

Helgi R. Ingvarsson (1985) graduated with distinction from his MMus course in music composition at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, in 2012 and after a composition fellowship the following year he is now currently a composition doctorate at the school, tutored by Matthew King and Nye Parry. Helgi has a BA from Iceland Academy of the Arts, mentored by Kjartan Ólafsson, and participated in an exchange programme at the Malmö Academy of Music, Sweden, studying with Rolf Martinsson. Other composition tutors include Detlev Glanert, at Dartington International summer school, England in August 2012. Helgi studied conducting in 2011-2012 with Sian Edwards and has conducted the Icelandic Choir in London since 2012. Additionally, Helgi has studied Vocal Arts and Euphonium playing in the past. His compositions include e.g. 3 chamber operas and 3 dance pieces for mixed ensembles. His current commission is the opera *Évariste* for the Courtould Gallery, Somerset House, London and the Guildhall School, premiered mid 2014, libretto by Lori Ann Stephens.

Helgi has collaborated with players, groups and ensembles like CHROMA Ensemble, cellist Clare O'Connell, Elektra Ensemble, players from the BBCSO, Composers ensemble, NewDots, the Ligeti Quartet and the Bartholdy Quartet and works performed at venues like Harpa, Reykjavík at the DarkMusicDays festival in Iceland; Wigmore Hall, London; The Place theatre, London; BBC's Maida Vale studios, London; The Forge, Camden; Linköping and Lund, Sweden and Salurinn, Kópavogur, Iceland.
www.helgiingvarsson.com & soundcloud.com/helgirafn

Rubens Askenar is a young composer living and studying in London. His work is influenced by many composers, artists and thinkers ranging from Perotinus Magnus to the works of Martin Heidegger or Jan Fabre's anatomic installations. His passion for working with different artistic manifestations is apparent in his compositional style. Many of his works make references to common natural processes, varying from the study of different locomotion systems of insects to the mechanics of an internal human organ. All of these influences can be seen in the sonorous organisation using a thorough sonological study, where the concept or idea is thrown into the problem of time.
soundcloud.com/rubens-askenar

Raymond Yiu is a composer, jazz pianist, conductor and writer on music. He is the winner of a BASCA British Composer Award in 2010 (with *Northwest Wind*), and nominated for the same award in 2004 (with *Beyond the Glass*), 2012 (with *Les Etoiles au Front*) and 2013 (with *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured*) respectively.

Yiu's early work received the advocacy of American composer-pianist-conductor Lukas Foss. He has worked with ensembles and artists including BBC Singers, BBCSO, CHROMA, Concorde Ensemble (Ireland), Ensemble 10/10, London Sinfonietta, Lontano, LSO and Andrew Watts. *The Original Chinese Conjurer*, with libretto by Lee Warren, was commissioned by Aldeburgh Production for the 2006 Aldeburgh Almeida Opera Season. *Maomao Yü*, a quintet for piano and traditional Chinese instruments was commissioned by LSO for Lang Lang and the Silk String Quartet. *The Earth and Every Common Sight*, for soprano and piano, won the Tracey Chadwell Memorial Prize 2010. In April 2013, Teatro Barroco of Vienna mounted a new production of *The Original Chinese Conjurer*, directed by Bernd Bienert.

www.raymondyiu.com & soundcloud.com/raymond-yiu



CHROMA gratefully acknowledges the support of the PRS for Music Foundation



CHROMA

7.30pm Wednesday 5 February 2014

The Forge Camden

Wednesdays at the Forge new music series

Stuart King clarinet
Ian Watson accordion
David Le Page violin
Robert Ames viola
Clare O'Connell cello

Michael Zev Gordon *Glass Mountain*
Liam Mattison *Blue Lake*
Helgi Ingvarsson *Loftkastali/Castle in Air*
Rubens Askenar *Testo Junkie*
Raymond Yiu *Les Etoiles au Front*

producer for CHROMA Claire Shovelton
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CHROMA

Founded in 1997, the critically acclaimed CHROMA is an acclaimed, London-based, flexible chamber ensemble dedicated both to new music and to revisiting classic repertoire in fresh and exciting contexts; mentoring the next generation of composers, and involving audiences in compelling, inspirational experiences.

Commissions include Julian Grant, Arlene Sierra, Philip Cashian, David Bruce, Michael Zev Gordon, Raymond Yiu, Claudia Molitor and Marcus Barcham-Stevens. Recent projects include ROH - Anne Dudley/Stewart Copeland operashots premieres; Tarik O'Regan *Heart of Darkness* (co-production Opera East) and Will Tuckett's *Wind in the Willows*. As Associate Ensemble with Tête à Tête, new works by Kerry Andrew, Samuel Bordoli, Charlotte Bray, Stephen McNeff, Joanna Lee, Robert Fokkens & Michael Zev Gordon through Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival, and The Opera Group - premiere tour of David Bruce *Firework-Maker's Daughter*.

