

A Recital with Sopranos by Keith Eisenbrey
Saturday, October 13 2007, 2pm
University Temple United Methodist Church

Prelude		Gavin Borchert
Sonata (1979)		Keith Eisenbrey
Fifth Sonata		Lockrem Johnson
Intermezzo IV		Keith Eisenbrey
Songs in the Wind	texts by Ruth McDonald with Lorri Froggét, soprano	Lockrem Johnson

****Intermission****

Two-Part Invention		Gavin Borchert
(“ . . . my chart shines high where the blue milks upset . . . ”)		Benjamin Boretz
Old Bangum	traditional text with Karen Eisenbrey, soprano	Keith Eisenbrey

Notes

Gavin Borchert

Prelude and *Two Part Invention*

Born and raised in Grand Forks, ND, **Gavin Borchert** studied composition at Michigan State University and at the College-Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati with Darrell Handel and Allen Sapp. A not-entirely-unexpected failure to secure an academic post upon graduation (DMA, 1993) led him to Seattle, where he composes, presents CD reviews every other Tuesday on KUOW's "Sound Focus," and covers classical music for Seattle Weekly.

Works of his that have received particularly lovely performances include the overture *She Stoops to Conquer* (Indianapolis Symphony), *Five Memos* (after Calvino) (Cincinnati Symphony, Tacoma Symphony), *Gjallarhorn* (Seattle Youth Symphony), *Shepherd's Life, with variations* (guitarist Mark Wilson), *Aubade-canon* (The Esoterics), a Piano Quartet (Seattle New Music Ensemble), *Kermesse* (Northwest Symphony), a Cello Sonata (Dave Beck), *Sweet wines and wines that foam* (Philharmonia Northwest), and *Canon for an August afternoon* (Octava Chamber Orchestra), in addition to any number of performances at the Seattle Composers Salon.

Gavin writes: "I've written a good deal of piano music, but since my technique on the instrument is severely limited, it's pushed me to see just how much interest and beauty I can possibly wring out of deliberately non-difficult music. (I probably will need to write a fast piano piece at some point.) The *Prelude* in F-sharp major (more or less) follows a neatly schematic plan: the inner voice descends by half-step from C# to G#, and then that whole section is repeated verbatim, transposed down a tritone, to complete the descent from G to D. In the F-major *Two-Part Invention*, the alternating-hand rhythm (in triple time) is taken unapologetically from Bach's E-major *Two-Part Invention*, while the idea of playing scale passages in one hand against arpeggiated triads in the other, and relishing the very gentle clashes that result, is borrowed from Arvo Pärt. "

Keith Eisenbrey

Sonata (1979), *Intermezzo IV*, and *Old Bangum*

For the score of *Sonata* (1979) I used paper without staves, so that neither specific pitches nor rhythms are notated, but rather, in a general way, pitch is indicated as higher than or lower than, and earlier than or later than. What is quite specifically notated is the articulation (short or long) and dynamics (loud or soft) of each note or phrase. In the middle segment I eschewed note-like shapes altogether, and penned scribbly shapes and trills. The beauty in this approach (aside from producing a stunningly pretty score) is that I am able, each time out, to re-design the pitch structure of the performance, either on the fly, or (as is not the case this afternoon) with malice aforethought.

Intermezzo IV (1983) is the fourth of six intermezzi I composed while pursuing compositional studies with Benjamin Boretz in upstate New York. It consists of a sequence of two-note chords, all sixths, sevenths, and ninths. I got lost in what still seems to me a warm, almost Brahmsian, harmonic broth.

Old Bangum (2007) is an extended exegesis of the American folk song of the same name. Or, it is an opera in 8 strophes in which the stage is the recital hall, the set is the piano and possibly a stool, and the only character is the eponymous folk song, sung in its entirety. Or, it is an epic battle between a wild boar and a hero, played out variously among the piano, the pianist, and the song, willy-nilly.

