Caroline Shaw

guest composer

Thursday, November 4, 2021 | 7:30 p.m.
Morse Recital Hall in Sprague Memorial Hall
Program

Matīss Čudars  
b. 1991

Still (2021)
Herdis Guðmundsdóttir, violin

Udi Perlman  
b. 1990

As of Me and Mine (2021)
I.
II.
III.
IV.
Jared Swope, baritone
Lloyd Van’t Hoff, bass clarinet
Shania Cordoba, trumpet
Addison Maye-Saxon, trombone

Aaron Israel Levin  
b. 1995

Snow Fragments (2021)
Aaron Israel Levin, conductor
Cameron Cullen, flute
Alex Dergal, bass clarinet
Youngji Kim, violin
Stephen Perkyns, cello
Yunling Zhang, piano

Lila Meretzky  
b. 1998

Four Songs at Night (2021)
I. We went through the days
II. This is the night
III. Night came into my house
IV. “The Golden Peacock”
Maura Tuffy, conductor
Christina “C” Han, soprano
Molly McGuire, mezzo-soprano
Danielle Maeng, flute
Marty Tung, bassoon
Kyle Thompson, horn
Gregory Lewis, violin
Ilana Zaks, violin
Emily Rekrut-Pressey, viola
Sandra Lied Haga, cello
Nicholas Hernandez, double bass
Yukiko Nakamura, percussion
Seho Young, piano

PAUSE
Samantha Wolf
b. 1990

snow // ash (2021)
Lloyd Van’t Hoff, clarinet
Allen Liang, cello
Alexa Stier, piano

Caroline Shaw
b. 1982

Schisma (2019)
Emily Shehi, violin
Charissa Leung, violin
Florrie Marshall, viola
Jakob Taylor, cello

Shaw

Narrow Sea (2017)
Part 1
Part 2
Part 3
Part 4
Part 5

Yale Percussion Group
  Russell Fisher, percussion
  Jacob Gutierrez, percussion
  Sijia Huang, percussion
  Makana Medeiros, percussion
  Yukiko Nakamura, percussion
  Michael Yeung, percussion
  Jonathan Mak, piano
  Caroline Shaw, soprano

As a courtesy to others, please silence all devices. Photography and recording of any kind is strictly prohibited. Please do not leave the hall during musical selections. Thank you.
Guest Profile

Caroline Shaw, guest composer

Caroline Shaw is a New York-based vocalist, violinist, composer, and producer who performs in solo and collaborative projects. She was the youngest recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2013 for Partita for 8 Voices, written for the Grammy-winning Roomful of Teeth, of which she is a member. Recent commissions include new works for Renée Fleming with Inon Barnatan, Dawn Upshaw with Sō Percussion and Gil Kalish, Seattle Symphony, Anne Sofie von Otter with Philharmonia Baroque, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Juilliard 415, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s with John Lithgow, the Dover Quartet, TENET, The Crossing, the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, the Calidore Quartet, Brooklyn Rider, the Baltimore Symphony, and Roomful of Teeth with A Far Cry. Caroline’s film scores include Erica Fae’s To Keep the Light and Josephine Decker’s Madeline’s Madeline, as well as the upcoming short 8th Year of the Emergency by Maureen Towey. She has produced for Kanye West (The Life of Pablo; Ye) and Nas (NASIR), and has contributed to records by The National and Arcade Fire’s Richard Reed Parry. Once she got to sing in three-part harmony with Sara Bareilles and Ben Folds at the Kennedy Center, and that was pretty much the bee’s knees and elbows. Caroline has studied at Rice, Yale, and Princeton, currently teaches at NYU, and is a Creative Associate at the Juilliard School. She has held residencies at Dumbarton Oaks, the Banff Centre, Music on Main, and the Vail Dance Festival. Caroline loves the color yellow, otters, Beethoven’s Opus 74, Mozart opera, Kinhaven, the smell of rosemary, and the sound of a janky mandolin.

