

New Music Series

Damselfly Trio

Liz Pearse, soprano

Chelsea Czuchra, flutes

Lindsay Buffington, harp



Monday, April 1, 2024

8:00 p.m.

Harper Hall

<i>Ariel's Hail</i> (2000)	Kaija Saariaho (1952-2023)
<i>Der Andreas Garten</i> (1986) Dunkel Noch schläft Und Morgen's Kleiner Kolibri Libelle Rote Scheibe Taubenflug Andreas Garten Der Mond	Ursula Mamlok (1923-2016)
<i>Alimondoj</i> (2020)	Alfred Zimmerlin (b. 1955)
<i>Haiku Settings</i> (1967) So cold are the waves When a nightingale sang A leaf is falling A tree frog softly begins How cool the green hay smells	Mamlok
<i>Bhoomija Returns</i> (2023)	Asha Srinivasan (b. 1980)
World Premiere	
<i>Journey</i> (1990)	Tania León (b. 1943)

Please join us for a post-concert discussion about *Bhoomija Returns* and the Hindu mythology that inspired it, led by Lawrence professors Asha Srinivasan and Constance Kassor.

Damsselfly Trio would like to thank: Lawrence University, Asha Srinivasan, Johanna Wienholts, Erin Lesser, and the Conservatory of Music faculty for their support of our visit, the Dwight and Ursula Mamlok Stiftung, and the Swiss Interpreter's Society.

Program Notes

ARIEL'S HAIL is the first section of the five-part 'Tempest Songbook', set to passages from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. *Ariel's Hail* is a luminous and beguiling rendering of the air sprite Ariel's greeting to his master Prospero, with deft instrumentation in the flute part and virtuosic requirements of the soprano all suffusing the space with the magical use of the harp. As Ariel sings, 'I charmed their ears.'

All hail, great master! Grave Sir, hail! I come
To answer thy best pleasure; be it to fly,
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride
On the curled clouds; to thy strong bidding task
Ariel and all his quality...
I boarded the King's ship. Now on the beak,
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
I flamed amazement: sometime I'd divide,
And burn in many places...
...then I beat my tabor,
At which, like unbacked colts, they pricked their ears,
Advanced their eyelids, lifted up their noses
As they smelt music, so I charmed their ears.

DER ANDREAS GARTEN is a setting of a poem by Gerard (Dwight) Mamlok, husband of the composer. The text portrays the garden of the Mamloks' summer home in California, located near the San Andreas fault. The poetry evokes both the beauty and the perils of nature. This is haunting and deeply atmospheric music: the brooding sound world created by the alto flute, low harp tones, and Sprechstimme at the opening and conclusion of the work contrasts with the brilliant, occasionally shrill, twittering of birds portrayed by flute, piccolo, and harp in the inner movements, producing an almost uncanny effect. The nine movements are arranged around numerous symmetries of pitch organization, tempo, and timbre. The eighth movement reproduces the second in inversion, with the rising and falling harp arpeggios that open and close the movements serving as important formal landmarks. An additional symmetry is created by the depiction of birds in flight in the fourth and seventh movements. -Barry Wiener

