



FRED HO



NEIL ROLNICK



NED MCGOWAN



KEERIL MAKAN



EVAN ZIPORYN



american composers orchestra

ORCHESTRA UNDERGROUND: X10D

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Welcome to Orchestra Underground: X10D, an album that explores the extreme ends of what's possible when some uncommon solo instruments join the orchestra as soloist. This album contains five works by as many composers featuring music for unusual instruments that extend the range and sonic possibilities of an otherwise acoustic orchestra.

Three of the pieces are what we might call “bottom-feeders,” as they explore and gather their power from the extreme low register. Evan Ziporyn demonstrates the virtuosic possibilities of the bass clarinet, integrating his own ideas with influences ranging from Balinese Gamelan to jazz to Stravinsky, in his Big Grenadilla. Fred Ho makes “real dragons fly” in a tour-de-force and call-to-action for baritone saxophone and orchestra that combines Chinese folk song with an avant-jazz perspective. Perhaps the most unusual instrument on this album is the seldom-heard contrabass flute, an instrument that, in the hands of Ned McGowan, is capable of everything from near breathless calm to driving bass riffs that propel the orchestra forward.

The other two works on the album partner electric instruments with the orchestra. Keeril Makan's Dream Lightly features the electric guitar of Seth Josel. But you won't find any amped-up power chords here, only the most delicate and ethereal of guitar harmonics, making the piece an almost anti-concerto. Finally, Neil Rolnick, a pioneer in electronic music, introduces us to the cyborg-fiddle he created with soloist Todd Reynolds, an instrument that seamlessly takes us from flashy Pagagini-esque pyrotechnics to cyberspace.

Each of the five pieces was commissioned and premiered by ACO for Orchestra Underground, its entrepreneurial ensemble and concert series at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall that seeks to re-invent and re-imagine the orchestra with unusual instruments, eclectic influences, new collaborations and technologies, and important new compositional voices.

More information about American Composers Orchestra can be found at www.americancomposers.org.



Keeril Makan: Dream Lightly for electric guitar & orchestra

In Dream Lightly, we are placed in a world that is beautifully paralyzed, or perhaps paralyzed by beauty. The music does not move; it has fallen asleep but is not aware of it. It is stuck in a continual repetition of similar thoughts, slightly changing and rearranging them, cast in subtly changing environments.

The guitarist almost always plays harmonics—notes produced by lightly touching the string at certain points to create sounds that sound higher and more fragile than ordinary pitches. The world of harmonics hovers above the guitar, oftentimes slightly, but purposefully, out of tune with instruments played in a conventional manner. The traditional tuning of the orchestra reflects a desire to move forward, to be able to modulate, and is a compromise between this desire and the way vibrating strings and air columns naturally work. The tuning of harmonics is derived from the open string; it is a static world, complete unto itself.

The piece explores the dissonance that exists between the harmonics on different strings of the guitar, as well as between the tuning of the guitar's harmonics and the tuning of the orchestra. All of the music is derived from or in response to the guitar. It is not a concerto in the traditional sense, as the soloist and the orchestra are not antagonists. Rather, it is as if the orchestra exists inside of the guitarist's head, helping, supporting, and coloring. There is a passage where the guitarist gently strums the instrument, not playing harmonics. Whether this is a moment of clarity or a deeper sleep is uncertain. After this, the music returns to its initial thoughts but eventually pushes forward, whether to wakefulness or deeper slumber, is again uncertain.



Described by The New Yorker as “an arrestingly gifted young American composer,” Keeril Makan has been featured composer at the Other Minds Festival in San Francisco, the MATA Festival in New York, and the Gaudeamus Festival in the Netherlands. His music has been performed by the Bang on a Can All-Stars, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, International Contemporary Ensemble, California E.A.R. Unit, Scharoun Ensemble Berlin, Argento Ensemble, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, Either/Or, and the New Juilliard Ensemble. His first CD, *In Sound*, was released on the Tzadik label with performances by the Kronos Quartet and Paul Drescher Ensemble. His music has also been recorded on Innova and Carrier Records. Makan is recipient of a 2012 Guggenheim Fellowship, as well as prizes from the American Academy in Rome, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Fromm Foundation, Hewlett

Foundation, Meet the Composer, Aaron Copland House and ASCAP. After training as a violinist, he received degrees in composition and religion from Oberlin and completed his PhD in composition at the University of California–Berkeley. He also studied at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, and in Paris. Makan is Associate Professor of Music at MIT.

