

World To Come

Maya Beiser – cello

Video environment by Irit Batsry
Video for Steve Reich's Cello Counterpoint by Anney Bonney

Jody Elff – sound design
Ben Kato – lighting design

Program

Fratres (1980)

Arvo Part

Mariel (2001/2003)

Oswaldo Golijov

Commissioned by Meet the composer commissioning music/USA for the Maya Beiser/Steven Schick project.

Cello Counterpoint (2003)

Steve Reich

Steve Reich's Cello Counterpoint was commissioned jointly by Maya Beiser and the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, and the Royal Hague Conservatory and Leiden University.

-----Intermission-----

La Voce (1981)

Louis Andriessen

World To Come (2003)

David Lang

World To Come by David Lang is A Meet the Composer Commissioning Music/USA Commission, commissioned for Maya Beiser by The Carnegie Hall Corporation, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, The Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, UC Santa Cruz Arts & Lectures, On the Boards and Connecticut College.

Additional funding for the full evening of "World To Come" was provided by the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which also presented the world premiere on October 18, 2003.

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World To Come - Program notes

Imagining a solo cello concert, one would most likely think of the J. S. Bach unaccompanied cello suites. As a child, studying these eternal masterpieces, Bach's music would intermingle with the singing voices of Muslim prayers from the neighboring Arab village of the Northern Kibbutz in Israel where I grew up. Late at night, after hours of practicing, I would listen to Janis Joplin and Billy Holiday as the sounds of tango music would be creeping in from my parent's turntable and the nearby windows of this Argentinean community. It all became music to me. I didn't hear the boundaries.

I still start every day of practicing playing Bach. This music never ceases to sound fresh and surprising to me. But as I was moving away from the traditional classical repertoire and trying to find new ways of musical expression, I realized that with today's technological resources, there is no reason to limit what can be produced at one time from a single string instrument. The power and coherency that comes from one person hearing, perceiving and playing all the voices, makes a very different experience. It could never sound the same with an ensemble of cellists. The excitement of a great orchestra or string quartet performance comes from the attempt to have a collective of musicians perceiving one unified, whole concept. The excitement from using multi-tracking the way I did in *World To Come* comes from the attempt to create and build a whole universe, with many diverse layers, all generated from a single source. My cello in the studio created all the pre-recorded tracks in tonight's performance. It is a fascinating process in which the music is being constructed a layer at a time.

When composers write music for me, I ask them to forget what they know about the cello, I hope to arrive at new territories, to discover sounds I have never heard before. I want to create endless possibilities with my cello. I become the medium, through which the music is being channeled, and in the process, when all is right, the music is transformed and so am I.

-Maya Beiser, August 2003

Imaginary Spaces for *World To Come*

The video projections for *World To Come* create imaginary spaces on the stage, environments inhabited by Maya Beiser and her music.

The projected space for *La Voce* by Louis Andriessen, is empty and bare. A fractured image of a desolate place. Maya, singing and reciting the poem, *La Voce* by Cesare Pavese, becomes the human presence which makes a space marked by absence resonate.

The space created for David Lang's *World To Come* is a world in transformation, in the process of becoming. Composed of images of water that I have shot in the past five years, this "creation scene" stems from my videotape "Traces of a Presence to Come" (1989-93) in which water is evoked as a dominant element in creation myths of different cultures.

Maya, playing inside this video environment in flux, appears at the same time to be surrounded by it and to generate it with the sounds of her cello.

Water here is raw matter, a physical element and a metaphor.
Like water, video signal is a flow.
It carries, it changes.
It can't be grasped.
Like memory.

You can't bathe in the same river twice.
You can't see an image nor hear a sound twice,
not in the same way.

-Irit Batsry, August 2003

Fratres – Arvo Part

"I have discovered that it is enough when a single note is beautifully played. This one note, or a silent beat, or a moment of silence, comforts me. I work with very few elements - with one voice, two voices. I build with primitive materials - with the triad, with one specific tonality. The three notes of a triad are like bells and that is why I call it tintinnabulation." Arvo Part

Fratres was written for the 12 cellists of the Berlin Philharmonic. Two years ago I was coaching a class of cellists, fine conservatory students, who were struggling with the piece. As I was trying to help them unify their bow strokes, their use of vibrato, and the breath of the phrasing, - the thought of playing it as a multi-track version came to me. By multi-tracking I could transcend the technical difficulty of "sounding like one voice", to try and explore other dimensions in the piece. By playing and pre-recording the other voices, I liberated myself to immerse in one role, assured of the "others" joining in perfect harmony. The twelve celli merge into one voice.

Mariel – Osvaldo Golijov

Mariel is Osvaldo Golijov's portrait of a departed friend. He writes:

"Mariel was the beautiful wife of my childhood friend Dario. She died in a car accident in January 2001. I wrote this short memorial for her, with melodies resembling the coast of Brazil that she and Dario loved so much." Osvaldo and I share similar background emanating from Argentina. His music always resonates with me, it feels very natural, it always sings.

