radius ensemble

05.21.22 | BOUNDARIES

Jennifer Montbach, Artistic Director
Edward M. Pickman Concert Hall
Longy School of Music of Bard College

Quintet — Nino Rota (1911-1979)

I. Allegro ben moderato
II. Adagio
III. Allegro vivace

Sarah Brady, flute
Jennifer Montbach, oboe
Noriko Futagami, viola
Miriam Bolkosky, cello
Ina Zdorovetchi, harp

Rubispheres #1-3 — Valerie Coleman (b. 1970)

I. Espressivo, Rubato
II. Molto cantabile
III. With finesse

Sarah Brady, flute
Eran Egozy, clarinet
Adrian Morejon, bassoon

INTERMISSION

Toward the Sea III — Tōru Takemitsu (1930-1996)

I. The Night
II. Moby Dick
III. Cape Cod

Sarah Brady, alto flute
Ina Zdorovetchi, harp

Piano Trio — Charles Ives (1874-1954)

I. Moderato
II. TSIAJ
III. Moderato con moto

Gabriela Díaz, violin
Miriam Bolkosky, cello
Sarah Bob, piano

PROGRAM NOTES

In recent years, we have seen boundaries of all types—personal and geopolitical, intellectual and aesthetic—drastically rearranged. Some were torn down, others reinforced and hardened. Tonight's program explores borders in the musical realm. Some—like those between genre, voice, and source—are obscured and blurred. American folk and parlor songs breach the walls of the concert tradition in Charles Ives's early Piano Trio. Jazz grooves ripple through Valerie Coleman's *Rubispheres*, and Nino Rota's Quintetto rings with sounds of his film scores. These works explore literal and metaphorical boundaries as well. *Rubispheres* charts contrasting neighborhoods of Manhattan, while Tōru Takemitsu's *Toward the Sea* explores the boundary between the human and animal worlds. Each work challenges our own assumptions about borders and reveals the benefits of crossing them.

Though few know **Nino Rota**'s name, many know his music. Rota (1911-1979) was an Italian composer, pianist, and conductor best known for his film scores. Born in Milan, Rota was a child prodigy, studying at the Milan Conservatory and later at the Conservatorio Santa Cecilia in Rome with Alfredo Casella. After encouragement from Arturo Toscanini, he moved to the United States where he received a scholarship to attend the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, studying composition with Rosario Scalero and conducting with Fritz Reiner.

The pieces that made Rota a household name were his scores for the first two *Godfather* films—his music for the second film earned him an Academy Award—but it was his work with Fellini that cemented his legacy as a film composer. The two creators worked together for decades, producing some of the director's most famous films, including the celebrated *8 1/2* from 1963. Fellini described Rota as the "most precious collaborator I have ever had" and noted that "between us, immediately, is a complete, total, harmony."

Rota was prolific, scoring over 150 films in his career. During the 1940s and 50s he composed at a frenetic pace, finishing about ten film scores a year. Yet, over the course of his career, he also made time to write ten operas, five ballets, and dozens of orchestral, choral, and chamber works. The **Quintet for Flute, Oboe, Viola, Cello and Harp** is one such work, and it functions as the perfect curtain-raiser—a delightful bonbon (or cannoli, perhaps?) to open the concert. This early piece from 1935 is comprised of three movements in a conventional fast-slow-fast scheme and unfolds in a traditional tonal language with creative touches adding spice. The first movement is a lilting, pastoral piece in 6/8 with a modal-tonal sound that smacks of Rota's films. The second, featuring beautiful solo turns in the viola and cello, wades into a neo-ancient sonority that returns to contemporary tonality with a dramatic shift to the subdominant toward the end of the movement. The finale, which

contrasts with the first movement in its stomping duple and galloping anapest rhythms, brings the piece to an energetic conclusion.

Rubispheres by **Valerie Coleman**, the work that follows Rota's Quintet, blurs the border between genres even further, making room for jazzy syncopations and ostinato grooves. Coleman was born and raised in Louisville, KY, in the same neighborhood in which Muhammad Ali grew up. Her father died when she was young, and while her mother had to raise and provide for her and her sisters alone, they all attended college. Coleman herself received a double BA in theory and composition from Boston University followed by a Master's Degree in flute performance from Mannes College of Music.