In 2014: premieres of Aldeburgh/ROH/ON Elspeth Brooke *The Commission* & Francisco Coll *Cafe Kafka*, ROH Luke Bedford *Through His Teeth*, Mahogany Opera Group tour of HK Gruber *Gloria – A Pig's Tale*, contemporary concert programmes at Kettle's Yard, RWCMD, Iford, Norwich, Laurence Osborn premiere with Tête à Tête, *Singing Through Puppets* R&D with Will Tuckett, the music meets literature series at the Kings Arms Berkhamsted including premieres from Leonardo Margutti and David Bruce, plus ongoing work with student composers at RHUL, RAM and Oxford University.

www.chromaensemble.co.uk Twitter @chroma_ensemble

Glass Mountain (2012) by Michael Zev Gordon

I've talked to Ian Watson about specially writing him a piece for quite some time. And I'm delighted this commission from CHROMA gave me the chance to do it.

The accordion is a wonderfully versatile instrument and is part of so many vernacular musics across the globe. In the case of my piece, the accordion and the ensemble evoke something of the world of klezmer, Jewish folk music originally from Eastern Europe. In more recent times, klezmer has seen a strong resurgence in the US and UK and elsewhere; but for me the poignancy of the music is, at least in part, because it is evocative of a lost pre-war time. In my piece, you only briefly hear 'real' klezmer. Instead I wanted to make a piece where you catch, as it were, shadows of that music – to create something all the more poignant because it is slightly out of reach. This also has to do with a recurrent theme in my music: the workings of memory. The title of my piece comes from a line from Austerlitz by the German writer W.G. Sebald, one of the great writers about memory: "When memories come back to you, you sometimes feel as if you were looking at the past through a glass mountain...".

Lofkastali/Castle in Air (2013) by Helgi Ingvarsson

Commissioned by Guðný Jónasdóttir for her final recital at the Royal Academy of Music, London, in June 2013. Another contributor to this version of the piece was cellist Clare O'Connell with her performances in Berkhamsted December 2013 and London and Cardiff in 2014. This piece was originally written during January – June 2013 and then revised in September 2013.

Testo Junkie (2014) by Rubens Askenar

Testo Junkie is based in the homonymous work by Spanish philosopher Beatriz Preciado,

one of the leading thinkers in the study of gender and sexuality. Beatriz Preciado shows the ways in which the synthesis of hormones has fundamentally changed since the 1950s, how gender and sexual identity formulated, and how the pharmaceutical and pornography industries are in the business of creating desire. All this is narrated through Preciado's daily account of her own use of testosterone over the course of one year. The extreme changes in her energy gave me a shape for the piece, which begins with thin and fragile threads of sound quickly transformed in explosive textures of rhythm and saturated sounds.

Les Etoiles au Front (2012) by Raymond Yiu

Les Etoiles au Front is a double concerto for clarinet and accordion in all but name. The title paraphrases alludes to *L'étoile au front*, a 1925 play by the French writer Raymond Roussel (1877-1933), whose writing methods, as outlined in his *Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres* (1935), inform my own approach to the musical materials of this work.

The concerto is in ten movements. Some of them are separated by brief breaks (between II and III, IV and V, VII and VIII, IX and X), while some of them are played attacca (I and II, III and IV, VIII and IX) or overlapping each other (V and VI, VI and VII). Materials are never shared between adjacent movements.

With the image of 'stars on the forehead' (or a single star in Roussel's original) as a starting point, the work takes materials from different musical sources solely for their association with 'star(s)': the very beginning of *La Vocation* from Satie's *Le fils de étoiles*, a fragment from the introduction of Reynaldo Hahn's chanson *Les étoiles*, and Nie Er's (1912-35) *March of the Volunteers* (which later became the anthem of the People's Republic of China – the Chairman Mao-style green cap with a red star provides the 'visual' link). A musical fragment printed in Roussel's own *Locus Solus* (1914) makes a brief appearance as an intermezzo (movement IV) played by the string trio alone.

Les Etoiles au Front was written for CHROMA to celebrate its 15th anniversary. It is affectionately dedicated to the players for whom the work is written – Stuart King (clarinet), Ian Watson (accordion), and the string players in the first performance, Marcus Barcham-Stevens, David Aspin and Clare O'Connell

BIOGRAPHIES

Michael Zev Gordon is Professor of Composition at the University of Birmingham. His works have been performed by many leading artists, including Britten Sinfonia, the London Sinfonietta, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and EXAUDI. Awards include a 2004 Prix Italia for *A Pebble in the Pond*, a large-scale radiophonic work on the subject of memory; and twice winner of the choral category of the British Composer Awards in 2008 and 2011, the last for *Allele* for 40 voices – on the subject of music and genes.

In recent years, Gordon has been featured composer at the Park Lane Group series and on the CoMA summer school. *On Memory*, played by Andrew Zolinsky, was one of The Times' top 10 contemporary albums of 2010. Tête-à-Tête/ CHROMA premiered Act 1 of *Icarus* at the Riverside Studios August 2011, with more of the opera shown at Exposure ROH Linbury. Recent premieres include *Bohortha (Seven Pieces for Orchestra)* for BBC Symphony Orchestra (Barbican Oct 2012), *Glass Mountain* for CHROMA (2012), *The Gleam of Hidden Skies* for Cheltenham Music Festival (2013).
soundcloud.com/michael-zev-gordon

Liam Mattison liammattison.com & soundcloud.com/liammattison