This multi-track version is an arrangement of the original score for cello and Marimba written for Steven Schick and myself.

Cello Counterpoint - Steve Reich

Cello Counterpoint is the first piece Reich has written entirely for cello, and I believe it will become a staple in the cello repertoire. It is an intense and demanding piece that employs an enormous range of the cello and requires utmost discipline and precision.

Reich writes: "Cello Counterpoint is scored for soloist and seven pre-recorded tracks. It is in three movements; fast, slow, fast. The first and last movements are both based on a similar four chord cycle that moves ambiguously back and forth between C minor and Eb major. This harmonic cycle is treated extremely freely however, particularly in the third movement. As a matter of fact, what strikes me most about these movements is that they are generally the freest in structure of any I have ever written. The second, slow movement is a canon in Eb minor involving, near the end of the movement, seven separate voices.

Cello Counterpoint is one of the most difficult pieces I have ever written, calling for extremely tight, fast moving rhythmic relationships not commonly found in the cello literature."

La Voce – Louis Andriessen

I met Louis Andriessen while a student at Yale University. This was 1986; I was beginning my exploration with contemporary music. He gave me the score for La Voce with a beautiful dedication. It opened a new door for me. The idea of vocalizing and playing at the same time was so beautiful and natural. I am not a singer and in this piece I am not singing in the traditional sense. The voice is an extension of the cello, at times merging with it and at times emerging out of it. La Voce is a piece that is about physical gestures as much as it is about the music. The haunting text is by the Italian poet Cesare Pavese, a tortured and brilliant writer who was a major literary force in post war Italy. He killed himself at the age of 42.

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Following is the English translation by Geoffrey Brock:

The Voice

Each day the silence of the lonely room
closes in on the gentle rustle of gestures
like air. Each day the small window is opened,
motionless, to the hushed air. The voice,
hoarse and sweet, won't break this cool silence.
The motionless air expands like the breath
of one who speaks, then falls silent. Each day
is the same, the same voice not breaking the silence,
hoarse and always the same stillness
of memory. The bright window accompanies,
with it's brief tremor, the calm of that time.

Each gesture jolts the calm of that time.
At the sound of that voice, the pain would return,
and the gestures, too, in the astonished air,
and words, and words, uttered so softly.
The sound of that voice would be a brief tremor
in lasting silence; even that would cause pain.

The gestures of pointless pain would return,
jolting all things in the rumble of time.
But the voice won't return, and the distant whisper
won't ripple memory's surface. A cool tremor
runs through the still light. In the memory of that time,
the soft, hoarse silence falls silent for good.

World To Come - David Lang

David and I have been collaborating for ten years since the beginning of my "Bang on a Can" period. He is a personal friend and I feel this piece is a personal gift. Yet sometimes the most personal becomes utterly universal. Such is the case with World To Come. It is an astonishing visceral work of 24 minutes that is an emotional rollercoaster. The piece was conceived during the time immediately following September 11, 2001, and though not directly related, the destruction, devastation and disillusion of that moment no doubt impacted it.

David Lang writes: "A cellist and her voice become separated from each other, and they struggle to reunite in a post-apocalyptic spiritual environment. World To Come is a kind of prayer - introspective and highly personal. It is a meditation on hope and hopelessness, asking fundamental questions about the death and life of the soul."

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World To Come - Artists' Biographies

Maya Beiser – cello

Recognized as a leading performer on the cutting edge of the musical world, cellist Maya Beiser has emerged as a celebrated solo artist, redefining the boundaries of her instrument. She has received critical acclaim for her solo CD's and performances, creating a fresh repertoire for the cello across cultures and genres.

Long known as the cellist for the Bang On A Can All Stars, Ms. Beiser left the ensemble to focus on her solo work. She has commissioned and collaborated with many of the world's most renowned musicians including Steve Reich, Meredith Monk, Louis Andriessen, Nana Vasconcelos, Simon Shaheen, Osvaldo Golijov, Brian Eno, Trent Reznor, Michael Gordon and Julia Wolf. Most recently she has collaborated with Academy-award winning composer Tan Dun, premiering his "Water Passion after St. Matthew" with Helmuth Rilling's Internationale Bachakademie Stuttgart on a live TV broadcast throughout Europe, as well as at the White Nights Festival in St. Petersburg, and the BAM Next Wave Festival in New York. She is the cello soloist on Sony Classical's recent CD release of the "Water Passion", and has performed Tan Dun's "Crouching Tiger Concerto" with orchestras around the globe including the China Philharmonic and Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Oregon Bach festival, the Eos Orchestra and the Sydney Symphony.

Maya Beiser has been a featured performer at prominent concert halls across four continents. She has appeared in solo performances at Lincoln Center's Great Performers series, Carnegie Hall's "Making Music", Los Angeles Philharmonic's Green Umbrella Series, and the Kennedy Center in Washington. Recent festival appearances include the Holland Festival, the BBC Proms, London's South Bank Meltdown Festival, the Jerusalem Festival, the Adelaide Festival and the Prague Spring Festival. She received numerous grants and awards for her commissions, including the Rockefeller Foundation's Multi-Arts Fund, the Koussevitzky Foundation, Meet the Composer, The Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Ms. Beiser's latest CD, *World To Come*, is being released by Koch Entertainment this Fall. *Kinship*, her previous CD for Koch, was selected by the Los Angeles Times as one of the 10 best classical discs of the year 2000.

