

**Inside-Outside** the Box  
Chamber Music of Frank Stemper  
7:30 pm — 5 April 2014  
Old Baptist Foundation Recital Hall

featuring

**Mødërné & The Altgeld Chamber Players**

CLARINET PIECE 1985

Eric Mandat, clarinet

ELECTRIC MUSIC NO. 1 1979

Moog Synthesizer on magnetic tape

ROPE 2006

- I. Bad Seed
- II. Lament Into Madness

Richard Kelley, alto saxophone  
Eric Lenz, 'cello  
Yuko Kato, piano

- - - - -**INTERMISSION**- - - - -

CONFLUENCE 2013

**Mødërné**

Danielle Aldach, soprano  
Abigail Simoneau, flute  
Derek Emch, clarinet  
Joel Auringer, bass clarinet  
Edward Charity & Petra Bubanja, violins  
Jennifer Franklund, viola  
Richard Davis, 'cello  
Paul Intravaia, percussion

EVENING, MILKING 2005

David Dillard, baritone  
Yuko Kato, piano

STRING TRIO 2008

- I. Dramatic, Shimmering
- II. Quiet, Hazy, Not Too Fast
- III. Raw, Relentless, Fast

Michael Barta, violin  
Jacob Tews, viola  
Eric Lenz, 'cello

**CLARINET PIECE (1985)** This music could only have been written for my 31-year colleague, Eric Mandat. He premiered it in Toronto at the *Society of Composers, Inc.* international conference. As I began my relationship with Mandat, and as I began this piece, I had absolutely no interest in adding extended techniques to my palette. I thought their use was superficial and exploitive – at best. (Describing myself back then, the words arrogant and stupid come to mind!) I’ve of course since changed my “tune.”

However, that’s not what really bugged me — as I began working on CLARINET PIECE, I realized that as the timbre of the clarinet became more complex with multi-phonics and quarter tones, etc., my pallet of meaningful musical syntax quickly became vast and very difficult to conceptualize. My little world of 12 equal-tempered pitch classes had more than enough musical potential for my lifetime, but suddenly, the possibilities grew exponentially, and I was completely intimidated. I did my best to realize *narrative statement*, but it quickly got away from me. It was too complex for me to understand or control. I didn’t compose this piece – it composed me! As I began trying to manipulate the sounds, the sounds themselves sat me down and lectured me about music, about its possibilities, and whom did I think I was try to tell THEM what to do!

I’m neither a quitter nor a gracious loser, but somewhere during this piece, you can hear me crying for mercy.

**ELECTRIC MUSIC NO. 1 (1979)** Yes, I had training in Classic tape techniques from back in the day: Utilizing oscillators and other non-digital sound devices and processors to produce Frequency modulated *patches*, that sometimes were intentionally flat but other times had a second level attack – envelope(s) – and decay; and then record them, one sound at a time, labeling, cataloging, and hanging them all on a rack above the tape recorders, in a web of possibilities; and then prehistorically manipulating the ferric oxide suspended on a long ½ inch strip of plastic tape, by measuring (for duration proportion thus creating *rhythm*) and splicing (often on an impossible lengthy diagonal in order to produce fade, blend, crescendo, various attacks, etc.); and then painstakingly combining everything together on the fragile tape, hoping that the splices hold, that oil from my fingers hadn’t compromised any of the above (often wearing clean white gloves like an atomic scientist), and that the magnetic patterns hadn’t lost too much fidelity before they could be reproduced. Weeks of activity that alternating between the technical and the artistic goal. And all for a 90 second *musical* statement.

The hell of this is that all of the above can now be accomplished in a split second on any cell phone.

