

NEA



AMERICAN
MASTERPIECES

CHAMBER
MUSIC

New and Newer

In Santa Fe this summer,
two brand-new quintets from veterans—
and a piano quartet from a
relative youngster

by John Stege

Part of an ongoing series spotlighting performances supported by the NEA's AMERICAN MASTERPIECES: CHAMBER MUSIC initiative

The Late June, July & August calendar of AMERICAN MASTERPIECES activities can be seen on page 14. An updated calendar will appear on www.chamber-music.org and will include recently funded programs presented in May and early June 2010. Some of the works being performed are acknowledged American classics, others are worthy but little known and rarely performed, and still others are very recent commissions.

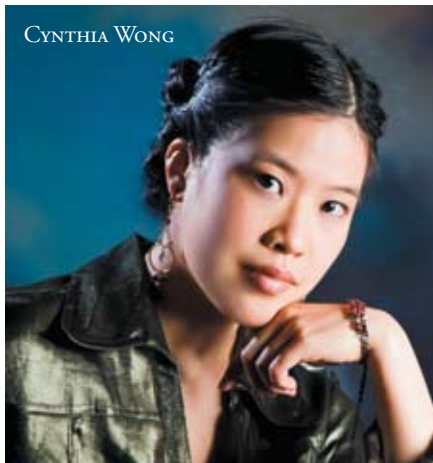
When we think “chamber music festival,” we probably take it for granted that an instrumentalist will be running the artistic end of the operation. Of course, said instrumentalist will also have a gift for overseeing the detail, detail, detail that makes for a successful festival. But that artistic director started out as a pianist or a cellist, say. Not as an administrator.

Think Marlboro/Serkin, Chamber Music Northwest/Shifrin. Or come up with your own longish list. Still, another kind of festival claims our attention, the composer-driven affair, notable among them Britten-Knussen-Adès at Aldeburgh, Menotti at both Spoleto, and a very few others. Now add the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and its artistic director since 1998, Marc Neikrug. Granted, the man is a pianist and accompanist who performs frequently at his own festival and elsewhere. But for Neikrug, composing comes first. And performing? A distant second.

This helps to explain Santa Fe's longstanding interest in commissioning and performing new music. The NEA *American Masterpieces: Chamber Music* grants, while not directly supporting commissions, have been, both last season and this, deeply supportive of Santa Fe's new-music initiatives. Neikrug and Santa Fe's executive director, Steven Ovitsky, channel the grant money into pre-concert discussions and masterclasses featuring composers of newly commissioned works. They're taped for quick access via the festival's website and play an important archival role as well.

During Santa Fe's current season, three American composers will premiere commissioned pieces, with commentary on their own work available online, courtesy of the NEA and the festival's commitment to making new music as available as possible. We'll be hearing from the young Manhattan-based composer Cynthia Lee Wong, the distinguished Cambodian American Chinariy Ung, and Steven Stucky, whose *Concerto for Orchestra* won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for music.

Neikrug met Wong two years ago, when the New York Philharmonic premiered one of his pieces. They talked, “something resonated,” Neikrug says, and she sent him a CD of her work. “I was frankly amazed by her level of accomplishment and sent along a copy of the CD to Oliver Knussen. He seconded, enthusiastically, my appreciation for Cynthia's remarkable talent.” The next big thing? A co-commission, with the La Jolla Music Society, for Wong's Piano Quartet, to be premiered August 5.



CYNTHIA WONG

Augusta Read Thomas had taken an interest in Wong's work, commissioning a string quartet for Tanglewood's Festival of Contemporary Music last summer. It's a logical step from there to writing a Piano Quartet, and Wong comments, "I love the form. But mine isn't tied to any particular genre or historical precedent. It's a piece for four instruments. The commission asked for eight to ten minutes of music. And when I started to write, I wasn't sure where this was going to go."

But as she began to compose, something emerged. "It surprised me. I discovered a stillness, a darkness, that I hadn't really known about. Granted, every process for developing a piece can be different, but this was totally unexpected. I spent a lot of time alone. My life slowed down. It was like a dream, but enjoyable. I could feel plenty of 'space' in the piece."

Wong had been reading Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia," a story notable for its deliberate pacing and uncanny inwardness. She thinks some of that modality found its way into the quartet, albeit unconsciously. Specific portions of Poe's text seem to contain particular relevance to her work, she feels, but the score doesn't cite these. "Many of my other works have been quick and busy, maybe a reflection of life in Manhattan. The Piano Quartet just goes deeper, I think."

"Space" plays a major role in another summer premiere at Santa Fe: Chinary Ung's *AKASA: Formless Spiral*, to be heard August 6. The Pali word *akasa* means *space*, and Ung comments that the new piece expresses "two worlds: that of limited space—physical space with a localized sound and sonority; and infinite space—conceptual, spiritual space."