Coleman began her concert career as the flutist for the widely celebrated wind quintet *Imani Winds*. "Imani" is the Swahili word for "faith," and Coleman created *Imani Winds* to showcase African American woodwind players and their unique cultural perspective in the concert tradition. She describes her reasons for starting the ensemble:

> "I used to be in the youth orchestra [as a child], and there were so many African Americans. But somewhere along the line, when I got to college, I was the only one in the orchestra. So, I wondered what in the world happened here? It came to my mind that role models are needed."

Coleman has since retired from *Imani Winds* to dedicate her time to composition and a new ensemble, *Umana Womana*, which she formed with violist Nokuthula Ngwenyama and harpist Hannah Lash. *Umana Womama* functions as a composers' collective in addition to being a performing ensemble—all three members are composers in their own right. In addition to writing music for *Imani Winds* and *Umana Womana*, Coleman has composed for (and performed with) countless ensembles the world over and established players in the classical, jazz, popular, and other traditions. She now teaches at her alma mater, Mannes, and has produced several milestone works. *Umoja, Anthem for Unity*, for instance, was the first commission for a living African-American composer by the Philadelphia Orchestra and was listed as one of the "Top 101 Great American Works" by Chamber Music America in 2002.

Many of Coleman's works play with the stylistic boundary between classical, jazz, and Afro-Cuban genres, and several incorporate political & social themes. The first three ***Rubispheres***, however, are jaunty and effervescent showpieces that tap the virtuosic syncopation of bebop and the anchored bump of 1970s funk. Each is a musical portrait of a particular space As Coleman notes,

> "*Rubispheres* is a series of chamber trios depicting urban life and landscapes in the world. The first three Rubispheres of the series features wind trio (flute, clarinet and bassoon) in a set of exciting, hip, rhythmic,

> and virtuosic outer movements dedicated to the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and soulful song for Washington Heights at night."

Tōru Takemitsu's (1930-1996) work brings us to an introspective, meditative world, far from city bustle. The Japanese composer, writer, and theorist, created evanescent works, spun from intricate textures and timbres resting on the border between sound and silence. Takemitsu was forced into military conscription in 1944, shifting to work for the U.S. Armed Forces after World War II. This early trauma tainted his view of his home culture, and early in his career he ceaselessly distanced himself from Japanese influence. He was a founding member of Jikken Kōbō (or "experimental workshop"), a multidisciplinary artists' collaborative established to pursue this very goal—to avoid Japanese artistic traditions. Only after Takemitsu encountered the music of John Cage did he begin to soften on the traditional music of his own country. Takemitsu explains:

> "I must express my deep and sincere gratitude to John Cage. The reason for this is that in my own life, in my own development, for a long period I struggled to avoid being 'Japanese,' to avoid 'Japanese' qualities. It was largely through my contact with John Cage that I came to recognize the value of my own tradition."

Takemitsu was skeptical of compositional theory and suspicious of "trite rules of music, rules that are...stifled by formulas and calculations." For Takemitsu, it was of far greater importance that "sounds have the freedom to breathe...Just as one cannot plan his life, neither can he plan music." The composer's influences were wide-ranging and deep. From the Western tradition, he drew from composers like Claude Debussy, Anton Webern, Edgard Varèse, Arnold Schoenberg, and Olivier Messiaen. Yet Japanese instruments also find representation both in works written specifically for them and works in which Western concert instruments replicate their idiomatic timbres and techniques. Instruments like the *shakuhachi*, the *biwa*, and the *shamisen* appear in several of the composer's pieces, including the work that opens the second half of tonight's program: *Toward the Sea*.

Toward the Sea was written when Takemitsu was drifting back toward tonality and increasingly exploring Japanese musical culture. The piece, commissioned by Greenpeace for its Save the Whales campaign, comes to us in three versions in three different sets of instrumentation—*Towards the Sea I*, written in 1981 for alto flute & guitar (also arranged for flute & marimba); *Toward the Sea II*, also from 1981, for alto flute, harp & string orchestra; and *Toward the Sea III*, a final version from 1989 for alto flute and harp without orchestra. (This final version we will hear tonight.) All three are written mostly in free time, with no bar lines (except in the second version, to facilitate conducting). The flute provides the primary thematic

material based, in part, on a motif spelling "sea" in German musical notation—Eb, E, A—a motif that reappears in several of Takemitsu's later works.

