

# Today's program

SETH KNOPP, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

# Yellow Barn

## Summer Residency Concert

July 25, 2020 | 7:30 | The Big Barn and the Greenwood School, Putney, VT

**John Cage (1912-1992)** Solo for Voice 39 from Song Books (1970)

Lucy Shelton

**Franz Schubert (1797-1828)** Ganymed, D.544 (1817)

Text by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Lucy Fitz Gibbon, soprano; Seth Knopp, piano

**Amy Beth Kirsten (b.1972)** yes I said yes I will Yes. (2012)

Text by James Joyce

Lucy Fitz Gibbon, soprano; Lizzie Burns, double bass

**Travis Laplante (b.1982)** The Obvious Place (2020)

World Premiere

Travis Laplante, saxophone

**Toshio Hosokawa (b.1955)** Windscares (1996)

Ayano Kataoka, Eduardo Leandro, percussion

**Beethoven Walks** at Greenwood Trail and Hannum Trail

**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)** Bagatelle in E-Flat Major, Op.126 No.3  
(1825)

Seth Knopp, piano

Tonight's wall program was created by **Michael Johnson**.

## **Die Hoffnug**

Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805)

Es reden und träumen die Menschen viel  
Von bessern künftigen Tagen,  
Nach einem glücklichen goldenen Ziel  
Sieht man sie rennen und jagen.  
Die Welt wird alt und wird wieder jung,

Doch der Mensch hofft immer Verbesserung!

Die Hoffnung führt ihn ins Leben ein,  
Sie umflattert den fröhlichen Knaben,  
Den Jüngling begeistert ihr Zauberschein,  
Sie wird mit dem Greis nicht begraben,  
Denn beschließt er im Grabe den müden Lauf,  
Noch am Grabe pflanzt er - die Hoffnung auf.

Es ist kein leerer schmeichelnder Wahn,  
Erzeugt im Gehirne des Thoren.  
Im Herzen kündigt es laut sich an,  
Zu was besserm sind wir gebohren,  
Und was die innere Stimme spricht,  
Das täuscht die hoffende Seele nicht.

Men speak and dream a lot  
of better days to come;  
toward a successful, golden goal  
one can see them running and chasing.  
The world grows old and then grows young  
again,  
yet Man hopes always for improvement.

Hope introduces Man to life,  
and it flutters about the cheerful boy.  
The young man is enraptured by its magic shine;  
it is not buried with the gray-haired old man,  
for although he ends his weary run in the grave,  
he still plants by his grave - Hope.

It is no empty, flattering delusion  
generated in the mind of a fool.  
It proclaims itself loudly in the heart:  
"We were born for something better!"  
And what the inner voice speaks  
will not mislead the soul that hopes.  
Upwards to your breast,  
All-loving father!

## Ganymed

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

Wie im Morgenglanze  
Du rings mich anglühst,  
Frühling, Geliebter!  
Mit tausendfacher Liebeswonne  
Sich an mein Herz drängt  
Deiner ewigen Wärme  
Heilig Gefühl,  
Unendliche Schöne!

Daß ich dich fassen möcht'  
In diesen Arm!

Ach, an deinem Busen  
Lieg' ich, schmachte,  
Und deine Blumen, dein Gras  
Drängen sich an mein Herz.  
Du kühlst den brennenden  
Durst meines Busens,  
Lieblicher Morgenwind!  
Ruft drein die Nachtigall  
Liebend nach mir aus dem Nebeltal.  
Ich komm', ich komme!  
Wohin? Ach, wohin?

Hinauf! Hinauf strebt's.  
Es schweben die Wolken  
Abwärts, die Wolken  
Neigen sich der sehnenenden Liebe.  
Mir! Mir!  
In eurem Schoße  
Aufwärts!  
Umfangend umfassen!  
Aufwärts an deinen Busen,  
Allliebender Vater!

