

2-22-2006

## "Coming Together"

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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Wednesday, February 22, 2006 • 7:30 pm

Camp Concert Hall  
Booker Hall of Music

Modlin Center for the Arts presents

## **eighth blackbird**

*Department of Music Ensemble-in-Residence*

Molly Alicia Barth, *flutes*  
Michael J. Maccaferri, *clarinets*  
Matt Albert, *violin*  
Nicholas Photinos, *cello*  
Matthew Duvall, *percussion*  
Lisa Kaplan, *piano*

### **“Coming Together”**

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David V. Foster, President

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for media sponsorship of the 2005-2006 season.*

# Tonight's Program

## "Coming Together"

*Zango Bandango* (2003)

Jennifer Higdon  
(b. 1962)

*Coming Together* (1999)

Derek Bermel  
(b. 1967)

*Le Quattro Stagioni Dalla Cucina Futurismo*  
(*The Four Seasons of Futurist Cuisine*) (1991)

Aaron Jay Kernis  
(b. 1960)

1. Manifesto
2. Heroic Winter Dinner
3. Springtime Meal of the Word in Liberty
4. Nocturnal Love Feast
5. Autumn Musical Dinner

—Intermission—

*Learning to See*

Barbara White

1. from the Meta-Matic Junk Heap
2. Bird
3. Irregular Metronomy
4. Bird
5. "...things the mind already knows"
6. Bird

*Coming Together*

Frederic Rzewski  
(b. 1938)

Molly Alicia Barth performs on a Lillian Burkart flute and piccolo.  
Matthew Duvall endorses Pearl Drums and Adams Music Instruments.



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## About the Artists



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### **eighth blackbird**

**Molly Alicia Barth, flutes**

**Matt Albert, violin & viola**

**Matthew Duvall, percussion**

**Michael J. Maccaferri, clarinets**

**Nicholas Photinos, cello**

**Lisa Kaplan, piano**

Described by *The New Yorker* as “friendly, unpretentious, idealistic and highly skilled,” eighth blackbird promises its ever-increasing audiences provocative and engaging performances. It is widely lauded for its performing style—often playing from memory with virtuosic and theatrical flair—and its efforts to make new music accessible to wide audiences. A *New York Times* reviewer raved, “eighth blackbird’s performances are the picture of polish and precision, and they seem to be thoroughly engaged...by music in a broad range of contemporary styles.” The sextet has been the subject of profiles in the *New York Times* and on NPR’s *All Things Considered*; it has also been featured on CBS’s *Sunday Morning*, *St. Paul Sunday*, *Weekend America* and *The Next Big Thing*, among others. The ensemble is in residence at the University of Richmond and at the University of Chicago.

Highlights of eighth blackbird’s 2005-06 tenth anniversary season include a California tour, with stops in Los Angeles, La Jolla, Stanford and Davis; a performance at New York’s 92nd Street Y; and the group’s debut concert at Boston’s Celebrity Series. eighth blackbird will showcase its virtuosity in three innovative programs during the season. A tenth-anniversary program, “lucid, inescapable rhythms,” features significant works honoring the ensemble’s mentors and collaborators. A tour of Osvaldo Golijov’s song-cycle *Ayre* with soprano Dawn Upshaw, and a special collaboration with the Blair Thomas & Co. puppet

theater and soprano Lucy Shelton, performing a fully memorized and staged cabaret-opera version of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, round out the trio of presentations.

Last season eighth blackbird made its western European debut in Amsterdam, as well as its Toronto debut. In previous seasons the sextet has appeared in South Korea, Mexico and throughout North America, including performances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, the Metropolitan Museum, the Kennedy Center, the Library of Congress, the Cleveland Museum of Art and the La Jolla Chamber Music Society, and it has performed as soloist with the Utah Symphony and the American Composers Orchestra. During the summers the group has appeared several times at the Great Lakes Music Festival, Caramoor International Music Festival, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival and Cincinnati's Music X, and has also appeared at the Tanglewood Music Center and the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival.