Complementing the Japanese cultural influences on display in *Toward the Sea* is a distinctly local inspiration: Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. While this might seem like a odd choice for a Greenpeace commission, Takemitsu sought to emphasize the spiritual dimension of the book. For Takemitsu, "meditation and water are wedded together." The three movement titles refer to the novel. *The Night* slowly emerges from breathy flute pitches to open the piece. *Moby Dick* follows with gentle harmonies floating around long tones in the flute, and *Cape Cod* settles into a faintly tonal conclusion.

Bridging east and west, combining Western and Eastern philosophy and aesthetics, and fusing sound and silence, Takemitsu forged a unique cross-cultural path. In a memorial issue of Contemporary Music Review, Jō Kondō wrote, "Needless to say, Takemitsu is among the most important composers in Japanese music history. He was also the first Japanese composer fully recognized in the west, and remained the guiding light for the younger generations of Japanese composers."

Though **Charles Ives** (1874-1954) might well likely find Takemitsu's music foreign, he would certainly find the novel that inspired *Toward the Sea* very familiar. Ives is a quintessential American maverick—as well as one of the first internationally known (and respected) American composers—and steeped in New England philosophical and spiritual traditions: transcendentalism and Protestantism. Though his experimental music was largely ignored earlier in his life, it was later assessed as precociously progressive by other mid-century, American modernists.

Ives was, in fact, much more well-known in his day for his accomplishments in a very different field: insurance. During his career as an insurance executive and actuary, Ives devised creative ways to structure life-insurance packages for people of means, which laid the foundation of the modern practice of estate planning. As a result, he achieved considerable fame in the insurance industry of his time, with many of his business peers surprised to learn that he was also a composer. Behind this square exterior, Ives, the composer, was quietly experimenting with everything from polytonality, tone clusters, and quarter tones to polyrhythms and aleatoric techniques. These proto-post-modernist experiments foreshadowed innovations later widely adopted during 20th century. As with some of the more established modernists, like Béla Bartók, Ives drew from sources outside the concert tradition, but unlike Bartók, he did not integrate these quotes into the compositional texture but juxtaposed them, sometimes aggressively, to dramatize their differences. He drew from the sounds of Americana, drawing particularly from New England Protestant culture, including hymn tunes, patriotic songs, and traditional ditties; the sounds of town bands at holiday parades; the swing of fiddlers at Saturday night

dances; and the croon of sentimental parlor ballads, including the melodies of Stephen Foster.

According to Ives' wife, the early **Piano Trio** was a reflection of Ives 'college days at Yale. He began composing it in 1904, during the sixth reunion of his Yale Class of 1898, and returned to it in 1911, making small changes and completing the final movement. The outer movements are more traditional in form. In the first, the same twenty-seven measures are repeated three times. The violin is silent for first rotation, the cello is silent for second, and all three instruments join for the third. The last—which features sweeping lyrical melodies that alternate with lighter syncopated sections after an opening introduction and violin recitative— is, in fact, a loose re-composition of a unison song Ives composed in college. Ives wrote this piece, called "The All-Enduring," for the Yale Glee Club, and when they refused to sing it he decided to include it in the lyrical violin-cello canon of this movement. The coda quotes Thomas Hastings' "Rock of Ages" in the cello.

The scherzo is a different matter entirely. The movement carries the designation "TSIAJ" which stands for "this scherzo is a joke." This contrasting romp, marked presto, features the full bag of Ivesian tricks—polytonality, timbral contrast, and quotation—for a brash and sometimes intentionally banal effect. Fragments of American folk songs appear tangled among themselves and grotesquely altered in rhythm, pitch, and harmony. The laundry list of quoted materials includes the folk songs "My Old Kentucky Home," "Sailor's Hornpipe," "The Campbells Are Coming," "Long, Long Ago," "Hold the Fort," and "There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood," among many others. Underlining the Yale connection, Ives also quotes a number of fraternity songs including the Delta Kappa Epsilon tune "A Band of Brothers in DKE," which appears prominently near the beginning of the movement.

All four composers on tonight's program reached across boundaries to craft works that, by their inspiration and construction, reflect a shared humanity despite difference. Their works showcase the beauty of cross-cultural exchange and expose the poverty in a destructive illusion of separateness.

