



... dedicated to the
promotion, composition,
performance, understanding
and dissemination of
new and contemporary
music ...

NEWSLETTER CONTENTS

XLII: 2, March–April 2012

Quartet

Composer Matthew Davidson discusses his String Quartet "Quartetto dell'Arte"

Page 1**Resources**

Learn about the Newsletter, upcoming SCI Events and our many online resources.

Page 2**Events**

Upcoming student, regional and national conferences of the Society.

Page 2**About**

Membership info, members of the National Council/Executive Committee.

Page 3**Join SCI**

SCI is an organization for composers. Various membership categories are available.

Page 3**SCItings**

Performances, Awards, Commissions, Honors, Publications and other Member Activities

Page 7

Quartetto dell'Arte: A New String Quartet

By Matthew de Lacey Davidson

This effort is an attempt to discuss, as non-subjectively as possible, a new work I have written for string quartet. *Quartetto dell'Arte* was conceived as an attempt to do something new with this tried-and-true genre. It is a five-movement, twenty-five minute, polytonal string quartet with a secret existential program. It is influenced by the quartets of Beethoven, Bergmüller, Schumann, Neils Gade, and Mendelssohn, amongst others. The works of New Zealand composer Jack Body, and his technique of using exact transcriptions of non-western melodies, was also an influence. In addition, Frederic Rzewski's technique of creating pan-tonal variations on North and South American melodies is clearly an influence. Finally, although I was not consciously aware of such during the process of composition, I realized afterwards that each movement strongly reflected the work of one to two other composers (i.e., the first movement displays a strong structural influence of Beethoven, despite the quotes from Bach; the third movement shows the influence of Prokofiev and Berg; the fourth of the Adagio movements in the symphonies of Bruckner; and the fifth is a polytonal pastiche of Rachmaninoff in 5/18 time).

Quartetto dell'Arte uses direct transcriptions of melodies from the following compact disc recordings:

- *Musique et Musiciens du Monde—Biélorussie* (UNESCO); Kazakh Music Today (Topic Records Inc.) (Movement One)
- *Belgique Ballades*, etc. (OCORA-Radio France); *Lituanie—Le pays des chansons* (OCORA-Radio France) (Movement Three)

The five movements of the quartet are named as follows:

- I. Preludio (Scherzo I)
- II. Fuga Frammentaria
- III. Gavotta Assurda (Scherzo II)
- IV. Adagietto Amoroso
- V. Finale: Tarantella Tumultuosa (Scherzo III)

Each movement is subtitled by a character found in *Commedia dell'Arte* as follows (although, akin to Debussy's

(Continued on Page 4)



About the Newsletter

Co-Editors: Michael Torres and Benjamin Williams

Circulation: 1400

Access: available on the SCI website at <http://www.societyofcomposers.org/publications/newsletter/>

Frequency of Publication: bimonthly

Newsletter Contact Information:

Benjamin Williams
1221 Cliffdale Dr.
Clinton, MS 39056
(330) 268-2590

newsletter@societyofcomposers.org

For other SCI business:

Society of Composers, Inc.
P.O. Box 687
Mineral Wells, TX 76067-0687
secretary@societyofcomposers.org

Copyright © 2010
Society of Composers, Inc.
All rights reserved.

How to Submit Items to the Newsletter

Articles: The Newsletter welcomes submissions of articles to run in future issues. Articles, if accepted, may be edited for length and content. Please include a photo with all submissions if possible (photo may be of author).

Member News + Photos: Please send all member news and activities with a photo. Submitted items may be edited.

Ideas/Suggestions: The Editors welcome any other ideas or suggestions.

Submit to the newsletter via email at: newsletter@societyofcomposers.org



Upcoming SCI Events

2013 Region I Conference August 15–17, 2013

Portsmouth, NH
Hosted by PARMA Recordings as part of the PARMA Music Festival

2013 Region IV Conference October 17–19, 2013

Eastern Kentucky University
Richmond, KY
Host: Thomas Couvillon
Thomas.Couvillon@eku.edu

2014 Region VIII Conference March 7–8, 2014

University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA

2014 Region V Conference March 27–29, 2014

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo
Hosts: Christopher Biggs and Lisa Coons



Internet & Email

www.societyofcomposers.org

- Conference dates and submission guidelines
- Contact information and links to member web-pages
- Student chapters and opportunities
- CDs and journals produced by SCI
- Details on SCI such as membership, contacts for officers, regional structure, by-laws, newsletter archives and more...

