



Northwestern University Cello Ensemble
shadow, echo, memory

Shadow, Echo, Memory is a collection of nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first century music arranged and written for cello ensemble. It draws its inspiration from the cello itself—that is, in the instrument's mysterious captivating force. Many believe the power of the cello lies in its ability to capture the range and timbral qualities of the human voice. Indeed, "Après un Rêve," "Vocalise," "Lux Aeterna," and "Three Lacquer Prints" are arrangements of vocal works that showcase the instrument's dynamic and versatile voice. In Mahler's "Adagietto" and Kernis' "Ballad," two songs of love that extend beyond the capabilities of the human voice, the cello shows its power to express what is inexpressible. And finally, Thomalla's "Intermezzo" and van der Sloot's "Shadow, Echo, Memory" both use the cello to transport the listener to an entirely new sound world; one where we come face-to-face with the haunting and disarming voice of a distant past.

All together, this varied group of compositions explores the cello's power to sing, to express textures of light and dark, to bring to life sounds and images from another time, and to aid a listener in revisiting their own history.

1-3.

THREE LACQUER PRINTS

Zachary Wadsworth

Zachary Wadsworth's (b. 1983) "vivid, vital, and prismatic" music has established him as a leading composer of his generation. Of his *Three Lacquer Prints*, he writes:

Music and poetry are both narrative art forms that take place over time, unfolding and changing as a listener or reader experiences the work. This similarity might help to explain their centuries-old marriage in vocal music. The visual arts, on the other hand, are typically static, and connections between painting and music are not nearly so well established. This is what drew me to Amy Lowell's "Lacquer Prints," in which she pairs short poems with Japanese *Ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. Lowell fully animates these visual works, imbuing each print with vivid

literal and psychological meaning. But her poems still have a remarkably static quality, perhaps imitating the permanently frozen scenes of the prints from which she took inspiration. Since each of the three poems included in this cycle is complete in one static emotional moment, I have set each with a single musical idea. In "Temple Ceremony," ritualized and slowly-tolling chords alternate between the high and low voices, briefly growing tangible with Lowell's description of "the most beautiful of dancers." In "A Year Passes," natural scenes are juxtaposed with vibrant living creatures, and the ensemble imitates both of these worlds with alternating polyphony and stasis. Finally, in "A Burnt Offering," Lowell's haunting and ritualistic description of emotional trauma unfolds in winding solo lines, building to a full-ensemble climax on the image of Lowell's indelible "Beloved"

I. Temple Ceremony

*Blow softly,
O Wind!*

*And let no clouds cover the moon
Which lights the posturing steps
Of the most beautiful of dancers.*

II. A Year Passes

*Beyond the porcelain fence of the
pleasure garden,
I hear the frogs in the blue-green
rice-fields;
But the sword-shaped moon
Has cut my heart in two.*

III. A Burnt Offering

*Because there was no wind,
The smoke of your letters hung in the
air
For a long time;
And its shape
Was the shape of your face,
My Beloved.*

Amy Lowell

4.

APRÈS UN RÊVE

Gabriel Fauré

Written in 1877 and published the next year, *Après un Rêve* is one of the earliest and most popular works by French composer Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924). The piece is originally a song for solo voice and piano set to text by his contemporary, Romain Bussine, a poet and voice teacher at the Paris Conservatory. The poetry evokes imagery of an ethereal, blissful dream, and then, upon awakening, expresses the dreamer's desperate yearning to return to this dream and reunite with his lover. An introspective melodic line over rich, haunting harmonies puts this surreal setting into music. The vocal line has been transcribed for many different solo instruments, including the cello – on which this song has become a popular recital piece. Roland Pidoux has arranged the entire piece for eight celli, which gives the piece a

unique blend of texture and color that could not be achieved with piano accompaniment.

*In a slumber which held your image
spellbound
I dreamt of happiness, passionate
mirage,
Your eyes were softer, your voice pure
and sonorous,
You shone like a sky lit up by the
dawn;*

*You called me and I left the earth
To run away with you towards the
light,
The skies opened their clouds for us,
Unknown splendours, divine flashes
glimpsed,*

*Alas! Alas! sad awakening from
dreams
I call you, O night, give me back your
lies,
Return, return radiant,
Return, O mysterious night.*

Romain Bussine
(translation by David K. Smythe)

5.

