

acknowledgments

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Kinesis II - 18 by Linda Plotkin © Linda Plotkin
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CATALYST :: New York New Music Ensemble

CONVERGENCE :: Cygnus Ensemble

MOONSET NO. 1 :: Linda Larson, soprano / Richard MacDowell, clarinet

GOLD-VERMILLION :: Da Capo Chamber Players

KINESIS :: Momenta String Quartet

david glaser

KINESIS



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music

Music's Conclusions

The intensity and focus of David Glaser's music reflect the concentration of his life. He has lived in New York City for the entirety of it — raised in Queens, and, for the past quarter-century, living in Manhattan. The first in his family to go to college, he soon discovered that the culture that engaged him was consistently the most rarified: unlike so many of his composer-colleagues in concert-music, he has virtually no interest in mainstream popular musical culture. Early on, having abandoned the French horn on account of his attraction to the tone-color of the guitar, he then found that he wasn't interested in that instrument's repertoire, so he dropped it, too; but it's no wonder that, with it in his performing background, the guitar should figure so large in two of the pieces on this disk. However, more broadly, what characterizes virtually all of the music here is its intentional direction towards New York concert-music performers, their ensembles, and the culture and tradition that they embody and extend. Most of it was written for, and is here performed by, ensembles that are among the most well-established, accomplished, musically ambitious, and, indeed, elite, of the City's groups that specialize in the newest, most challenging music.

Thus, in his relations with the dominant musical culture, Glaser would seem to subscribe proudly to Gauguin's line, currently so unfashionable: "I shut my eyes in order to see." But although it's for our ears only, his music still paradoxically calls visual metaphors to mind: the luminous radiance of its sparkling timbral textures is a reflection of the focus of an intense conception, expressed for interpretation by instrumentalists just as intensively engaged, and demanding an audience that, too, will shut its eyes for the music's duration, in order to see.

Let us, then, do that: in darkness, as the first movement of *Kinesis* begins, we hear the guitar's intimate, hesitant, fragmentary, but insistent call become increasingly urgent and expressively intense: just as their attacks approach a ferocious violence, the notes of the guitar become extended and elaborated by the string quartet, which gradually forms an audio scrim through which we hear the soloist start to weave his increasingly continuous and elaborate passages. But then, its gradual acceleration broken, musical time becomes suspended: the web of contrapuntal lines is punctuated by uninvolved instruments scurrying through it, trying to avoid being caught in the gravitational field towards which the counterpoint, becoming increasingly dense, has already descended so precipitously. Finally, in rhetorical sync and now really playing together, and with the articulation of a definitive rhythmic and harmonic sequence synthesized out of the contours that the individual lines have been gradually describing, the guitar-quartet complex closes the movement with a simplified clarity at which the music had not, earlier, even hinted.

In the first interlude, the hesitancy of the opening quickly becomes eclipsed by an intensity of expression much like what had begun to emerge and develop during the first movement. The musical action here is broken into aggressive gestures: its discontinuities offer no respite, but rather, they just temporarily suspend the active musical agents, offering increasingly shorter silences, through which we wait for each new passage to follow, and finally, to overlap with, the last, as though each successive pair were drawn together by springs increasingly resilient and elastic. The twin and triplet notes of the quartet's twittering tremoli that begin *Kinesis*'s Movement II seem at first to be just hanging there, independently suspended, and then follow, at first haltingly, a downward trajectory towards the register in which the guitar finally enters to comment upon, and then complement, the music that the rest are playing, until some retake their tremoli again, which here, however, take part in a synoptic musical creation that, as it pushes forward with its pressing, insistent momentum, now kaleidoscopically incorporates the textures from which it has earlier sprung.