Lockrem Johnson

Fifth Sonata and *Songs in the Wind*

Lockrem Johnson was born March 15, 1924, in Davenport, Iowa. He studied music at the Cornish School of Music and the University of Washington. He taught there 1947-49, was pianist with the Seattle Symphony 1948-51, music director of the Eleanor King Dance Company 1947-50, and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1952. He lived in New York for several years where he worked in the music publishing business. He was head of the Cornish School of Music 1962-69. He died March 5, 1977, in Seattle. His works include the chamber opera *A Letter to Emily* (1955), the ballet *She*, a symphony (1966), numerous chamber and vocal works, 6 piano sonatas, and a multitude of other solo piano works. In Seattle he was a well-known teacher and active supporter of local musicians.

I had the pleasure of meeting Lockrem Johnson once, in the Fall of 1976, because, in a typical gesture, he was doing a young musician a favor. I had been writing music for about a year, and my composition teacher at the time wanted me to enter a piece in a state-wide contest. Since my teacher wasn't a member of the sponsoring organization, Lockrem agreed to sponsor me, sight un-seen (and music un-heard). Technically I had to be his student, so I was invited over for a lesson. Four hours or so later, (and quite enamored of his wonderful Grotrien piano), I left with his sponsorship, loads of advice and encouragement, and a score to his *Fifth Sonata* (ca. 1950). I have been working on this single-movement composition ever since. Among its unusual features is a theme in jaggedly violent octaves played by the left hand, while the right hand plays a "silent" chorale, its carefully un-dampened strings excited by sympathetic vibration alone. This theme ends the work, and the final, excruciatingly quiet sounds are the vibrations of strings not struck by any hammer.

Songs in the Wind is a cycle of six songs, performed without pause, on texts by Ruth McDonald. The vocal writing and the keyboard figurations are fluent and expressive, painting vivid images of storm, longing, loss, and intimacy.

Benjamin Boretz

("... *my chart shines high where the blue milks upset* . . .")

Throughout his long career, **Benjamin Boretz** has been active as a composer, theorist, teacher, improviser, editor, and publisher. His compositional and music-theoretical works include *Group Variations*, *Meta-Variations: studies in the foundations of musical thought*, *Language as a Music*, ("...*my chart shines high where the blue milks upset*..."), *If I am a musical thinker*, *One*, and *Music/Consciousness/Gender*. Among his many collaborations, some of the most fruitful have been with composers J. K. Randall and Elaine Barkin. He was the instigating and long-time editor of *Perspectives of New Music*, and is currently co-editor of *The Open Space magazine*. In all his varied activities his voice stands as a continuing challenge to the conscience of our musical lives, and as an eloquent champion of the worth of musical endeavor.

("... *my chart shines high where the blue milks upset* . . .") (1975/1976), Benjamin Boretz's lyrical study in "two notes at a time" has been a touchstone in my musical life since I first made its acquaintance almost 30 years ago. What intrigues me so deeply, aside from its beguiling loveliness, is the magical way it unfolds, like a flower carefully blooming, step by step, projecting, in the end, an image very like its own beginning, utterly transformed. One pianist likened playing this piece to taking a stroll in a minefield, but to me it seems more like playing a remarkable game of Go, constructing from the simplest elements a complex and subtle field in which each new move re-images the meaning of what has gone before, and casts shadows into next-ness.

Texts

Songs in the Wind

by Ruth McDonald

1.

How cold the waves are upon my heart:
Tonight the wind is swift and cold,
Lashing my face,
Buffeting the breath from my body.

I thought I heard your laughter
Ringing up from the beach,
But you were gone when I touched the sand,
Only the waves knew the print of your foot on their floor.

There is but one mark they may not erase
Unless my heart bows to their surge.

2.

It takes the rising of the sun,
And the setting of the moon,
To make the days into years,

But one word, whispered,
Has stopped the flight of black beach heron
Against the dawn.

One word, filling the room with silence,
While the firelight gleams quickgold in the grate.
Only one word to stop my world in its spinning.
Why was I listening?

3.

There is fury loose on the sound tonight,
A fury of wind and water and salt spray lashed in my face.
Waves crescendo upon the beach and my heart
Leaps to greet them.

One and one, we are matched in destruction,
Gathering force from the surging of the rip tide,
Carrying my heart to crash into a million pieces
Against the rocky edge of your indifference.

4.

