



Composer Kevin Puts

Percussion virtuoso Evelyn Glennie

Cabrillo Music Festival Sonic Explorers

Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music hits another high note with year 44, but its most compelling pieces may leave an indelible imprint | by Damon Orion

As the gears of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music grind into motion for the 44th time, the anticipatory buzz is every bit as thick as when the event first launched in 1962. This year's festival, the 15th under the baton of the irrepressible Marin Alsop, is an exemplary manifestation of the festival's mission to explore new and original possibilities in symphonic music. Starting with the world premiere of National Geographic photographer Frans Lanting's *Life: A Journey Through Time* (a multimedia presentation featuring music by Philip Glass), the 2006 festival presents a buffet of sonic innovations, including—among many other things—a showcase of three orchestral sections playing in different tempos, a vibraphone piece played with four mallets and a composition that uses digital technology to weld various classical melodies together.

Here, in all their outside-the-box splendor, are the results of *GT*'s recent journey through the gray matter from whence these imaginative ideas flowed.

Property Management

When four-time Emmy-winning composer Laura Karpman was commissioned by Red Bull—yes, the drink manufacturer—to brew up a piece for a concert

at Carnegie Hall, her thinking took a turn for the inventive. Inspired by the centerpiece of the concert, a concerto for turntable and orchestra written by DJ Radar, she decided to do some table turning of her own. Reversing DJ Radar's idea of bringing modern styles to a traditional forum, she created a piece that brought familiar classical themes into a more contemporary context. The result was and is *Transitive Property of Equality*, which employs the modern "mash-up" technique of combining two or more well-known songs by digital means.

Karpman, whose Cabrillo Music Festival debut coincides with *Transitive Property*'s West Coast premiere on Aug. 5, calls the approximately 13-minute composition "a kind of love song, a Valentine to these pieces [that it quotes]." The piece borrows passages from Mozart's *Symphony No. 40*, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*. Unnatural musical matings abound, the composer's favorite example being a section in which Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* is layered with a section of the waltz from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. The unifying theme running throughout is Dvorák's *Symphony No. 9* [1893], which was itself a prototype mash-up in that it quoted African and Native American music within a classical context.

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The composer, who has enjoyed appreciable success as a composer of film, television and video game scores as well as concert music, borrowed the title *Transitive Property of Equality* from the one thing she remembers from the math classes she took as a child: a logical syllogism of the same name, roughly meaning "If $a = b$ and $b = c$, then $a = c$." Karpman says the title relates not only to places in history in which composers have quoted and stolen from other composers, but also to the concept of layering and creating equivalencies out of things that are fundamentally different from one another.

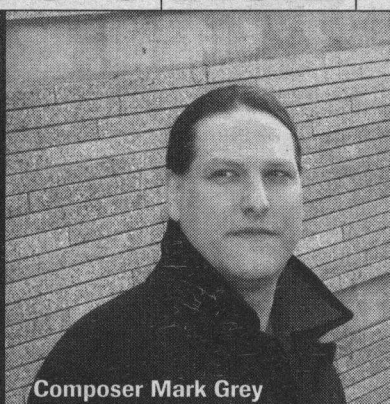
Karpman's best friend in accomplishing the latter of these objectives was Pro Tools, by way of which she manipulated recorded samples of the pieces being quoted to create dramatic underpinnings, rhythmic and otherwise. "I wanted to really experiment with bringing this notion of recorded music into live music," she says. "All the samples come from the pieces themselves which are being quoted at the time—it's all very organic and kind of macro-microcosmic."

Unorthodox as Karpman's approach may seem in the context of classical music, the composer doesn't think the idea is anything particularly new. She points out that Dvorák kicked off the third movement of his *New World Symphony* with a quote from Beethoven's 9th and then proceeded to riff on that theme.

Following Dvorák's example, she begins to extrapolate: "Composers are constantly quoting from other composers, and this is something that's been done all through music history. I think that this sense of layering found music on top of original music is something that is done—it's just done in a different way. That's one of the things I wanted to say [with this piece]: This is a great concept, and it's not a new one."



Conductor Marin Alsop



Composer Mark Grey



Composer Laura Karpman

Come On, Feel the Noise

Following the presentation of Karpman's work at the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium is a hotly anticipated recital by Evelyn Glennie, the deaf Scottish percussion virtuoso featured in the movie *Touch the Sound*. Glennie will be presenting *Percussion Concerto*, a continuous 25-minute piece with a returning theme that explores the possibilities of using four mallets to play the vibraphone or marimba.

Percussion Concerto composer Kevin Puts (also the composer of *River's Rush*, featured at last year's festival) says of his latest work, "The piece really isn't one of those percussion concertos where [Glennie] is sort of frantically moving from instrument to instrument; she stays put on one for quite a while, and that's the way I wanted to set it up. So it almost feels like *Concerto for the Vibraphone*, and then *Concerto for the Glockenspiel* ... In that way, you can think of the piece as chapters, and each chapter is played by a different instrument."