Evan Ziporyn: Big Grenadilla for bass clarinet & orchestra

Big Grenadilla is my second bass clarinet and large ensemble work: previously, I composed and performed *Drill* for bass clarinet and wind ensemble, casting myself in the role of drill sergeant, leading the troops through a vigorous basic training.

Bass clarinet is the instrument I know best, thrust into my hands in high school, and never far from me since. It’s a life partner, and I write for it as I would write for another musician, ideally using my music to reveal the instrument’s own physical and spiritual character. In practical terms, the vocabulary of the music is contoured to the acoustic characteristics of the horn, rather than the other way around. Grenadilla is a dense, strong dark wood that is often mistaken for ebony. It is the primary wood for many instruments, including the bass clarinet, whose bottom joint alone is a single piece 30 inches in length. 60 years ago, Woody Herman premiered Stravinsky’s pocket-sized *Ebony Concerto*. Title aside, I claim no conscious connection to this masterpiece, but simply bow my head in homage.

Evan Ziporyn makes music at the crossroads between genres and cultures, east and west. He studied at Eastman, Yale and University of California–Berkeley with Joseph Schwantner, Martin Bresnick, and Gerard

Grisey. He first traveled to Bali in 1981 to study Gamelan. Ziporyn has been a featured member of Bang on a Can since 1987, touring the globe and premiering over 100 commissioned works. Ziporyn joined the MIT faculty in 1990, where founded Gamelan Galak Tika in 1993, beginning a series of groundbreaking compositions for Gamelan and western instruments. As a clarinetist, Ziporyn recorded the definitive version of Steve Reich’s multi-clarinet *NY Counterpoint* in 1996, sharing in that ensemble’s Grammy in 1998. In 2001 his solo clarinet CD, *This is Not A Clarinet*, made Top Ten lists across the country. He has been commissioned by Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road, Kronos Quartet, So Percussion, BMOP as well as ACO. He received the 2007 USA Artists Walker Award and the 2004 American Academy of Arts and Letters Lieberman Fellowship. Recordings have also been released on Sony Classical, New Albion, and New World.



Fred Ho:
When the Real Dragons Fly!
for baritone saxophone & orchestra

The title of this work is based on a traditional Chinese folksong used to say farewell. When the Real Dragons Fly! is a farewell to obstructionists and gatekeepers who prevent the real creative forces in humanity. It is a liberation song—allowing people who've been held down, blockaded, obstructed, disappeared, marginalized, and ignored to fly and soar. It is dedicated to all imaginative forces that want to work together to bring about human liberation—trying to free humanity from slavish consumption of both unneeded material items as well as foolish items.

This is my first “outing” with a traditional Western-European orchestra. I've written for unique ensembles involving western instruments before but never had an interest in writing for standard configurations of Western-European genres.

This performer-composer relationship allows me to use an extreme amount of extended techniques and improvisation and keep the orchestra more defined in their standard practices. The time and long-term relationship required for developing any sort of improvisatory relationship with the orchestra is nearly impossible, so I have approached this from the point of view of letting myself explore the cosmos, and I am the foil. Any good composer can use the forces they have and develop an architectural plan and ground strategy that is suitable for the capacity of the players. For example, writing for cross-culture instruments (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc.) you must understand the abilities of all those instruments, the architecture, etc.,

and you have to know their characteristics, capabilities, and capacities. With this architectural plan—as with any multi-cultural endeavor—you must know the elements you are dealing with and respect them. You must add your own creativity and imagination to stretch them but know they can't become what they are not. They are what they are.