» carolineshaw.com

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Student Profiles

Matīss Čudars ’23MM
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» soundcloud.com/matisscudars

Udi Perlman ’26DMA
Student of Aaron Jay Kernis
» udiperlman.com

Aaron Israel Levin ’27DMA
Student of Aaron Jay Kernis
» aaronisraellevin.com

Lila Meretzky ’22MM
Student of David Lang
» soundcloud.com/lila-meretzky

Samantha Wolf ’22MMA
Student of Christopher Theofanidis
» samanthawolfmusic.com

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Program Notes

BY MATĪSS ĶUDARS

Still was composed during the spring of 2021 when many of us were still forced by the public health conditions and law to stay socially still. This piece is a sonic still of someone attempting to still one’s own mind and desires during a time of uncertainty and inner longing.

BY UDI PERLMAN

As of Me and of Mine began in a second-hand book sale in Tel Aviv, where, browsing through dusty boxes, I found a book of “120 Chassidic Melodies”. This slim collection, published presumably in 1947, was assembled by Joachim Stutchewsky (1891–1982), a Ukraine-born Israeli cellist, composer, and musicologist, and includes his transcriptions of the Nigunim (melodies) of eastern European Jewish communities. Later at home, leafing through the book, I realized to my surprise that I did not know any of the melodies in the book. And yet, the loose, recitative-like improvisatory melodic contours and dancing rhythms seemed uncannily familiar to me and reminded me of much of the Jewish and Israeli music I know and love. May I claim these unknown-yet-familiar melodies as my own, I wondered? As of Me and of Mine is my response to this question.

BY LILA MERETZKY

Four Songs at Night features poetry by Anna Margoli, which is sung in the original Yiddish. These four poems were originally published independently from one another. As I explored Margolin’s work, I selected them to form a loose narrative. The world of these poems awakens when the sun goes down. In the darkness, the speaker meditates on the fragility of a relationship with a loved one, and the twin burdens of mortality and aliveness. Projected behind the musicians are paper collages I made in reaction to the poetry, with projection design by Camilla Tassi.

Poetry by Anna Margolin (1887–1952) Translated from the Yiddish by, and printed with the permission of, Shirley Kumove

I. We went through the days

We went through the days as through storm-tossed gardens.

Blossoming, maturing; mastering the game of life and death.

Clouds, vastness and dreams were in our words.
Among stubborn trees in a rustling summer garden we fused into a single tree.

Evenings spread their deeply darkened blue, With the aching desire of winds and falling stars, With shifting, caressing glow of fluttering leaves and grasses, We wove ourselves into the wind, merged with the blueness Like happy creatures and clever, playful gods.

II. This is the night

This is the night, the sadness, the non-existence, The treacherous glow of dreams. Unhappy one, what will be? Be cold, be clever, turn away from the stars, From child’s play with shadows, dew and fragrance, Be still, be still, And with all your congealing blood you will hear, How the earth opens And the worm beckons.

III. Night came into my house

Night came into my house With the roar of stars, flood, wings, With the glow of swamps, dirt roads, and mists. I lay tense and miserable. Trees came into my house, Looming gigantic with roots and trunks And ancient deep glances from the leaves. And huge bizarre clouds Came with thunder and laughter, Like the dark heads of pagan gods. And all of them swirled, hard and wild and bleak, Clamoring: “you are, you are, you are”.

I lay tense and miserable.

IV. “The Golden Peacock”

The golden peacock flew off and away, And night opened its golden eye. My radiant one, sleep on.

Night opened its golden eye, I became the fiddle and you the bow. My restless one, sleep on.

I became the fiddle and you the bow, Happiness arced fondly above us. My gentle one, sleep on.

Happiness arced fondly above us, Left us alone, flew off and away. My mournful one, sleep on.

BY SAMANTHA WOLF

In late 2019, snow began falling in New Haven on the same day that ash began falling from the sky across Australia. *snow // ash* is a meditation on distance, dislocation, and decay.