I walked the world today,
Saw the sunset take in its gold-washed robes,
Watched the stars ready for midnight

And I saw the four winds dip into jars
Of cherry blossom honey
To sweeten the path of spring.

I saw the rain distill its showers
From pale mountain meadows,
But long though I searched,

Nowhere did I find
The secret of the deep retreat
In your spoken word of welcome.

5.

There is magic, I have found
In the first sun flame
Licking over night-buried peaks.

There is deep excitement to my mind
In the lash of wind
Against storm-beaten beach,

And once, before daybreak,
I discovered Spring
Sleeping in the arms of a pink-budded cherry tree.

6.

Then tell me why my eyes seek yours
In quick delight,
Or why my heart listens for your voice
Against the discord of traffic-filled streets.

Or was the answer in the amber eyes
Of a white-winged moth
Quivering last night at my candle flame?

Old Bangum

(traditional - collated from various sources by Keith Eisenbrey)

Old Bangum will you hunt and ride?
Dillum down dillum.
Old Bangum will you hunt and ride?
Dillum down.
Old Bangum will you hunt and ride,
Sword and pistol by your side?
Coo-bee kee, cuddle down, killee quo quum.

There lives a wild boar in these woods.
...
Breaks your bones and drinks your blood.
...

Old Bangum drew his wooden knife.
...
He swore by Jove he'd take his life.
...

Old Bangum sought the wild boar's den
...
He saw the bones of a thousand men.
...

Old Bangum blew both loud and shrill
...
The boar he heard on temple hill
...

The boar came out in such a dash,
...
He cut his way through oak and ash.
...

Old Bangum and the wild boar fought.
...
At set of sun the boar was not.
...

Old Bangum did you win or lose?
...
He swore by Jove he'd won the shoes.
...

The Performers

Lorri Kristin Froggét studied composition with Martin Amlin at Boston University, where she earned her BMus in Vocal Performance in 1992. Lorri completed her MMus in Vocal Performance and Pedagogy at the University of Oregon in 1994. She has taught voice privately since 1995 to a studio of 25-35 students, and currently teaches Class Voice for the Art Zones Continuing Education program at Bellevue Community College. As a soloist, Lorri has performed recitals, opera, oratorio, musical theatre, and is an avid proponent of contemporary music, premiering the works of several dozen composers. She has been a singing member of The Esoterics since 2003. She composes in her spare time, and converses regularly with her two cats, Kissie and Buttercup.

Soprano **Karen Eisenbrey** has enjoyed singing since early childhood, and has sung with school- and church-related choral groups since the age of 8. As a soloist, she specializes in the vocal music of Keith Eisenbrey, who is, conveniently enough, her husband and father of her children. She also participates in the improvisation activities of Banned Rehearsal and remorselessly churns out fantasy and science fiction novels, all as yet unpublished.

Keith Eisenbrey is a native of the Puget Sound area. He studied composition with Dell Wade, Ken Benshoof, John Rahn, and Benjamin Boretz, and piano with Victor Smiley, Joan Purswell, and Neal O'Doan. He is a charter member of The Barrytown Orchestra, an interactive music-making ensemble based in Barrytown, New York, and is a cofounder of Banned Rehearsal, an ongoing argument in creative musical expression, now in its 24th year. His critical and theoretical work has appeared in *Perspectives of New Music*, *News of Music*, and *Open Space*, and he assisted in the editing of Boretz's *Meta-Variations: Studies in the Foundations of Musical Thought* for its recent republication. His compositions have been performed in such far-off places as: Tambov, Russia; Oak Harbor; Olympia; and Capitol Hill. His oeuvre includes solo pieces for various keyboards, text-sound, songs, a cantata, chamber works, and electronic media. Inspired by a mysterious and majestic whimsy, the music of Keith Eisenbrey explores the vast arcane recesses of human imagination. Cerebral and sensuous, remorselessly speculative, he seeks to illuminate those most intimate of our personal spaces: the silences across which, in which, and out from which music, thought, and utterance unfold. He lives in the Maple Leaf neighborhood of Seattle with his wife Karen, their two boys, John and Isaac, and their two cats, Ibb and Obb.