

Sunday, November 21, 2010 at 8pm
Merkin Concert Hall

Strata

Audrey Andrist, piano
James Stern, violin
Nathan Williams, clarinet

Program

Riddle (1999) (*written for Strata*)

Robert Maggio

- I A ring that has no end?
- II A baby with no cryin'?

(b. 1964)

Seven Glances at a Mirage (2003) (*written for Strata*)

Jonathan Leshnoff

(sections are played without pause)

(b. 1973)

- Glance 1: From afar
- Glance 2: Discerning
- Glance 3: Doubting
- Glance 4: Running
- Glance 5: Vanishing
- Glance 6: Re-adjusting
- Glance 7: Illusion

Contrasts (1938)

Béla Bartók

- I Verbunkos (Recruiting Dance)
- II Pihenő (Relaxation)
- III Sebes (Fast Dance)

(1881–1945)

I N T E R M I S S I O N

Trio Concertant

An Archipelago of Moods (2010) (*written for Strata**)

Stephen Paulus

- I Stark; buoyant
- II Bittersweet
- III Restless; agitated
- IV Insouciant; delicate
- V Obdurate
- VI Surreal
- VII Relentless

(b. 1949)

**world premiere performance*

This concert, and the Metaclassical Music Project, are funded by a generous grant from the Rauch Foundation. The audience is invited to greet the performers and composers in the upper lobby following the performance.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Welcome to the inaugural concert of the Metaclassical Music Project. What is “metaclassical?” We aspire to have it be many things. To start with, think of it as “beyond classical”: what’s next? where will our new audiences come from? how will compositional styles, presentation styles, performance practice and audience preferences evolve together? Those of us most deeply affected by these questions, need to remind ourselves that some of the greatest art can require effort to understand and effort to appreciate. If our conviction is that the effort pays off then we have two jobs: showing people *how* to put forth the effort and enticing them to do so.

Accordingly, Strata’s tours normally involve outreach presentations in schools, and our verbal communications at concerts are vital for creating a context around the music we play, articulating that crucial analogy that helps a possibly foreign mode of expression mesh with an audience member’s own experience and values. Normally this would mean speaking from the stage. If we choose, tonight, to restrict ourselves to the printed word, it is because the formal and highly ritualized concert setting still highlights a quality in music that no other setting can, and it ought to remain as one of the possible ways to have people enjoy what we do. Indeed, one might say that the contrast between the formal and the informal is at the heart of the Metaclassical Music Project (MMP). We are asking composers to write music that is structured so as to provide an array of illustrations for our school presentations, but that can also, when played straight through without interruption, serve as a dramatic and virtuosic *tour de force* for the concert hall. An expected consequence of this prompt is that the music will be multi-leveled and have an element of the self-referential—being as it is “music about music”—and this is a second meaning of the prefix, “meta”. For an exhaustive (but hopefully not exhausting!) account of the concept, please visit stratamusic.org, where it is explained in terms of a variety of artistic mediums, from Wagner to Vonnegut to Haydn to Hollywood.

Stephen Paulus has been the first person to take on the project, and his relationship to the idea, from inception to completion, underwent some interesting evolution that is worth recounting here. Initially expressing an interest in the fact that, with so few instruments, our ensemble provides such a complete representation of the different physical ways of producing sound—bowing, plucking, hitting, blowing air; sound produced by a vibrating string; sound produced by a vibrating reed; sound produced by vibrating air in a tube—he set out to explore the significance of these different methods, individually and in relation to each other. The potential for multi-leveledness here is similar to what we find in poetry, where meter and rhyme draw attention to the physical characteristics of the words, independent (or interdependent) of their meaning.

As the movements began to take shape, it became clear to him that the piece was turning out to be about contrast: the many different ways in which that abstract idea can be made a concrete musical reality; the ways that pairs of opposites give structure to our perception--background/foreground, near/far, high/low; finally, the ways in which the idea of contrast can play out in terms of human drama—conflict, tension, dialogue, expectation and surprise. Thus the work, through its genesis and in its final form, provides us with opportunities to demonstrate to young audiences how a direct connection can be traced between the fundamental elements of music and the moods that the music evokes. One can see from Paulus’s movement titles that his sense of mood is

exquisitely nuanced (I confess I had to get out my dictionary for a couple of them), and we can hardly offer young people a greater gift than to involve them in the process of verbalizing emotions and observing their inner workings.