Since its founding in 1996, eighth blackbird has been active in commissioning new works from eminent composers such as George Perle, Frederic Rzewski and Joseph Schwantner, as well as groundbreaking works from Jennifer Higdon, Derek Bermel, David Schober, Daniel Kellogg, Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez, Jefferson Friedman and the Minimum Security Composers Collective. The group received the first BMI/Boudleaux-Bryant Fund Commission and the 2004 NEA/CMA Special Commissioning Award, and has received grants from BMI, Meet the Composer, the Greenwall Foundation and Chamber Music America, among others.

The ensemble is enjoying acclaim for its three CDs released to date on Cedille Records. The first, *thirteen ways*, featuring works by Perle, Schober, Joan Tower and Thomas Albert, was selected as a Top 10 CD of 2003 by *Billboard* magazine. *beginnings*, featuring Kellogg's *Divinum Mysterium* and George Crumb's *Vox Balaenae*, was praised by the *New York Times*: "The performances have all the sparkle, energy and precision of the earlier outings...It is their superb musicality and interpretive vigor that bring these pieces to life." eighth blackbird's third disc for Cedille, *fred*, with three works of Rzewski, was released

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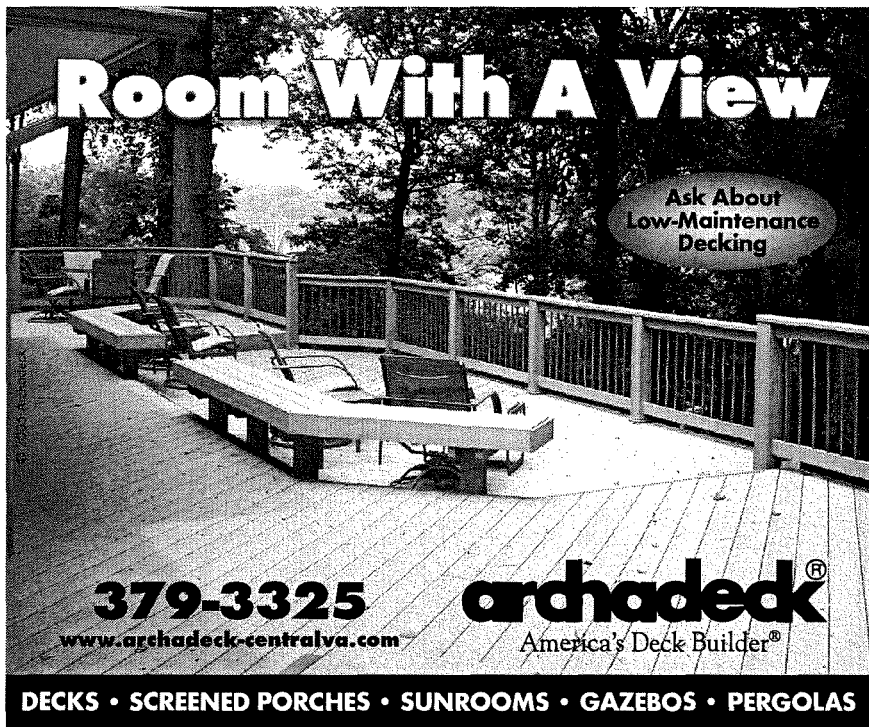
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in June 2005. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported: "The music covers all kinds of moods and approaches, from dreamy surrealism to caffeinated unison melodies, and the members of eighth blackbird deliver it all with their trademark panache." A fourth CD, titled *strange, imaginary animals*, is scheduled for release on Cedille Records in fall 2006.

eighth blackbird is active in teaching young artists about contemporary music and its members, in addition to their residencies, have taught master classes and conducted outreach activities throughout the country, including the Aspen Music School System (grades K-12), the La Jolla Chamber Music Series, the Candlelight Concert Series and Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa. The members of eighth blackbird hold degrees in music performance from Oberlin Conservatory, the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory and Northwestern University. The group derives its name from the Wallace Stevens poem "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." The eighth stanza reads:

*I know noble accents  
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;  
But I know, too,  
That the blackbird is involved  
In what I know*

Visit the ensemble's Web site at [www.eighthblackbird.com](http://www.eighthblackbird.com) for more information.