**ROPE (2006)**

Like its Hollywood precursor, *Rope* (1948), a film experiment by Alfred Hitchcock in which he tells, in one continuous scene, the Nietzsche-related story of two intellectuals committing murder just to prove that they can, *Rope* (2006), a two-movement trio for alto sax, ‘cello and piano, is an attempt at a seamless study of musical line and lyricism, that develops, or perhaps dissects, a single musical germ from beginning to end, rising and falling, ebbing and flowing without the introduction of contrasting thematic material except by way of variation, embellishment, ornamentation and especially heterophony, the fourth musical texture, in which slightly different variations of the same tune are performed simultaneously – often sounding improvised with tiny discrepancies (or errors) between versions, which, while achieving some degree of contrast, in this particular context is always related to the original statement throughout the 16 minute composition, including the interim between the first and second movements, as the performers adjust their instruments and music for the remainder of the piece, and you, the audience, take a break, cough, check your cell phones and make comments to the person next to you about the music, the musicians and/or your after-concert plans, a kind of no-man’s land within a composition similar to the Hitchcock model with its strange but regularly placed blackouts necessary because it was only possible to get 10 minutes maximum on a single reel of film before re-loading the camera(s), with the second movement (*Lament Into Madness*) actually continuing the dissection of the original statement exactly where movement one (*Bad Seed*) concludes, continuing the analysis while uncovering more and more about the sinister tendencies of the motive, eventually coming down to examining the structure of a single cell – musical and neurological, much like the genetic code or DNA of psychosis, specifically, that which sociopathically always chooses bad over good, in this case first degree murder, even though the guilty party is merely being true to his internal instincts, having nothing to do with learned behaviors, and therefore is behaving honorably in this particular musical microcosm, even though this instinct is in fact – dangerous psychopathic mental illness. *Good Evening.*

**CONFLUENCE (2013)** This brief ensemble work was Commissioned by the Office of the Chancellor, Southern Illinois University Carbondale by Rita Cheng, SIUC Chancellor and by Carla Coppi, Director, SIUC Center for International Education.

The inspiration for CONFLUENCE was the very ideal which it honors – higher education. As I understand it, the goal of the academy is to seek and disseminate knowledge, and this dual initiative is nothing less than that on which the future of world and the human species rests. While ignorance and greed have been consistent partners in bringing down mankind, enlightenment offers hope for our potential to come.

Just as single brooks and streams come together to create enormous rivers, which then feed into the sea, the creative research by diverse scholars unites within the academy in order to expand the body of human knowledge and, thus, ensure our future. Transferring that scholarly bounty to humanity's greatest resource, the young, completes the circle of the academy, as new scholars carry on this vital search for enlightenment. That Northeast Normal University and Southern Illinois University Carbondale have, for thirty years, fused their borderless efforts toward this ideal, is then a broader commitment to the academy. My brief musical statement consists of several contrasting ideas that eventually flow into a single theme and musically celebrate the CONFLUENCE of the rivers of knowledge produced by the scholarly and academic union of these two institutions.

**EVENING, MILKING (2005)** EVENING MILKING is the final song of a 55 minute song cycle setting the poetry of Herbert Scott. The poetry was written after Scott was diagnosed with cancer, one of the most heartless diseases created by whomever is in charge. Herb Scott was the husband of Shirley Clay-Scott, former Dean of Liberal Arts at SIU. She was a strong, brilliant woman, who advocated effectively and shrewdly for the survival of the SIU humanities. Regarding the entire cycle:

Many of the poems set in this song cycle, from Herb Scott's book, *Sleeping Woman*, were written after the poet discovered the leukemia that eventually killed him. Thus, they are a recollection, a reflection or perhaps a reliving of his life, as a boy and young man. As the project of composing this setting of ten of Scott's poems began, it was doubtful that the poet would be around for the premiere. However, consulting with Mr. Scott on several occasions during the composition process found him not just in admirably good spirits, but remarkably, astonishingly, heroically stronger than the cancer that was killing him. His LIFE continued to be consumed with his life: with poetry, not just his own, as well as virtually all other art forms, and overwhelmingly with his family. This project seemed rejuvenated him and perhaps helped to push the cancer into remission. But Herb had an inner spirit that was strong as an ox.

The first performance of *A Love Imagined* occurred about more than five months after the poet was expected to die. Instead, he not only attended the premiere but gave of reading of his poetry at the performance. That summer, he then went on a joint poetry reading tour together with three Pulitzer Prize winning poets, which included the eastern United States and Prague. All three of those poets stated how moved they were at Scott's readings during the tour. Scott was healthy through that trip, which became a culminating moment for him. Poet Herbert Scott passed away in February 2006, more than a year after the original diagnosis and a month after a performance of *A Love Imagined* in Kalamazoo, Michigan where he worked for decades. One of the last times I saw Herb Scott, he surprised me by grabbing my arm and dancing a jig, as if he was thumbing his nose at the poison in his body.

