

Program Notes

Nick Omiccioli, born in 1982, is a metalhead in a classical musician's world, and his music encompasses many genres. The motivation behind much of his music comes from a passion for his experiences playing electric guitar in rock, metal, and jazz groups, and from his interest in graphic novels. He turned his attention toward music when he first heard Metallica's eponymous album "The Black Album."

Mr. Omiccioli's music has been performed in Asia, Europe, and throughout North America, and he has composed for some of the leading ensembles of today, including Alarm Will Sound, Berkeley Symphony, l'Orchestre de la Francophonie, Jasper String Quartet, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, Ensemble Paramirabo, and the Third Angle Ensemble. He has received commissions from the Wellesley Composers Conference, the Aspen Music Festival and School, Shouse Institute at the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, National Arts Centre in Canada, Le Domain Forget, and Nu Deco Ensemble. In addition to having been awarded many national and international honors, he has received residencies at Copland House, Willapa Bay AiR, and he was a finalist for the Rome Prize.

Nick Omiccioli holds degrees from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where he was a Preparing Future Faculty Fellow, and from Heidelberg University. His primary composition teachers included James Mobberley, Chen Yi, Zhou Long, and Brian Bevelander. He is currently Assistant Professor of Composition Studies at Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music at the National University of Singapore.

Nick Omiccioli: *push / pull* (2013, revised 2015)

push / pull, for septet, is an exploration of my musical roots in rock and metal music. While *push / pull* is not a direct translation of the idiom, it evokes something of the visceral energy of that music. Not only does the mood shift between a pushing and pulling energy, the larger musical sections also expand and contract, repeating in lengthened, shortened, or in exact repetitions of their original forms. The work's driving force is relentless, and *push / pull* is, admittedly, more "push" than "pull,"

The 2018-2019 season marks the 80th birthday of composer **John Harbison** with celebrations throughout the country and around the world. Three major premieres, more than a dozen new recordings, his first book, and performances across the globe mark the occasion. Major city-wide celebrations are taking place in Harbison's two home-towns of Boston, Massachusetts and Madison, Wisconsin.

One of America's most distinguished artistic figures, Harbison is recipient of numerous awards and honors, among them a MacArthur Fellowship and a Pulitzer Prize.

He has composed music for most of America's premiere musical institutions, including the Metropolitan Opera, Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, New York Philharmonic, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Harbison's concert music catalog is anchored by three operas, six symphonies, twelve concerti, a ballet, six string quartets, numerous song cycles and chamber works, and a large body of sacred music that includes cantatas, motets, and the orchestral-choral works *Four Psalms*, *Requiem* and *Abraham*. His music is widely recorded on leading labels.

First performances in the 2018-2019 season include the monodrama *If* (for Boston Musica Viva, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center), the organ symphony *What Do We Make of Bach?* (for the Seattle Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, and Northrop at the University of Minnesota), together with a companion volume of essays on Bach, and the Viola Sonata, commissioned by an anonymous admirer as a consortium of first performances by distinguished violists across the country.

Recent works include *Psalm 116* (Chanticleer), *String Quartet No. 6* (Lark and Telegraph Telegraph Quartet), *Presences* (cello and string quintet), *A Bag of Tales* (codas for piano), *The Cross of Snow* (in versions for viols with countertenor, and string quartet with mezzo-soprano), *The Nine Rasas* (clarinet, viola and piano), and *Painting the Floors Blue* (for violinist Jennifer Koh). Harbison's opera *The Great Gatsby*, a commission from the Metropolitan Opera, was recently revived at Semperoper Dresden, following performances in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Aspen, Boston and Tanglewood.

Mr. Harbison has been composer-in-residence with the Pittsburgh Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, American Academy in Rome, and numerous festivals. He received degrees from Harvard and Princeton before joining the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he is currently Institute Professor. For many summers since 1984 he taught composition at Tanglewood, serving as head of its composition program from 2005 to 2015, often directing its Festival of Contemporary Music. With Rose Mary Harbison, the inspiration for many of his violin works, he has been co-Artistic Director of the annual Token Creek Chamber Music Festival since its founding in 1989. He continues as principal guest conductor at Emmanuel Music (where for three years he served as Acting Artistic Director), and he is a past music director of Cantata Singers. An accomplished jazz pianist, Harbison founded MIT's Vocal Jazz Ensemble in 2010, for which he served as coach and arranger, and he is pianist with the faculty jazz group Strength in Numbers (SIN).

Mr. Harbison has been President of the Copland Fund and a trustee of the American Academy in Rome. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and is a Trustee of the Bogliasco Foundation.

John Harbison: Die Kurze

Die Kürze (Brevity) was composed in 1969, and is dedicated to the pianist Robert Levin, who took part in its first performance at the New York Composer's Forum. Subsequently performers include the Fires of London and the chamber ensemble of the New England Conservatory. The work is a very intimate chamber piece, aphoristic in nature, divided into three short movements. The first movement is an exchange between the piano and the other players, both in lyrical isolation. This is followed by a kind of burlesque, a series of bravura solos ending in a mock-ariso. The last movement is a wordless setting of Hölderlin's "Die Kürze."

Melinda Wagner's extensive catalogue of music includes her *Concerto for Flute, Strings and Percussion*, which earned her the Pulitzer Prize in 1999, a *Concerto for Trombone*, composed for Joseph Alessi and the New York Philharmonic, a piano concerto, *Extremity of Sky*, commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for Emmanuel Ax, and *Little Moonhead*, for the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra as part of its "New Brandenburgs" project. Ms. Wagner has received three commissions from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the most recent of which, *Proceed, Moon*, was premiered in 2017. Other recent performances have been by the American Composers Orchestra, the United States Marine Band, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, American Brass Quintet, Empyrean Ensemble, and the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society.