Fred Ho is a revolutionary baritone saxophonist, composer, band leader, writer, producer and matriarchal socialist and aspiring Luddite. He has 20 CDs released as a leader, has had six books published, his latest entitled Diary of a Radical Cancer Warrior: Fighting Cancer and Capitalism at the Cellular Level. His latest CD is Year of the Tiger and Deadly She-Wolf Assassin at Armageddon! Recently, he was commissioned by the Tanglewood Festival for Fanfare to Stop the Creeping Meatball. His new big band, dance and video

performance epic, Sweet Science Suite: A Scientific Soul Music Honoring of Muhammad Ali was premiered at the Guggenheim Museum and the Brooklyn College Center for the Performing Arts in November 2011. Ho has received numerous awards, including two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, six Rockefeller Foundation fellowships, three New York Foundation for the Arts fellowships, the Harvard Arts Medal, the American Music Center Letter of Distinction, and the Revolutionary Lifetime Award.

Ned McGowan:
Bantammer Swing
for contrabass flute & orchestra

The contrabass flute is the larger cousin of the normal flute, sounding two octaves below and taking up four times as much space. It's largely unknown in the classical repertoire, and Bantammer Swing is likely the first ever solo concerto written for it. The piece is a standard concerto form of three movements with a cadenza. That being the case, my main goal as a composer was to try to show off some of its qualities – the singing highs, the velvety middles, the rich lows, and also some of its possibilities for extended techniques. Having played the smaller flute for many years before becoming a composer, I was immediately attracted to the low notes on the contrabass flute and the various musical roles possible at the low end of the frequency spectrum.

Regarding the title, I recently moved to a different house after living in a little Amsterdam attic apartment on the Binnen Bantammer Street. I chose the title to commemorate my time there and because most of the voices in Bantammer Swing are the ones developed during that period.



“Ned McGowan’s music strives for an idiom in which various musics—American popular, European classical, avant-garde, and Carnatic [South Indian music], a fascination with proportionally intricate rhythms, the use of microtones in the search for new subtleties of melody rub against each other and generate new meanings,” according to musicologist Bob Gilmore. McGowan studied flute at the San Francisco Conservatory and the Cleveland Institute of Music, then moved to Amsterdam, studying both flute and composition. In 2007, his fascination with Carnatic music led to extended stays in India studying performance, rhythm and composition. “What fascinates me is the Carnatic use of rhythmical complexities developed through a tradition of performance.” But despite whatever complexity McGowan might write, his music is written with both the performers and the listeners in mind. In his debut in Carnegie Hall with ACO, he “proved there’s

still plenty of life in old-fashioned virtuosity with Bantammer Swing, a playful, athletic concerto for his unwieldy contrabass flute,” according to The New York Times.

Neil Rolnick: iFiddle Concerto for violin, electronics & orchestra

During the writing of this piece, the biggest event in my life was the birth of my first grandson. Besides the general good feeling of welcoming a new being into the world, Jake’s arrival left me thinking a lot about time and the way in which knowledge and values are transmitted across generations, how my memories of my own grandfather, who was born more than a century ago, will be transmitted to my grandson, who I hope will take them many decades into the future. This is all very heady stuff to try to make relevant to an 18-minute piece for violin, computer, and orchestra. But it is relevant to the piece in a number of ways.

First, as I began to work on the piece, I found myself in a kind of middle ground between the past and the future. From the past, the idea of making a real concerto was very appealing. As I think of the concerto from the 19th century, it is a virtuoso vehicle that sets up a competitive binary relationship between soloist and the orchestra. Second, thinking towards the future, this isn’t just a concerto for violin, but a concerto for a cyborg violin that has been intimately joined to a computer. For the last few years, I’ve been deeply involved in writing work that explores this kind of relationship between instruments and computer—that uses the computer to expand the already substantial expressive abilities of virtuoso players.

Perhaps inspired by my grandson, I’ve tried to approach the writing of this piece with a kind of fresh look at how my materials can work together. As new babies spend time figuring out each and every bit of their world—how to control their heads and hands and feet, how to identify their parents and themselves, how to smile and laugh—I’ve tried to dramatize the encounter between soloist and ensemble by thinking of it as a process of constant discovery.

Part of the discovery has been the dialog I’ve had with Todd Reynolds, the soloist in the piece. Todd and I have worked together in many different ways over more than a decade, and I’ve seen his initial interest in getting to know more about music technology develop into a deep engagement with the computer as a natural extension of his music making and violin playing. This makes for the possibility of working in a serious way to re-define what a violinist might do musically when the instrument



is paired up with a computer. Although originally I thought of this as a concerto for violin, computer, and orchestra, I've now begun to think of it as a concerto for a new kind of instrument, one that combines the computer and violin into a single musical instrument. I've thought of it as a cyborg violin, but Todd and I began referring to it as an iFiddle.