How, in the radiance of morning,  
You glow all around me,  
Spring, beloved!  
With a thousandfold of love's delights  
On my heart presses  
Your everlasting warmth:  
This holy feeling,  
This unending beauty!

That I might hold you  
In this arm!

Ah, on your breast  
I lie, languishing,  
And your flowers, your grass  
Press themselves to my heart.  
You cool the burning  
Thirst of my breast,  
Sweet morning wind!  
The nightingale calls down to me  
Lovingly from the misty valley  
I'm coming, I'm coming!  
Where? Ah, to where?

Upwards! Striving upwards!  
The clouds float  
Downward, the clouds  
Bend themselves towards this longed-for love.  
To me! To me!  
In your lap,  
Upwards!  
Embraced embracing!  
Upwards to your breast,  
All-loving father!

**from Ulysses**

James Joyce (1882-1941)

... I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.

## Program Notes

### John Cage (1912-1992) Solo for Voice 39 from Song Books (1970)

Many of the fundamental ideas of John Cage's later compositional practices emerged in his earlier years. He entered Pomona College as a theology major in 1928, and describes in his autobiographical statement why he left soon after:

"I was shocked at college to see one hundred of my classmates in the library all reading copies of the same book. Instead of doing as they did, I went into the stacks and read the first book written by an author whose name began with Z. I received the highest grade in the class. That convinced me that the institution was not being run correctly. I left."

Decades later, Cage would become a pioneer of indeterminacy in composition and in performance, where elements of the music are left up to chance or to the whim of the players. In 1951, Cage acquired the first English translation of the *I Ching* [Book of Changes], the Chinese symbol system designed for divination. Much of his subsequent work used operations based on pages from the *I Ching* to which Cage would randomly flip, including *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (1951) for 12 radio receivers, *Music of Changes* (1951) for piano, and, later, *Cheap Imitation*. He also composed using star charts in his *Etudes Australes* (1975) for piano and *Atlas Eclipticalis* (1962) for orchestra. Cage's most ambitious work involving chance procedures was *Europeras I & 2* (1987), which uses the *I Ching* to generate every aspect of the production—libretto, score, costumes, sets, lighting, "plot"—based on a database of over 100 classic European operas. According to Cage, his use of the technique allowed a piece to be performed in chaotically different ways, and also fulfilled his intention to "let things be themselves."

In 1970 Cage took a commission to write two sets of songs for Cathy Berberian and Simone Rist. He consulted the *I Ching* to determine how many songs would go into each book: 56 and 34 were the responses. Now he had the ambitious goal of writing ninety new pieces for a solo singer, and he had only three months to do it. Running to 317 pages of manuscript score, the songs are incredibly diverse, a cornucopia of musical invention.

The heterogeneity of the *Song Books* was the result of the method that Cage set up to guide the construction of the ninety solos. This was a method that would help

him to find his way through the challenge of writing ninety solos in ninety days, and that would simultaneously take him on a host of unknown compositional adventures: not an architect's blueprint, but the hero's instructions in a fairy tale, full of riddles and secrets. For each song Cage had to ask three questions and receive the answers by tossing coins and consulting the *I Ching*. The answers would provide him instructions on how to discover this solo.

The first question: "Is this solo relevant or irrelevant to the overall theme of the *Song Books*?" For his theme, Cage took a line from his diaries: "We connect Satie with Thoreau." Relevant solos include references to either Satie or Thoreau or both; irrelevant songs do not. The second question: "What kind of solo is this?" There were four categories: song (that is, a primarily sung piece), song using electronics, theatre (that is, *not* involving singing, but instead consisting of actions), and theatre using electronics. The third question, the open-ended one, the key that opened the treasure chest of invention: "How will I compose this solo?" There were three possible answers: compose it using a method that Cage had used before, compose it by making a variation to a method already used, or invent an entirely new method of composition. If the answer was to use or vary an existing method, chance also determined exactly which method. Thus armed with a theme, a format, and this general direction, Cage set forth to figure out exactly how to make the solo. He did this for each of the ninety solos, one after the other, until the work was completed, the journey ended.