- I. *Dunkel*, geheimnisvoll, verborgen,
der Erde Wunde.
In ihrer Kruste ungezähmt, im Schlummer:
San Andreas.
Es blüht ein Garten
der Verwerfung nahe.
- Dark, mysterious, hidden,
the earth's wound.
In its crust untamed, in slumber:
San Andreas.
A garden blooms
near the fault.
- II. *Noch schläft der alte Baum;*
zwischen den Ästen
der Spinne trügerisch Gewebe.
Und durch das Filigran
am schwarzen Firmament
ein Stern, erstarrt zu Eis.
- The old tree sleeps on;
between the branches
the spider's deceptive web.
And through the filigree
on the black sky
a star, frozen to ice.
- III. *Und Morgen's sanfter Tau;*
schimmernde Perlen
auf gelben Rosen.
Im Nebel steht der Garten stumm;
da von der Ferne ein Vogel ruft.
- And morning's soft dew;
shimmering pearls
on yellow roses.
The garden silent in fog;
a bird calls from far away.
- IV. *Kleiner Kolibri;*
schillernder Dunst
durch blaues Licht,
schwirrst
vor und zurück,
verweilend,
berauschenden Nektar
stiehlst.
Langschnabel Du!
Rückwärts
fort!
- Little hummingbird;
gleaming haze
through blue light,
whirring
back and forth,
lingering,
the heady nectar
Stealing
You Longbeak!
Backward
Gone!
- V. *Libelle,*
wie kamst Du in meinen Garten?
Warum bliebst Du nicht dort,
wo Du zu Hause—
im grünen Schilf am See?
Lockte der Duft der Rosen,
das tiefe Blau an knorrigen Ästen?
Oder hast Du mich,
einst auch von fernen Ufern,
nur einmal besuchen wollen?
Dich trug bloss der Wind;
mich brachte der Sturm.
- Dragonfly,
how did you find my garden?
Why didn't you stay
where you belong—
in the lake's green reeds?
Did the scent of the roses tempt you,
the deep blue on gnarled branches?
Or did you come
just to visit me,
who also came from distant shores?
The wind carried you;
The storm brought me

VI. *Rote Scheibe;*

Sonnenglut;
Mittags. Und trocknes Gras
versengt.
Kein Vogel. Stille.
Nur ein kleiner Ball,
gelblich-rot,
fällt zur Erde
und zerplatzt.
Ein Sperling naht,
pickt an der Aprikose,
die, beschattet
auf einer Fliese ruht

Red disk;
glowing sun;
noon. And dry grass
singes.
No bird. Silence.
Only a small ball
yellowish-red
falls to the earth
and bursts.
A sparrow comes near
pecks at the apricot,
which rests in shadow
On a flagstone.

VII. *Taubenflug über den Garten;*
weisse Flügelschläge
des Habicht's Auge unbekümmert.
Taubenflug über San Andreas;
flüchtige Schönheit
gegen Wolken.

Doveflight over the garden;
white wingbeats;
unconcerned with the hawk's eye.
Doveflight over San Andreas;
fleeing beauty
against clouds.

VIII. *Andreas Garten,*

Garten meiner Seele!
Du bist mir im Herzen;
Dir bin ich nahe.
Ich weiss von Deiner Wunde,
aber auch sie bist Du.

Andreas Garden,
Garden of my soul!
You are in my heart
as I stand here.
I know of your wound;
it is a part of you.

IX. *Der Mond ist riesig gross heut 'Nacht,*
geister-helles Scheinen;
die furchtsame Akazie möchte sich
verstecken.
Tief in der Erde
eine dumpfe Bewegung
(fast lautlos, unmerklich).
Die Wurzeln ahnen Sie.

The moon is huge tonight;
its light is spectral.
The fearful acacia wants
to hide.
Deep in the earth
a hollow motion—
(almost silent, imperceptible).
The roots sense it.

ALIMONDOJ

Language has an incredibly rich sound, and the wonderful musical language of the poet Ingrid Fichtner's poetry lusts, as it were, for translation into sound, sung sound, instrumental sound. Ingrid Fichtner's poems are written in both English and German, a stroke of luck for a composer who wants to use English in a piece of music but has German (Swiss German) as his mother tongue. But there is another language sparking in between: The singer sometimes speaks a few words in a language that may seem understandable because of its references to Romanic and Germanic languages, but is not, because it is artificial and constructed; it lacks the grown, living body of a language of native speakers: Esperanto. These can be comments on what she is doing ("Mi turnis la paĝon / I have turned the page over") but they can also be questions that suddenly arise ("Kial mi entute kantas poemon? / Why do I sing a poem at all?"). When making music, but also when listening to it, we are constantly asking questions. – *Alimondoj* asks us a lot of questions with sounds and musical behaviours that can also irritate us. The Damselfly Trio is a very important creative partner in this, because the piece also opens up spaces where a new and different virtuosity can unfold. This is of course also a manual virtuosity, but even more a creative and artistic one, because the piece also wants to inspire the creative inventiveness of the musicians. In the amalgam of sound created by the musicalisation of language, we sense the bodies and personalities of the performers. They lead us into a special *Alimondoj* experience space. They lead us to an Otherworld. –*Alfred Zimmerlin*

Poetry by Ingrid Fichtner, Esperanto texts (in italics) by Alfred Zimmerlin

anontso

Medio

bildo de la besto

Far too few

mi turnis la paĝon

hues of blue way too few shades of blue in this sky above me

subtekstoj neantaŭvidebla babilantaj ĝemeloj

and

Marigolds a myriad of blossoms

am I in for a shower?

am I in for a soak?