As the guitar reasserts itself in the second interlude, and the others remain silent, we may be at first distracted by the beauty and agility of the instrument — a credit to its master, Oren Fader — but as it riffs on the motive with which it opened, a multilayered dialogue develops between registrally identified musics — a dialogue that becomes increasingly striking in its solo instrument complexity, until, as though the guitarist has played out of turn, it becomes cut off, almost arbitrarily, by a simple strum. Especially here, the headphone-wearing listener is encouraged by the exquisite close-recording to imagine hearing from the dark interior of the body of the guitar, surrounded by the vibrating wood of the instrument, enveloped in seemingly solid sound.

By the last movement, their relations now well explored, the guitar and the quartet make a cooperative, complementary, and often contrapuntal music together, one in which the beauty of the ensemble's calm deliberation can then draw in the listener to confront a new passage in which all five players follow their discontinuous and sharply punctuated paths, paths which then become one — a single path on which they now, finally, travel together, at peace and in harmony, with each other, and prepared as a group for whatever the terrain of the future should bring.

Kinesis is one of a series of Glaser's compositions that take their inspiration (and in this case, their title, too) from the work of visual artist Linda Plotkin. As may be seen, for example, on the cover of this CD, each of the monotypes of her *Kinesis* series contains a central element spiraling up and folding over itself, and Glaser has written that he thinks of the music of his *Kinesis* as a sonic analog of Plotkin's vocabulary of gestural shapes and rhythms.

In *Catalyst*, on the other hand, it's an ensemble-driven texture of quickly-repeated chords that initiates the musical action, which, as instrumental threads come loose, gradually morphs into a more loosely-woven fabric, one in which

the opening gestures find themselves in a context that changes their meaning altogether — now they interrupt a longer term continuity, and gradually become echoes, pervasively embedded within the events to come, which include and absorb them, but are marching to very different orders. Those orders are reflected in the evanescent timbres of the instrumental interaction, in which the musicians gradually seem to learn to play together nicely — playing so nicely that sometimes one of them can take center stage without disruption, and so nicely that the entrances of others are no longer aggressive acts against which to be defended, but welcome opportunities for intermingling, for eventual musical interplay and, finally, interpenetration.

Moonset No. 1 (the first of a projected set of five) begins as though it's a singer's vehicle in vocalise, but then gradually reveals itself, as the clarinet reflects and punctuates the singer's lines, to be a wordless musical expression of a vocal narrative beyond words, in which what's expressed is to be heard in the interaction of two musics — instrumental and vocal — a composite soundscape in which the phonemes through which the soprano embodies the notes of her part are largely left to her extemporizing choice. This recording of that performance process is astonishingly touching and beautiful — the associations of syllables become affecting in ways that actual words, carrying the weight of their meanings, can only suggest.

In *Convergence*, the intensity of the interchanges between the guitarist and the other players of the Cygnus ensemble is immediately gripping. Though such intense exchanges are occasionally broken by contemplative solo passages expressed by the ensemble members one by one, when those solos are then joined by the ensemble, in their interplay, through which one picks up and extends another's line, they form and extend, all together, the harmonies of chords. As those harmonies then inform each other through their succession, a listener can sense an activity of group construction — one perhaps unexpected in this most urban individualist of composers — that, like a barn-raising, engages the talents of each person involved, gradually creating a structure of functional narratives — a structure in which, so much more than simply a setting for the jewel-like beauties expressed through the guitar, all can together take pride.

Its resonant title drawn from the final line of Gerald Manley Hopkins' poem "The Windhover," *Gold-vermillion* opens with a brilliant play of instrumental gestures that ring with luminescent timbral color. Hopkins was a favorite poet of composer Edward Levy, to whose memory this work is dedicated. On its rhythmic surface, the music echoes the tumbling cadences of the poem's hyper-exuberant alliteration and assonance, and, in instrumental interaction, it also reflects Hopkins' verbal play of phonemic recurrence and echo. From the fluttering repetitions of the opening piano music, to their extension, first in the flute, and then in the others as they take over, the piece embodies, in the medium of sound, the ecstatically propulsive pitch of the poem. Even as the attacks becomes fewer, and the

notes, longer, they seem still suspended in registral space, like a raptor gliding on an up-draft, resting, and then gradually again gaining altitude. And later, as the instruments learn to work together, in the interaction of their coloration, to propel the action forward, we hear yet more echos of Hopkins's double- and triple-consonant attacks, gradually accruing to continue the sense of musical motion even through moments of suspension, and punctuating the music's conclusions.