SHADOW, ECHO, MEMORY

Michael van der Sloot

Canadian native Michael van der Sloot (b. 1991) is a versatile and accomplished cellist and composer. A student of Hans Jørgen Jensen and a member of the Northwestern University Cello Ensemble, his music seeks to connect the roles of performer and composer by encouraging individual or collective creativity, freedom and collaboration in performance. Of his *Shadow, Echo, Memory* he writes:

Since I first saw images of Ice Age art in my childhood, my imagination and curiosity have been haunted by these spectacular paintings, left deep in hidden caves by prehistoric peoples. While these early humans lived in a much different world than ours, their art shows an aware-

ness of their natural surroundings and a rich spiritual dimension. This ancient proof of humankind's artistic legacy has certainly left an impression on me; *Shadow, Echo, Memory* is my own personal response to the many years of intrigue and inspiration these prehistoric masterpieces have provided. Scored for 21 cellists, the piece is built from a variety of musical colours, textures, and contrasts that blend and collide to illustrate the scene of a painted cave. The music incorporates many sounds that are generally not associated with the cello; echoing droplets of water open the piece, followed by a chorus of ghostly voices and the timbres of primitive flutes as the cave comes alive. Textures and effects evocative of flickering light, reflections of water on rock, rising smoke, and shifting shadows give the piece a phantom sense of motion and imagery reminiscent of the ways your mind is deceived under dim light. While we will never truly know the meaning of the art these

people created so long ago, we can all appreciate it as magnificent evidence of their rich imagination and creativity in a very different age, and its enduring, profound effect on our own imaginations today.

6.

VOCALISE

Sergei Rachmaninov

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943) composed his *Vocalise*, undoubtedly one of his most popular compositions, for voice and piano in 1912. The work contains no lyrics; instead, it is sung using any vowel of the singer's choosing. As a result, there exist countless arrangements where instruments take on the singer's role. This particular adaptation for cello ensemble perfectly showcases the cello's inherent vocal timbre and brilliantly captures the intense expression and vocal inflection of the piece. Rachmaninov creates a feeling of

motion underneath the unfolding of the melodic line by using chromatic movement and by constantly shifting between major and minor tonalities. The predominantly stepwise and diatonic nature of the melodic line causes it to seem simple, but the phrase lengths are in fact very irregular and unpredictable. This irregularity is what is most seductive about the melody — that is, its feeling of endlessness. The phrases seem never to stop, overlapping one another so seamlessly that the bar lines disappear, time suspends and the music floats, never quite reaching the earth. This suspense is present from the very opening measures, in which the first downbeat of the bar is unclear, immediately creating a feeling of levitation that persists throughout the piece. The absence of lyrics in "Vocalise" gives each listener the opportunity to draw from their own emotions and experiences, and ultimately, to find their own sense of meaning in the music.

7.

INTERMEZZO (FROM *FREMD*)

Hans Thomalla

Intermezzo is an excerpt from *Fremd*, a 2011 opera by Chicago-based composer Hans Thomalla (b. 1975). Loosely based on Euripides' tragedy *Medea*, *Fremd* describes Jason and the Argonauts, a group of heroes from Greek mythology, as they sail to the bizarre land of Colchis in search of the Golden Fleece. Once at Colchis they meet the princess and sorceress Medea, who assists Jason in his quest for the fleece, ultimately falling in love with him and returning to Corinth as his bride. At Corinth, however, Jason elopes with another woman, feeling that the exotic Medea is irreconcilably different from himself and the other Greeks. Heartbroken, Medea retaliates by murdering both of their children. Of *Fremd*, Thomalla writes: "Below the surface of the confrontation between

the Greeks and Medea lies a conflict, that pinpoints the contradictions of Western thought: the conflict of nature and concept. The process of objectification of the Other – of nature inside and outside ourselves – begins with the Argonauts' disembarkation in Colchis, the strange and unvanquished land." In *Intermezzo*, subtitled 'Flight' (depicting the escape from Colchis), the composer expresses this estrangement. By incorporating foreign sounds and scarcely sustaining a chord for more than an instant before slowly sliding away in varying speeds and directions, Thomalla creates a surreal atmosphere of alienation and uncertainty. Originally from Bonn, Germany, Hans Thomalla is a professor of composition and music technology at Northwestern University.

