2-21-2007

Eighth Blackbird: "strange imaginary animals - part II"

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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The Modlin Center for the Arts presents
eighth blackbird
University of Richmond Ensemble-in-Residence

Tim Munro, flutes
Michael J. Maccaferri, clarinets
Matt Albert, violin
Nicholas Photinos, cello
Matthew Duvall, percussion
Lisa Kaplan, piano

with Lucy Shelton, soprano

“strange imaginary animals–part II”

Sponsored in part by the Department of Music

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40 West 57th Street
New York, N.Y. 10019
David V. Foster, President

The Modlin Center thanks Style Weekly and Richmond.com
for media sponsorship of the 2006-2007 season.
Tonight's Program

“strange imaginary animals–part II”

Arpège ................................................................. Franco Donatoni
(1927-2000)

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird ............................................. Lukas Foss
(b. 1922)

Luciérnagas ........................................................... Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez
(b. 1964)

—Intermission—

Cancionero Separdi ............................................................. Roberto Sierra
Pregoneros van y vienen (Town criers come and go)
Avridme galanica (Open up for me, beautiful girl)
Dolores tiene la reina (The queen has pains)
A la luna naci yo (At one I was born)
Una matica de ruda (A little plant of rue)
Al kenar de la nixava (Around the corner)
El me querido bevio vino (My lover drank wine)

Friction Systems ............................................................. David M. Gordon
(b. 1976)

Matthew Duvall endorses Pearl Drums and Adams Music Instruments.

Please silence cell phones, digital watches and paging devices before the performance. The use of any recording device, either audio or video, and the taking of photographs, either with or without flash, are strictly prohibited.
About the Artists

eighth blackbird

Tim Munro, 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 in Virginia and at the University of Chicago.

Highlights of eighth blackbird’s 2006-07 season include a return to the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, two concerts at The Kitchen in New York City, and tours through New York, California, Colorado and Texas. During the ensemble’s tenth anniversary in the 2005-2006 season, the group toured 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.

In previous seasons the sextet has appeared in South Korea, Mexico, Canada,
Amsterdam 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 has performed as soloist with the Utah Symphony and the American Composers Orchestra. During the summer the group has appeared several times at Cincinnati's Music X, the Great Lakes Music Festival, Caramoor International Music Festival and Norfolk Chamber Music Festival. They have also appeared at the Tanglewood Music Center, the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival and, in 2006, made their debut at the Ojai Music Festival, where the group was named music director for the 2009 season.

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 ground-breaking 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. In 2008 eighth blackbird looks forward to premiering works by Steve Reich and Bang on a Can composers Michael Gordon, David Lang and Julia Wolfe.
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 summed up 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 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*, was released on Cedille Records in November 2006. Last year the group debuted on the Naxos label in a performance of *The Time Gallery*, commissioned by *eighth blackbird* from 2004 Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Paul Moravec.

*eighth blackbird* is active in teaching young artists about contemporary music and, in addition to their residencies, has 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, Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa, and throughout the Greater Chicago area.

The members of *eighth blackbird* hold degrees in music performance from Oberlin Conservatory, among other institutions. The group derives its name from the Wallace Stevens poem “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.” The eighth stanza reads:

\[
I \text{ know } \text{noble accents} \\
\text{And lucid, inescapable rhythms;} \\
\text{But I know, too,} \\
\text{That the blackbird is involved} \\
\text{In what I know}
\]

Visit the ensemble’s Web site at www.eighthblackbird.com for more information.

**Lucy Shelton, soprano**

Winner of two Walter W. Naumburg Awards—for chamber music and solo singing—American soprano Lucy Shelton is an internationally recognized exponent of 20th and 21st century repertory. She has performed the world premieres of over 100 works, many of which were composed for her. Notable among these are song cycles by Elliott Carter (*Of Challenge and Of Love*), Oliver Knussen (*Whitman Settings*) and James Yannatos (*Songs of Desolation and Joy*); chamber works by Carter (*Tempo e Tempi*), Joseph Schwantner (*Sparrows*), Mario Davidovsky (*Romanceros*), Alexander Goehr (*Sing, Ariel*), Poul Ruders (*The Bells*), Stephen Albert (*Treestone*) and Charles Wuorinen (*Fenton Songs II*); orchestral works by Albert (*Flower of the Mountain*), Schwantner (*Magabunda*), Knussen (*Whitman Settings*), David Del Tredici (*Quaint Events*), Gerard Grisey
L’Icone paradoxiale), Ezra Laderman (Isaiah Symphony) and Ned Rorem (Schuyller Songs); and Robert Zuidam’s opera (Rage d’Amours).