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## Notes on the Program

### **Jennifer Higdon: *Zango Bandango* (2003)**

Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962) is an active freelance composer. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including a Pew Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship and two awards from the American Academy of Arts & Letters. Higdon enjoys more than 100 performances each year of her works. Her recordings by the Atlanta Symphony on the Telarc label have made the Classical Billboard charts, and the 2004 release of *Concerto for Orchestra/City Scape* was nominated for four Grammy Awards. Some of her recent commissions include works for the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, National Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Cypress String Quartet, the Verdehr Trio and the Ying Quartet. She is on the composition faculty at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Regarding *Zango Bandango*, the partner-piece to *Zaka* that was commissioned by eighth blackbird in 2003, the composer offers these lines:

a racing dance  
a romping angle  
a final stance  
a new-style jangle  
for the audience  
we Zango, we Bandango!

—Nicholas Photinos

### **Derek Bermel: *Coming Together* (1999)**

Derek Bermel (b. 1967) has been widely hailed as clarinetist, composer and jazz and rock musician. He has been featured at numerous international music festivals, and his commissions have included those from the National, Saint Louis, Albany and New Jersey Symphonies, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, American Composers Orchestra, De Ereprijs (Netherlands), Birmingham Royal Ballet, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, New York International Fringe Festival and cellist Fred Sherry. He has also received many of today's top awards, including the Rome Prize, Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellowships, and residencies at the Lincoln Center Directors Lab, Tanglewood, Banff and Yaddo. Derek Bermel is the founding clarinetist of Music from Copland House and co-founder, music director and co-artistic director of the Dutch-American interdisciplinary ensemble TONK. About *Coming Together*, Mic Holwin writes:

*Coming Together* is a quintessential Bermel work: humorous, gesture-based and demonstrating a keen ear for invoking the human voice. This short duo consists entirely of *glissandi*. Says Bermel, "I wanted to write a piece without any 'straight' pitches, one that relied solely on gestural development, yet would still be convincing and emotional." Bermel achieves this by specifying exactly where each pitch starts and ends and

where each glissando occurs in time—this careful placement of tonal areas defines the structure and carries the piece forward.

The playing field is defined in the first gesture of *Coming Together*: a low cello *moan*—*uhhhh*. The cello catches the clarinet's attention with bold pizzicati, the clarinet squawks in protest, and the cellist petulantly drops his bow and lets it bounce on the strings (*col legno battuto*). At first distant in pitch and gesture, the two partners slowly converge, moving closer in range and rhythmic intensity. They seem to unconsciously mimic each other. Intense stroking by the cello incites the clarinet to high shrieks. The intimacy becomes disarming, like enduring the sound of cats in heat in the yard next door or overhearing a frisky couple in an adjoining hotel room. By the end, the instruments have indeed come together—disparate lines have converged to a single point, and they groan in rhythmic unison. A husky-voiced clarinet produces a ripping multiphonic; difference tones emerge from the combined growl of the two instruments. The trust ends with another *col legno battuto*.

—Nicholas Photinos

**Aaron Jay Kernis: *Le Quattro Stagioni Dalla Cucina Futurismo (The Four Seasons of Futurist Cuisine)* (1991)**

Aaron Jay Kernis (b. 1960), winner of the 1998 Pulitzer Prize, taught himself both piano and composition, later studying with composers John Adams, Charles Wuorinen, Jacob Druckman and Harrison Birtwistle. Kernis received national acclaim in 1983 for his first orchestral work, *Dream of the Morning Sky*, premiered by the New York Philharmonic. Since that time, he has worked with and written for many of the nation's leading orchestras, including the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony and the San Francisco Symphony, as well as for soloists including Joshua Bell, Truls Mork, Pamela Frank, Sharon Isbin, Renee Fleming and Nadja-Solerno Sonnenberg. About *The Four Seasons of Futurist Cuisine*, based on excerpts from Filippo Marinetti's *The Futurist Cookbook* (1932), the composer writes:

I intended this piece to be a sort of "historical recreation" of what I imagined music written to accompany these early modernist texts might have sounded like. References to bitonality and early twentieth-century chromaticism, along with parodies of Wagner and Bruckner and sappy romantic popular song, alternately mirror and foil the text in an appropriate spirit. At the time I composed the work, I was also aware of certain other parallels that made the Marinetti texts both compelling and topical for me. A fascination with new technologies within an atmosphere of political decay and intolerance reflects our own time, and the rise of Fascism in Italy when these texts were published mirrors certain political trends on the current national and international scene. The first movement text, Manifesto, contains an excerpt from Marinetti's pathbreaking Futurist Manifesto of 1909; the remaining texts come from the Futurist Cookbook, written in the second wave of Futurism in the 1930's.