*Song Books* is a piece that is impossible to characterize in any brief description—a piece which juxtaposes the old and the new, determinacy and indeterminacy. Cage's description is as good as any: "To consider the *Song Books* as a work of art is nearly impossible. Who would dare? It resembles a brothel, doesn't it?"

—James Pritchett

**Amy Beth Kirsten (b.1972)** *yes I said yes I will Yes.* (2012)

Recognized with artist fellowships from the John S. Guggenheim Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, Amy Beth Kirsten grew up in the suburbs of Kansas City and Chicago; was educated at Roosevelt University(MM) and the Peabody Institute (DMA); and now lives in New Haven, CT.

A member of the composition faculty at Longy School of Music of Bard College since 2017, she also teaches music composition privately and, for the past eight

years, at the HighSCORE summer festival in Pavia, Italy. Kirsten previously served on the faculty of the Peabody Institute from 2015 to 2017, and she has been a guest lecturer at institutions including the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester (U.K.), Yale University, Princeton University, Curtis Institute, Cornell University, and the Royal Academy of Music in London.

**Travis Laplante (b.1982) *The Obvious Place* (2020)**

While composing *The Obvious Place*, I had one of the most beautiful experiences of my life here in Putney, Vermont. One day I was improvising on the saxophone in my studio with my eyes closed, facing a glass door. I was struggling with writer's block, searching for what came next musically in the composition. When I opened my eyes I saw, perched on my car just a few feet on the other side of the glass door, a broad-winged hawk staring directly into my eyes. I continued to play, eyes locked with the hawk. She was obviously listening to the sounds and responding by rhythmically moving her body in an otherworldly way, all while maintaining piercing eye contact. At first, I doubted that it was the sound of the saxophone that was related to her movements. However, if I stopped playing she stopped moving. I felt a communication unlike anything I had experienced before. It was a connection so ancient and so generous. In that moment I could feel that birds and humans once shared a common language, and that it is still possible to remember and participate in this communication today if one is willing to be trained. I always imagined this shared language taking place through sound, but it was clear that she was teaching me a language where sound and movement are not separate. This communication continued for around fifteen minutes, and as time passed I honestly couldn't tell who was following who. I didn't know whether my notes were being responded to by the hawk's movements or whether my notes were responding to the hawk's mysterious movements. Eventually, the hawk flew directly at the glass door toward my face, and turned at the last second and flew away. After this experience, the idea of having writer's block seemed so ridiculous and irrelevant. The most prominent musical motifs within *The Obvious Place* are the result of this magical interaction. Through this music I hope to convey our longing for forgotten love.

—Travis Laplante

**Toshio Hosokawa (b.1955) Windscapes (1996)**

Toshio Hosokawa's music is deeply influenced by Japanese aesthetic and spiritual elements. Especially in Japanese calligraphy, he finds an antidote to chaos; an inherent quality that brings order amidst disorder. Around the time when Hosokawa composed *Windscapes* for two percussionists, this influence grew to include sumi-e painting, an Indian ink painting that can be described as a "drawing version" of calligraphy. He was inspired by a work of the most prominent Japanese master of Indian ink and wash painting, Sesshū Tōyō (1420-1506). In one of his works, "Haboku Sansui," Sesshū uses a "splashed-ink" technique to depict a figure that casts shadows, but whose outline is not clear. The figure blends with the background, becoming vague and hardly noticed. Lines are continuous, but shapes dissolve into the landscape.

In *Windscapes*, Hosokawa is deeply inspired by this concept. As performers of this work we imagine our hands becoming brushes, and drum heads becoming canvas. Playing shapes on our drums, we "paint" wind in space; not only in sound, but also visually. Here, wind is born out of silence and returns to silence again. As Hosokawa says, "We hear the individual notes and appreciate at the same time the process of how the notes are born and die: a sound landscape of continual 'becoming' that is animated in itself."