BY CAROLINE SHAW

Schisma is a reference to the phrase “in the cleft of the rock,” which appears in many scriptures, including the Song of Solomon and Isaiah. In the Book of Exodus (33:22), there is a beautiful line which reads: “I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.” It is essentially a promise of safety, of a makeshift refuge within a crack in something as hard and unforgiving as mountain rock, until the danger has passed. It is a kind of nest, a home. I have always felt that Beethoven’s “Heiliger Dankgesang” (third
movement of Opus 132) uses a nest-like architecture in a unique and profound way. The return of the dance-like Neue Kraft fühlend section always feels like a warm homecoming, a place of hope and shelter and deep comfort. The choice to title this piece with the modern Greek word “schisma” (a translation of the Hebrew נִקְרַת, or “cleft”) is a reference to the islands in today’s Greece which have become harsh refugee camps for Syrians seeking asylum from the war. It also points to the nature of war, of the break between peoples, and of the search for hope and new growth within the breaks and crevices.

*Narrow Sea* was written for Sō Percussion, Dawn Upshaw, and Gil Kalish in 2017. The piece combines my previous explorations of folk song and hymnody with a sonic universe that includes ceramic bowls, humming, a piano played like a dulcimer by five people at once, and flower pots (which are the central focus of *Taxidermy*, my first piece for Sō Percussion, written in 2012). Gil Kalish’s piano serves as a grounding force, or a familiar memory, that keeps reappearing amid the different textures introduced by Sō Percussion. And Dawn Upshaw’s voice is a brilliant instrument that brings the words to life with warmth and directness. Each movement of *Narrow Sea* is a new melodic setting of a text from *The Sacred Harp*, a collection of shape-note hymns first published in the 19th century. All of the texts used in the piece share two features: each refers to water in some way (the river Jordan, swelling flood, narrow sea—images of what lies between this world and the next), and each has a sense of joy in looking to heaven (crossing over, going home). These words may be hundreds of years old, but the essential yearning for a home, a safe resting place, has a renewed relevance today, throughout the world. The work is dedicated to all humans seeking safe refuge.

**PART 1**

lyrics from #457 of *The Sacred Harp*  
(source: Joseph Bever’s Christian Songster, 1858)

*I am a poor wayfaring stranger*  
While journeying through this world of woe  
Yet there’s no sickness, toil or danger  
In that bright world to which I go  
I’m going there to see my Father  
I’m going there no more to roam  
I’m only going over Jordan  
I’m only going over home  
I know dark clouds will gather over me  
I know my way is rough and steep  
Yet beauteous fields lie just before me  
I’m going there to see my Mother  
She said she’d meet me when I come  
I’m only going over Jordan  
I’m only going over home

**PART 2**

lyrics from #66 of *The Sacred Harp*  
(source: Isaac Watts, 1707)

*Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood*  
Stand dressed in living green  
While Jordan rolled between  
While Jordan rolled between  
There everlasting spring abides  
And never withering flowers  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heavenly land from ours
PART 3
lyrics from #61 of The Sacred Harp
(source: John Adam Granade, 1804)

Sweet rivers
Lie just before
Had I
The pinions of a dove
I’d to those rivers fly
I’d rise above above above above my pain
With joy outstrip the wind
I’d cross over over over over over over Jordan’s waves
And leave the world behind

PART 4
lyrics from #51 & #65 of The Sacred Harp
(source: Samuel Stennett, 1787)

On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan’s fair and happy land
Where my possessions lie
Don’t you feel like going home
Don’t you feel like going home
My home is in the promised land
And I feel like going home

PART 5
lyrics from #457 of The Sacred Harp
(source: Bever, 1858)

I am a poor wayfaring stranger
While journeying through this world of woe
Yet there’s no sickness, toil or danger
In that bright world to which I go
I’m going there to see my Father
I’m going there no more to roam
I’m only going over Jordan
I’m only going over home
I’m going there to see my Mother
She said she’d meet me when I come
I’m only going over Jordan
I’m only going over home