What makes me think of velvet?

What makes me think of canopies?
What makes me think of sweet pea?
and sweet William in front of dragon flowers
flowers dragonflies and damselflies
(the bodies eyes the wings)
in what is called a rose garden?

Kial mi entute kantas poemon

What makes me think of seedlings?
Is this a different spring?

I see the leaves I see the litter
I see the cracks
I see the bud
I do not know the scales
Am I to get to know the soil
Do I hear a tanpura?
I'd like to hug this Banyan tree
not only speak of

musikigo de lingvo

kunfandado naturon kai kulturon

not only speak of it..
am I in for a soak?

nova ĉapitro. kian kinejon mi eniras?

Iloi el la sfero de songoi

that far away from any sea this narrow path
another day ahead of me

HAIKU SETTINGS is a fantastic example of Ursula Mamlok's disjunct, highly expressive instrumental writing that is characteristic of her music in the 1960s. *Haiku Settings* may be listened to on various levels. The structural design is most likely of interest to composers. More important for the listener is to note the connection between the music and the poetry. In these settings much attention has been paid to the content of each poem. In a way the songs may be heard as a kind of mood painting, quite similar to the treatment of much vocal music of the past.

The chill of icy waves is expressed here by asymmetrical angular shapes in the flute line, set against the repeated motion of the minor 3rd in the vocal line, depicting the rocking gull.

Larger intervals and longer note values were chosen for the line "when the nightingale sang out," contrasted by the short notes in the following

phrase “the sparrow flew off,” etc. The heavier timbre of the alto flute contributes to the melancholy mood of the third song in addition to the fact that there is a minimum of intervallic motion.

As a complete contrast, song four (played as fast as possible) displays large skips in the instrumental writing, the vocal line consisting of only two notes which come close to each other gradually until merging in a trill on the word “trill.”

The last song, “How cool the green hay smells,” is free from the concise rhythmic shapes which were more suitable for the preceding texts. Here all is at rest and a feeling of relaxation is accomplished by slow moving, unaccented lines, the voice and alto flute complementing, rather than contrasting each other. –*Ursula Mamlok*

I. Poetry by Basho

So cold are the waves / the rocking gull can scarcely / fold itself to
sleep

II. Poetry by Jurin

When a nightingale sang out / the sparrow flew off / to a further tree

III. Poetry by Ransetsu

A leaf is falling / alas alas another / and another falls

IV. Poetry by Rogetsu

A tree frog softly / begins to trill as raindrops / spatter the new leaves

V. Poetry by Boncho

How cool the green hay smells / carried in through the farm gate / at
sunshine

BHOOMIJA RETURNS

Like every Hindu child, I grew up learning the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. Here is a reductive and simplified synopsis: Ravana, the villainous king of Lanka, abducts Sita, the wife of Rama, who is the crown prince of the powerful kingdom of Ayodhya, while Sita, Rama, and his brother Lakshmana are living out a 14-year exile in the woods.

Bhoomija Returns is inspired by the controversial events that occur near the end of the *Ramayana*, specifically after Sita has been rescued and Ravana has been defeated in war by Rama. Throughout the story, Sita is portrayed as a woman of utmost dignity and virtuous character who must endure numerous injustices, not only by her abductor Ravana but also by her own husband Rama and society at large, which cannot accept her as untainted. Even after enduring a test of fire (“agni pariksha”) that proves her fidelity to Rama, she is exiled from the palace, and years later after raising twin sons, she is asked to demonstrate her faithfulness once more. This time, she calls upon Bhoodevi, the Earth goddess, to prove her innocence by taking her into her bosom. The ground opens, Bhoodevi receives Sita, the ground closes, and the onlookers are left stunned.

