



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA

GROUP 11

48th Annual Benefit Concert

Sunday, December 10, 2023, at 3 PM

Christ & St. Stephen's Church

120 W. 69th St, NYC

Observing the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Awarding of the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize to Narges Mohammadi

Roger Aplon, narrator

Clara Cho, cello

Arthur Cook, cello

Marcia Eckert, piano

Deborah Gilwood, piano

Debra Kaye, piano

Sara Paar, soprano

Program

Invocation, a call for peace (2006) Kim D. Sherman
Sara Paar, Clara Cho, Marcia Eckert

An Aria for the Executive Order (2017) Niloufar Nourbakhsh
Sara Paar and Marcia Eckert

Veiled, for cello and electronics (2019) Niloufar Nourbakhsh
Clara Cho, cello

Ukraine, 2022 (2022) Debra Kaye
Text by Roger Aplon
Debra Kaye and Roger Aplon

Intermission

La Frontera* (2021) Judith Shatin
Sara Paar and Marcia Eckert

Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 50 (1929) Ernst Toch
Allegro commodo
Intermezzo "Die Spinne" (The Spider), Andante
Allegro

Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus (Praise to the Eternity of Jesus) Olivier Messiaen
from *Quartet for the End of Time* (1940-41)
Arthur Cook and Deborah Gilwood

**World Premiere*

Kim D. Sherman composes for theater, opera, concert, and film. She embraces lyricism and dissonance as equal partners in her musical storytelling. Her book of piano solos, *UNFATHOMABLE THINGS*, was published in 2021. She has written numerous song cycles for voice and instruments. Ms Sherman studied music at Lawrence University and composition with Thea Musgrave. She is a regular volunteer composer for The 52nd Street Project. She is currently at work on *BLUESTEM*, a chamber opera based on the writings of Willa Carter, and *MY DEAR SUSY CLEMENS* (A Twain Family Christmas,) a holiday musical. www.kdsherman.com

INVOCATION – Composer’s note

Invocation was premiered on March 27, 2006, at St. Bartholomew’s Church in New York City. “Make peace on all your lands” is sung in thirteen different languages. Originally written for Soprano, Flute, Violin and Cello, this iteration of INVOCATION was created for today’s concert.

Award winning composer, pianist, decipherist, **Niloufar Nourbakhsh**, is grateful to live and work as an artist in collaboration with different people in the world, through different mediums and forms. Community is central to her existence and artistic process. She has multiple artistic families including Iranian Female Composers Association - IFCA, Emruz Festival and Ensemble Decipher. Her works have been performed at numerous festivals and venues. Ms Nourbakhsh teaches composition at Longy School of Music of Bard College. Her name in Persian means a water lily that gives light. <https://niloufarnourbakhsh.com/>

AN ARIA FOR THE EXECUTIVE ORDER – Composer’s note

An Aria For The Executive Order is my attempt to understand how masses of people can be stripped of their basic humanity by the banality of ignorance. The text is lifted directly from the original Travel Ban, signed by Donald Trump, and two quotes from Philip Roth’s 2010 novel *Nemesis*.

VEILED – Composer’s note

I think it takes a lot of courage to stand up against something that everyone has accepted as normal. Personally as an Iranian woman, I carry a lot of anger with me: the anger that comes from things I’ve witnessed happen to the women in my personal life, to larger scale growing up in a country that actively veils women’s presence — be it through compulsory hijab or banning solo female singers from pursuing a professional career. I think for me it’s important to transform this anger into a collective force that is both beautiful and resilient. Veiled is a tribute to Iranian women who made such transformations possible.

Composer and pianist **Debra Kaye’s** works range from lyrical to grooving, experimental to coloristic, but above all, expressive and deeply felt. Classical-Modern Music Review praises her 2023 Navona release, *Ikarus Among the Stars* saying “...each work is a gem”. Winner of 6 Global Music Awards, she has received many commissions and grants. Ms Kaye serves on the board of the New York Women Composers and is an Associate Director with Composers Concordance. Her debut album *And So It Begins* (Ravello) was described as “...inspirational, an album that will surely stand the test of time” (babysue.com). <https://debrakayecomposer.com>

UKRAINE 2022 – Composer’s note

Throughout the crisis in Ukraine, I have been inspired by the spirit of the Ukrainian people. In *Ukraine 2022*, the piano serves as musical accompaniment to Roger Aplon’s powerful text that so vividly portrays a sense of their daily life. The piano reflects on the writer’s words in a postlude that includes strains of the Ukrainian National Anthem, We Shall Overcome and Bach’s *Wachet Auf*.