SCION

SCION is a listing of opportunities on our website exclusively for members. It is updated on a continual basis so that it may be checked at any time for the most current notices. In addition, members are emailed on the first Monday of each month to remind them to visit the site for new or recent postings. The large number of listings is easily managed by a table of contents with links to the individual notices. In-depth coverage; contest listings in full; all items listed until expiration; this is a valuable resource that you may print in its entirety or in part at any time.

John Bilotta, SCION Editor
scion@societyofcomposers.org

scimembers

scimembers is a member-driven e-mail mailing list that is intended to facilitate communication between members of the Society on topics of concern to composers of contemporary concert music. It conveys whatever notices or messages are sent by its members, including announcements of performances and professional opportunities, as well as discussions on a wide variety of topics. For more information, including how to join and participate in the listserv:

<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/publications/listserv.html>

National Council

President

James Paul Sain
University of Florida

Region 1

Scott Brickman
University of Maine at Fort Kent

Beth Wiemann
University of Maine

Region 2

Anneliese Weibel
SUNY-Stony Brook

Daniel Weymouth
SUNY-Stony Brook

Region 3

Harvey Stokes
Hampton University

Bruno Amato
Peabody Conservatory

Region 4

Mark Engebretson
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Paul Osterfield
Middle Tennessee State University

Region 5

Mark Phillips
Ohio University

Frank Felice
Butler University

Region 6

Eric Honour
University of Central Missouri

Craig Weston
Kansas State University

Region 7

Bruce Reiprich
Northern Arizona State University

Glenn Hackbarth
Arizona State University

Region 8

Rob Hutchinson
University of Puget Sound

Patrick Williams
University of Montana

President Emeritus

Greg Steinke

Membership Information

For complete details, please visit
<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/join/membership.html>.

Full Membership (\$55/year): Eligible to submit scores to the National Conferences, regional conferences, SCI Recording Series, SCI Journal of Music Scores. Access to the SCI Newsletter in electronic form. Optional subscription to [scimembers], the SCI listserv and all other SCI publications. Eligible to vote on Society Matters and in elections for the National Council.

Joint Membership (\$75/year): Same benefits as full members

Senior Membership (\$27.50/year): Open to those 65 years of age or older, or retired. Same benefits as full members.

Associate Membership (\$27.50/year): Open to performers and other interested professionals. Receives the SCI Newsletter in electronic form and can participate in national and regional conferences.

Student Membership (\$27.50/year): Eligible to submit to national and regional conferences and to vote in society matters. Access to all SCI publications.

Student Chapter Membership (\$17.50/year): Same benefits as student members, but only available on campuses having Student Chapters.

Institutional Membership (\$25/year): Organizations receive hard copy of the SCI Newsletter and other mailings.

Lifetime Membership (\$1100 or \$120/year for 10 years): Benefits the same as full members, for life.

Executive Committee

Chairman

Mike McFerron
Lewis University

Editor, Newsletter

Michael Torres
Muskingum University

Benjamin Williams
Mississippi College

Editor, SCION

John G. Bilotta

Editor, Journal of Music Scores

Bruce J. Taub

Producer, CD Series

Vera Stanojevic
Capital University

Thomas Wells
The Ohio State University

Coordinator, Submissions

Lee Hartman
University of Central Missouri

Representative, Student Chapters

Nickitas Demos
Georgia State University

Coordinator, SCI/ASCAP Student Competition and Grants

Anne Kilstofte
Phoenix Arizona

Webmaster

David Drexler

System Analyst

M. Anthony Reimer

System Administrator

Matthew McCabe
Columbus State University

Representative, Students

Adam Scott Neal

Chair Emeritus

William Ryan
Grand Valley State University

Quartetto dell'Arte: A New String Quartet

(Continued from Page 1)

Preludes, the title appears at the end of the movement, as if it were an afterthought):

- I. Sandrone
- II. Il Dotore
- III. Arlecchino
- IV. Gli Innamorati
- V. Pantalone

Every instrument plays in a different key almost throughout. The key structure for the whole work is as follows:

- I. Violin I: C major—A minor; Violin II: A major—F# minor; Viola: G-flat major—E-flat minor; Cello: E-flat major—C minor
- II. Violin I: F major; Violin II: C major; Viola A-flat major; Cello: E major
- III. Violin I: E minor—G major; Violin II: C-sharp minor—E major; Viola: B-flat minor—D-flat major; Cello: G minor—B-flat major
- IV. Violin I: B-flat major; Violin II: G major; Viola: E-flat major; Cello: B major
- V. Violin I : A minor—C major; Violin II: F-sharp minor—A major; Viola: E-flat minor—G-flat major; Cello: C minor—E-flat major

It might be noted that for the most part, the foundation key in the cello in each movement goes up by thirds in alternating minor and major keys.