Ms. Shelton has appeared with leading conductors such as Alsop, Barenboim, Boulez, De Leeuw, Gilbert, Knussen, Nagano, Rattle, Rilling, Rostropovich, Salonen, Slatkin and Spano with major orchestras worldwide including Amsterdam, Boston, Chicago, Cologne, Denver, Edinburgh, Helsinki, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Minnesota, Munich, New York, Paris, St. Louis, Stockholm, Sydney and Tokyo.

With her vast repertoire of vocal chamber music, Ms. Shelton has collaborated with numerous ensembles such as the Emerson, Guarnieri and Mendelssohn string quartets, The 21st Century Consort, Da Capo Chamber Players, Ensemble InterContemporain, Ensemble Moderne, Klangform Wien, Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, Ensemble Sospeso, Nash Ensemble, Network for New Music, Musica Viva, Schoenberg-Asko, Speculum Musicae, Da Camera of Houston and eighth blackbird (the latter two with whom she has performed innovative stagings of Schoenberg’s Pierrot Lunaire). She has been a guest at numerous festivals including the Aldeburgh, Aspen, BBC Proms, Bethlehem Bach, Chamber Music Northwest, Grant Park, Holland, Kuhmo, Lockenhaus, Marlboro, Oregon Bach, Ravinia, Salzburg, Santa Fe and Tanglewood. Her extensive discography is on the Deutsche Grammophon, Koch International, Nonesuch, NMC, Naxos, Bridge, BIS, Albany and Innova labels.

In the 2006-2007 season Ms. Shelton sings numerous New York City performances including Elliott Carter’s Tempo e Termini at MoMA, an appearance on the Movado series at the Baryshnikov Center with pianist Pedja Muzijevic in George Crumb’s Apparition, her debut at Zankel Hall with the Met Chamber Ensemble and Maestro James Levine in Carter’s A Mirror On Which To Dwell, Schoenberg’s Pierrot Lunaire for Mannes College’s Schoenberg Symposium (with Da Capo) and two composer portrait concerts devoted to Charles Wuorinen (Fenton Songs I & II with members of the Brentano Quartet and pianists Sarah Rothenberg and Alan Feinberg) and Chinary Ung (...still life after death with Da Capo). She returns to Da Camera of Houston for a program of Stravinsky and Webern coordinated with a Paul Klee exhibition at the Menil Collection, and sings Unsuk Chin’s Acrostic Wordplay with the 21st Century Consort (Christopher Kendall, conductor) in a program coordinated with a Saul Steinberg exhibition at the Smithsonian. To celebrate the 50th birthday of James Primosch in Philadelphia she performs his song cycle Holy the Firm (Stephen Gosling, piano). Continuing her collaborations with eighth blackbird, Ms. Shelton joins them for two east coast concerts of Schoenberg’s Pierrot Lunaire, Roberto Sierra’s Cancionero Sefardi, and Lukas Foss’ Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird. She sings with Orchestra 2001 in Philadelphia and Bucharest in Knussen’s Hums and Songs of Winnie the Pooh and Schwantner’s Sparrows. Ms. Shelton goes to the west coast for a residency in the San Francisco Bay Area with the Adorno Ensemble singing repertoire of Copland and Knussen (songs), Villa Lobos (Suite for Violin and Voice), Birtwistle (Ring a Dumb Carillon) and Deak (The Ugly Duckling). Orchestral repertoire of the season includes Sibelius’
Luonnotar, Mahler's Fourth Symphony and Peter Maxwell Davies' Revelation and Fall (in Turin, Italy, with the London Sinfonietta, Oliver Knussen conducting). She will bring the Wuorinen Fenton Songs to Buffalo in June before returning to Tanglewood Music Center for the summer.

