

# CUBE circuits

The Latest Buzz from CUBE  
Contemporary Chamber Ensemble

Winter–Spring 2006



## Mark your calendars for CUBE!

### “Sounding the Sacred II”

Sunday, February 19, at 4:00 PM  
Augustana Chapel  
Lutheran School of Theology  
1100 E. 55th St.  
Chicago

#### Program

- Lawrence Axelrod, *The Immanence of Angels*, for baritone and piano
- Patricia Morehead, *Antiphonal*, for oboe/English horn and clarinet/bass clarinet
- William Ferris, *Antiphon*, for solo clarinet
- Pozzi Escot, *Jubilation*, for string quartet, with guest artist Tetras String Quartet
- Ralph Shapey, *O Jerusalem*, for soprano and flute
- Paul Ben Haim, *Songs without Words*, for oboe and piano
- Robert Cogan, *Utterances*, for solo soprano
- Margaret Bonds, *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* for voice and piano
- Florence Price, *Song to the Dark Virgin* for voice and piano

**Guest performers:** Jeffrey Strauss, baritone, Sharon Quattrin, soprano, Tetras String Quartet

## Sensationally Macabre

by Janice Misurell-Mitchell

On Friday, January 13, 2006 I attended the first of a series of three concerts of music of Hungarian composer György Ligeti, presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York City. The first program had the most sonic variety; the following two concerts featured works for woodwind quintet, string quartet, and piano.

Most of the program was organized around a chronological sequence of works, opening with the tonal *Old Hungarian Ballroom Dances*, for flute, clarinet and strings. Ligeti wrote the piece in 1949 to appease Soviet authorities, who asked him to write something for public radio that reflected the country's cultural heritage; the work was a great success. He says, "I became famous for writing a piece that was not my own composition". Nonetheless, there are hints of irony in this work, which apparently were not noticed by those in power.

The *Chamber Concerto for Thirteen Instrumentalists*, completed in 1970 reflected a vastly different musical vocabulary, one the composer developed after fleeing Hungary in 1956, moving to Vienna, then working extensively with other modernist composers in Cologne at West German Radio. This piece, in several movements, contained virtuosic writing for all the instruments, creating a delicate balance between soloistic and textured ensemble writing; the use of sonorites of minor seconds and melodies of perpetual motion made for an exciting performance. Conducting the group was Reinbert de Leeuw, director of the Schoenberg Ensemble in Amsterdam and a familiar conductor and pianist in the US.

The showstopper was "Mysteries of the Macabre," the wild coloratura aria from Ligeti's opera, *Le Grand Macabre* (1978), arranged for chamber ensemble and performed brilliantly by soprano Barbara Hannigan. The opera is set in a surrealistic world with themes of mortality and depravity: the end is coming, or perhaps it's not. The soprano portrayed Gepopo, a male character who is chief of police. Wearing a shiny black wig, a short, tight black leather dress, high boots and a long black leather coat, Hannigan sputtered and sang a series of disconnected sentence fragments, words and sounds, accompanied by a similarly disjointed instrumental texture that was punctuated by occasional verbal outbursts from the ensemble.

Providing a calm antidote to the previous piece's excesses was the *Hamburg Concerto* for solo horn and chamber orchestra, completed in 2002.

Here Ligeti writes for an ensemble that includes two basset horns and four obbligato natural horns. The contrast between the solo horn, played for the most part on a contemporary instrument, and the four obbligato horns was striking: the natural horns (without valves), all in different keys, created an intonation that defied any known tuning. The result was a sense of unusual color, termed "weird" even by the composer. William Purvis, the soloist, led the group through a series of seven movements, many with contrasting dance rhythms and musical styles.

Completing the program was Ligeti's classic work, *Aventures and Nouvelles Aventures I and II*, for three singers and seven instrumentalists (1965). As the composer explains, the piece uses an artificial language that conveys "ritualized human emotions... such as understanding and dissension, dominion and subjection, honesty and deceit," etc. There is no setting of a text, only particular groupings of sounds. Barbara Hannigan, soprano, Katalin Károlyi, mezzo, and Omar Ebrahim, baritone, performed the vocal parts with drama, humor, and irony.

The audience at Alice Tully Hall responded with tremendous enthusiasm to the entire concert. ■

# CUBE Annual Spring Festival 2006

## Sounding the Sacred II: CUBE Looks Up

by Lawrence Axelrod



After an auspicious first collaboration last year with the Lutheran School of Theology, CUBE will present "Sounding

the Sacred II." The concert will be held on Sunday, February 19 at 4 PM at the Lutheran School of Theology, 1100 East 55<sup>th</sup> St., in Hyde Park. Admission is \$15, free for students.