Neikrug has known Ung since their days at Tanglewood in 1970. "He's a composer of great stature and maturity. (Ung received the prestigious Grawemeyer Award in 1989, the first American to do so.) His music is hugely personal, with inner delicacy and

deep attention to detail and texture. With Ung, you feel there's always an inward searching." The *AKASA* premiere, also a co-commission with the La Jolla Music Society, will feature five players: the Real Quiet trio (cello, piano, percussion), viola, and pipa. Says Neikrug, "It's a rich palette with all the sounds Ung needs. Chinary takes time for his work, so this was an early commission. But when he's done with it, it's perfect."

Ung teaches at the University of California at San Diego, and Felix Fan, the cellist with Real Quiet, grew up in nearby La Jolla. They've known one another for a long time, and Fan is a big admirer of Ung's work. Last summer Real Quiet's Santa Fe performance of *Spiral 1* (1987) may have helped spark this latest in a series of Ung's "spirals." The composer asked Fan and the ensemble if they were comfortable with vocalization. They are, and the new work will include whistling, chanting, speaking, and singing.

David Cossin, Real Quiet's percussionist, added, "With Chinary, every sound, every color counts—he gets exactly what he wants." Also, the *AKASA* project has a special intimacy. "He's writing for people he knows well. Our trio, of course—plus Wu Man, who plays pipa, and his wife, Susan, who will be our violist."

The third of Santa Fe's NEA-connected composers, Steven Stucky, has been a major, multi-talented player on America's contemporary music stage for years. He holds a record tenure, 1988-2009, as composer-in-residence with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; he made his mark with the New

York Philharmonic's *Hear & Now* series; his book on Lutoslawski is definitive; and he's an acclaimed teacher at Cornell, numbering Roberto Sierra among his students. As Neikrug points out, "Steven has long been an integral part of our musical world."

Stucky's Piano Quintet, premiering at Santa Fe August 11, evolved after conversations among the composer, Neikrug, and Chamber Music Northwest's David Shifrin, a co-commissioner of the piece. Asked about the process, Stucky jokes, "Well, it was a bit like writing my String Quartet, *Nell'ombra, nella luce*. Only 20 percent more. I've always had a close connection with chamber music, starting as a kid playing the viola in Kansas and Texas. I was enthusiastic, but not very good. The Brahms quintet just blew me away, still does, so now's my chance, I guess. It feels a bit like hopping on the last car while the train's pulling away."

The Stucky work is a single movement, played without pause. "I think it's a friendly piece. There's nothing theoretical or abstract about it. I've even marked one section of the score 'Rollicking.' The piece plays with the contrast between primary emotions—drawn-out introspection vs. boisterous hyperactivity."

Any allusions? "Oh, no. At least not intentional. But if someone heard Shostakovich in the slower, intimate sections or Bartók in the fast passages, it wouldn't bother me."

Do you compose "American" music? "Well, I never really thought so. But at a rehearsal of one of my pieces for the LA Philharmonic, a colleague turned to me and asked, 'Are you from the Midwest?'"

John Stege has degrees from Harvard and the University of New Mexico. He is emeritus professor of English Literature at Mercer University and the author of Therapy and Resolution in Shakespearean Comedy. He has written on opera and chamber music for The Santa Fe Reporter since 1986.

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Performances in Late June, July & August

JUNE 25 Cleveland Heights, OH

PRESENTER: **Apollo's Fire** PROGRAM: *Come to the River: An Early American Gathering* ARTISTS: Apollo's Fire Countryside Players (Sandra Simon and Abigail Lennox, soprano vocals; Scott Mello, tenor vocals; Paul Shipper, bass vocals & guitar; Tina Bergmann, hammered dulcimer; Rachel Jones, early fiddle; Kathie Stewart, flutes & penny whistle; TBA, guitar/banjo; René Schiffer, cello; Jeannette Sorrell, harpsichord/direction) www.apollosfire.org

JUNE 29 & AUGUST 3

Highland Park, IL

PRESENTER: **Ravinia Festival Association**

PROGRAM: Davidovsky, Quartet No. 5 (on a program with Schumann and Mendelssohn) ARTISTS: Juilliard String Quartet **8/3** Higdon, *Voices* (on a program with Beethoven and Schumann) ARTISTS: Pacifica Quartet; Orion Weiss, piano www.ravinia.org

