

The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

presents

Sounds Modern

performing

Electric EArth

Saturday, June 10, 2017, 2:00 pm

Modern Art Museum auditorium

Program

Pot au Feu (1968)

Delia Derbyshire (1937-2001)

Vox Balaenae (Voice of the Whale), 1971)

George Crumb (b. 1929)

Vocalise (...for the beginning of time)

Variations on Sea-Time

Sea Theme

Archeozoic (Var. I)

Proterozoic (Var. II)

Paleozoic (Var. III)

Mesozoic (Var. IV)

Cenozoic (Var. V)

Sea-Nocturne (...for the end of time)

Concret PH (1958)

Iannis Xenakis (1922-2001)

Credo in Us (1942)

John Cage (1912-1992)

Still Angry (2007)

Andrew May (b. 1968)

Performers

West Fox and Colton Lytle, percussion

Andrew May (Assistant Director, Sounds Modern), phonograph, electronics

Elizabeth McNutt (Director, Sounds Modern), flute

Kourtney Newton, cello

Connor O'Meara, clarinet

Shannon Wettstein, piano

Notes

The works on today's concert, like much of Doug Aitken's work, use electronics to dislocate, recontextualize, and recombine seemingly incongruous materials. The cultural referents of past and present come together in a technologically mediated mulch that becomes fertile soil where new ideas can grow.

Today, June 10, is the 2017 Delia Derbyshire Day. A pioneer of electronic music composition, Derbyshire is famous for the 1963 theme music from *Dr. Who*; she realized it from a sketch by BBC composer Ron Grainer, who famously reacted to the finished track with the question "Did I write that?" Her music was widely heard on television, and she also collaborated with poets and rock musicians; an archive at the University of Manchester preserves much of her work. Described by Peter Marsh as "angular robot jazz crammed with incident," Derbyshire's *Pot au Feu* (1968) prefigures stylistic and technical approaches of more recent years; in fact, a sample from this piece is a prominent element in Freddie Gibbs and Madlib's 2014 track *Real*.

Iannis Xenakis composed *Concret PH* for performance at the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels, alongside Edgar Varèse's *Poème Electronique*. Both works were projected through 400 speakers inside the Philips Pavilion, which Xenakis also designed (the "PH" in the title stands for the hyperbolic paraboloids which were the basis of the pavilion's design). This piece is built from short recordings of crackling embers in a fire, which Xenakis assembled into clouds of varying density, turning a natural phenomenon into musical material.

Recordings of humpback whale songs, which Crumb heard in 1969, inspired *Vox Balaenae* (Voice of the Whale). Masked performers in a marine blue light have a shamanistic role, leaving their human personae behind to embody forces of nature. Transformed quotations of classical and romantic music come together with Crumb's own timbral and rhythmic inventions in a dislocated, undersea context.

John Cage wrote *Credo in Us* (1942), like many of his early percussion ensemble works, for choreography by Merce Cunningham and Jean Erdman. Muted gongs, electric buzzers, tin cans, and tom toms bring out the percussive qualities of the piano, diminishing its harmonic role. Cage composed the time structure and form of the piece first, then filled this abstract container of time with a variety of disparate textures of sound and rhythmic pattern. A turntable or radio transforms unpredictable elements from the classical music tradition (Cage suggests Dvořák, Beethoven, Sibelius, or Shostakovich) into a new musical instrument.

Still Angry (2007) is a double concerto: a struggle between the instrumentalists, who are set on doing avant-garde improvisation, and the computer, equally determined to do songs by 1970's Manchester bands. Quotations from songs by Joy Division, Magazine, and Buzzcocks, covered in layers and fragments by the composer, join together with the performers' improvisations in a post-punk quodlibet. The title is part of a quote from Richard Morgan's novel *Altered Carbon*: "When they ask how I died, tell them: still angry." There are plenty of reasons for unquenchable anger these days – the stylistic chauvinism that makes music divide people instead of uniting them may not be the best one – but I'm still angry about it. *Still Angry* was written for Elizabeth McNutt and Esther Lamneck, a.k.a., The Tornado Project.

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. 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.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Christopher Deane and the UNT Percussion Department for providing instruments, the Center for Experimental Music at UNT for providing electronics support, and Tina Gorski and John Nuckels of the Modern for collaborating in bringing our sounds to the Modern. The next Sounds Modern event in Fort Worth will be on Saturday, September 23, at 2 pm. For more information, go to www.soundsmodern.org and www.facebook.com/SoundsModern. Please follow us on Facebook!