The wide-ranging program features vocal and instrumental music of varied spiritual emphases. Purely instrumental works will have an important role in this concert. Patricia Morehead's *Antiphonal* for English horn and bass clarinet based on music of the twelfth century nun-composer, Hildegard von Bingen, and William Ferris's *A Lenten Meditation* for solo clarinet will be the shorter offerings, along with Paul Ben Haim's *Three Songs Without Words* for oboe and piano.

Pozzi Escot's *Jubilation* for string quartet will be played by the Tetras String Quartet of the Juilliard School in New York. This work has been hailed as a "rare and wonderful piece" and admired for its "aphoristic density". The composer, who will attend the concert, resides in Boston and is recognized as a principal exponent of the relationship between music and mathematics.

A more familiar yet non-traditional

text-setting of the sacred will be represented by Ralph Shapey's "O Jerusalem" for soprano and flute. The solo soprano voice will also be featured in Robert Cogan's "Utterances", an eight-minute work featuring a multi-language text and extended vocal techniques. Mr. Cogan, a past chair of the Departments of Theoretical Studies and Composition at the New England Conservatory, will be in attendance. The wonderful soprano for these two pieces will be Sharon Quattrin.

Lawrence Axelrod's song cycle "The Immanence of Angels" presents a more expanded spiritual landscape, pairing texts by James Broughton and Rabindranath Tagore. Jeffrey Strauss, last heard singing new music in the Chicago Chamber Musician's Composer's Perspective series last season, will be the baritone.

## Facets of CUBE



by Janice Misurell-Mitchell

Hear CUBE's exploration of the many sides of American music in its March

12 concert "Facets of CUBE", at 3 PM at the Merit School of Music, 38 S. Peoria St., two blocks west of Chicago's Greentown. The concert will open CUBE's Spring Festival; ticket prices for Festival concerts are \$20/\$10.

Works of Pulitzer-Prize-winning composers such as Bernard Rands, George Walker and Joseph Schwantner will be performed along with Chicago composers Ilya Levinson, Elizabeth Start, Patricia Morehead and Edward Eicker.

There will be three world pre-

mieres: *Sketches of a Summer Night*, for the CUBE ensemble by Edward Eicker; *Out of the Depths I Cry*, for voice, oboe, clarinet, percussion, cello and piano, based on poetry by Ruth Gembicki Bragg, by Ilya Levinson; and *Truth, Justice, and...* for electric cello, English horn, flute, piano and percussion by Elizabeth Start.

Other compositions featured on the program are *Five Fancies for Clarinet and Piano Four Hands* by George Walker; *Memo 8: For Solo Oboe*, by Bernard Rands; *Tears for Cassandra* for solo cello by Patricia Morehead; and *Velocities (Moto Perpetuo)* for solo marimba by Joseph Schwantner. Guest artists are Barbara Ann Martin, soprano and Elizabeth Start, cello.

## Pianoforte CUBE

by Philip Morehead

CUBE will present pianist Jeffrey Jacobs in a special free concert at Columbia College, 1014 S Michigan Ave, Chicago, on Wednesday, April 5 at 12:30 PM. The program will include works by Patricia Morehead, Chester Biscardi, Ethan Haimo, and George Crumb. A graduate of the Juilliard School and the Peabody Conservatory, Mr. Jacobs is a noted proponent of contemporary music, who has had works written for him by Crumb, Persichetti, Schuller, and many others and has recorded over 50 works for solo piano and piano and orchestra. There will a post-concert discussion with Jacobs and composer/CUBEist

Patricia Morehead.

## CUBIST Cornucopia



by Janice Misurell-Mitchell

The second concert of CUBE's Spring Festival, "CUBIST Cornucopia," will be on

Friday, April 7 at 7:30 PM at Columbia College Concert Hall, 1014 S. Michigan Avenue. There promises to be wealth of new pieces along with contemporary classics performed by CUBE members and special guests.

Headlining the concert will be a performance of Elliot Carter's *Tempo e Tempi*, for soprano, oboe/English horn, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin and cello, performed by mezzo-soprano Julia Bentley.

*Impressions*, for solo flute by Timothy Bowlby, will be given its world premiere by CUBE's Caroline Pittman. Doug Lofstrom, on the faculty of Columbia College, will premiere a new work for flute, oboe and English horn, clarinet, percussion and double bass, featuring members of CUBE and Columbia College. Also featured are *Flux*, for alto flute and cello by Jason Eckardt, *Cornucopia*, for solo piano by M. Lewis Spratlan, and *Duo for Flute and Piano*, by Aaron Copland.