—Stephen Dembski

composer

"Subtly potent" is the way the American Academy of Arts and Letters described **David Glaser's** work when it awarded him an Arts and Letters Award in Music in 2005. He has been commissioned by a broad range of ensembles and solo performers including the New York New Music Ensemble, Sequitur, the Cygnus Ensemble, the NewMusic@ECU festival for Christopher Grymes, Parthenia — a Consort of Viols, No Exit, Caroline Stinson, the Peconic Chamber Orchestra, the New Jersey Percussion Ensemble and Glaux, the new music ensemble of Temple University and sopranos Susan Narucki, Judith Kellock and Linda Larson.

The recipient of awards and commissions from the Fromm Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Alice M. Ditson Fund, and the American Music Center, he has been a fellow at the MacDowell Colony and the Wellesley Composers Conference, and composer-in-residence at the NewMusic@ECU Festival at East Carolina University.

Glaser was born and raised in New York City. He is a graduate of Columbia University where his teachers included Mario Davidovsky, Martin Boykan, Jack Beeson and George Edwards, and now teaches music at Stern College for Women of Yeshiva University in New York.

performers

For 35 years, **The New York New Music Ensemble** has commissioned, performed and recorded the important and emerging composers of our time. The group has in fact been the means by which many of these composers have become known and appreciated. NYNME has been recognized and supported by many significant American foundations, including the Jerome Foundation, the Fromm Foundation at Harvard, the Mary Flagler Cary Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, the Koussevitzky Foundation, Chamber Music America, the NEA and NYSCA, among others. They have performed innumerable college residencies, appeared at major festivals and have recorded a huge discography of important chamber works. They have traveled to Europe, Asia, and South America to perform, teach and record, and have branched out into theatre music, electronics live and prerecorded, and interactive new technologies.

The **Cygnus Ensemble** was founded in 1985 by guitarist and composer William Anderson. Cygnus proudly celebrates its unflagging commitment to American modernists, even through their eclipse by the minimalist movement, which Cygnus embraces as a vital American phenomenon and an inevitable aesthetic revolution. Throughout this revolution, modernist composers have quietly become better at doing what they do, and more precise about exactly what they are doing — working out the experiential ramifications of a great proliferation of compositional techniques that emerged in the last century — the Burgess Shale of compositional techniques. Cygnus has had several key modernist works composed especially for them including Milton Babbitt's *Swan Song No. 1*, Mario Davidovsky's *Ladino Songs* and Charles Wuorinen's *Sonata for Guitar and Piano*. The ensemble has produced numerous recordings and given concerts in the US, Europe and Mexico. Cygnus is currently in residence at Sarah Lawrence College and the City University of New York's Graduate Center. In February/March, 2012 Cygnus will be in residence at the Library of Congress to inaugurate the Dina Koston and Roger Shapiro Music Fund concerts.

Soprano **Linda Larson** premiered David Glaser's *Catullus Dreams*, as well as his *Moonset No. 1*. Recognized for her commitment to new American music, Ms. Larson has sung with leading new music ensembles, including the Center for Contemporary Opera, Sequitur, Washington Square Contemporary Music Society, Ensemble X, Brooklyn New Music Collective, Encompass New Opera Theatre, and Voices of Change. She is a frequent performer at the American Composer Alliance Festivals and has sung leading operatic roles throughout the United States. She is a member of the chamber trio *Inalare* with flutist Kay Borkowski and pianist Bair Shagdaron.

