quartet, this work transforms what the string quartet can be.

(notes by Kevin McFarland)

Notes on String Quartet no. 3 “Im Innersten” by Wolfgang Rihm

Rihm's Third String Quartet was completed when the composer was twenty-four years old. It work of youthful exuberance but displays a maturity beyond his age that has allowed it to withst the test of time. The quartet is characteristic of Rihm's work in that the overall form is not struct in a formalized way, but rather the individual lines are imbued with an inner life, navigating the through sudden twists and turns guided by an unsteady emotional compass. The piece amalgam diverse array of textures and harmonies without becoming pastiche. It reflects upon traditional tonality and counterpoint in a nostalgic way without ever seeming trite. As the title indicates (roughly translated as "in the internal" or "innermost") the work is intensely personal and heartf and this feeling of genuineness overrides what could otherwise be perceived as cliché or ironic.

It is difficult and even inadvisable to give a proper narrative overview of the work. Firstly, an attempt to do so would seem incredibly redundant. The first five movements could all be descri as extended and relentless climaxes punctuated by moments of quiet but hesitant or unsure repos And though they are all related by similar motives and themes, they nonetheless each have an individual identity that is difficult to capture or sum up in words. Secondly, to give a blow-by-b account of each movement would ruin the work's efficacy, much like overhearing the plot twists movie or book in advance. The only hint given here is that the sixth movement is radically diffe from the others, in that it displays incredible restraint and control, withholding its emotional pea the absolute maximum effect. It is in this final movement that all the aforementioned extremes are reconciled, but not integrated. The full resolution of this inner conflict is rendered as a beautiful perhaps impossible dream.

(notes by Kevin McFarland)