

The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

presents

Sounds Modern

performing

Framing desire in music

Saturday, May 16, 2015, 2:00 pm

Modern Art Museum auditorium

Program

<i>Primavera Porteña</i>	Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)
<i>Garden of Joy and Sorrow</i>	Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931)
<i>Tender Intervals</i>	Andrew May (b. 1968)
<i>and then I knew 'twas wind</i>	Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996)
<i>Verano Porteño</i>	Piazzolla

Performers

Daphne Gerling, viola ; Jaymee Haefner, harp ; Steven Harlos, piano;
Andrew May (Assistant Director, Sounds Modern), violin;
Elizabeth McNutt (Director, Sounds Modern), flute ;
Kourtney Newton, cello

Notes

In *Framing Desire in Music* we chose recent works in which composers express their longing, sentimental and magical, for an unattainable and distant reality. The program includes works that celebrate particular people and places – and especially beloved pieces of music that composers refer to (even incorporate), reframing them much as photographs and video reframe and reinforce elements of the visual world. These musical acts of sympathetic magic provide a sonic dimension to the Modern's exhibition *Framing Desire*.

Composer, bandoneón player, and arranger **Astor Piazzolla** was already a successful tanguero in Buenos Aires when he began to study composition formally. His studies with Alberto Ginastera and Nadia Boulanger nurtured his gifts for counterpoint, orchestration, and chamber music, all of which fed into his unique re-invention of the tango. In 1955 he formed the Octeto Buenos Aires, an unique chamber ensemble for which he wrote some of his most innovative tango compositions; this group included cellist José Bragato, who created the piano trio arrangements of Piazzolla's *Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas* (Four Seasons of Buenos Aires) of which we will perform two on this concert. Piazzolla composed *Verano Porteño* (Summer) in 1965 as incidental music for a play; *Primavera Porteña* (Spring) was written in 1970. The original versions were for a quintet featuring electric guitar, double bass, and bandoneón; in this arrangement, in addition to a poignant nostalgia for Buenos Aires, there are also passages that evoke the original instrumentation, flowing into others more directly idiomatic to violin, cello, and piano, reframing the ensemble in a phantasmagorical dance.

According to Russian composer **Sofia Gubaidulina**, this work from 1980/93 "...was conceived under the strong influence of two directly contradictory literary phenomena: 1) the work *Sayat-Nova* by Iv Oganov, about the famous Eastern story-teller and singer, and 2) verses by the 20th century German poet Francisco Tanzer. Vivid Eastern color was counterposed to a typically Western consciousness. But both of these works had significant inner similarities: their contemplativeness and refinement. Such phrases in Iv Oganov – 'the ordeal of a flower's pain, the peal of the singing garden grew, the revelation of the rose, the lotus was set aflame by music, the white garden began to ring again with diamond borders...' – impelled me to concrete aural perception of this garden. And, on the other hand, all this ecstatic flowering of the garden was expressed naturally in the sum reflections of the F. Tanzer about the world and its wholeness."

Wann ist es wirklich aus?
Was ist das wahre Ende?
Alle Grenzen sind
wie mit einem Stück Holz
oder einem Schuhabsatz
in die Erde gezogen.
Bis dahin ...,
hier ist die Grenze.
Alles das ist künstlich.
Morgen spielen wir
ein anderes Spiel.
– Francisco Tanzer (1921-2003)

When is it really over?
What is the true ending?
Each border seems a line drawn
as with a stick of wood
or the heel of a shoe
into the earth.
Until then . . . ,
here is the borderline.
All the rest is artifice.
Tomorrow we'll play
another game.
– Translation: Paula Robison

Tender Intervals (2003) was inspired by two very different musicians: Italian composer Franco Donatoni (1927-2000), who wrote works I love to hear and play that gradually develop the propulsion and extension of tiny, seemingly ornamental ideas; and Amiya Dasgupta (1923-1994), a great teacher, composer, and sitarist with whom I studied briefly, and also had the pleasure of performing some of his works that created an evocative counterpoint between Hindustani and Western rhythmic and melodic practices. These two artists had very

different approaches to musical time, and yet in this piece I found the gestures wanted to be extended through time in ways that made me think of both of them. I was also influenced by the perversely labile narrative of Vladimir Nabokov's *Invitation of a Small Creature*, which I was reading as I wrote the piece, and which includes this perplexing yet stirring passage: "Maybe the only thing that hints at a sense of Time is rhythm; not the recurrent beats of the rhythm but the gap between two such beats, the gray gap between black beats: The Tender Interval. The regular throb itself merely brings back the miserable idea of measurement, but in between, something like true Time lurks. How can I extract it from its soft hollow?"

Japanese composer **Toru Takemitsu** wasn't generally known for his use of quotation. However, in this composition from 1992, contains materials taken from Debussy's famous *Sonata* of 1915, also for flute, viola, and harp. Like much of Takemitsu's work, this trio combines elements of Japanese and Western musical styles. The title comes from a poem of Emily Dickinson.

Like Rain it sounded, till it curved
And then I knew 'twas Wind -
It walked as wet as any Wave
But swept as dry as Sand -
When it had pushed itself away
To some remotest Plain
A coming as of Hosts was heard
That was indeed the Rain -
It filled the Wells, it pleased the Pools
It warbled in the Road -
It pulled the spigot from the Hills
And let the Floods abroad -
It loosened acres, lifted seas
The sites of Centres stirred
Then like Elijah rode away
Upon a Wheel of Cloud.
— Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Acknowledgments

Flutist **Elizabeth McNutt** conceived the **Sounds Modern** series as an invitation for modern art lovers to enjoy the best innovative modern music. Sounds Modern explores the sonic dimensions of the ideas represented in the galleries, bringing the artwork to life in the concert hall. Sounds Modern also presents concerts at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas. In addition to directing Sounds Modern, McNutt is director of the Nova new music ensemble at the University of North Texas, where she teaches in the flute and composition areas. Sounds Modern assistant director **Andrew May** is on the UNT composition faculty.

Thanks to Tina Gorski and John Nuckels of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth for their collaboration and inspiration in bringing our sounds to the Modern. The next Sounds Modern event in Fort Worth will be on Saturday, October 17, at 2 pm. On August 1, we'll be premiering Andrew May's *Unset* at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, TX. For more information, go to www.soundsmodern.org and www.facebook.com/soundsmodern. Please like us on Facebook!