In addition to Ms. Bentley, CUBE is honored to have Rich Corpolongo, winds; Grant Strombeck, drums and percussion; Paula Kosower, cello; Doug Lofstrom, double bass.

## Live from WFMT 98.7

by Lawrence Axelrod

CUBE's concert on WFMT will take place on Monday, April 10 at 8 PM Our program features music by Pulitzer-prize winning composers, with pieces that span the many decades since that prize was established. Both well-known and lesser-known composers who have been honored with the Pulitzer Prize

will be featured.

Representing the 1940s will be Walter Piston and his *Suite* for oboe and piano. The icon of the "American Sound", Aaron Copland, will represent the 1950s with his *Duo for Flute and Piano*. The 1960s will feature Leon Kirchner's *Flutings*, for flute and percussion based on music from his opera, *Lily*. Dean of American composers Elliott Carter will represent the 1970s with his *Tempo e Tempi* for soprano, oboe/English horn, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin and cello performed by Chicago favorite, mezzo-soprano Julia Bentley. A solo percussion work, *Reflections on the Nature of Water* by Jacob Druckman, will represent the 1980s. The 1990s will be represented by *Five Fancies for Clarinet and Piano Four Hands* by George Walker. Finally, the first decade of this century will be represented by M. Lewis Spratlan's solo piano work *Cornucopia*.

Please tune in to hear this varied, unusual and thoroughly American concert program.

## CUBE on the Road

by Philip Morehead

CUBE packs its bags and travels to Three Oaks, Michigan, to perform in the lovely Acorn Theater ([www.acorntheater.com](http://www.acorntheater.com)) on Sunday, April 23, at 3 PM. Tickets are \$10. The program will include works by Aaron Copland, Robert Lombardo, Olivier Messiaen, Walter Piston, M. Lewis Spratlan, Joseph Schwantner, George Walker, and Giacinto Scelsi.

## New Music Chicago

by Philip Morehead

New Music Chicago, of which CUBE is a member, will present a free Mother's Day concert at the Chicago Cultural Center on Sunday, May 14, at 3 PM. CUBE's contribution will be the world premiere of *Which Way Home?*, a song cycle by New York composer Drew Hemenger on poems of Anne Sexton. The cycle will be

sung by soprano Alicia Berneche, who commissioned the work, accompanied by Philip Morehead, piano.

The composer writes: "When I was asked to write a song cycle by the Chicago-based soprano Alicia Berneche on the topic of 'Women Poets Who Committed Suicide,' I was a little taken aback. However, when she explained that she was doing a recital on this subject, inspired by an article she had read about the way in which suicidal poets have used language differently from non-suicidal ones, I became interested. At her suggestion, I looked at a few different poets and immediately fell in love with the manic, crazy and utterly brilliant poetry of Anne Sexton. Sexton suffered several breakdowns and attempted suicide several times before finally succeeding in 1974, at the age of forty-six. She went in and out of mental institutions, yet was still able to maintain a family and create a sizable body of work."

Hemenger's cycle sets eight poems which "give a glimpse into this woman's life." In the cycle, there are crazy and tragic moments as well as happy and awestruck ones.

## American Songbook III



by Philip Morehead  
The output of America's art song composers is rich indeed, and two superb examples

will be presented on CUBE's American Songbook program on Sunday, May 21 at 3 PM in the Gottlieb Concert Hall, Merit School of Music, 38 S. Peoria St, Chicago. The concert features two former member of Lyric Opera's acclaimed Center for American Artists, Alicia Berneche and Brian Leerhuber. Alicia replaced Dawn Upshaw as Daisy Buchanan in Lyric's production of *The Great Gatsby* and has gone on to a

distinguished career in opera. Alicia will perform the song cycle *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* by Dominick Argento, which won the composer the Pulitzer Prize in Music for 1975. The composer sets diary entries dating from 1919 to the last entry in 1941.

The program will also feature an exciting new cycle, *I Am Waiting for You to Love Me*, composed for CUBE by Ricky Ian Gordon with a commission made possible by support from the Katherine A. Abelson Fund of the Lester S. Abelson Foundation. The cycle is a setting of poems by Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, Guillaume Apollinaire (translated by X.J. Kennedy), Gwendolyn Brooks, Paul

Celan, and Donald Justice. The music is scored for baritone, flute/piccolo, flute/alto flute, oboe/English horn/oboe d'amore, clarinet/bass clarinet, double bass, piano, and percussion. The work will be sung by Brian Leerhuber.

The third major work on the program is the world premiere of the *Concertino for Piano and Three Instruments* by Robert Lombardo. The work is in three movements, each featuring a virtuoso solo section for the piano and interplay with the ensemble, which consists of flute, oboe, and marimba. The piano soloist will be CUBE member Lawrence Axelrod.