Matthew Heck

MEMBERS

SARAH BOB, PIANO, hailed as "sumptuous and eloquent" by the *Boston Globe*, is an active soloist and chamber musician noted for her charismatic performances, colorful playing and diverse programming. A strong advocate for new music and considered a "superstar" by *National Sawdust*, she is the founding director of the New Gallery Concert Series, devoted to commissioning and uniting new music and contemporary visual art with their creators. The goal, her strong suit, is to introduce music in a loving, inclusive, and intoxicating way. Her recent album, *...nobody move...*, a selection of NGCS commissioned solo piano works from over the past twenty years, has quickly received international acclaim and is considered "a must listen" by the BBC Magazine. Inspired by current events, she is also the creator of The Nasty Cooperative, numerous dialogue-driven artistic events created to build community and help raise funds for organizations in need. In addition to Radius Ensemble, Sarah is an original member of her piano/percussion group, Primary Duo, and is faculty at the Longy School of Music of Bard College.

MIRIAM BOLKOSKY, CELLO, appears nationally as an orchestral and chamber musician. She has performed extensively with orchestras in Boston, New York, D.C. and Chicago, including Boston Lyric Opera, A Far Cry, Boston Pops, BMOP, Boston Ballet, ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, National Lyric Opera, and Lyric Opera of Chicago. She has appeared as soloist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the Paul Hill Chorale, and on classical and popular commercial recordings. A graduate of the University of Michigan and the Cleveland Institute of Music, Miriam maintains a large private studio and has held faculty positions at Northwestern and the Cleveland Institute of Music. She is also a Registered Yoga Teacher, Alexander Technique Teacher, and Coach.

SARAH BRADY, FLUTE, called "enchanting" (*Boston Globe*) and "clairvoyantly sensitive" (*New Music Connoisseur*), is principal flute with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project and Opera Boston, and appears with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Ballet, Portland Symphony Orchestra, Firebird Ensemble, Boston Musica Viva, The Cortona Collective, and Brave New Works. She has premiered and recorded new music from many of today's leading composers, including new music commissioned by Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Project. Sarah is the newly appointed Director of Contemporary Classical Music at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, where she is Associate Professor of Flute. She recently enjoyed a sold-out debut at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall with pianist Oxana Yablonskaya. Her chamber and orchestral recordings can be heard on the Albany, Naxos, Oxingale and Cantaloupe labels.

GABRIELA DÍAZ, VIOLIN, began her musical training at the age of five, studying piano with her mother, and the next year, violin with her father. She

studied at New England Conservatory, where she earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees under James Buswell. A cancer survivor, Gabriela is committed to cancer research and treatment. In 2004, she was awarded a grant from the Albert Schweitzer Foundation to organize a series of chamber music concerts in cancer units at various hospitals in Boston called the Boston Hope Ensemble. Devoted to contemporary music, Gabriela has worked closely with many significant living composers, including Pierre Boulez, Magnus Lindberg, Frederic Rzewski, Roger Reynolds, Alvin Lucier, John Zorn, Osvaldo Golijov, Steve Reich, Brian Ferneyhough, Hans Tutschku, and Helmut Lachenmann. Gabriela is a member of several Boston area new music groups, including Sound Icon, Ludovico Ensemble, Dinosaur Annex, Firebird Ensemble, and Callithumpian Consort. She is a member of the Wellesley College faculty and can be heard on New World, Naxos, Centaur, BMOP/Sound, Mode, and Tzadik records.

ERAN EGOZY, CLARINET, hailed as "sensitive and energetic" (*Boston Musical Intelligencer*), is a musician, entrepreneur, and educator. He is the co-founder and Chief Scientist of Harmonix Music Systems, which developed Guitar Hero, Rock Band, The Beatles: Rock Band, and Dance Central. Eran and his business partner are recipients of the Time 100, Fortune Magazine's "40 under 40" award, and USA Network's "Character Approved" award. Eran is currently Professor of the Practice in Music Technology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he teaches and conducts research on new forms of interactive computer and music systems. He holds degrees in electrical engineering and music from MIT studied clarinet with Jonathan Cohler and William Wrzesien at New England Conservatory. He has performed as soloist with the MIT Symphony Orchestra and has appeared with Emmanuel Music, A Far Cry, Winsor Music, and the Worcester Chamber Players.