So, maybe as I watch a new kid learn about his world by exploring it day to day, I tried to learn about the iFiddle by exploring it in the old world of the concerto form. On an emotional level, the music I write invariably reflects what I'm feeling when I write it. For whatever joyfulness you hear in the piece, you probably have my grandson to thank.

A pioneer in the use of computers in performance since the late 1970s, Neil Rolnick often includes unexpected and unusual combinations of media in his work. Whether working with electronic sounds, improvisation, or multimedia, his music has been characterized by critics as "sophisticated," "hummable and engaging," and as having "good senses of showmanship and humor." Rolnick's performances included concerts in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Vienna and New York. He completed 50 Fugue and Numb, both part of the extended media performance MONO in 2012. That same year he was awarded the Hoefer Prize from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Innova Recordings released *The Economic Engine* in 2009, which was cited as one of the year's outstanding classical CDs in the *New York Times*. He has also received a New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship, and residencies at the MacDowell Colony and the Ucross Foundation. In January 2011 Innova Recordings released his 16th CD, *Extended Family*. Rolnick teaches at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY, where he founded the iEAR Studios.

THE ARTISTS

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA

American Composers Orchestra (ACO), founded in 1977, is the only orchestra in the world dedicated to the creation, performance, preservation, and promulgation of music by American composers. ACO makes the creation of new opportunities for American composers and new American orchestral music its central purpose. ACO identifies today's brightest emerging composers, champions prominent established composers as well as those lesser known, and increases awareness of the infinite variety of American orchestral music, reflecting geographic, stylistic, and temporal diversity. ACO also serves as an incubator of ideas, research, and talent and as a catalyst for growth and change among orchestras, and advocates for American composers and their music. ACO has performed music by nearly 600 American composers, including 200 world premieres and commissioned works. ACO maintains an unparalleled

range of activities, including an annual concert series at Carnegie Hall, commissions, recordings, broadcasts and streaming, educational programs, new music reading sessions, composer residencies and fellowships, as well as special projects designed to advance the field. More information is available at www.americancomposers.org.

BRAD LUBMAN, CONDUCTOR

Brad Lubman has gained widespread recognition over the past two decades for his versatility, commanding technique, and insightful interpretations. He has worked with a variety of illustrious musical figures including Pierre Boulez, Oliver Knussen, Steve Reich, and John Zorn.

Lubman's conducting engagements include major orchestras such as the Finnish Radio Symphony, Swedish Radio Symphony, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, New World Symphony and St. Paul Chamber Orchestra as well as ACO. Lubman is Music Director of the new music



ensemble Signal, founded in 2008 and hailed by The New York Times as “one of the most vital groups of its kind.” Lubman is Associate Professor of Conducting and Ensembles at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where he has directed the Musica Nova ensemble since joining the faculty in 1997. He is also on the faculty of the Bang on a Can Summer Institute.

JEFFREY MILARSKY, CONDUCTOR

Jeffrey Milarsky, a leading conductor of contemporary music, is a frequent collaborator with ACO, having served as both percussionist and assistant conductor with the orchestra. In the U.S. and abroad, he has premiered and recorded works by contemporary composers, including Charles Wuorinen, Fred Lerdahl, Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter, Gerard Grisey, Jonathan Dawe, Tristan Murail, Ralph Shapey, Luigi Nono, Mario Davidovsky, and Wolfgang Rihm. Milarsky is Music Director and Conductor of the Columbia University Orchestra. He is also on the faculty of The Manhattan School of Music, as well as The Juilliard School, where he is Music Director of AXIOM contemporary ensemble, and a member of the conducting faculty. Milarsky has worked with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York City Opera, and Bergen Philharmonic in Norway. Recent performances include IRCAM in Paris, Tanglewood, and Carnegie Hall, where he substituted for James Levine in an all Elliott Carter program in honor of his 100th birthday.