Ms. Shelton has received an NEA Solo Recitalist grant, Distinguished Alumni Awards from New England Conservatory and Pomona College as well as an Honorary Doctorate degree from Pomona College. A native of California, Ms. Shelton's primary mentor was mezzo-soprano Jan De Gaetani. She has taught at the Third Street Music Settlement School, Eastman School, New England Conservatory and the Cleveland Institute. She joined the resident artist faculty of the Boston Symphony's Tanglewood Music Center in 1996. In the fall of 2007 she will join the Manhattan School of Music faculty for a new graduate degree program in the performance of contemporary music.
**Franco Donatoni: Arpege (1986)**

Franco Donatoni (1927-2000) is considered among the most prominent of Italian composers of his generation, which includes contemporaries Berio, Nono and Scelsi. He spent his entire career almost exclusively in Italy, studying with composers Desderi, Liviabella and Pizzetti in Milan, Bologna and Rome, and teaching at conservatories in Bologna, Turin, Milan and Siena. His music went through several periods of development: in the 1950s he came under the influence of Boulez and Stockhausen in Germany and Bruno Maderna in Italy, which led to a turn to strict serial techniques. Beginning in the 1960s, the introduction of chance procedures and the influence of John Cage can be seen in such works as *For Grilly* “improvisazione per sette” for seven performers. In the mid-1960s and mid-1970s, he underwent two periods of compositional crisis where he wrote nothing for over a year; the first, which was broken in 1966 by the composition of *Etwas ruhiger im Ausdruck* for quintet (fl, cl, vn, vc, pno), led him to destroy and denounce much of his earlier music. The music from his late period, from 1980 until his death, is marked by driving rhythms and the extended development of terse compositional materials, sometimes using the same melodic fragments in multiple works.

*Arpege*, a study in virtuosity, is representative of his late period, with several sections of varying length connected compositionally by short motivic cells that are developed over the course of the piece. The work is approximately 12 to 13 minutes in length.

—Nicholas Photinos

**Lukas Foss: Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird (1978)**

Lukas Foss (b. 1922) is an American composer, conductor, pianist and professor. He studied composition with Noël Gallon, Serge Koussevitzky and Paul Hindemith. He has served as music director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the Buffalo Philharmonic and the Milwaukee Symphony. Foss was appointed professor of music at the University of California at Los Angeles in 1953, replacing Arnold Schoenberg, and later taught at the University at Buffalo. He has been professor of music, theory and composition at Boston University since 1991.

Considered among Lukas Foss’ greatest works, *Thirteen Ways of looking at a Blackbird* was written in 1978 and uses as its text the poem of the same name by early 20th century American poet Wallace Stevens. This poem, one of the poet's most famous works and one that was often set to music during the 20th century, is composed of 13 short stanzas that depict and contrast a blackbird amongst a variety of settings. Foss’ work, approximately 17 minutes in duration, is scored for soprano, flute, piano and percussion, the last of which performs much of the time inside the piano.

—Nicholas Photinos
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

I
Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II
I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

III
The blackbird whirled in the
autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV
A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

V
I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

VI
Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

VII
O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

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

IX
When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

X
At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

XI
He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XII
The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII
It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.
Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez: *Luciérnagas* (1998)

Born in Mexico City in 1964, Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez grew up in Guadalajara and is now a permanent U.S. resident. He obtained a degree in piano performance from the Universidad Guadalajara and later pursued studies in music composition, earning master’s degrees from the Peabody Conservatory and Yale University, as well as a Ph.D. from Princeton University. Among his teachers are Jean E. Ivy, Jacob Druckman, Martin Bresnick and Henri Dutilleux. In 2003 Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez was appointed as associate professor of composition at the Eastman School of Music. About *Luciérnagas*, the composer writes:

*Luciérnagas* is an example of a rather abstract composition that is otherwise based on a very concrete experience. I was working on the music for Pascal Rioult’s choreography “El Mozote”—a story about the killing of hundreds of innocent Salvadorians at the hands of militiamen, when I came across a text by Carlos Henríquez, titled “Luciérnagas en El Mozote” (Fireflies at El Mozote). The text described the arrival of Henríquez and other workers of “Radio Venceremos” to the site where the massacre had taken place three years earlier. As the men reached the outskirts of the desolate village, Henríquez writes that “...a dazzling spectacle made it clear to us that we had arrived at El Mozote: thousands of little lights began to twinkle. The intermittent dance of fireflies illuminated the night, showing us the way to the town’s ruined church. ‘They are the souls of El Mozote!’ said Padre Rogelio Poncel.”

I was fascinated by the fact that the “dance of the fireflies” described above stayed on my mind not as a visual or narrative representation of a brutal—albeit strangely poetic event, but as a powerful—and strictly musical—“picture”: The sound of brief rhythmic punctuations that weave a sparkling, constant, yet unpredictable flicker. Like the trompe-l’oeils found in the visual arts, the outcome is a shared expression of that which is regular (or “predictable”) and of the ultimately chaotic.