Ms. Wagner has been a recipient of a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship and awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and ASCAP. She was awarded an honorary doctorate from Hamilton College, and a Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Pennsylvania, and she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2017. She has held faculty positions at Brandeis University and Smith College, and she has served as a mentor at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, Wellesley Composers Conference, and Yellow Barn. She currently serves on the faculty of the Juilliard School of Music.

Melinda Wagner: Wick

Wick was composed for the New York New Music Ensemble during the spring of 2000. I came upon this title primarily because I like the clipped, sharp sound of the word "wick." But it also can refer both to something that is lit and to the action of drawing up—energy perhaps? Ultimately, "wick," and its similarity to the Old English word *wicca*, meaning "witch," makes a fitting title for a piece of music that is at times just a little bit naughty.

Cast in one movement, the piece unfolds in three sections. The opening introduction, fast and furious, leads to a "big tune," and a quiet, meditative section follows. Finally, the drama and break-neck speed of the opening return. That *Wick* fell neatly into this tri-partite design came as a surprise to me, as I did not anticipate its structure as I was going along. The process of composing became one of gathering up increasing amounts of energy, then finding ways to release the music at certain points, letting off steam. Sometimes the energy splinters into fanciful cadenza-like solos; at other times it is absorbed or disguised by

overlapping descending waves, moving in slow motion. At the end of the work, tension is released through the performers' own voices as the entire ensemble and conductor intone the pitch D.

Born in Washington, D.C. in 1955, composer **Jeffrey Mumford** has received the Academy Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts & Letters, a Fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation, and an ASCAP Aaron Copland Scholarship. He was also the winner of the inaugural National Black Arts Festival/Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Composition Competition. He has also been recipient of grants from the Ohio Arts Council, Meet the Composer, the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music Inc., the ASCAP Foundation, and the University of California.

Mr. Mumford's commissions include ones from the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association and the Library of Congress (co-commission), BBC Philharmonic, the San Antonio, Chicago, and National symphonies, Washington Performing Arts, Network for New Music, Fulcrum Point New Music Project (through New Music USA), Duo Harpverk (Iceland), the Sphinx Consortium, Cincinnati Symphony, VERGE Ensemble /National Gallery of Art/Contemporary Music Forum, Argento Chamber Ensemble, Cleveland Orchestra, the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation, Fromm Music Foundation, and the McKim Fund in the Library of Congress. His music has been performed by major orchestras, soloists, and ensembles in the United States and abroad, including London, Paris, Reykjavik, Vienna, The Hague, Russia, and Lithuania.

His current projects *verdant cycles of deepening spring*, a violin concerto for Caroline Chin; *...amid still and floating depths*, a string quartet for an international consortium of ensembles; *of radiances blossoming in expanding air*, for cello and chamber orchestra; *unfolding waves*, a piano concerto for pianist Pina Napolitano and the Ars Nova Ensemble (France), *brightness dispersed*; and a concerto for cello and string orchestra for Mariel Roberts and the String Orchestra of Brooklyn.

Mr. Mumford has taught at the Washington Conservatory of Music, was Artist-in-Residence at Bowling Green State University, and served as Assistant Professor of Composition and Composer-in-Residence at the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music. He is Distinguished Professor at Lorain County Community College in northern Ohio.

Jeffrey Mumford: a garden of flourishing paths

a garden of flourishing paths was commissioned by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and the Contemporary Music Forum/VERGE Ensemble, to celebrate the 100th birthday of the distinguished composer Elliott Carter. It was my pleasure to know Mr. Carter for many years, having studied with him in the early 1980s, and I am pleased to add my small piece to the many that were written to honor this marvelous creative artist on the occasion of his centenary celebration.

The work is cast in eight short movements, each of which features a particular instrument or group of instruments. To me, the title evokes the space for which it was written, the West Garden Court of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. It also refers to the expressive character of the developmental paths taken by the instruments in relation to each another.

John Harbison: *The Seven Ages* (2008)

The Seven Ages was commissioned by the Serge Koussevitsky Foundation in the Library of Congress, and is dedicated to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitsky. The piece, which is about twenty-five minutes long, is scored for mezzo-soprano, flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello and vibraphone. I am grateful to Louise Glück for her poems, both in this piece and wherever they have appeared, and to the Wylie Agency for use of six of them in this piece.

This vocal chamber piece was composed during June and July of 2008 at Aspen and Tanglewood. As I wrote it I became convinced that every poem in the book—in fact every Glück poem—could be music, this in spite of the fact that her poems are often much larger than those composers tend to set. Her words are clear, strongly placed, deeply felt, vivid—all the things needed to suggest rhythm, melody, and a kind of “symphonic” structure.

Once I chose the poems, I began to shear the sequence as a whole, grouped thematically around “The Seven Ages,” the book’s title poem and the first in the collection. Composition began with the final lines of this first poem (although it was eventually the last to be completed), then moved into the other five poems, presented here in the order in which they appear in the book. Although the songs were all composed at once, they each made independent musical proposals.

While visiting with the Tanglewood Composition Fellows in the summer of 2008, in connection with a performance of my *Symphony 5*, which includes a setting of her poem, “Relic,” Louise Glück gave colorful, reluctant testimony about her writing habits. Her work leaves her periodically, reappearing inconveniently and unbidden. This account confirmed, for me, the affinity I feel for her cadence, voice, and material. *The Seven Ages*, taken hold in the midst of an active summer schedule, after a “blank” period—which always feels irrevocable—felt like an urgent conversation with the poet. After living in these poems it was difficult to leave them.