Paulus writes: “My approach to the work has been to exploit register, contrast, location of the instruments with respect to each other and also color. In a way, I have treated the ensemble almost like a mini-orchestra. I have given each movement a real character—in a sense almost a real “character”—with musical attributes that inform each one. I have very much considered the listener as well as the player. As always I have tried to write themes, gestures, colors and effects that seem surprising at times while still seeming inevitable. That is always my goal, no matter what medium I am writing for. I firmly believe that we listen primarily by association, and one of the “teaching” aspects of my work (and works) is to make this task something that is enjoyable and capable of being accomplished by virtually any listener.”

Indeed this is a quality that *Trio Concertant*, the newest work on tonight’s program, shares with Bartók’s *Contrasts*, the oldest. *Contrasts*, while it certainly offers up some challenging sonorities for the listener to process, nevertheless holds no secrets—no elements meant to be discernible only by the initiated. Its gestures, phrase structures and spirit are firmly rooted in the late 18th Century tradition of the *Romungre* gypsy bands that were allowed to enter Hungarian urban centers at that time, and who performed at recruiting events, where officers of the Hungarian army performed elaborate dances to stir up patriotic feeling amongst the attendees. Originally entitled *Rhapsody*, Bartók’s work had followed the two-movement format characteristic not only of the traditional recruiting dances but also of his earlier works bearing that name. The middle movement was later added and the name changed to *Contrasts*, in which form it was recorded in 1940 by Bartók at the piano, József Szigeti on the violin and Benny Goodman (who commissioned the work for \$300) on clarinet.

But it is equally valid, and indeed equally alluring, for music to hold secrets, a fact that both Maggio’s and the Leshnoff’s works demonstrate beautifully. Each in its own way contains a hidden element, something not actually audible in itself, but connected by a fine filament to that which is audible. Thus in *Riddle*, one will hear readily enough the familiar folk tune, *I Gave My Love a Cherry*, when it is played in unison by the violin and clarinet but probably won’t, unless it is pointed out, hear that the very same pitches form the wild, relentless and evolving *ostinato* in the piano part; or that the same tune, turned upside-down, forms the clarinet’s quiet prayer, reacting to the point where the second movement boils over in conflict. Yet the fact that the audible and the inaudible are one and the same should give us pause: how do we know we are not actually hearing and responding to the inaudible?

Maggio was working on this piece for Strata while he and his partner, the artist Tony LaSalle, were waiting to be able to adopt their daughter Annamaria. He writes: “I set out to write something distinctly American, playful, energetic and bright. Even the lyrics of the song suggested the contrasting emotional landscapes of the two movements, which are, for me, musical meditations on aspects of marriage and children, respectively. Both movements are essentially variation forms. The first movement, centering on ‘a ring when it’s rolling,’ is a little observation on marriage, how there’s a kind of dance, with the partners sometimes moving apart but always coming back together again (thus the piece begins and ends with the violin and clarinet in rhythmic unison on the tune, while all the

"argumentative" canons and shared but fractured lines are in between); and the second movement, centering on 'a baby when it's sleeping,' is a kind of meditation on hopes and fears while waiting for our baby."

With *Seven Glances at a Mirage*, the connection between the audible and the inaudible occurs in the realm of rhythm and meter. Leshnoff writes: "I composed this piece for Strata in 2003 and consciously incorporated their signature sound and flare." We had told Leshnoff that we enjoy complex cross-rhythms and he took us at our word. After a free and spacious introduction (Glance 1), the music breaks into a rapid swirl of notes (Glance 2). Only the players will be aware that these notes come in groups of six; indeed the players must, with some difficulty, keep track of the grouping in order to accomplish the precise and seamless cross-fading between parts that Leshnoff demands. But the melodic contour contradicts the grouping, making it inaudible to the listener until it later emerges as a result of a slower melody being superimposed. The remaining Glances continue the pattern of alternating free cadenza (the odd-numbered Glances) with driving rhythm (the even-numbered ones). Thus while Glance 7 ends the work with a final spacious cadenza, Glance 6 complements Glance 2 with the same swirling melodic figure only, this time, it is groupings of four notes that are first revealed to the performer and only later to the listener. Even after the meters (i.e. groupings) have been revealed, the listener has to work hard to hold onto the sense of them, and is motivated to do so by that natural human tendency to try to discern pattern. That tendency is alternately gratified and confounded, hence the sense of a mirage evoked by this music.

The process by which listeners are brought into the presence of the inaudible by means of their own natural seeking to make sense out of the audible is demonstrated by Maggio and Leshnoff with the kind of clarity that makes for a great "teaching opportunity." It transforms the idea, with which these notes began, of "showing people how to put forth the effort," into the idea of showing them that they are already putting forth the effort. Paulus, Bartók and, in one way or another any composer worth listening to, will use the notes to lead the listener to something beyond the notes. It is this process that, when people are made consciously aware of it, will give them a window onto their own sensitivity, discernment and greatness.