Born in Chicago, **Roger Aplon** has had fourteen books published: One of prose poems; short fiction: *Intimacies*, thirteen of poetry, most recently *The Omnipotent Sorcerer*, *Burn Baby Burn* ; and *The Beethoven Project*. Many of his poems confront social, political injustices and conflicts. He’s been awarded many prizes and honors. After an eight year writing retreat in Barcelona, Spain, he now makes his home in Beacon, New York, where he edits and publishes a poetry magazine: “Waymark – Voices of the Valley” and is at work on revising an earlier collection – *It’s Mother’s Day*. You can read and hear examples of his work at: www.rogeraplton.com

Judith Shatin is renowned for music that spans acoustic, electroacoustic and digital realms. Called “highly inventive on every level” by The Washington Post, her music combines an adventurous approach to timbre with dynamic narrative design. She has turned increasingly to current issues in her music, including immigration and the

environment. Shatin has been commissioned by many prestigious organizations and won many honors, and her music is recorded on more than 30 albums. Shatin is William R. Kenan Jr. Professor Emerita at the University of Virginia, where she founded the Virginia Center for Computer Music. www.judithshatin.com

LA FRONTERA – Composer’s note

I composed La Frontera because of my concern about the terrible experiences of so many trying to immigrate to the US, especially those from South and Central America. The text, from Dreaming America, is by an unnamed youth trying to immigrate and winding up in maximum security detention.

Deborah Gilwood has appeared as a soloist as well as a collaborator with numerous orchestras and ensembles, including the Long Island Philharmonic, Brooklyn Philharmonia, and Solisti New York. As an active chamber musician, Ms. Gilwood has performed with a number of groups and was a co-founder of the Blue Door Chamber Music series on Cape Cod. She has taught piano at Smith College, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Westfield State University, Seton Hall University in NJ, and is currently on the piano faculty of Mt. Holyoke College. Since 2007 Deborah has been on the faculty of Pianophilia! in NYC. She lives in Amherst, MA.

Cellist **Arthur Cook** has appeared as a chamber musician and soloist in numerous summer festivals, including Sandpoint, Meadowmount, Yale-at-Norfolk, Rutgers, Apple Hill, Taos, and Provincetown. He appears regularly on the North Shore Pro Musica chamber music series and with Blue Mountain Festival in concerts at Franklin Marshall College. He has recently performed in a series of online chamber music concerts and solo cello concerts. Mr. Cook has been on the faculties of Seton Hall University and Smith College. He is a free-lance cellist in the New York metropolitan area and teaches privately from his studio in Jersey City.

Cellist Arthur Cook and pianist Deborah Gilwood have been playing together since 1985. They recorded this program’s Toch Sonata on their CD entitled *Censored by Hitler: The Rediscovered Masterpieces*, on the Centaur record label. About this CD, Fonofone Magazine wrote “Their performance is full of intensity...a performance deserving wide attention from the public.”

Ernst Toch (1887-1964)

A celebrated avant-garde composer of the rich cultural scene of Weimar Germany after WWI, Ernst Toch fled Germany in 1933 and after that was never able to live up to his musical promise.

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

Quartet for the End of Time was composed and performed during the nine months that Messiaen was interned in a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany after France was invaded in 1940.

Clara Cho is a Korean cellist based in New York City. Committed to a diverse array of both classical and new music, she is a fierce advocate of the music of our time, working closely with living composers to develop emerging repertoire and presenting new works in the context of innovative performance programs. Clara holds BM and MM degrees from Manhattan School of Music, studying under Julia Lichten, and is continuing her education at MSM under the tutelage of Philippe Muller, working towards a Professional Studies certificate.

