

GAMELAN ENCANTADA

Saturday, March 21, 2020
UNM College of Fine Arts Downtown Studio
Albuquerque, NM

Live concert canceled; this program accompanies the sound file of various performances made in rehearsal. Sound file (with photo of the composers featured in this concert) is available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGRYR889iD4>

@0:00

The Moon Gang Goes East by Barbara Benary (1974)

At a cue from the drum, this composition comes out of (and is inspired by) the traditional Javanese ceremonial piece Monggang, and echoes its stately sound. The origin of the title dates to the time of Benary's first gamelan class at Livingston College, where her students familiarized the title of the traditional piece into "Moon Gang." Benary writes: "One summer I took the instruments on a car trip to a children's camp to do a workshop, driving in a generally eastward direction. Needing a short but interesting piece to teach there, I composed this as a spin-off from the traditional Monggang." In a similar spirit, our group refers to it as "The Moon Gang Goes West," in honor of Barbara's contribution (as designer and builder of our instruments) to the establishment of gamelan in New Mexico.

@6:20

Eine Kleine Gamelan Music by Daniel Goode (1980)

A piece for structured group improvisation using any instruments, any tuning, and any combination of instruments and tunings. Instructions are given to the players on how to derive and interpret melodic intervals; all other choices are left up to the players.

@12:29

Ladrang Tirtoekencono (traditional Javanese)

A "strong style" slow piece from Central Java, with an interpretive elaboration on the bossed *bonang*, doubling on the high pitched *peking*, and an intermittent interlocking melody on paired *demungs*.

@24:40

Sleeping Braid by Barbara Benary (1979)

This piece, based on the “braid” row structure (see “Braid” below), is composed of two simultaneous canons. The first canon consists of two separate parts (each doubled by instruments in the next lower range) reading through the row at an interval of two notes, in a slow, even pace. This canon is woven together by an ostinato played on a pair of higher pitched instruments. The second canon enters after the first is established, with the flute leading and the voice following. The song was written for Barbara’s daughter, Lyra Samara Silverstein, sleeping through her first winter.

@31:24

Underground Gending by Philip Corner

Realization: Bosque Balungan by Bob Kasenchak and Brendan Rome (2019)

Bob writes: “Corner’s original score is actually a set of instructions, based on decisions made by ‘chance’ means, such as tossing coins or throwing dice (*a la* John Cage). This practice (like many others on this concert) is in the tradition of New York’s experimental ‘downtown’ composers of the 1960s-70s, with the idea being that the composer sets loose parameters and allows the musician(s) realizing the score a great deal of freedom in the creation of the final piece.

Written in Corner’s own idiosyncratic version of English, the score outlines in very broad terms how someone might go about creating a realization of the piece:

Choice 1 Number of Measures

Choice(s) 2 The “irama” (relative tempo/density) Number-of-Beats for each unless a constant be preferred...in practis

All instruments should follow the general-rules for their role but with an expanded sens of creative-freedom...

...and so forth for the duration of the piece, individual notes, etc.

In order to realize Corner’s instructions, Brendan (a member of Gamelan Encantada until his recent move to the NW) and I (Bob) retired to the Bosque Brewing Company in ABQ (where Brendan was working at the time) armed with some graph paper and a bag of dice. We assigned possible values for each of Corner’s ‘Choices’ in the score; for example, we decided that the number of sections could be anywhere from 1 to 8 (we rolled a 3), the third of which is repeated 7 times (we rolled a 7). All notes, rests and tempo changes were determined in the same way, by chance. The resulting piece is both very ‘gamelan-y’ at points and very ‘chance music-y’ at others.”

@41:30

Gong Fanfare by Barbara Benary (1987)

This composition first appeared as the introductory number to Islene Pinder's Balinese-American Dance Theater piece entitled "Night Shadow". Solo parts are written for four large hanging gongs (here realized on aluminum keygongs by two players), with all other instruments slowly and quietly drifting in at the end. The choice of pitch arrangement throughout the piece comes from Benary's interest in minimalist process structures for composing as well as echoing the pattern "changes" of traditional English bell ringing.

@47:34

Sixties by David Demnitz (1987)

One of four movements of *Suite for Gamelan Son of Lion*, written for Barbara Benary. The piece begins and ends with a gong, and each rhythmic cycle is 60 beats. Players select notes from within given ranges and play on beats assigned to correspond to their pitch range. All factors of 60 are represented with larger numbers playing lower pitches. Player #1, on the highest instrument, controls tempo and duration; all other decisions (dynamics, individual notes) are made by the performers.

@54:45

Braid by Barbara Benary (1975)

Part of a series of pieces composed between 1974 and 1980, based on a numerical process which (on the metallophone keyboard) involves a skip up over two tones followed by a step down (forward three, back one, forward three, etc.). In the seven-toned pelog scale (which we are using for all of the pieces performed here), the process yields a 14-tone row; the resultant "braid" is interpreted in various ways to produce the different pieces. Here, the performers slowly make their way along the entire row, and although the three-part interlocking rhythm is strictly determined, the number of repetitions back and forth between two consecutive tones (before dropping the first and moving to the next) is left up to the individual players.

@1:10:30

Bubaran Arum Arum (traditional Javanese)

A traditional "ending" piece plays in Java to signal the concert is over. Thank you so much for listening!