The first movement starts with a polytonal transcription of the E-flat Prelude from the WTC I by J.S. Bach, which acts as a sort of “opening adagio”. It is followed by the first transcribed melody (from Byelorussia) which, in turn, acts as an “allegro—first group.” The melody is then moved back and forth between the other members of the quartet. It is followed by a “second group” which is highlighted by a melody from Kazakhstan mostly in 4/2 time. A “development” section then follows which mostly expands upon the last five notes of the Kazakh theme; however, it is often accompanied by a heavily

disguised accompaniment derived from the notes of the Byelorussian theme. Eventually, it moves into an “Ivesian” section which combines quotes from Beethoven, Chopin, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Scott Joplin, amongst others. In fact, the Beethoven theme is from the “Moonlight” sonata, because it was one of my first musical experiences. When I brought that score to my first piano teacher—bless her soul—after I had been learning piano only a few months, she asked me, “Do you know what key it’s in?” I responded that I didn’t know. She said, “Well, it’s got four sharps so it’s in E major!” (Of course, it is in C-sharp minor). So the quote (in both keys) is in honor of my first piano teacher(!). There follows a “reverse recapitulation” where the Kazakh theme is first presented in diminution played pizzicato, and the first theme from Byelorussia is presented augmented, and then followed by a transcription of the ending of the same Bach E-flat Prelude.

The second movement is a pointillistic double retrograde fugue using melodies by Verdi and Puccini. This was a particularly fun movement to write, because initially I wrote a “conventional” fugue, but then kept removing more and more notes until the melodies became merely “hinted at”—at least in the first few bars of the movement. This movement shows the influence of Rzewski, as he describes in one of the variations of his score of *36 Variations on The People United Will Never Be Defeated*, like “fragments of a lost melody.” I would like to point out that while there is a Shostakovich piano quintet which casts similarly the first two movements as a prelude and fugue, I did not know of its existence until some months after *Quartetto dell'Arte* was finished.

The third movement, also a scherzo, uses a gavotte melody as the main theme (partially in homage to Prokofiev; despite writing many gavottes, he never wrote one for string quartet). This melody is juxtaposed by two others, one from Belgium, the other from Lithuania. The constant use of glissandi not only recalls the *Presto delirando* (5th) movement of Berg’s *Lyric Suite*, it also pays homage to non-western music where the pitch value of A=440hz is not always observed. Those who know the *Lyric Suite* well will be able to see microscopic similarities, though not audibly detectible. This

movement ends with an “ostinato machine” analogous to those found in Stravinsky’s *Sacre de Printemps*.

The fourth movement juxtaposes melodies by Guillaume de Machaut and Stephen Foster. Almost all of the melodic material is related to these two melodies. As the transformed Machault melody is manipulated at the beginning, it gradually turns into slowly changing motives, which one eventually realizes has become an accompaniment to a melody, *a la Mo-*

zart. In addition, this use of polytonality gives rise to an effect similarly found in some Renaissance, i.e. that of “modal mixture.”

The fourth movement also uses the effect of constant rhythmic canons, which helps develop interest and propels the work forward. This is a technique which I had used to great effect in *The Singing Lesson*, the chamber opera which I wrote immediately prior to *Quartetto dell’Arte*.

QUARTETTO DELL'ARTE

IV. Adagietto Amoroso

Adagietto $\text{♩} = 50$
Con Sord. al fine dell'adagietto Matthew de Lacey Davidson

The score consists of four systems of staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello.
 - **System 1:** Starts with *pp* dynamics and includes performance instructions *Con Sord. al fine dell'adagietto*. Section markers A and B are present.
 - **System 2:** Continues the melodic lines with dynamics ranging from *p* to *mp*. Section marker C is present.
 - **System 3:** Features a *ppp* dynamic marking and includes the instruction *Al Tuton* for the Viola and Cello parts. Section marker D is present.
 - **System 4:** Continues the *Al Tuton* section with complex rhythmic patterns in the lower strings.