JULY 2-16 Burlington, VT

PRESENTER: **Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival**

PROGRAM: **7/2** Barber, *Serenade*, Opus 1; Laura Kaminsky, *Wave Hill*; Evan Chambers, *Fire Hose Reel*; Arthur Foote, Piano Quartet in C, Opus 23 ARTISTS: Barber: Arik Braude, violin; Sophie Arbuckle, violin; Lembi Veskimets, viola; Alexander Ezerman, cello. Kaminsky: Kevin Lawrence, violin; Brian Suits, piano Chambers: Carolyn Stuart, violin; Svetozar Ivanov, piano. Foote: Carolyn Stuart, violin; Lembi Veskimets, viola; Robert Jesselson, cello; Svetozar Ivanov, piano **7/9** Piano Trio, Leonard Bernstein (Felicia Moyer, violin; Robert Jesselson, cello; Dmitri Steinberg, piano) **7/13** *American Song*, with William Bolcom and Joan Morris **7/16** Chamber works of William Bolcom, including Violin Sonata no. 4 (Kevin Lawrence, violin, and Dmitri Steinberg, piano), Piano Quintet (Kathryn Lucktenberg, violin; Stephanie Ezerman, violin; Wing Ho, viola; Steven Pologe, cello; Brian Suits, piano); *A Bouquet of Traditional Flower Rags* for piano trio, *Introduzione e Rondo: Haydn Go Seek* (Arik Braude, violin; Robert Jesselson, cello; Paul Orgel, piano), Octet (Kyung Sun Lee, violin; Chin Kim, violin; Elizabeth Chang, violin; Carolyn Stuart, violin; Karen Ritscher, viola; Sophie Arbuckle, viola; Alexander Ezerman, cello; Brooks Whitehouse, cello) www.uvm.org/gmcmf

JULY 14-31 North Adams, MA

PRESENTER: **Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art Bang on a Can Festival of Contemporary American Music** PROGRAM & ARTISTS: **7/14** Evan Ziporyn **7/16** Todd Reynolds **7/16** Piano (Chinary Ung "Seven Mirrors";

Vicki Ray, "Jugg[ular]ing"; Rand Steiger, "awhirl"; David Rosenboom, "Twilight Language" (Vicky Ray, piano) **7/17** *Cello & Piano Works* (Ashley Bathgate, cello; Vicky Chow, piano; also piano, guitar, violin, cello, percussion, electronics **7/19** *Cello, Piano, & Violin*: works by George Crumb, Shaun Naidoo, Salvatore Sciarrino, & Mischa Zupko (Nick Photinos, cello; Vicky Ray, piano; Todd Reynolds, violin) **7/20** *The String Quartet* **7/21** *Martin Bresnick* **7/22** *Gregg August* (Gregg August, bass, et al.) **7/23** *LaMonte Young and Others* (Christine Southworth, robots & electronics; Evan Ziporyn, clarinets) **7/24** George Crumb (*Black Angels*, *Lux Aeterna*, *Vox Balanae*, *Madrigals I, II*) **7/26** *World Premieres* Sophie Cash-Goldwasser, Jeremy Howard Beck, Amanda Feery, Maria Vladimirovna Grigoryeva, Ravi Kittappa, Adam Haws, Robert Honstein, Svetlana Maras **7/27** *Chamber Music or Not Chamber Music?* **7/28** *Can Gamelan Be Modern?* **7/29-7/30** *tba* **7/31** *BoAC Marathon* Michael Gordon, *Yo Shakespeare*; David Lang, *Forced March*; Arvo Pärt, *Fratres I*; Conlon Nancarrow, *Piano Studies* (arr. Ziporyn); Steve Reich, *Double Sextet*; Christine Southworth, *Zap*; Julia Wolfe, *Fuel*; Evan Ziporyn, *Typical Music*; Music from Uzbekistan; et al. www.bangonacan.org/summer_festival

JULY 15 Rohnert Park, CA

PRESENTER: **California Summer Music** PROGRAM: Judith Shatin, *Doxa*, for viola and piano; *Run*, for piano quartet; *View from Mt Nebo*, for piano trio; David Tcimpidis, violin sonata, with piano ARTISTS: students and faculty of Sonoma State University www.csmusic.org/index.php

JULY 17-AUGUST 29 Woodstock, NY

PRESENTER: **Maverick Concerts** PROGRAM: *Barber at 100* **7/17** *Young People's Concert* Barber's *Summer Music*; music of Valerie Coleman, Jeff Scott and others ARTISTS: Imani Winds **7/18** Barber, *Summer Music*; John Harbison, Wind Quintet; Irving Fine: Partita for Wind Quintet; Valerie Coleman, new work ARTISTS: Imani Winds **7/14** *Gay Life: Barber, Schumann and the New York Art-Song Tradition* Barber, *Nocturne* (Homage to John Field) and Songs, Opus 10 & 13; Songs of Copland, Griffes, Rorem, Virgil Thomson, and Russell Platt ARTISTS: Maria Jette, soprano; Alan Murchie, piano **8/15** Barber, String Quartet in B Minor, Op. 11 and "Dover Beach" ARTISTS: Amernet String Quartet; Michael Chioli, baritone **8/29** *Adagio* for Strings; James Matheson: Piano Quintet; Gunther Schuller: *Adagio* for Strings ARTISTS: Borromeo String Quartet & Judith Gordon, piano www.maverickconcerts.org