Raised on a Kibbutz in Israel by her French mother and Argentinean father, Maya Beiser is a graduate of Yale University. Her major teachers were Aldo Parisot, Alexander Schneider and Isaac Stern.

Irit Batsry – Video Environment

Irit Batsry is an artist working mainly in video and installations. Her work has been shown extensively in 35 different countries. She was awarded the Whitney Biennial Bucksbaum Award in 2002, the Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 1992 and the Grand Prix Video de Création of the Société Civile des Auteurs Multimedia, Paris in 1996 and 2001 as well as many prizes including: Grand Prix -Locarno 90 and 95, First Prize - Vigo 94 and 01 Best International Artistic Contribution - Cadiz 91, First Prize - the Australian Video Festival 89, First prize - San Francisco Poetry Film Festival 89.

Selected shows include the National Gallery in Washington, the National Film Theater and the ICA (London), Reina Sofia Museum (Madrid), Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Museu d'Arte Moderna (Rio), Ludwig Museum (Köln), Tel Aviv Museum, the Whitney and the MOMA in NYC.

Her videotapes were acquired by museums and selected for international festivals including Rio '87,'90, Berlin '88,'90,'92,'96, London '87,'91,'96, 2000, Montréal '87,'88,'94,'96,'97, Bonn '86,'88,'90,'92,'94,'96, Geneva '89,'91,'93,'95, Oberhausen '92,'96, Den Haag '92,'94,'96, Montbéliard '90,'92, and Rotterdam 2000.

Selected broadcasts include PBS (Channel 13, KQED), La Sept, WDR and ARTE.

Anney Bonney – video for Cello Counterpoint

Anney Bonney is a New York artist, a painter who makes videos. She studied art history and theater at Wellesley College and film at the School of Visual Arts. She was a contributing Arts Editor for Bomb Magazine and the Performance/Video Curator at the Kitchen. Her collaborations with avant garde musicians, composers and sound artists have resulted in single channel videos, live mixes and installations. Her work's been exhibited in a variety of venues: from downtown clubs in the late 70's (the Mudd Club, Club 57) to more formal institutions (the Ford Foundation, Lincoln Center, the Brooklyn Museum) as well as numerous Festivals [IFP West/LA, Tribeca, Rotterdam, Rio Cine, Berlin, Oberhausen and the American Film Institute (LA)]. She's collaborated with Liz Phillips, Ben Neill/DJ Spooky, Holland Hopson, Bernadette Speach and Gerard Pape among others. Her collaboration with Anthony de Mare inspired by the Meredith Monk composition, Double Fiesta, played at the Yale British Art Center and INVIDEO in Milan. She's been a guest VJ at David Linton's Unity Gain events for the last several years (most recently at the Performing Garage). She just returned from a residency with the Experimental Television Center in Oswego, New York. She's been teaching Video Art in the School of Art + Design @ SUNY Purchase, since 2000.

Jody Elff – sound design

Jody Elff is an audio engineer & sound artist living and working in New York City. As an audio engineer he has worked with Laurie Anderson, Bang On A Can All Stars, Paul Winter, Diana Krall, New York Voices, and a host of others. He has composed and performed music for film, dance and theatre, and has recorded, mixed and mastered a wide variety of musical albums. His sound art works - location specific sonic sculptures - have been presented in various galleries and museums internationally.

Ben Kato – lighting design

Ben Kato New York lighting design credits include: The National Theater of the United States of America's critically acclaimed Placebo Sunrise and Garvey & Superpants Episode #23 (Chashama), other NTUSA collaborations include "5" and Brains (Soho Rep). Flesh and Bone Theater's premiere of Tango 'Til They're Sore by Matthew Hancock (The Flea) and Abe Kobo's The Green Stockings (Urban Stages). Ray on the Water (HERE); Saint Latrice (Juliana Francis/P.S. 122); Warriors (Culture project); Blueprint Series 1999 - 2002 (Ontological). He has designed regionally at the Dublin Fringe Festival, The Williamstown Theatre Festival, The Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the Saratoga International Theater Institute (Bob; dir. Anne Bogart).

Ben has served as assistant designer on numerous productions of Ruben Santiago-Hudson's Lackawanna Blues, as well as the New York premieres of The Shape of Things (Promenade Theater) and Design For Living (The Roundabout Theatre Company) and Pulitzer Prize winning author Nilo Cruz's Two Sisters and a Piano (The Public Theater). Fashion / Industrial design credits include: Cloak and Maggie Norris (NYC); Associate designer for CFDA Fashion Awards at Lincoln Center, Gucci & Yves Saint Laurent fashion shows in Milan and Paris.

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