—Nicholas Photinos



### **Barbara White: *Learning to See* (2000)**

Barbara White is an associate professor in the Music Department at Princeton University, which recently awarded her a Harold Willis Dodds University Preceptorship. She studied at Harvard and Radcliffe Colleges and the University of Pittsburgh. White has been commissioned by Chamber Music America Rural Residencies, the American Composers Forum and National Endowment for the Arts's Continental Harmony Initiative, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the New York New Music Ensemble, the Fromm Foundation and the Koussevitzky Foundation. Recent honors and awards include those from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. About her work, the composer writes:

*Learning to See* translates my experiences of visual art into the sonic realm. As I composed the piece, I focused on the journeys of four twentieth-century artists, paying particular attention to their formal preoccupations as well as to the evolution and unfolding of their aesthetic attitudes. The six movements share a predilection for simplicity, economy and brevity, but like the paintings and sculptures they emulate, they are quite diverse. There is a musical machine featuring "junk percussion," a formalist fabrication of tangled lines and sharp points, and a set of progressively leaner variations. One movement is built almost entirely out of brief references to other music.

—Barbara White

### **Frederic Rzewski: *Coming Together* (1972), arranged by Matt Albert (2000)**

Born in Westfield, Mass., in 1938, Frederic Rzewski studied with Charles Mackey, Walter Piston, Roger Sessions, Milton Babbitt and Luigi Dallapiccola. His compositional career has had many phases; his music from the late sixties and early seventies (*Les Moutons de Panurge*, *Coming Together*) combine elements of written and improvised music, which in the '70s led to a greater experimentation with forms in which style and language are treated as structural elements (*The People United Will Never Be Defeated*). He briefly returned to experimental and graphic notation (*Le Silence des Espaces Infinis*, *The Price of Oil*), before exploring new uses of the twelve-tone technique in the '80s (*Antigone-Legend*, *The Persians*). His more recent work (*Whangdoodles*, *Sonata*) adopts a more free and spontaneous approach. eighth blackbird commissioned Frederic Rzewski to write *Pocket Symphony*, which was premiered in 2001. About *Coming Together*, Rzewski writes:

*Coming Together* was written in November and December of 1971 in response to an historical event. In September of that year, inmates at the state prison of Attica, N.Y., revolted and succeeded in taking possession of a part of the institution. Foremost among their demands was the recognition of their "right to be treated as human beings." After several days of fruitless negotiations, Governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered state police in to retake the prison by force, justifying his action on the grounds that the lives of the guards whom prisoners had taken as hostages were in danger. In the ensuing violence forty-three persons, including several of

the hostages, were killed and many more wounded. One of the dead was Sam Melville, a prisoner who had played a significant role in organizing the rebellion. In the spring of 1971, Melville had written a letter to a friend describing his experience of the passage of time in prison. After his death the letter was published in the magazine *Ramparts*. As I read it I was impressed both by the poetic quality of the text and by its cryptic irony. I read it over and over again. It seemed that I was trying both to capture a sense of the physical presence of the writer, and at the same time to unlock a hidden meaning from the simple but ambiguous language. The act of reading and rereading finally led me to the idea of a musical treatment. The text is as follows: "I think the combination of age and a greater coming together is responsible for the speed of the passing time. It's six months now, and I can tell you truthfully few periods in my life have passed so quickly. I am in excellent physical and emotional health. There are doubtless subtle surprises ahead, but I feel secure and ready. As lovers will contrast their emotions in times of crisis, so am I dealing with my environment? In the indifferent brutality, the incessant noise, the experimental chemistry of food, the ravings of lost hysterical men, I can act with clarity and meaning. I am deliberate, sometimes even calculating, seldom employing histrionics, except as a test of the reactions of others. I read much, exercise, talk to guards and inmates, feeling for the inevitable direction of my life."



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