## M. William Karlins Memorial Concert

There will be a concert in memory of M. William Karlins on Tuesday, February 14, at 7:30 PM in Pick Staiger Concert Hall, on the Evanston campus of Northwestern University. Featured will be several pieces by Bill Karlins, including *Academic Festival Fanfare*, *Catena 1 for Little Orchestra with Clarinet Obligato*, *Quartet No. 2* for saxophone quartet, *Introduction and Passacaglia*, for alto and tenor saxophones, and piano, and one of his last pieces, *Wally's Caprice*, for solo flute. Performers include the Northwestern Contemporary Music Ensemble; the Chicago Saxophone Quartet; Walifred Kujala, flute; Eric Honour, clarinet; Jan Berry, Bill Street and Paul Bro, saxophone; Elizabeth Buccheri and Terry Spina, piano. For information call (847) 491-5441.

## Chicago Premiere: Nixon in China

*Nixon in China*, John Adams' groundbreaking opera on human drama within contemporary politics will receive its Chicago premiere by Chicago Opera Theatre in May. Written in 1987, the opera presents scenes, actual and imagined, of the two primary couples involved—Richard and Pat Nixon and Chairman Mao and his wife, Jiang Qing, and the entourages surrounding them in their 1972 visit.

For more information please see [www.chicagooperatheater.org](http://www.chicagooperatheater.org)



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# CUBE 18th Season 2005-2006

## Winter and Spring Concerts in a Nutshell

**"Sounding the Sacred II"**, Sunday, February 19, 4 PM, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1100 E. 55th St., Chicago. Tickets \$15 (students free). Music by Axelrod, Ben Haim, Bonds, Cogan, Pozzi Escot, Ferris, Morehead, Shapey. Guest artists: Jeffrey Strauss, Sharon Quattrin, Tetras String Quartet. Co-sponsored by the Lutheran School of Theology.

**Annual Spring Festival Concert I, "Facets of CUBE"**, Sunday, March 12, 3 PM, Merit School of Music, Gottlieb Concert Hall, 38 S. Peoria St., Chicago. Tickets \$20 (\$10 students, seniors). The many sides of American music, with works by Morehead, Rands, Schwantner, Walker, Eicker, Levinson, and Start. Guest artist: Barbara Ann Martin. Partially funded by the Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation.

**Pianoforte CUBE**, Wednesday, April 5, 12:30 PM, Columbia College Concert Hall, 1014 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Admission free. Guest pianist Jeffrey Jacobs plays works by Morehead, Crumb, Biscardi, and Haimo. Co-sponsored by Columbia College.

**Spring Festival Concert II, "CUBIST Cornucopia"**, Friday, April 7, 7:30 PM, Columbia College Concert Hall, 1014 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Tickets: \$20 (\$10 students, seniors). Music of Carter, Bowlby, Lofstrom, Eckardt, Spratlan, and Copland. Guest artist: Julia Bentley. Partially funded by the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation.

**"Live from WFMT"**, Monday, April 10, 8 PM. Works by Pulitzer Prize winning composers: Piston, Copland, Kirchner, Carter, Druckman, Walker and Spratlan.

**CUBE on the Road**, Sunday, April 23, 3 PM, Acorn Theater, Three Oaks, Michigan ([www.acorntheater.com](http://www.acorntheater.com)). Tickets: \$10. Works by Copland, Lombardo, Messiaen, Piston, Spratlan, Schwantner, Walker, and Scelsi. Co-sponsored by the Acorn Theater.

**New Music Chicago**, Sunday, May 14, 3:00 PM, Preston Bradley Hall, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., Chicago. Admission free. Performances by member organizations, including CUBE, Fulcrum Point, ICE, MAVerick and Accessible Contemporary Music. CUBE presents soprano Alicia Berneche and pianist Philip Morehead in the world premiere of *Which Way Home?* by Drew Hemenger. Co-sponsored by the Chicago Cultural Center.

**Spring Festival Concert III, "American Songbook III"**, Sunday, May 21, 3 PM, Merit School of Music, Gottlieb Concert Hall, 38 S. Peoria St., Chicago. Tickets: \$20 (\$10 students, seniors). Guest artists, soprano Alicia Berneche and baritone Brian Leerhuber. World premieres by Ricky Ian Gordon and Robert Lombardo, featured work by Dominick Argento. Ricky Ian Gordon commission funded by the Katherine A. Abelson Fund of the Lester S. Abelson Foundation. Concert supported in part by the NIB Foundation.