The fifth movement is a rondo, mostly based on previous material. At measures 26–33 of the fifth movement, a melody occurs once only and is not developed nor repeated. At the end of the score the same melody appears but it is obviously written for a voice, with words in Italian set to it. The occurrence of the melody within the actual quartet itself is the same “song” only with the words “suppressed.” This has been done historically by both Berg and Mahler.

To the best of my knowledge, *Quartetto dell’Arte* is the first string quartet to:

1. have the first, third, and fifth movements set as *scherzi*;
2. follow the traditional Viennese models using structured and progressive polytonality in combination with transcriptions of non-western melodies;
3. have each voice mimic a similar key structure (only polytonally). For example, in the recapitulation of the first movement, each voice uses its own respective flat-II or Neapolitan key;
4. have each movement cyclically related, while simultaneously have the number of bars of each movement ordered according to patterns found in the Fibonacci series (with the exception of the last movement);
5. use tonality in an unusual manner, but in the format of polytonality, which produces an almost “modal mixture” effect similar to that of some Renaissance music;
6. combine both contemporary influences (such as Jack Body’s work, *Three Transcriptions* for string quartet, and Frederic Rzewski’s *Four North American Ballads*) with the formal structures available to us in the traditional Viennese canon, and obscure works in the Romantic repertoire.

For these reasons, I believe *Quartetto dell’Arte* deserves to be heard, despite the fact that the technical challenges in terms of both ensemble and solo work are probably indicative of string quartet ensembles which are at the top of their field.

The image displays a musical score for a string quartet, *Quartetto dell'Arte* by Matthew de Lacey Davidson. The score is arranged in four systems, each containing staves for Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The notation includes various musical symbols such as dynamics (e.g., *mp*, *f*, *ff*, *pp*), articulation (e.g., *pizz.*, *arco*), and performance markings (e.g., *mf*, *ff*). The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The first system shows measures 27-33, the second system shows measures 34-40, the third system shows measures 41-47, and the fourth system shows measures 48-54. The score concludes with a final measure marked *mf*.

Matthew de Lacey Davidson

SCItings

Member News and Activities

Performances, Awards, Commissions, Honors, Publications and other Member Activities.

David Ward-Steinman

On January 23, 2012 a song by David Ward-Steinman, "Jewels", was premiered by Daniella Carvalho, Brazilian soprano, making her debut in Carnegie Hall/Weill Hall in a benefit concert called "Jewels of the Heart". The song was commissioned by her husband, the conductor Jeff Eckstein.

Luke Schwartz

Lucy Moses School faculty premiered *10-29-11*, a quintet for flute and strings, on January 25, 2012 in New York City's Merkin Concert Hall.

Robert J. Bradshaw

Members of the Salem State University music faculty—Gary Wood, baritone; Lynn Shane, soprano; and Beverly Soll, piano—were joined by Boston area freelance musicians Monica Duncan, clarinet; Nathan Cohen, violin; and Kristjan Asgeirsson, marimba, premiered Bradshaw's comic chamber operetta *QWERTY: An Opera With A [TEXT] Message* on January 30, 2012. This concert program was presented by Cape Ann Opera and funded by the Music Drives Us Foundation.

This composition and project are intended to help open a conversation about responsible and safe use of technology. In this case, focusing primarily

on texting by college students but also addressing issues pertaining to email, blogging and chat rooms.

Ryan Olivier

On February 9, 2012 *Magis: Songs* on poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins received its premiere by Temple University Faculty Members in Rock Hall.

Brett L. Wery

Pianist/Singer Judith Avitabile premiered Wery's *Piano Sonata* on February 16, 2012 in the Carl B. Taylor Auditorium on the Campus of Schenectady County Community College, School of Music.

Eric Knechtges

Knechtges' piece for euphonium and band, *Aporia*, was premiered by euphonium soloist Adam Frey and the Miami University Wind Ensemble on February 22, 2012 in Hall Auditorium on the campus of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. It uses a quotation of the trumpet melody from Ives' *The Unanswered Question* and is both an exploration of the theme of the human search for universal truth and its consequences, and an homage to Charles Ives.

Chan Ji Kim

At the International Composers and Interactive Artists concert at the Symphony Space in New York City, Chan Ji Kim's trio, *In Memoriam*, written for teacher, mentor and friend, Dr. Dinu Ghezzo, was premiered on February 24, 2012.

Jason Bahr

Bahr's *Eagle Fanfare* was premiered by the Boston Brass on February 25, 2012 in the U. Tobe Recital Hall on the Florida Gulf Coast University Campus.