Marcia Eckert is active as a collaborative pianist and has appeared in the Mostly Mozart Festival, as well as at Merkin, Alice Tully, and Weill concert halls, and London’s Leighton House. She has been referred to as “a pianist of impressive skill and sensitivity, the sort of keyboard collaborator that every instrumentalist dreams of” (Scott Cantrell, *Albany Times-Union*). She has taught at Hunter College and Mannes Prep and maintains a large private studio in Manhattan. She is the founder and director of *Pianophilia!*, a summer piano intensive for adults, which began in 2004. <http://marciaeckert.com>

Acclaimed as “sensitive to every expression in the text” (*New York Concert Review*), soprano **Sara Paar** is an interpreter of contemporary classical music and opera. She has performed both traditional and new works with several New York-based ensembles. With Ensemble 365, Ms. Paar has released the critically acclaimed CD Eastern Currents (Romeo Records) and was also featured on the recently released CD of Marga Richter’s vocal music. She serves as Co-Chair of the Board of Directors for the New York Women Composers, Inc. and on the music faculty at Fordham. <http://sarapaar.com>

Texts and Translations

Invocation

Make peace on all your lands,
in Arabic, English, Hebrew, Italian,
Japanese, Hindi, French, Greek, Spanish,
German and Latin
Peace,
In Serbian, Chinese, Farsi, Italian, Hindi,
German, French, Hebrew, Arabic and
English

An Aria for the Executive Order

(Text lifted directly from the original Travel Ban and two quotations from Philip Roth's novel *Nemesis*.)

you had to be there
to see what it looked like
they lived in a dream
and we lived in a nightmare
I hereby suspend entry into the United States of such persons for ninety days
what I wanted was the tiniest thing to be like everyone else
the United States should not admit those who engage in acts of bigotry or hatred or those who would oppress Americans of any race gender or sexual orientation
the terror of the unforeseen is what the science of history hides
turning a disaster into an epic
Ah! No Ban No Wall America Resist (chant)

Ukraine 2022

(Text by Roger Aplon)

It Begins With A Question:
*What is it
eviscerates morality,
invites the birth of a beast where a taxi-
driver, plumber or
an accountant, once lived
a humane life?*

***The first was a young boy. The doctors registered him as Unknown No.1*

I'm here. Room 32.
I've removed the shrapnel from his chest & legs & arms & now
I insert a breathing tube & crank up the machine
to do the work.
I've been here thirty-six hours & am headed home to the subway
where my mother & sister crouch among their slim necessities:
paper to clean ourselves, water, toothbrush, blanket.
"I'm here too," says my daughter. Now six, she has a doll, pink shoes, a Minnie Mouse barrette & a CD player that's run out of juice.
She hopes for a night,
when she can dream of summer.
I'm an anonymous soldier. Before, I was a candy maker.
Today, we lifted an old man across the gap to the arms of his shuddering wife of fifty years. They carried bread & a bible.
I've shot men & watched them die. Once our brother Slavs, they've come to war & worse: they've slaughtered our innocents, stacked them like cordwood,
left us
the vacant stares of women raped by squads of men,
left us babies
decapitated & strung like gourds from street-signs & lampposts . . .
Our killer's corpses lay stiff & broken,
in the ditches.
Once
husbands, fathers, sons & lovers – like us . . .

Texts and Translations

Just
like us
Who can say
What it is
eviscerates morality,
invites the birth of a beast where a taxi-
driver, plumber or
an accountant, once lived
a humane life?

La Frontera (The Border)

(Text by an undocumented youth
imprisoned in an American maximum
security detention center).

Translation by Seth Michelson

un lugar a que todo el mundo vamos al
tener un
sueño
y ver a mi familia feliz
pero no nos dejan llegar a la frontera por
ser de
otro país
y me pregunto por qué
si todos somos seres humanos somos
los mismos
no tenemos papeles
porque estamos en el mismo mundo
tenemos
sentimientos iguales
el color de piel es diferente
pero eso no quiere decir que no somos
iguales es que en este
país en mi país
hay mucha gente racista
el ser blanco, el ser negro no
quiere decir
que somos iguales somos todos
iguales tenemos la misma mente
la misma meta
el caminar días por el desierto al
inmigrar nos agarra

a place the whole world goes
when we
dream
and want to see our families happy
but they don't let us reach the border
because
we're from other countries
and I ask myself why
if we're all human beings if we're
all the same don't we have
papers too
because we're all in the same world have
the
same feelings
though our skin colors may differ
but that doesn't mean we're not the same it
means that
in this country in my country there are lots
of racists
to be white, to be black doesn't mean
we are unequal
we're equal
we have the same thoughts the
same goal
to walk for days across the desert called to
immigrate