Sita is also known as “Bhoomija,” which means “sprung from the ground” in Sanskrit because her birth is of mysterious origin. She was found as a baby by a king ploughing a field. Some say that Sita’s descent into the ground was an act of defiance, leaving the world of petty-minded humans behind, and others say that, in the end, she returns home to her mother, the mother of us all, Mother Earth. –*Asha Srinivasan*

Poetry by Asha Srinivasan

Daughter!

Daughter of Earth,

Return to me, my daughter, Bhoomija!

Pure as dirt, Susheela.

Purer than ash, Vijaya!

Burn!

Woman, burn!

Kalankini, burn!

Again, burn!

Again and again and again, burn!

Are you soiled?

Are you pure?

Never pure enough
Don't!
Don't prove your innocence, Priye.

Are you soiled?
Born of the soil come back to soil, back to Bhoomika.

Return, return, return to Janani,
Return to the Yoni!

Leave!
Leave! Leave! Leave! Leave.

I receive you. I receive you. I receive you.

JOURNEY

Long before the women of DamselFly chose to name their ensemble after a creature that sounds as if it would be delicate – but is actually one of nature's most impressively athletic flying predators – Cuban-American Tania León wrote her athletic proclamation *Journey* for the Jubal Trio, setting text by Lebanese-American poet and visual artist Etal Adnan. *Journey* is a celebration of all the bold, bright sounds possible in this trio combination, rather than the more subdued, soft soundscapes one might generally associate with flute, harp, and soprano voice. This brief work sets the text in a unique way – almost entirely in reverse. Thus, the singer sounds almost as a jazz scat artist among a flurry of syncopated rhythms both within and outside of a tight rhythmic context. According to León, the work is dedicated to composer/performer Julius Eastman and composer Talib Rasul Hakim. –*Liz Pearse*

Poetry by Etel Adnan

The human spirit rises
over its mountains.
Three astronauts circle the
planet Jupiter
We are all going into a
space journey discovering
the promise of angels.
The earth is the beginning
of the Universe.

About the Composer

Indian-American composer **Asha Srinivasan** draws from her Western musical training and Indian heritage to create her compositional language. Her music has been presented at national and international venues and has been cited in dissertations and scholarly work. She was selected for the 2019 NewMusic Initiative Commissioning Program, which led to the creation of *Ipseity* for choir. Her composition *Dviraag* was awarded at the 2011 Thailand International Composition Festival and won the 2015 Flute New Music Consortium competition. In 2012, Alarm Will Sound premiered *Svaralila* at the Mizzou International Composers Festival. She has also won national commissioning competitions, including the BMI Foundation's Women's Music Commission and the Flute/Cello Commissioning Circle. Her works have been released on CD by Ravello Records (PARMA), MSR Classics, Ablaze Records, and others. She has served on the American Composers Forum Board and as adjudicator for the National Endowment for the Arts, among others. In 2012, she co-hosted the SEAMUS national conference at Lawrence University. Her studies include: D.M.A. Composition at University of Maryland, College Park; M.Mus. Computer Music Composition and Music Theory Pedagogy at the Peabody Conservatory, and B.A. at Goucher College. Ms. Srinivasan is currently an Associate Professor of Music at Lawrence University. For further details and purchasing scores, please visit www.twocomposers.org

About the Performers

The DamselFly Trio – Liz Pearse, soprano; Chelsea Czuchra, flutes; and Lindsay Buffington, harp – is a mobile chamber ensemble dedicated to the music of contemporary composers and poets/writers. Continuing the work begun by The Jubal Trio, DamselFly is committed to commissioning, performing, and promoting contemporary chamber music for their unique instrumentation. Since their founding in 2017, the trio has commissioned new works from a number of composers and poets including Ryan Molloy and Martin Dyar, Pierce Gradone and Stephanie Anderson, Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon, Lindsey Jacob and Nicole O. Nichols. Upcoming projects include the world premiere of a new work by Asha Srinivasan and commissions from composers Brittany J. Green and Ingrid Stölzel. DamselFly Trio is based in the US and Switzerland, conducting concert and educational activities throughout the US and Europe.