8.

BALLAD

Aaron Jay Kernis

The musical language of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Aaron Jay Kernis (b. 1960) is truly eclectic. He is as willing to incorporate the influences of Latin rhythms, jazz and rap as he is to use harmonic worlds of the Romantic masters, the Renaissance and Hildegard von Bingen. Kernis' *Ballad* for eight cellos was written in 2004 in memory of his parents who had passed away the previous year. The unique treatment of lyricism and harmony throughout the work is inspired by the composer's recollection of his mother's love of the classical American popular ballad singers of her time as well as his father's fondness for jazz music. The influence of both, however, is not overt — the work is primarily a lament for the most vocal of instruments: the cello. Although there is no specific program attached to this

work, the title, "Ballad," suggests that there is a narrative underlying the music. Distinct sections of varying tempos, each of which explore different moods, textures, registers, and timbres, spell out an extended song form that takes many detours. A series of emotional intensifications push the lyricism of the piece to the breaking point, all the while daring the cello to reach the highest points in its register. The resulting musical story follows a large arch, beginning softly and subdued with a flautando quality in the cello, gradually but constantly intensifying toward a dramatic climax with more vigorous bow strokes, and finally calming down in an ethereal, tranquil haze of harmonics. At its core the piece most closely resembles a modern take of the 19th century Elegie or Vocalise, with its own distinct mix of 20th century tonal and jazz harmony.

9.

LUX AETERNA

György Ligeti

Hungarian Composer György Ligeti (1923-2006) wrote his haunting *Lux Aeterna* in 1966. It is a setting of the final movement of the mass for the dead, which speaks of the eternal light that shines on the deceased once they join God in the afterlife. Ligeti uses a technique of canonic imitation, in which many voices sing the same melodic line at varying paces, to generate an image of light expanding from a single point to cover vast distances. These voices begin on the same note, but eventually expand out to cover all twelve pitches available. Once the voices complete these melodic lines and reunite on the final pitch of the series, they are interrupted by pleasing harmonies from the bass — a casting, or reframing of this dense light by the voice of God himself. Ligeti gives each of the sixteen

voices that make up this piece its own rhythmic identity, and goes out of his way to prevent the voices from changing notes simultaneously. The result of this original compositional technique, which he called *micropolyphony*, is a seamless, flowing texture that subtly moves toward and away from intense dissonance. The sympathetic vibrations that occur across the strings of the cello serve to highlight the friction and overtones that are naturally present in Ligeti's rich musical language.

10.

ADAGIETTO (FROM SYMPHONY NO. 5)

Gustav Mahler

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) wrote his *Adagietto* in 1902 as the fourth movement of his Fifth Symphony, dedicating the movement to his wife, Alma. According to her, he left with it a short poem, bemoaning the

impossibility of expressing true love in words, and admitting "I can only lament to you my longing and love." This piece shows that very process of loving lamentation. The movement follows a slowly developing ABA form. The beginning and ending of the piece, both of which feature a calm and nostalgic melody, greatly contrast with the middle section, whose impassioned melodies and oscillating harmonies extend to the extreme limits of the cello's range. Each of the four times that the initial melody returns, the duration of every note expands from the previous iteration. This augmentation transfigures the character of this tune from that of a poignant romance to a massive and emotional lament, which hints at the timeless eternity of true love. The uniformity of sound made possible by an orchestra of cellos highlights the density and organic unity of this *Adagietto*, Mahler's most familiar and popular of compositions.



GABRIEL CABEZAS

Cellist Gabriel Cabezas is one of America's most sought-after young musicians. Combining superb technique, intellectual curiosity, and a pioneering musical spirit, he is equally at home in front of an orchestra, collaborating with a singer-songwriter, or sharing the stage with dancers. He has been featured as soloist with the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, New World Symphony, Nashville Symphony, and the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Costa Rica, among others. A committed advocate for community engagement and education programs across the country, he is involved with Midori's Partners in Performance, the Sphinx Organization, and Chicago's Citizen Musician movement. He was twice the First Place Laureate at the Sphinx Competition—in the Junior

Division (2006) and in the Senior Division (2012).