Notes by James Stern

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Strata is a coming together of three extraordinary musical talents: Audrey Andrist, piano; Nathan Williams, clarinet; and James Stern violin and viola. Their combined credits encompass numerous international prizes and performances across four continents including such places as Carnegie Hall, the Marlboro Festival and the Kennedy Center. Strata brings "deft ensemble playing" and a "talent . . . that's worth getting worked up about" (Washington Post) to a repertoire that combines the great trio and duo repertoire of the past with an ever-growing body of new works written especially for them over the twenty years they have been playing together.

Equally capable of winning over an audience with unique renderings of popular music and of making even the most complex works accessible, exciting and meaningful, Strata has received enthusiastic repeat engagements at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival, New

York's historic Maverick Concerts and San Francisco Composers Inc, for which they were listed as one of San Francisco Classical Voice's "highlights of 2005." They have been resident artists at the Banff Centre for the Arts and appeared in New York City under the auspices of the International Society for Contemporary Music.

All holders of the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Juilliard School, the members of Strata are dedicated to every level of music education, from the mentoring of graduate students and young professionals, to the initial sparking of musical passion in very young children, to the guiding of audiences in what to listen for. They perform a wide range of specially tailored presentations for K-12 schools, and have done numerous university residencies involving coaching chamber music and both advising and performing the music of young composers.

They have appeared as a featured ensemble at the annual conventions of the Music Teachers' Association of California and the International Clarinet Association. The ensemble's debut CD, an exciting mix of new and standard repertoire recorded in 1999, is available on the Arizona University Recordings label as well as on iTunes. They are featured on compact discs of the music of Robert Maggio for CRI and Adam Silverman for New Focus Recordings, and have been recorded live in concert for CBC Radio in Canada. stratamusic.org

Hailed as a "stunning pianist with incredible dexterity" (San Francisco Classical Voice), Canadian pianist **Audrey Andrist** has thrilled audiences around the globe, from North America to Japan, China and Germany with her "passionate abandon", "bright energy", and "great intelligence." Ms. Andrist grew up on a farm in Saskatchewan, and while in high school traveled three hours one-way for piano lessons with William Moore, himself a former student of famed musicians Cécile Genhart and Rosinna Lhévinne. She completed Masters and Doctoral degrees at New York's elite Juilliard School, studying with Herbert Stessin, and garnered first prizes at the Mozart International, San Antonio International, Eckhardt-Gramatté, and Juilliard Concerto Competitions. She has performed in many of North America's most prestigious venues, including the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, Place des Arts in Montreal, Chicago's Ravinia Festival, and Alice Tully Hall in New York. She is a member of the Verge Ensemble in Washington, DC. An avid performer of new music with many world premieres to her credit, Ms. Andrist can be heard on over a dozen recordings of both standard and modern repertoire on the Albany, Centredisques, and New Focus labels, among others. She currently lives in the Washington, DC area, where she maintains a busy private teaching studio, and has performed at the Library of Congress, Wolf Trap, and the Smithsonian Institutions.

James Stern is a multi-faceted musician whose violin playing has been heard worldwide and cited by the Washington Post for "virtuosity and penetrating intelligence." In addition to Strata, he performs with Andrist as the Stern/Andrist Duo. They have performed throughout the United States, Canada and China, with additional recitals in Munich and Paris. Stern has served on the faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music and is now Associate Professor and Chair of the String Division at the University of Maryland School of Music. He has taught masterclasses throughout North America and in China, Norway and Italy. He has performed at the Marlboro, Ravinia, Banff and Bowdoin festivals as well as at New York's Alice Tully Hall and Carnegie Hall. Since

moving to the Washington, D. C. area he has performed with the 21st Century Consort, the Contemporary Music Forum, the Smithsonian Chamber Players and the Axelrod Quartet, at such venues as the Corcoran Gallery, the German and French Embassies, the Smithsonian Institution's Hirshhorn Museum, National Museum of American History, Renwick Gallery and American Art Museum, the Library of Congress, the National Gallery, the Phillips Collection, the National Museum of the American Indian, Strathmore Mansion and the White House.