In recent seasons, Damsselfly Trio has performed throughout Switzerland, Ireland, the UK and the US. Their concert appearances have taken them to a wide range of venues, including: Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center, the Hugh Lane Gallery Dublin, Queen's University Belfast, Irish World Academy, Wild Atlantic Words Festival, Rehmann Museum, the Bank of the Arts in New Bern, NC, and digitally at the University of Liverpool. They have also been heard over the air on BBC Northern Ireland.

In 2018, Damsselfly held a performance residency at Avaloch Farm Music Institute in New Hampshire, US (where they were inspired by local insect life to name their trio). The trio has given masterclasses and workshops at the Eastman School of Music, UNC-Wilmington, East Carolina University, Maynooth University, Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, as well as virtually at the University of North Texas. Since 2018, Damsselfly has regularly given outreach concerts in public schools in eastern North Carolina under the auspices of the Carolina Chamber Music Festival.

Damsselfly Trio's commissioning and performing work has been generously supported by various institutions including the Irish Arts Council, National University of Ireland, George Walker Center at ESM, Swiss Interpreter's Society, Aargauer Kuratorium, Migros Kulturprozent, the Dwight and Ursula Mamlok Stiftung and the Swiss Cultural Fund-UK. www.damsselflytrio.com

The harpist **Lindsay Buffington** was born in Maryland, and has been based in Switzerland since 2005. She currently lives in Luzern. Lindsay completed her studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, Conservatoire de Lausanne and Hochschule – Luzern Musik. She completed degrees in Bachelor of Music, Master of Music Performance and Master of Music Pedagogy. Her main harp teachers included Elaine Bryant, Rebecca Anstine Smith, Chantal Mathieu and Xenia Schindler.

Lindsay is a versatile performer who thrives on playing in diverse musical styles. She enjoys an active freelance career in Switzerland and abroad, and plays regularly both as a soloist and with ensembles. An active chamber musician, Lindsay is the co-founder of several chamber music ensembles including: Deux en Harpe, with harpist Céline Gay des Combes (2008) and the Cochlea Duo, with flutist Chelsea Czuchra (2013). www.lindsaybuffington.com

A performer at home in a wide range of genres and repertoire, flutist **Chelsea Czuchra** is especially drawn to the experimental, quiet, and gorgeous sounds found in the world of new music. She has appeared as soloist and chamber musician throughout Europe and North America, including turns as a scotch tape virtuoso and bull-roarer player. Chelsea's recent collaborative projects have included a program of contemporary work for flutes and voice with Liz Pearse, recording Damsselfly Trio's first set of commissions, commissioning and premiering several new works for flute and harp by Swiss women composers and the launch of a commissioning project for moving/vocalizing flutist. A fierce advocate for arts education, Chelsea frequently performs for school outreach programs in Switzerland and around the US. Based in Switzerland, Chelsea was raised in eastern North Carolina and is a proud graduate of UNCSCA, the NC Governor's School, Purchase College and CalArts.
www.chelseaczuchra.com

Vocalist **Liz Pearse** has alternately been described as a "badass", having "a near-psychedelic understanding of what a composer is trying to accomplish", and possessing "a voice made of arrows forged in a volcanic pit, transforming the didactic and mundanely intellectual into actual fire". After a childhood spent playing every instrument she could find, Liz has spent her career exploring the infinite possibilities of the human voice. Her uniquely colorful and versatile instrument has led to performances of wide-ranging works from medieval to modern, and though Liz is known as a specialist in contemporary vocal repertoire, she enjoys a well-aged song. Liz often performs self-accompanied at the piano. She has commissioned and performed over a dozen works for solo singer/pianist. Though self-accompanying is a large part of her practice, Liz has a voracious appetite for the camaraderie of chamber music. In addition to her work with Swiss/USA-based Damsselfly Trio and collaborations with pianists performing the vocal music of Messiaen and Babbitt, Liz is one-fourth of Quince Ensemble, an American Midwest-based treble quartet dedicated to the creation and performance of contemporary vocal literature. When she's not performing, Liz lives and teaches in the beautiful Driftless region of Minnesota. More information about Liz can be found at lizperse.com

We collectively acknowledge that Lawrence University is situated on the ancestral homelands of the Menominee and Ho-Chunk people.