



University of North Texas College of Music

Ensemble Recital | Tuesday, November 15, 2022 | 8:00 pm | Voertman Hall

Nova Ensemble
Elizabeth McNutt, Director

Eight Songs for a Mad King (1969) Peter Maxwell Davies (1934–2016)
Libretto: Randolph Stow (1935–2010)

1. The Sentry (King Prussia's Minuet)
2. The Country Walk (La Promenade)
3. The Lady-In-Waiting (Miss Musgrave's Fancy) Transition
4. To Be Sung on the Water (The Waterman)
5. The Phantom Queen (He's Ay A-Kissing Me) Transition
6. The Counterfeit (Le Conterfaite)
7. Country Dance (Scotch Bonnett)
8. The Review (A Spanish March)

Christopher Rodriguez, baritone

Hyunsu Yoon, flute and piccolo

Alex Ravitz, clarinet

Grace Remner, violin

Colin Stokes, cello

Nicole Ying, piano and harpsichord

Madeline Wallace, percussion and dulcimer

Garrison Gerard, conductor

--Intermission--

Hymnkus (1986) John Cage (1912–1992)

Te Yu Huang, tenor

Anne Dearth Maker, alto flute

Justin Weis, euphonium

Kory Reeder, double bass

Graham Viegut, percussion

The Sentry

Good day to your Honesty.
God guard who guards the gate.
Here is the key of the kingdom.
You are a pretty fellow:
next month I shall give you a
cabbage.
Undo the door!
Who has stolen my key?
Ach! my kingdom is snakes and
dancing,
my kingdom is locks and slithering.
Make room!
Pity me, pity me, pity me.
Child, child whose son are you?

The Country Walk

Dear land of sheep and cabbages.
Dear land of oaks, beeches and
strangling ivy,
green snakes of ivy.
God guard trees.
Blue-yellow-green.
Is the world like a chained man's
bruise
I think of God. God also is a King.

The Lady-in-Waiting

Madam let us talk, let us talk.
Madam I mean no harm.
Only to remember, to remember
what it was that through silk,
lace, linen and brocade,
swooped on my needle. To
remember.
Madam, let us talk, talk, talk, talk.
I mean no harm, no harm, no harm,
no.....

To be sung on the Water

Sweet Thames, sweet Thames,
far, have I followed thee,
God guard my people.
Sweet Thames flow, soft.
Burdened by my people.
(deliver me from my people they
are within.)
to Eden garden, unto Eden garden
in Hanover, Bermuda or New South
Wales.
Sweet Thames, flow soft. Evacuate
my people.
I am weary of this fate. I am alone.

The Phantom Queen

Where is the Queen? Why does she
not visit me?
Esther, Esther, O my heart's ease.
Have they chained you too, my
darling, in a stable?
Do they starve you, strike you, scorn
you, ape your howls?
They say some other woman is your
wife,
but the Queen's name is Esther, Esther.
Fall on my eyes, O bride like a starless
night.

The Counterfeit

I am nervous, I am not ill but I am
nervous.
If you would know what is the matter
with me I am nervous.
But I love you both very well; if you
would tell me the truth.
I love Dr Heberden best; for he has
not told me a lie.
Sir George has told me a lie; a white
lie, he says,
but I hate a white lie!
If you tell me a lie, let it be a black lie!

Country Dance

Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people
with singing and with dancing
with milk and with apples.
The landlord at the Three Tuns
makes the best purl in Windsor.
Sin! Sin! Sin!
black vice, intolerable vileness
in lanes, by ricks, at Courts. It is night
on the world,
Even I your King has contemplated
evil.
I shall rule with a rod of iron, comfort
ye my people

The Review

My people, I come before you in
mourning, on my breast, a star.
The King is dead.
A good-hearted gentleman, a
humble servant of God.
a loving husband, an affectionate sire.
Poor fellow, he went mad.
He talked to the trees, attacked his
eldest son.
disowned his wife, to make a ghost
his Queen -
a ghost his Queen.
So they seized him, whipped him
starved him, jeered in his face,
while he talked he talked he talked
he talked:
they could not shave him, his mouth
was never still.
Sometimes he howled like a dog !
And he veiled the mirrors to not see
himself pass by,
for his eyes had turned into
blackcurrant jelly.
Poor fellow, I weep for him.
He will die howling.
howling, howling.....
--Randolph Stow (1935–2010)

Eight Songs for a Mad King

An English composer and conductor, Peter Maxwell Davies worked in a variety of styles ranging from large-scale symphonic works to musical theatre pieces to serialist compositions. Alongside fellow composer Harrison Birtwistle, Davies founded the group New Music Manchester which featured avant-garde compositions. Throughout his life Davies continued to organize and direct performances of new music, including directing the group The Fires of London which premiered many works, including Davies' own *Eight Songs for a Mad King*.

Eight Songs for a Mad King is a monodrama vacillating from the sublime to the ridiculous. The central figure of the story is King George III, whose mad thoughts, words, and actions comprise the central material of the work. The instrumental performers represent King George III's bullfinches who he spent hours singing to in an attempt to teach them his beloved songs. The percussionist serves as the keeper of the king—both protecting the birds from the king, and guarding the king from his own madness. The work is riddled with quotations from other pieces such as Handel's *Messiah* or works of Birtwistle. These quotations are often subsumed in the larger texture of the piece, framing the events of the piece and adding layers of irony to the text. The rhythmic stability changes throughout the work; some parts are notated with exact rhythms (albeit with extensive cross-rhythms), while others use varying levels of indeterminacy, mirroring the practices of recitative—particularly in the fourth song. All players are given extended techniques, none more-so than the vocal part whose range exceeds six octaves and switches rapidly between different shades of insanity.

The text, written by Randolph Stow, is inspired by an organ of King George which he used to play to his birds and himself. The mechanical organ would play these tunes, which also direct the form of the piece. Alongside the text of these songs, Stow interspersed quotations from the King, as well as commentary based on events from his life such as a reference to Dr. Heberden who served as the King's physician.

Hymnkus

John Cage, an influential composer, theorist, artist, and philosopher of the twentieth century, wrote pieces exploring facets of music ranging from indeterminacy and non-standard uses of instruments to the nature of sound itself. Two of Cage's most renowned teachers were Henry Cowell and Arnold Schoenberg, and his music was heavily influenced by Cage's study of Indian philosophy and Zen Buddhism.

The title of this work combines two words: Hymn and Haikus. The word "Hymn" is reflected in the parts, which are made up of repeated verses. The word "Haikus" is relevant because each of the verses consists of 17 events. The events are played four, five, or six times, with varying tempi. These parts may be performed as solos, or in any combination; here it is performed by a chamber ensemble. The work is made up of the solos from Cage's *Etcetera 2/4 Orchestras*, each reduced to the same repeated 8-note chromatic range between G2 and C3, an interval of a perfect fifth, creating a wide possibility of material within a narrow pitch range.--Garrison Gerard