JULY 21-AUGUST 7

Steamboat Springs, CO

PRESENTER: **Strings Music Festival** PROGRAM & ARTISTS: **7/21** William Kroll, *Banjo and Fiddle* (Monique Mead, violin; Wendy Chen, piano); John Williams, Theme from *Schindler's List* (Andrés Cárdenes, violin; Wendy Chen, piano); Gershwin, *Lullaby* (the Meridian Quartet: Anastasia Storer, Claude Halter, Emiko Karen Matsumaru, Anne Lee) **7/24** Copland, Sonata for Violin and Piano (Andrés Cárdenes, violin; Wendy Chen, piano); David

Stock, *Sueños de Sefarad* for String Quartet (Meridian Quartet: Anastasia Storer, Claude Halter, Emiko Karen Matsumaru, Anne Lee) **8/1** Gershwin, Selections from *Porgy and Bess* (Arturo Delmoni, violin; Wendy Chen, piano); Artie Shaw Concerto for Clarinet (Mark Nuccio, clarinet; Mike Garson, piano; Erik Privert, bass; Dave Brophy, drums); Mike Garson *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* (Andrés Cárdenes, violin; Mike Garson, piano); Mike Garson, *The Immigrant* (Andrés Cárdenes, violin; Monique Mead, violin; Arturo Delmoni, viola; Catherine Lehr, cello; Mike Garson, piano) **8/4** Leonard Bernstein, Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (Mark Nuccio, clarinet; David Deveau, piano) **8/7** Lukas Foss, *Three American Pieces* (Mark Nuccio, clarinet; David Deveau, piano) www.stringsmusicfestival.com

JULY 31, AUGUST 7 & 14

Monadnock region, NH

PRESENTER: **Monadnock Music** PROGRAM: *American Spiritual* **7/31** PROGRAM: Stephen Foster, Songs ARTISTS: Janna Baty, mezzo soprano, Mihae Lee, piano; Andrew Norman; Sabina, ARTISTS: Jonathan Bagg, viola; Mark Kuss, Medley of American Spirituals ARTISTS: Janna Baty, mezzo-soprano, Adela Pena and Gabriela Diaz, violin; Stephanie Fong, viola; Jing Li, cello; New renditions of traditional songs ARTISTS: Rani Arbo & Indra. **8/7** *Sound of Wild Imagining: No Strings Attached* PROGRAM: Edgard Varèse, *Octandre* ARTISTS: Jessi Rosinski, flute; oboe tba; Steven Jackson, clarinet; Ron Hartounian, bassoon; horn tba; Richard Watson, trumpet; Rob Couture, trombone; Robert Black, bass; Frank Zappa, *The Black Page*, for trap set solo, and instruments ARTISTS: John Ferrari, Jessi Rosinski; John Supko, *Without Stopping*, for 3 Discmans on shuffle function (on a program with Debussy and Messiaen) ARTISTS: Robert Black, bass; Jessi Rosinski, flute; John Supko, electronics; discmans **8/14** *Sound of Wild Imagining: Moonstruck: Myth, Poetry, and Percussion* PROGRAM: Arnold Schoenberg, *Pierrot Lunaire* ARTISTS: Tony Arnold, soprano; Steven Jackson, clarinet; Laura Gilbert, flute; Curtis Macomber, violin; Elizabeth Anderson, cello; Donald Berman, piano; Milton Babbitt, Philmel ARTISTS: Tony Arnold, soprano, tape; Luciano Berio, *Circles* ARTISTS: Tony Arnold, soprano; Douglas Perkins, Todd Meehan, percussion; Barbara Allen, harp www.monadnockmusic.org

AUGUST 5-12 Santa Fe, NM

PRESENTER: **Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival** PROGRAM: **8/5 & 8/6** Cynthia Wong, Piano Quartet (on a program with Mendelssohn and Mozart) ARTISTS: William Barnewitz, Felix Fan, Jennifer Gilbert, Nancy Goeres, Hsin-Yun Huang, Robert Ingliss, Julie Landsman, Todd Levy, Marc Neikrug, Michael Rusinek, Andrew Russo, Milan Turkovic, Liang Wang **8/8** Chinary Ung, *Akasa: Formless Spiral* (on a program with Smetana and Mozart) ARTISTS: William Barnewitz, Nancy Goeres, Robert Ingliss, Julie Landsman, Todd Levy, Orion String Quartet, Real Quiet, Michael Rusinek, Milan Turkovic, Susan Ung, Liang Wang, Wu Man **8/12** Steven Stucky, Piano Quintet (on a program with Mozart and Schubert) ARTISTS: Ani Kavafian, Anne-Marie McDermott, Opus One, Orion String Quartet, David Shifrin www.sfcmf.org