*Evening, Milking*, the final song/poem in the cycle to me suggests the end, childhood memories of loved ones and surroundings. Herb grew up on a farm in Oklahoma. My take on it was, as he penned these words, Herb Scott was preparing

## **E V E N I N G , M I L K I N G**

Each day redeemed by evening

The stammering sunset.  
The moon in its rut of sky.

The mind is white wicker.

Cows, heavy with the business of milk,  
nod home from the east pasture.

There is a moan that milk makes.

The clatter of hooves, the lovely cow eyes.  
Thrown oats. The rasp of rough tongues.

My grandmother's small hands.

It is true the earth cries out at dusk.  
Its various voices

**STRING TRIO (2008)** My long time colleague, Michael Barta, asked me to write my first and only *String Trio*, for premiere in his home town, Budapest. The performance was to be a live broadcast over Hungarian National Radio on the *Bartók-3* Network. I was pretty excited to be writing a string trio. Honestly, if I had only one medium to compose for, it would be for strings – especially quartets and trios. But I was also *inspired*, because the new piece was going to be premiered in Hungary, the home of Béla Bartók, one of my first new music influences. Bartók's six string quartets are easily as influential as Beethoven's seventeen, and both of those dudes are at the top of my list of *invisible* composition teachers!

My excitement can be seen in the opening of the piece, with Barta's very first Rhapsodic blast. Only strings can sing like this screaming emotion, and I was thrilled to finally have the opportunity to write such lines. Barta's *lick* is then answered by the other two instruments, all which lead to various plateaus of shimmering trills, and then the three do what strings can do, they have

But, what string players don't like is to play *sul tasto*, or *flautando*, which is what I ask of my colleagues in the second movement. I ask them NOT to be dramatic, and they don't like it. *Sul tasto* is bowed closer to the middle of the strings, where there just isn't a lot of overtone color. The sound is unemotional, no vibrato, no passion. It's just the pure sound of sawing the strings – it's a beautiful, ethereal sound. The context for this indifference, in the second movement, can only be described as "laid back," "chilling," or maybe, more profoundly, spiritual contemplation.

I needed to do this, because both the three performers and you, the listeners, needed to store up a little energy for the last movement, which takes off like a "bat out of hell," and doesn't stop. The last movement is just me paying homage to my *invisible* Hungarian mentor, anticipating my music being performed in his country.

The piece was written in 2008, the same year I was also commissioned to compose solo pieces for the Klein International String Competition in San Francisco. Sadly there was a 30 year void of *GETTING* to write for strings before, and it looks like there's going to be another extended hiatus from writing for these masterpieces of expression, violin/viola/cello/c.bass. Anybody know any string quartets looking for a composer?

**The Altgeld Chamber Players** have been performing together since the mid-90's. Led by Music Director Eric Mandat, the ACP is a flexible instrumentation ensemble composed of distinguished SIUC faculty and outstanding graduate students. The repertoire of this dynamic and exciting ensemble ranges from cutting-edge contemporary works to the great classics of chamber music.

**Mødèrné** is a covert contemporary ensemble of SIU students and former students, who are serious about pushing the envelope of sound. They appear here and there, when you least expect them, displaying their wares and talents, all in the name of new music. Last year they pushed the envelope with Reich's *Music For Eighteen Musicians*, and other mysterious, late-night performances, and "outside" jams, all around this time of year. They have been, as it were, *Outside Outside the Box*. Because this particular concert is called *Inside Outside the Box*, it would appear that **Mødèrné's** appearance tonight would be *Outside Inside Outside the Box!*

**Frank Stemper** has been *Composer In Residence* at SIU since 1983. His music has been performed in 22 countries and half of the United States. He has received numerous awards including *The George Ladd Prix de Paris*, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, four fellowships from the Illinois Arts Council, ten awards from *Meet the Composer—Global Connections*, 25 consecutive *ASCAP* awards, and nominations for the Grammy and Pulitzer Prizes. Through his multiple artist and teaching residencies in Mexico, Romania, Spain, The Netherlands, and France, and more than 50 *Guest Composer* appearances at international festivals, he has maintained a presence on the world new music scene. His music is an eclectic blending of mainstream Jazz and the avant garde.