Nathan Williams joined the faculty of the Butler School of Music at the University of Texas at Austin in August, 2008. In October, 2008 he was appointed principal clarinetist of the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra in Houston. He has been hailed by critics as "outstanding for his musicality, breath control, robust, and brilliant tone, and flawless technique" (El Nuevo Dia Domingo, San Juan), "a highly effective soloist" (The New York Times), and "a stellar musician, capable of the most exquisite and expressive playing" (The Winston-Salem Journal). He has appeared as concerto soloist and given recitals and chamber music performances at the Kennedy Center, Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Hall, and Kaufmann Hall at the 92nd St. Y, and throughout the United States as well as in Austria, Canada, China, Italy, Israel, Hungary, Germany, Japan, Taiwan, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Portugal. Mr. Williams was Co-Artistic Director for the 2010 International Clarinet Association ClarinetFest, hosted by the Butler School of Music in July, 2010. He has been heard in concert broadcasts on National Public Radio, the Austrian Radio Network, NCRV Dutch Radio), and WNCN-New York. His compact disc recordings for Albany Records, Composers Recordings, Inc., Naxos and New Dynamic Records have earned much critical acclaim. Mr. Williams is an artist/clinician for Buffet Crampon and a Rico/D'Addario performing artist. He is on the artist faculty of the Aria International Summer Academy at Mt. Holyoke College in Massachusetts, and the Montecito Summer Music Festival in Santa Barbara, California.

Jonathan Leshnoff is quickly winning an international reputation as one of America's most gifted young composers. The New Jersey-born composer is riding the crest of a wave of popularity that has resulted in international performances of his works by the Philadelphia, Baltimore, IRIS, Buffalo, Kyoto, Curtis Institute, Kansas City, National Gallery of Art, Boca Raton, Columbus, Extremadura (Madrid) Orchestras, among others, and chamber music performances by the Da Capo Chamber Players and the Smithsonian's Twenty-First Century Consort. The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts recently commissioned him for a full-length Oratorio, to be premiered by The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia under the baton of Roberto Minzuc during the Kimmel Center's inaugural International Arts Festival in 2011. During the same season, he will look forward to two other premieres: The Philadelphia Orchestra, under the direction of Charles Dutoit, will premiere his flute concerto written for Philadelphia Orchestra Principal Flutist, Jeffrey Khaner and a new orchestral work, *Starburst*, will be premiered by Marin Alsop and The Baltimore Symphony. He is currently the composer-in-residence with the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra.

The first of three recordings devoted exclusively to Leshnoff's music was released on the Naxos "American Classics" label and selected among Naxos's top 40 CDs for 2009. It includes his Violin Concerto, performed by violinist Charles Wetherbee and the

Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Markand Thakar, and his String Quartet No. 1, performed by the Carpe Diem String Quartet. Other Naxos releases feature his Symphony No. 1 conducted by Michael Stern and the IRIS Chamber Orchestra, and Leshnoff's chamber music.

Named by the *Baltimore Sun* as an "Artist to Watch," Jonathan Leshnoff's music has been lauded by the *Strings Magazine* as "quite distinct from anything else that's out there," by the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* as "a fluid, thoughtful work, superbly textured and unafraid to be intellectual," and by the *Baltimore Sun* as "remarkably assured, cohesively constructed and radiantly lyrical." The *New York Times* declared in a November, 2008 review that "the afternoon's keenest discovery was Mr. Leshnoff."

Currently an Associate Professor of Music at Towson University in Maryland, he can be found running around local Baltimore playgrounds with his children.
www.jonathanleshnoff.com.

The music of **Robert Maggio** has been called "lyrical, passionate, melodic, and rhythmically charged" (American Record Guide). Hailed as a composer of music that is "smart, vital, and inventive" (Philadelphia Inquirer), Robert Maggio has created a substantial body of works in nearly every genre, each creating a unique connection between the composer's "wondrously eclectic vocabulary" (New York Times) and the demands of a diverse body of commissions.

Recent projects include *Rain and Ash* (String Quartet No. 2) for the Borromeo Quartet, and *Color and Light* (orchestra) for the Riverside Symphonia. Works in progress include "because of the joy," a choral anthem for West Chester Presbyterian Church, and a new work for Orchestra 2001. Maggio is also a member of the BMI Musical Theatre Workshop, where he is currently collaborating on two different musicals, one with lyricist Kristin Maloney, and one with lyricist and playwright Michael Hollinger.

In the Spring of 2004, Albany Records released a CD of Maggio's recent choral works including *Aristotle*, *Jacklight*, *The Wishing Tree*, and *Rachel and Her Children*. In reviewing this CD, American Record Guide said, "Maggio is quite a craftsman, with the traditional elements... all contribute to a smooth, luxurious, somewhat mysterious, flow." Fanfare Magazine reported, "...Maggio shows himself both deeply respectful of the choral tradition and determined to put his own stamp on it."

