



University of North Texas
College of Music

Ensemble Concert | Monday, April 14, 2025 | 8:00 p.m. | Paul Voertman Concert Hall

Nova Ensemble
Elizabeth McNutt, director

Crama (2006–2007) Panayiotis Kokoras
(b. 1974)

Alison Parker, flute
Lucas Shroyer, clarinet
Ray Hsu, violin
Qianqian Fu, viola
Min Ching Lin, cello
Zhaohan Wang, piano
Quixian Lu, conductor
Benjamin Damann, technological support

from Quartet for the End of Time (1941)..... Olivier Messiaen
VI. "Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes" (1908–1992)
VII. "Fouillis d'arcs-en-ciel, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du temps"

John Griffin, clarinet
Xiachu Song, violin
Xiyang Liu, cello
Teng Cao, piano

Idyll for the Misbegotten (1987)..... George Crumb
(1929–2022)

Cameron Bilek, flute
Hunter Gross, Tzu-Ling Hung, and Chris Trlak, percussion
Benjamin Damann, technological support

Program five hundred fifty-seven of the 2024–2025 season
Photography and videography are prohibited

Worker's Union (1975) Louis Andriessen
(1939–2021)

Cameron Bilek, Elizabeth McNutt, and Alison Parker, flute and piccolo

John Griffin and Alex Ravitz*, bass clarinet

Lucas Shroyer, basset horn

Jessica Stearns*, alto saxophone

Ray Hsu, violin

Min Ching Lin, Xiyang Liu, and Kourtney Newton*, cello

Justin Weis*, euphonium

Teng Cao, Qiuxian Lu, and Stephen Lucas*, keyboard

Hunter Gross, Tzu-Ling Hung, and Chris Trlak, percussion

Nathan Howard, conductor

Benjamin Damann, technological support

** Asterisk denotes Nova alumnus*

Program Notes

by Benjamin Damann

Crama

The piece *Crama* is a commission of the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University and was premiered by International Contemporary Ensemble – ICE in New York City. The title of the piece refers to a homogeneous mixture that consists of two or more elements mixed together. The result usually has different properties, sometimes substantially different, from those of its initial components.

The piece is rather focused to form a solid unified sonic image composed by gestures, articulations, postures, rhythmical figures, textures and spectrum changes all grouped into a single composite sonic entity. Notes have been abandoned in favor of mutating, sometimes teetering and exploding, sound complexes. Distortion noise and violence become deliberate intentions with their own musical meaning. Unstable acoustic systems, electronics, musicians and musical notation all interact in real performance. In *Crama*, I see the performer as sound sculptor who is working on a huge statue with tools for jewelries. Me as a composer, I have to guide and inspire him/her for the 'best strike' the best sound.

Crama (first version Braided Fractures) was awarded the First Prize at Gianni Bergamo Classic Music Award 2007 in Lugano/ Switzerland and the 2012 Boston New Music Initiative's Commissioning Competition in Boston/ Massachusetts.

– Panayiotis Kokoras

Quartet for the End of Time

Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* is one of the most profound and transcendent works of the 20th century, composed under extraordinary circumstances. Written while Messiaen was imprisoned in Stalag VIII-A, a German POW camp during World War II, the quartet premiered on January 15, 1941, before an audience of fellow prisoners and guards. Despite its dire origins, the music reaches beyond suffering, evoking a timeless vision of faith, eternity, and divine radiance.

Scored for a unique ensemble of clarinet, violin, cello, and piano—determined by the musicians available in the camp—Messiaen drew inspiration from the Book of Revelation, particularly the angel's proclamation that "there shall be time no longer." This theme of transcending time manifests in the quartet's unorthodox rhythmic structures, nonretrogradable (palindromic) rhythms, and ecstatic, suspended harmonies.

The eight movements explore a range of emotions and textures, from the eerie, bird-like calls of the *Abyss of the Birds* (a clarinet solo symbolizing solitude and eternity) to the ferocious energy of *Dance of Fury*, for the Seven Trumpets. The work culminates in *Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus*, a radiant violin-and-piano duet that ascends towards an ineffable vision of the divine.

Messiaen, a devout Catholic and a synesthete who associated music with colors, described the quartet as an expression of his faith and an escape from the horrors of war. Yet its power extends beyond religious interpretation—*Quartet for the End of Time* is a testament to human resilience, the capacity for beauty in suffering, and the eternal nature of art.

An Idyll for the Misbegotten

George Crumb's *An Idyll for the Misbegotten* is a haunting, meditative work for amplified flute and three percussionists. Written in 1986, the piece reflects Crumb's deep concern for humanity's relationship with nature and civilization's destructive tendencies. The title suggests a lament for those who have been cast aside or forgotten, a theme that resonates throughout Crumb's body of work.

Crumb inscribed the score with a passage from Pascal: "The misbegotten shall inherit the earth." This phrase, both prophetic and mournful, underscores the piece's emotional weight. The solo flute, often played in an otherworldly and expressive manner, evokes a voice calling out across a vast, primordial landscape, while the percussionists create an atmospheric backdrop of gongs, drums, and other resonant instruments.

The work's spacious and reverberant textures recall the influence of nature, a recurring inspiration for Crumb. The flute's evocative lines, reminiscent of ancient or ritualistic music, are meant to be performed from a distance, further enhancing the sense of mystery and isolation.

Crumb himself wrote:

"Flutes and drums are, historically, the most ancient of instruments. Perhaps this is why I conceive the music of the flute (especially in its more serene and meditative moods) as a kind of 'primordial song.'"

In *An Idyll for the Misbegotten*, this primordial song becomes a poignant commentary on the human condition, urging us to listen—not only to the music but to the echoes of the past and the warnings of the present.

Workers Union

Louis Andriessen's *Workers Union* is a raw, driving work for any group of instruments, blending minimalist repetition with unrelenting rhythmic energy. Composed in 1975, the piece reflects Andriessen's deep engagement with political and social themes, embodying both the discipline and collective power of a workers' movement.

Subtitled "for any loud-sounding group of instruments," *Workers Union* is written in a unique form of notation: the rhythms are precisely notated, but the pitches are left indeterminate, allowing performers to play within a structured yet flexible framework. This approach reflects Andriessen's belief in collective effort—each performer contributes to a unified whole while maintaining a degree of individual freedom.

The music itself is aggressive and unrelenting, built on hammering ostinati and shifting rhythmic cells. It surges forward with a propulsive energy reminiscent of industrial labor or political protest. Andriessen, influenced by Stravinsky, jazz, and Dutch socialist movements, described the piece as "a combination of individual freedom and severe discipline," mirroring both musical and societal struggles.

Workers Union is not just a piece of music—it is a statement, a call to action. It challenges performers to find unity within disorder and listeners to confront its relentless drive. Nearly 50 years after its composition, it remains a powerful, defiant work that speaks to the necessity of solidarity and resistance.