A Chicago native and long-time student of Hans Jensen, Cabezas studied at the Curtis Institute of Music with Carter Brey, and is a recipient of the Career Grant by the Rachel Elizabeth Barton Foundation.

JOSEPH JOHNSON

Joseph Johnson has appeared at festivals including Santa Fe, Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society, Bard, Cactus Pear, Grand Teton, and Music in the Vineyards as well as the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan, and the Virtuosi Festival in Brazil. He currently serves as Principal cellist of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Santa Fe Opera. Previous positions include section and principle cellist with the Milwaukee Symphony and principal of the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra. He was a founding member of both the Prospect Park

Players and the Minneapolis Quartet, the latter of which was honored with The McKnight Foundation Award in 2005.

Mr. Johnson holds a B.M. from the Eastman School of Music and an M.M. from Northwestern University. Awards include a performer's certificate from the Eastman School of Music and first prize from the American String Teachers Association National Solo Competition. Mr. Johnson performs on a magnificent Juan Guillami cello, crafted in 1747 in Barcelona.

RICHARD NARROWAY

Australian cellist Richard Narroway has appeared as a soloist with the Grand Rapids Symphony, the HanZhou Philharmonic Orchestra and the Northwestern University Symphony Orchestra, and in recital on Chicago's WFMT Dame Myra Hess Series and the Keys to the City Piano Festival at Chicago's Symphony Center. He has given

performances in many prestigious venues such as the Kennedy Center, Chicago Symphony Center, Preston Bradley Hall, Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, St. Cecilia Music Center and the Sydney Opera House. Richard has garnered top prizes in the Third Beijing International Cello Competition, the Samuel and Elinor Thaviu Competition in String Performance, and the Gold Medal and Bach Award in the 2010 Stulberg International string competition. Festival appearances include the Piatigorsky Cello Festival, the Kronberg Academy Cello Meisterkurse, Sarasota and Norfolk Music Festivals, Pinchas Zukerman's Young Artists Program in Ottawa, and most recently Music@Menlo.

Born in 1991, Richard pursued his cello studies from an early age, enjoying tutelage from Hans Jensen, Susan Blake, David Finckel and Takao Mizushima. Currently he is pursuing a Doctoral degree with Richard Aaron at the University of Michigan.

HANS JØRGEN JENSEN

Hans Jørgen Jensen is professor of Cello at Northwestern University Bienen School of Music, and director of the Northwestern University Cello Ensemble. He is a faculty member of the Meadowmount School of Music and the Young Artist Program at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, Canada. From 1979 to 1987, he served as Professor of Cello at the Moores School of Music at the University of Houston. Mr. Jensen has given numerous masterclasses and performed as a soloist and recitalist in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Japan, including appearances with the Danish Radio Orchestra, the Basel Symphony Orchestra, the Copenhagen Symphony, and the Irish Radio Orchestra. Mr.

Jensen's former students have won numerous National and International Competitions and many hold positions in major music schools and symphony orchestras. Mr. Jensen was named the 2010 ASTA Artist Teacher, a Charles Deering McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence at Northwestern University, received the Northwestern University Bienen School of Music Exemplar in Teaching Award, and was named the Outstanding Studio Teacher of the Year by Illinois ASTA. In 2001, he was awarded the U.S. Presidential Scholar Teacher Recognition Award by the U.S. Department of Education.

THE NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY CELLO ENSEMBLE

Established by artistic director and Northwestern University cello professor, Hans Jørgen Jensen, the Northwestern University Cello Ensemble began as a result of bringing together Northwestern students, talented Chicago-area high school cellists, and 21 highly successful Northwestern alumni in May 2013 to record Mahler's *Adagio*. This unique and memorable event inspired the continuation of the project and the decision to record this debut album. With artistic contributions from all members of the ensemble, and intensive rehearsals and sectionals for a full year, the

album became a truly collaborative effort with tremendous initiative and leadership from the students themselves. The title track, *Shadow, Echo, Memory* (by the ensemble's own Michael van der Sloot) was directly influenced and shaped by this open approach. Some of the cellists who participated in this project are members of leading symphony orchestras and faculty members at major U.S. music schools.

The Northwestern University Cello Ensemble is strongly committed to expanding the range of cello ensemble repertoire by programming and commissioning new music in addition to arrangements and adaptations of established works.