NORIKO FUTAGAMI, VIOLA, enjoys a distinguished career as a versatile and prolific soloist, orchestral and chamber musician. She is Principal Violist for the Albany Symphony, an ensemble with numerous world premiere performances and recordings, and plays with their Dogs of Desire contemporary ensemble as well as the New Jersey Symphony. Now living in the Greater Boston area, she serves as Assistant Principal Violist for the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra. Her dynamic virtuosity, combined with a passion for new music, has led to collaborations with the Boston Ballet Orchestra, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Boston Musica Viva, Radius Ensemble and Winsor Music Chamber Series.

ANNE HOWARTH, HORN, is a freelance horn player and chamber musician, appearing regularly in area ensembles including the wind quintet Vento Chiaro, Juventas New Music Ensemble, Lexington Symphony, Plymouth Philharmonic Orchestra, and Portland Symphony Orchestra. Anne is not only a founding member of Radius Ensemble, but also serves as its outreach director. She teaches horn and coaches chamber music at Boston Conservatory at Berklee and Tufts University, maintains a private studio, and is on the horn faculty of the New England Conservatory Preparatory



and Continuing Education divisions, and the Brookline Music School. Anne studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich and holds degrees from Oberlin College, Oberlin College Conservatory, and New England Conservatory. She is currently fascinated by transformation and the way it is represented in music.

JENNIFER MONTBACH, OBOE, is the founder and artistic director of Radius Ensemble, named Boston's Best (2016) by the *Improper Bostonian*, in residence at the Longy School of Bard College since 2011. She has been acclaimed for her "energetic and eclectic" programs that have "attracted a younger, more diverse audience" *(Boston Globe)*, winning the ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming from Chamber Music America in 2013. Jen curated and produced the Ensemble's debut album, *Fresh Paint*, and has commissioned and premiered more than twenty new works in her role as artistic director. As an oboist, she is known for her "evocative lyricism and nuanced phrasing" *(Bay Windows);* she has appeared with orchestras and ensembles throughout New England, and has held administrative positions at the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. She holds a Bachelor of Arts *cum laude* from Harvard College and a Master of Music in oboe performance from New England Conservatory. Jen founded and produces the West Concord Porchfest, and is also a volunteer with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, where she mentors families of children newly diagnosed with type 1 diabetes.

ADRIAN MOREJON, BASSOON, praised for his "teeming energy" and "precise control" by the *New York Times* and having "every note varnished to a high gloss" by the *Boston Globe*, is New York-based soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral musician. As a soloist, Adrian has appeared in New York, Boston, Vienna, Prague, Memphis, and Miami with the Talea Ensemble, IRIS Orchestra, Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), and the Miami Symphony. Morejon will be featured in recordings of Harold Meltzer's Full Faith and Credit, double concerto for two bassoons and string orchestra, and Joan Tower's Bassoon Concerto *Red Maple*, to be released by BMOP/Sound. Adrian is a member of the Dorian Wind Quintet, Talea Ensemble, Radius Ensemble, bassoon duo Dark & Stormy, and the Gene Project, and has appeared with numerous other chamber ensembles and festivals. He is co-principal of IRIS Orchestra and has performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), the Boston Pops, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, The Knights, and others. Adrian holds degrees from Yale School of Music and the Curtis Institute of Music. He currently teaches at SUNY Purchase, CUNY Brooklyn College and CUNY Hunter College.

GUEST ARTIST

INA ZDOROVETCHI, HARP, is principal harpist of the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, Portland Symphony Orchestra, Boston Modern Orchestra Project and Boston Lyric Opera. She has appeared as soloist with numerous orchestras around the world including The Boston Pops, Westdeutscher Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester Köln, Jerusalem Symphony, Haifa Symphony, and the Seattle Chamber Orchestra (among many others) and has been presented by Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, Celebrity Series of Boston, Savannah Music Festival, Rockport Chamber Music and more. Honors include Alien with Extraordinary Abilities in the Arts from the U.S. government, Outstanding Music Faculty of the year from Boston Conservatory, and multiple awards at the 17th International Harp Contest in Israel. Educated in the USA, Romania and her native Moldova, she holds degrees from New England Conservatory, Boston University, Boston Conservatory, Bucharest University of Music and "Ciprian Porumbescu" Lyceum of Music (double-majoring in harp and piano). When not practicing, or performing, Ina Zdorovetchi enjoys spending her free time on a quiet Florida beach, voraciously reading on her favorite subjects: psychology, financial markets and kinesics.

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