Published by Theodore Presser Company, Hickman Music Editions and Yelton Rhodes, Maggio's music is currently recorded on the Albany and CRI (New World) labels. Upcoming CDs of Maggio's music include *A Sense of Space*, recorded by the American Brass Quintet, and Maggio's string quartets, *Songbook for Annamaria* and *Rain and Ash*, recorded by the Borromeo Quartet.

Maggio's orchestral music has been performed by the Boston Pops, the Atlanta Symphony, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the Long Beach Symphony, the National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico, the Oakland East Bay Symphony, the Dallas/Fort Worth Symphony, the New York Youth Symphony and the Tampa Bay Youth Orchestra. His chamber and vocal/choral music has been commissioned and performed by the New York Festival of Song, Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Colorado Quartet (Arizona Friends of Chamber Music commission), Sanford Sylvan and David Breitman (Barlow

commission), Detroit Chamber Winds, Meridian Arts Ensemble, Composers Inc., Network for New Music, Orchestra 2001 and the Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia. In addition to composing for ballet, Maggio has created scores for numerous modern dance companies (Stephen Pelton Dance Theater, Randy James Dance Works, Leah Stein and Dancers). In 1994, he was composer-in-residence at the American Dance Festival. He has composed songs and incidental music for professional theater productions, including those at Yale Repertory Theater, Philadelphia Theater Company, Peoples Light and Theater, and Shakespeare Santa Cruz.

Maggio has received awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Pew Fellowships in the Arts, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and Meet the Composer. A graduate of Yale and the University of Pennsylvania, Robert Maggio lives in Lambertville, New Jersey with his partner, the artist, Tony LaSalle, and their daughter Annamaria. He is a Professor and Chairman of the Department of Music Theory and Composition in the School of Music at West Chester University. www.robertmaggio.net

Composer **Stephen Paulus** has been hailed as "...a bright, fluent inventor with a ready lyric gift." (The New Yorker) His prolific output of more than four hundred works is represented in many genres, including music for orchestra, chorus, chamber ensembles, solo voice, keyboard and opera. Commissions have been received from the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, The Houston Symphony and St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, with subsequent performances coming from the orchestras of Los Angeles, Philadelphia, St. Louis, the National Symphony Orchestra, and the BBC Radio Orchestra. He has served as Composer in Residence for the orchestras of Atlanta, Minnesota, Tucson and Annapolis, and his works have been championed by such eminent conductors as Sir Neville Marriner, Kurt Masur, Christoph von Dohanyi, Leonard Slatkin, Yoel Levi, the late Robert Shaw, and numerous others.

Paulus has been commissioned to write works for some of the world's great solo artists, including Thomas Hampson, Hakan Hagegard, Doc Severinsen, William Preucil, Cynthia Phelps, Evelyn Lear, Leo Kottke and Robert McDuffie. Chamber music commissions have resulted in works for The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Friends of Music at the Supreme Court, the Cleveland Quartet and Arizona Friends of Chamber Music. He has been a featured guest composer at the festivals of Aspen, Santa Fe, Tanglewood, and, in the U.K., the Aldeburgh and Edinburgh Festivals.

As one of today's pre-eminent composers of opera, Paulus has written ten works for the dramatic stage. *The Postman Always Rings Twice* was the first American production to be presented at the Edinburgh Festival, and has received nine productions to date. Commissions and performances have come from such companies as the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Washington Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Berkshire Opera Company, Minnesota Opera, and Fort Worth Opera, among others, as well as many universities and colleges.

His choral works have been performed and recorded by some of the most distinguished choruses in the United States, including the New York Concert Singers, Dale Warland Singers, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Robert Shaw Festival Singers, New Music Group of Philadelphia, Master Chorale of Washington DC, Vocal Arts Ensemble

of Cincinnati, Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and dozens of other professional, community, church and college choirs. He is one of the most frequently recorded contemporary composers with his music being represented on over fifty recordings.

A recipient of both Guggenheim and NEA Fellowships, Paulus is also a strong advocate for the music of his colleagues. He is co-founder and a current Board Vice President of the highly esteemed American Composers Forum, the largest composer service organization in the world. Paulus serves on the ASCAP Board of Directors as the Concert Music Representative, a post he has held since 1990.

Paulus's music has been described by critics and program annotators as rugged, angular, lyrical, lean, rhythmically aggressive, original, often gorgeous, moving, and uniquely American. He writes in a musical language that has been characterized as "...irresistible in kinetic energy and haunting in lyrical design." (Cleveland Plain Dealer) "Mr. Paulus often finds melodic patterns that are fresh and familiar at the same time....His scoring is invariably expert and exceptionally imaginative in textures and use of instruments." (The New York Times) www.stephenpaulus.com