*This concert is dedicated to
Barbara Benary (1946-2019) and her daughter,
Lyra Samara Silverstein*

About the Composers

Barbara Benary

Co-founder (with Philip Corner and Daniel Goode) of the new music ensemble Gamelan Son of Lion, whose instruments she built (and whose surname, translated from Hebrew, gives the group its title), Benary has also performed in the ensembles of Philip Glass, Jon Gibson, and Alvin Lucier. She has composed pieces for a number of theatrical productions, including those done for La MaMa Experimental Theater Club in the 1970s as well as the shadow puppet operas *Karna* and *The Story of Esther*. Self-described as "a part-time minimalist who also likes to write melody," Benary has integrated world music forms, structures and instruments (most notably those of India and Indonesia) with traditional Western materials. Her compositions are included on CDs published by Innova, Tzadik and New World, as well as on the GSOL label.

Philip Corner

(For our dear friend who lives in Northern Italy now, we thought it would be a tribute to all Italians at this moment of crisis to have his "bio" in his own words, complete with idiosyncratic spelling, etc.):

"Reggio is the centr-ov-the-world. Just think: Here com-together all streets; and then leav. Streets. Railways. Cyclpaths. Far frum chaos. Mor than 20year-ago the American musician Philip Corner took-note that t'was beter here than in NewYork. This mister had-been a tromboneplayer in the army in Korea: deafening, *i suppoze*. He knows how to read music. Sublym at the pianokeyboard---live witnesses heard him play in Venice, at the Fenice. Got to giv this info caus he duz everything to wipe-out the memory. Returns to the origins in-order-to re-discover what music was befor music. How duz he do-it? The first-thing iz by lending-an-ear, Lissen to what the Things hav- to-say. Wat musics they make, watjokes, wat *lumber*. He has playd with everything. Tried-out graters on dry bred. Knifes on carrots and potatos. Cauzd boats to resound. No fear in-front-ov a grounded old rusty *dragonship* (ie-an abandond dredger). **So here: the wheel still missing. Alone; with no partner; without a saddel; no handlebar. A pur cult object (following Duchamp).** This to-be-found on the workbench of *Resistent Rays*, a metafisical bikeshop on the platform ov the littltrain which goes

north (... "in arrival from Reggio-Bagnolo-Novellara-Guastalla" announces in-a-whisper the loud speaker)..."

David Demnitz

Currently the director of Gamelan Son of Lion as well as the musical director of the Association of Black Social Workers' Senior Center, Demnitz also worked for 25 years as a music instructor at various residential treatment centers. He received a Mary Cary Flagler Charitable Trust grant for production of his 1999 CD *Gamelan as a Second Language*, and his other compositions, including the four movement indictment of the Iraqi War, *Operation Iraqi Liberation (O.I.L.)* for gamelan and string quartet can be heard on YouTube.

Daniel Goode

A performer and composer with GSOL since its founding in 1976, Goode is also the co-founder/director of NYC's DownTown Ensemble, formed in 1983. In 2004, he initiated the Flexible Orchestra, a rethinking of the traditional symphony, and has composed works in various orchestrations, including those featured on the CD *Flexible Orchestra: Annbling*. His innovative music for clarinet includes *Circular Thoughts* (Theodore Presser Co.) and *Clarinet Songs* on the XI label. His solo, ensemble and intermedia works have been performed worldwide and in national and international festivals including New Music American and Bang on a Can. His published works and scores are available from Frog Peak Music.

About the Instruments and the Ensemble

Gamelan is the name of both the pitched percussion orchestra of Indonesia and the music it performs. The styles most familiar to Western listeners are those used to accompany the shadow puppet plays and dance dramas of Java and Bali, but similar ensembles exist throughout Southeast Asia and the Philippines.

The keys of gamelan instruments are made of steel, bronze, iron or bamboo, and in Central Java are usually tuned to either a five-note (*slendro*) or seven-note (*pelog*) scale. Although there is a relative distance between tones that remains somewhat stable from ensemble to ensemble, each gamelan has its own unique overall tuning, making instruments from one ensemble generally incompatible with those of another.

Gamelan outside of Indonesia falls into two fairly distinct camps, with one concentrating on the repertory of Java, Bali, Sunda and

other regions of the country, while the other is more concerned with developing a body of new work that emphasizes both the unusual tonality of the instruments and the complex, interlocking and cyclical structures of traditional compositional forms. The latter approach has generally come to be referred to as the “American Gamelan” movement, although ensembles of this type also exist throughout Europe and in Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

Gamelan Encantada, with its primary focus on commissioning and performing contemporary compositions, is firmly rooted in the “American Gamelan” school. The instruments were built in 1991 by Barbara Benary, one of the founders of NYC’s composer’s collective, Gamelan Son of Lion. The keys are made of rolled steel, and are tuned to a special scale devised by Benary known as “Buffalo Tuning” (in honor of a similar set she designed for the State University of New York in Buffalo). The large gongs and drums are from Central Java, and the ensemble follows the innovations of American Gamelan by substituting tuned aluminum disks and hubcaps for the smaller pot-gongs known as *kenong*, *ketuk* and *kempyang*, and using aluminum bars over resonators to replicate the *kempul*.

In 2011, **Gamelan Encantada** celebrated its 20th Anniversary with the release of the CD *Oasis in the Desert: New Music from New Mexico*. In 2012, they were Artists in Residence at UNM’s Composers Symposium. They have also performed at the Outpost Performance Space, Sunday Chatter Chamber Music Series, Globalquerque, the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market, the Albuquerque Museum, and many other venues throughout the Southwest.

GAMELAN ENCANTADA MEMBERS

Jenny DeBouzek, Artistic Director

Levi Brown Molly Hill Sooz Hoffman Bob Kasenchak
Kristen Keilman Charlotte Leung Matthew Zimmerman