At 25 minutes without a break, the concerto could easily have turned into the musical equivalent of the boring-history-teacher scene from *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, but Puts explains that in crafting this piece, he strove to create a sense of continuity and forward motion, some of which he feels gets lost in writing separate movements. Fortunately, by unfolding in distinct segments, *Percussion Concerto* packs enough dynamic, textural, timbral and emotional diversity to keep the listener's interest.

"There's a lot of variety in this piece," Puts says. "It's definitely a concerto for Evelyn, but I really worked hard to create a lot of variation and color in the orchestra. It's a difficult orchestra part, almost a virtuoso orchestra part, so it's not just that she's doing all these virtuoso things, and the orchestra is sitting back. The audience invariably talks about all the activity and color going on in the orchestra, too."

Welcome to the Machine

Rounding out the Aug. 5 proceedings is the West Coast premiere of Michael Daugherty's *Time Machine*, an ambitious 20-minute orchestral piece for three conductors. Daugherty, whose compositions have been featured in the festival multiple times since 1995, was originally commissioned by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra to write this piece, which requires that the orchestra be divided into three sections, one consisting of strings, one of trumpets and one of trombones. Each section is led by its own conductor to accommodate the various tempos. The sections are divided spatially as well as sonically, which Daugherty says relates to the theme of time travel in that "you have the three dimensions—up/down, forward/backward and so forth—and then, of course, time travel is the fourth dimension, theoretically, so the three together equals the fourth dimension, I guess."

The Time Machine is divided into two movements, the first entitled "Past" and the second "Future." "Past" begins with the polyrhythmic clicking of woodblocks, simulating the sounds of clocks and metronomes. In keeping with the theme, this movement explores musical styles of yesteryear. As described by Daugherty, the string section plays a lyrical, fugue-like texture while the other two ensembles play music that reflects the style of the Renaissance.

By contrast, "Future" deals with various forms of contemporary music, exploring the ways in which modern composers have used multiple orchestras. Based on the H.G. Wells novel "The Time Machine," "Future" launches us into the 22nd century, in which humanity is divided into two species: the gentle Eloi and the fearsome, subterranean-dwelling Morlocks.

"The Morlocks are cannibals, so they pile up all these bones, so for percussion, I used a lot of rattling bone instruments, wood instruments, that remind one of skeletons," Daugherty reveals. "The Morlock music is a very dissonant, pulsating kind of music. It was a lot of fun to write that move-

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Violinist Leila Josefowicz



Composer Michael Daugherty

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ment. I suppose if I ever had an assignment to do a film score, this would be it, but it's too complicated for a film score, probably. It definitely packs a punch—I'll say that. It has a huge, way-over-the-top ending."

Up, Up and Away

On Saturday, Aug. 12, celebrated classical violinist Leila Josefowicz will perform *Elevation*, a 19-minute modal piece that begins in 12/8 and switches between a triple and duple feel. The piece was custom-made for Josefowicz by composer Mark Grey, hailed by the *Los Angeles Times* as one of classical music's "Faces to Watch in 2006." Grey says he chose the title *Elevation* not only to signify a sense of upward motion and emotional upliftment, but also to denote that the violin hovers over the orchestra as a separate presence in the musical fabric.

"It's kind of based in the concept of streams, and a lot of different lines going almost different directions, even though they're very connected, and handing off information to one another," he expounds. "But when they do converge, it comes kind of like how streams gather to create a river, so the momentum and the upward motion helps push the emotional energy of the piece up to another level."

As with all of his music, the composer says he wrote *Elevation* on guitar. When composing for orchestral strings or solo violin, he uses a guitar tuned in perfect fifths (as opposed to the customary fourths), and he keeps another guitar on hand that he tunes to a variety of open tunings such as G or D when composing for wind instruments.

The initial impetus that got *Elevation* off the ground, as it were, was a previous piece Grey had written for Josefowicz entitled *San Andreas Suite*. Having heard the way the violinist was able to bring various colors of the piece to the surface, Grey approached *Elevation* with her distinct instrumental voice in mind.

"What she can create with her instrument is otherworldly—it's just beyond words," Grey says. "When you're there listening to her in the moment, you just get completely swept away from the outside world. What she did with that solo work [*San Andreas Suite*] was just outstanding, and hearing her perform that for the first time sparked this initiative: 'Hey, let's do another piece.' I'm honored she's found a voice in my music that she feels is hardy and can bring communication to the audience and can speak, have a voice."

For more information about the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, visit cabrillomusic.org or call 420-5260.