PERSONNEL

Cello

Philip Boulanger M
Gabriel Cabezas M-F
Juan-Salvador Carrasco M-W-T-V
Sung Chan Chang M-W-L-T-K-V
Krystian Chiu M
Brannon Cho M-W-L-T-K-V
Minna Rose Chung M
Nick Curry M
James Czyzewski M-R
Ari Evan M-F-W-L-T-K-V
Austin Fisher M-W-L-T-K-V
Christopher Gao M
Mark Gibbs M-R
Johannes Gray M-F
Ian Greenberg M-W-L-T-V
Geirthrudur Anna Gudmundsdottir
W-L-T-V
Nick Heinzmann M-W-L-T-V
Brian Hoffman M
Russell Houston M-W-L-T-V
Emily Hu F
Joseph Johnson M-R
Dan Katz M
Ayoun Alexandra Kim M
Christina Kim M
JiHee Kim M

Ji-Ye Kim M-W-T-V
Sarah Kim M
Jonathan Koh M
Yuki Koyama M-F-W-L-T-K-V
Ken Kulosa M-R
Yoon Ju Kwon M
Jane Lee W
Stephanie March M
Richard Mazuski M-W-L-T-V
Thomas Mesa M-W-L
Myrtil Mitanga W-L-T-V
Jenn Miyahira Townsend M
Nathan Mo M
Rosina Mostardini M
Jake Muzzy M
Henry Myers M-W-L-T-V
Oleksander Mycyk M-F
Richard Narroway M-R-K
Una O'Riordan M-R
Soyoon Park M
Yong Park M-T
Chris Pidcock M-R
Alan Rafferty M-R
Laura Ritchie M
Wick Simmons M-W-T-V
Michael van der Sloot W-L-T-V
Ben Solomonow M-F
Nicky Swett M-W-T-V

Genevieve Tabby W-L-T-K-V
Andrew Talle M
Wyndham Tsai M-F-W-L-T-K-V
Tahirah Whittington M
Denielle Wilson W-T-V
Yifan Wu M
Josiah Yoo M
Emily Yoshimoto M-W-L-T-V

Bass

Jarrett Bastow M
Brendan Fitzgerald M
Felice Howard M-T
Brian Melk M-T
Zachary Sawyer T
Sarah Stumbras M
Thomas Dibiasio-White M

Guitar

Juan Alejanddro Garcia T

Percussion

Aaron Villarreal T

Harp

Ben Melsky M

Key

M — Mahler
F — Fauré
R — Rachmaninov
W — Wadsworth
L — Ligeti
T — Thomalla
K — Kernis
V — van der Sloot

Northwestern University Cello Ensemble

Shadow, Echo, Memory
SLE-70004

Producer Hans Jørgen Jensen

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Project Manager Nicky Swett

Liner Notes Henry Myers, Richard Narroway, Nicholas Swett, Michael van der Sloot.

Three Lacquer Prints | Zachary Wadsworth Completed in July, 2012.

Commissioned by the Esoterics. World premiere on October 6, 2012 by the Esoterics. This arrangement was made by the composer for the Northwestern University Cello Ensemble in 2014. Recorded January 25, 2014 Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, Northwestern University.

Après Un Rêve | Gabriel Fauré The songs were written between 1870 and 1877, and published in 1878. This arrangement for 8 celli is by Roland Pidoux. Recorded May 26, 2013 Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, Northwestern University.

Shadow, Echo, Memory | Michael van der Sloot Composed in 2014. Recorded May 24, 2014 Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, Northwestern University.

Vocalise | Sergei Rachmaninov Composed and published in 1915. This arrangement for 8 celli is by Roland Pidoux. Recorded May 26, 2013 Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, Northwestern University.

Intermezzo (from Fremd) | Hans Thomalla Composed Flüchtig. Intermezzo for string orchestra (and guitar and percussion) (2011). Recorded May 25, 2014 Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, Northwestern University.

Ballad | Aaron Jay Kernis Recorded May 24, 2014 Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, Northwestern University.

Lux Aeterna | György Ligeti Written by György Ligeti in 1966. Recorded February 10th 2014 Alice Millar Chapel, Northwestern University.

Adagietto (from Symphony No. 5) | Gustav Mahler Published 1904. Recorded May 26, 2013 Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, Northwestern University.

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