My “luciérnagas” are represented by tangible musical materials: ascending and descending scale-like gestures that only seem regular, but that are actually under constant transformation. Similarly, the general rhythmicity of the piece is marked by the use of ostinati, whose regularity is perpetually disturbed by the incisive action of various surface elements, such as displaced accents, dynamic interjections, and the juxtaposition of extreme registers: the highly organized but endlessly puzzling world of insect life.

—Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez
Roberto Sierra: *Cancionero Sefardi* (1999)

**Pregoneros van y vienen** (Town criers come and go)
**Avridme galanica** (Open up for me, beautiful girl)
**Dolores tiene la reina** (The queen has pains)
**A la luna naci yo** (At one I was born)
**Una matica de ruda** (A little plant of rue)
**Al kenar de la nixavía** (Around the corner)
**El me querido bevio vino** (My lover drank wine)

Roberto Sierra was born in 1953 in Puerto Rico and is currently the Old Dominion Foundation Professor of Composition at Cornell University. Sierra's numerous commissions include the orchestras of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Houston, Minnesota, Dallas, Detroit, San Antonio and Phoenix, as well as the New York Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Kronos Quartet, Continuum, England's BBC Symphony, the Spanish orchestras of Galicia, Castilla y León and Barcelona, and at Wolf Trap, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Festival Casals and France's Festival de Lille, among others. He is the recipient of the Academy Award in Music by the American Academy of Arts and Letters and has served as composer-in-residence for the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. About his *Cancionero Sefardi*, which is approximately 18 minutes in length, the composer writes:

The sheer beauty and the poignant melodic structures in the music from the Sephardic tradition [the Jews of medieval Spain, from S'faradi, the Hebrew word for Spain] has captivated me since I heard the first Ladino song. In *Cancionero Sefardi* I didn't want to do a mere “arrangement,” but to rather recreate these melodies within my own musical language. In the instrumental accompaniment I took as point of departure the harmonies suggested by the tunes, transforming them with microtonal inflections. To add an element of percussion to the “Pierrot” formation, the piano is “prepared” in two of the songs. In the sources where I found the material some of the melodies appeared only as fragments, to which I added music in order to complete the songs.

—Nicholas Photinos

(turn page for text)
PREGONEROS VAN Y VIENEN
Pregoneros van y vienen
por la ciudad de Aragón.
Todo varón que hijo tiene
A la guerra debe ir.
Pregoneros van y vienen.
Qué que vos conte la mi madre
lo que hoy me acapitó.
Un mancevo a la Guerra
hija es y no varón.

AVRIDME GALANICA
Avridme, galanica
que ya va a amanecer.
Avrir, ya vos avro,
mi lindo amor.
Esta noche yo non duermo
Pensando en vos.
Mi padre está meldando,
se sentirá.
Amataldle la candelica,
se durmirá.
Mi madre está enfornando
se sentirá.
Aruvaldle la palica
se dormirá.

DOLORES TIENE LA REINA
Dolores tiene la reina.
No los puede soportarlos.
Cuando s'asentó a parir
y demandó piedades.
Allí la oyó su suegra
de altas torres mas arriva.
Andavos la mi nuera
parir onde'el vuestro padre.

TOWN CRIERS COME AND GO
Town criers come and go
around the city of Aragon.
Every male that has a son
to war must go.
Town criers come and go.
Let me tell you mother
what happened today.
A boy went to war,
she is a daughter and not a son.

OPEN UP FOR ME, BEAUTIFUL GIRL
Open up for me, beautiful girl
dawn is coming.
I will open right away,
my beautiful love.
Tonight I won't sleep
thinking of you.
My father is reading
he will hear you.
Blow out his candle,
and he will fall asleep.
My mother is baking
she will hear you.
Rock her chair,
and she will fall asleep.

THE QUEEN HAS PAINS
The Queen has pains.
She cannot endure them.
When she laid down to give birth,
and asked for help.
Her mother-in-law heard her
from high towers.
Go, daughter-in-law,
to give birth with your father.
A LA UNA NACÍ YO
A la una nací yo,
a las dos me engrandecí,
a las tres espózí,
a las cuatro me cazaron.
Dizme, niña, ¿dónde vienes?
que te quiero conocer.
Y, si no tienes amante,
Yo te haré defender.
Alma, vida y corazón.