Clarinetist **Richard MacDowell** has performed and taught internationally including recent visits to Canada, the Dominican Republic, China and Taiwan. A versatile performer, equally comfortable as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral player, Mr. MacDowell has been heard in Banff, Canada, in Nanning, China and as principal clarinet of the Dallas Chamber Orchestra, and the Austin and San Antonio Symphonies. Mr. MacDowell has been on the faculties of the Interlochen Arts Academy and University of Texas at Austin where he was Co-Artistic Director of ClarinetFest® 2011. He holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music, New England Conservatory, Northwestern and Florida State Universities.

From its beginning, with founding member and pianist Joan Tower, the Naumburg Award-winning, internationally acclaimed **Da Capo Chamber Players** has built a reputation on working closely with composers, representing an enormous spectrum of compositional styles. Their repertoire includes more than 100 works written for the ensemble, representing an enormous spectrum of compositional styles.

Da Capo has twice been featured at Moscow Autumn and St. Petersburg Sound Ways festivals, combining American works with seven by Russian composers. For more than two decades, the group has been in residence at Bard College, and since 2006 has been Ensemble in Residence with the composition program of the Bard College Conservatory of Music. The group presents an annual New York City concert series at Merkin Concert Hall.

Guest artist **Marshall Taylor** has played in Europe and Japan as well as the United States, and has recorded as both saxophonist and conductor for Albany Records, CRI, Innova, Koch International Classics, and Naxos among others. He plays with many ensembles in Philadelphia and New York. He teaches saxophone at Temple University's Esther Boyer College of Music in Philadelphia. With Dr. Marion Kant and Dr. Samuel Hsu, he presents concerts of "Entartete Musik" ("Degenerate Music") — the music of composers banned, displaced or murdered by the Nazi regime.

Described by *Time Out New York* as "an outstanding ensemble prone to innovation and exploration" and praised by *Strad Magazine* for its "understated confidence" and "burnished tone," the **Momenta Quartet** has premiered more than 50 works since 2004 and has collaborated with more than 70 living composers. Based in New York City, Momenta has concertized at some of the city's well-known alternative and mainstream venues; lectured and performed at numerous American universities; and traveled to England, Singapore, Hawaii and Indonesia. The quartet has received grants from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, Meet the Composer, the Aaron Copland Fund, the Brooklyn Arts Council and the New York State Council on the Arts. www.momentaquartet.com.

Guest artist **Oren Fader**, guitarist, has performed in the U.S., Europe and Asia with a wide range of classical and new music groups, including the Met Chamber Ensemble, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and the Mark Morris Dance Group. A champion of contemporary music, he has premiered more than 250 works with guitar, and can be heard on more than 40 commercial recordings and film. Mr. Fader has been on the guitar and chamber music faculty of the Manhattan School of Music since 1994. www.orenfader.com

Kinesis

David Glaser

- 1 *Catalyst* (2007) [9:44]
The New York New Music Ensemble
 Jayn Rosenfeld, flute I Jean Kopperud, clarinet
 Chris Finckel, cello I James Baker, percussion
- 2 *Convergence* (2000) [9:57]
Cygnus
 Tara Helen O'Connor, flute I Calvin Wiersma, violin
 Susannah Chapman, cello I Oren Fader, guitar
- 3 *Moonset No. 1* (2003) [8:40]
 Linda Larson, soprano I Richard MacDowell, clarinet
- 4 *Gold-vermillion* (2002) [12:31]
DaCapo Chamber Players
 Patricia Spencer, flute I Blair McMillen, piano
 guest artist Marshall Taylor, alto saxophone

- Kinesis* (2008) [16:00]
- 5 I. [5:58]
 6 Interlude I [1:52]
 7 II. [3:37]
 8 Interlude II [1:05]
 9 III. [4:21]
- Momenta String Quartet**
 Asmira Woodward-Page, violin
 Emilie-Anne Gendron, violin
 Stephanie Griffin, viola I Joanne Lin, cello
 guest artist Oren Fader, guitar

Total Time = 57:14



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