STEVEN SLOANE, CONDUCTOR

Steven Sloane, ACO’s principal guest conductor, is one of the most adventurous conductors to have emerged in recent years. His passion for unusual repertoire, interest in eclectic juxtapositions of music of divergent eras and styles, commitment to contemporary works, and willingness to challenge convention have established Sloane as a bold champion of the future of concert music. Sloane made his Carnegie Hall debut with ACO in 2002, serving as ACO’s music director until 2007, leading the

orchestra in dozens of world premiere performances at Carnegie Hall and Jazz at Lincoln Center. He is General Music Director of the City of Bochum Symphony (Germany), and has also served as Music Director of the Spoleto Festival, USA. Sloane’s engagements include the Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lyon, Berlin, San Francisco Symphony, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Munich and Bavarian Radio orchestras, the orchestra of the Komische Oper Berlin, the Berlin Philharmonic, Orchestra del Teatro di San Carlo Naples, City of Birmingham Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, London Philharmonia and the Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra.

SETH JOSEL, ELECTRIC GUITAR

Seth Josel has performed with such leading orchestras and ensembles as the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Southwest German Radio Orchestra, and the Schönberg Ensemble of Amsterdam, and has appeared at major festivals including Salzburg Festspiele, Ars Musica, Donaueschingen, The Holland Festival, Munich Biennale and London’s South Bank Festival. From 1991-2000 he was a member of the Ensemble Musikfabrik NRW. He is a founding member of the Catch Electric Guitar Quartet, based in Amsterdam. Josel has collaborated such composers as Mauricio Kagel, Helmut Lachenmann, Tristan Murail, Phill Niblock and James Tenney. In 1995 he released his first solo CD on for Composers Recordings, Inc. He recorded Berio’s Sequenza XI for the complete Sequenza cycle released on Mode Records in 2006. Recently, a rare compilation of new art music for electric guitar was featured on New World Records. Josel studied at the Manhattan School of Music, and was the first guitarist to earn a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Yale. His teachers included Manuel Barrueco and Eliot Fisk.

TODD REYNOLDS, VIOLIN

Todd Reynolds has been hailed by critics as “New York’s reigning classical/jazz violinist.” He is a fixture on New York’s downtown scene, playing with the Bang on a Can All-Stars, the Steve Reich Ensemble, and as a founding member of the Mahavishnu Project. Reynolds is a co-founder of the New York-based string quartet Ethel, and he has premiered works by dozens of American Composers. After studying under the legendary violinist Jascha Heifetz, and receiving degrees from the Eastman School of Music and SUNY Stony Brook, Reynolds served as Principal Second Violinist of the Rochester Philharmonic. His career has included performances, recordings, and collaborations with a huge and diverse list of prominent figures including Yo-Yo Ma, Uri Caine, John Cale, Steve Coleman, Joe Jackson, Graham Nash, Marcus Roberts, Wayne Shorter, and Cassandra Wilson.



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innovating right before your ears

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ACO's recording initiative is made possible with the support of the Aaron Copland Fund for Music.

Ned McGowan commissioned by The Brannen-Cooper Fund. Keeril Makan, Neil Rolnick and Evan Ziporyn commissioned by American Composers Orchestra. Fred Ho commissioned by American Composers Orchestra with the support of the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts.

Orchestra Underground: X10D

- 1 Dream Lightly** Keeril Makan 13:50
Seth Josel, electric guitar
Jeffrey Milarsky, conductor
- 2 Big Grenadilla** Evan Ziporyn 15:45
Evan Ziporyn, bass clarinet
Brad Lubman, conductor
- 3 When the Real Dragons Fly!** Fred Ho 12:06
Fred Ho, baritone saxophone
Jeff Milarsky, conductor
- 4 Bantammer Swing** Ned McGowan 18:12
I. / II. / III.
Ned McGowan, contrabass flute
Jeffrey Milarsky, conductor
- 5 iFiddle Concerto** Neil Rolnick 18:58
Todd Reynolds, violin
Neil Rolnick, electronics
Steven Sloane, conductor

Rolnick recorded live on March 17, 2006. Ziporyn recorded live on October 13, 2006.
McGowan recorded live on April 27, 2008. Makan and Ho recorded live on November 16, 2008.
Bantammer Swing was first released on ACO's Playing It UNSafe album in 2011.

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