AT ONE I WAS BORN
At one I was born,
at two I grew up,
at three I was affianced
at four they married me off.
Tell me, child, from whence you come?
For I wish to know you.
And, if you have no lover,
I shall be your defender.
Soul, life and heart.

UNA MATICA DE RUDA
Una matica de ruda
una matica de flor.
Me la dió un mancevico
Que de mí s’enamoró.
Hija mía mi querida
no t’eches a la perdición.
Mas vale un mal marido
que un mancevo d’amor.
Mal marido la mi madre,
el pilisco y la maldición.
Mancevo d’amor la mi madre,
la mançana y el buen limón.

A LITTLE PLANT OF RUE
A little plant of rue
a little flower plant.
I got it from a boy
who fell in love with me.
My dear daughter
Don’t succumb to damnation.
A bad husband is worth more
than a young lover
Mother, a bad husband,
the pinch and the curse.
Mother, a young lover,
the apple and the good lemon.

AL KENAR DE LA NIXAVA
Al kenar de la nixava
todo vedre ‘stá
Mancevo lindo y hermoso
tómate atrás.
Que mejor d’esta muchacha
otra ya no hay.
Allí está la muchacha,
sekliyada s’tá.

AROUND THE CORNER
Around the corner
everything is green.
Fair and handsome boy,
turn back.
That there is no girl
better than this one.
There is the girl,
she is very sad.

EL MI QUERIDO BEVIÓ VINO
El mi querido bevió vino.
El tino ya lo pedrió.
Allí debaxo l’arvolera,
taradarí, taradám,
cuchillo me travó.
Taradarí, taradání...

MY LOVER DRANK WINE
My lover drank wine.
He lost his aim.
There under the trees,
taradarí, taradám,
he pierced me with his knife.
Taradarí, taradám...

—translations by Roberto Sierra

David M. Gordon (b. 1976) earned B.M. and M.M. degrees in composition from Northern Illinois University, studying primarily with Jan Bach. Currently, he is pursuing a Ph.D. in composition at the University of Chicago, where his principal teachers are Shulamit Ran and Marta Ptaszynska. Gordon has written works for a variety of performers and ensembles, including the Chicago Sinfonietta, eighth blackbird, Aguavá New Music Ensemble, Contempo, the Motion Trio and steelpan virtuoso Liam Teague. Performances of his compositions have taken place at such venues as the Caramoor Music Festival, the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Chicago’s Symphony Center, Moscow’s Festival Alternativa, the 2004 European Spring Festival in Archangielsk, Russia, the Deer Valley Music Festival and Chicago’s Millennium Park. In addition to composing, Gordon teaches on the faculty of Wheaton College and serves as the manager of Contempo, the University of Chicago Contemporary Chamber Players.

*Friction Systems* (2005) is a revised version of a work called *Dramamine* that I composed in 2002 for eighth blackbird. Although it is not programmatic in the traditional sense, the piece explores notions of discord, imbalance, tension and disorientation in the context of a relentless and extremely fast moto perpetuo. The overarching impression of instability in *Friction Systems* is expressed through a variety of musical devices, the most notable of which are the superimposition of conflicting rhythmic patterns and the melodic pairing of instruments a quarter-tone apart. While these associations are significant in the overall concept of the work, *Friction Systems* more generally centers on the development of various musical techniques that are of long-standing interest to me. The use of complex, machine-like rhythmic patterns, “out-of-tune” pitch spaces and exotic timbres can be seen as deriving more from a broad compositional viewpoint than from specific extra-musical connotations. Timbral manipulation, in particular, has occupied a focal point in my creative investigations, and *Friction Systems* is no exception to this. The work features an extensively prepared piano—26 of the strings have machine screws placed between them, supplying a wide range of unique tone colors and microtonally-inflected pitches—and incorporates an array of exotic percussion instruments. Many of the sonorities highlighted in the work are, in fact, loosely inspired by the sound of Central Javanese Gamelan, a type of music that I performed actively during my six years at Northern Illinois University. Along with the timbral connections mentioned above, this influence can be tangibly identified in my use of low, bell-like octaves in the piano as markers of important formal divisions (an allusion to the low gong which marks cyclical repetitions in gamelan music). I would like to note, lastly, that *Friction Systems* is conceived, abstractly, as a psalm of praise to God, the one to whom I owe everything I am and have—in nomine Jesu. Many thanks to eighth blackbird for their unswerving dedication to the success of both this piece and my work in general; they are, without question, the finest group of musicians that I have ever had the honor to work with.

—David M. Gordon