

# Birds on a Wire

2012-13 Season  
341st Concert

Thursday 7 February 2013  
Dalton Center Recital Hall  
7:30 p.m.

WILLIS KOA, Cello  
JORY KING, Flute  
AHMED ANZALDUA, Piano  
SKYE HOOKHAM, Percussion  
ANDREW MAXBAUER, Percussion  
DAVID COLSON, Conductor

*featuring*

CARL RATNER, Baritone  
RAYMOND HARVEY, Piano  
VALERIA JONARD, Computer  
ABDERRAHMAN ANZALDUA, Computer  
CHRISTOPHER BIGGS, Sound Engineer/Composer  
ROBERT G. PATTERSON, Composer

Christopher Biggs  
b. 1979

*Biodiversity* (2012) World Premiere

- I. 1. Monochrome
2. Sequencing
3. Action – Reaction
4. Genetic Diversity
- II. 5. Virus with Shoes
6. Developed Consumption (video by Barry Anderson)
7. Organismal Diversity (video by Kevin Abbott, choreography by David Curwen and dancers\*)
- III. 8. (re)action – (re)action (video by Richard Johnson)
9. Biofeedback
10. Ecological Diversity (video by Eric Souther)
11. Entropy (includes processed video by all collaborating video artists)

intermission



Robert G. Patterson  
b. 1957

*American Pierrot:*  
*A Langston Hughes Songbook* (2011) World Premiere

- I. Pierrot's Passion
  - When Sue Wears Red
  - Midnight Dancer
  - Love Song for Lucinda
  - Lady's Boogie
- II. Pierrot's Estate
  - Words Like Freedom
  - Go Slow
  - Visitors to the Black Belt
  - Dream Boogie: Variation
  - Silhouette
- III. Pierrot's Heart
  - Heart
  - Soledad (A Cuban Portrait)
  - Life is Fine

CARL RATNER currently serves as Associate Professor of Voice at Western Michigan University. He teaches applied voice, French and German diction for singers, and vocal literature, and from 2001–10 served as Director of Opera. He is professionally active as a baritone soloist, stage director, and opera consultant.

He was awarded a 2010–11 Fulbright grant to perform in recital, give lectures and master classes, direct an American chamber opera, and research Russian art songs at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in the Russian Federation. In 2011, he toured the eastern United States with a recital of songs by Russian and Russian-American composers, beginning with a performance at the Russian Cultural Center in Washington D.C. He also collaborated with the Bach Ensemble of Naples Florida for performances of *Messiah* as well as a mixed program of sacred music that was toured to Germany and the Czech Republic.

His operatic engagements have included the leading baritone roles of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*; Verdi's *Falstaff*; Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Turandot*; as well as Robert Ward's Pulitzer Prize winning operatic version of *The Crucible*. He has performed in concert and recital in ten states and four European countries and has sung in fourteen languages.

Ratner's career also includes over two decades of experience as an opera director. He learned his craft assisting directors at major opera houses including Covent Garden (London), the Metropolitan Opera, Munich Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Santa Fe Opera, and the Spoleto Festival in Italy, where he worked with eminent composer Gian Carlo Menotti. From 1994–99 served as Artistic Director of Chicago Opera Theater, Chicago's second largest opera company, and previously held the same position with Chamber Opera Chicago from 1984–93. He has staged professional productions throughout the United States.

He received his Bachelor of Music degree in music history from the Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio and also participated in an internship in opera, dance, and drama production at The Juilliard School in New York City. He earned a Master of Arts in vocal pedagogy at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago and his Doctor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from the School of Music at Northwestern University.

Now in his fourteenth season as Music Director of the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, RAYMOND HARVEY was previously Music Director of the Springfield Symphony in Massachusetts and the Fresno Philharmonic in California. He has appeared as guest conductor with many of America's leading orchestras, and served for sixteen years as

Music Director of the El Paso Opera in Texas.

Harvey holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and a master's and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from the Yale School of Music. He has been a frequent guest teacher for the Conductors Institute at Bard College.

To those who have seen the Maestro's pre-concert lectures, it should come as no surprise that Harvey is also an accomplished pianist. His piano teachers have included Jess Smith of the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, Joseph Hungate and Joseph Schwartz of the Oberlin Conservatory, and Adele Marcus of the Juilliard School. Harvey has appeared as conductor/soloist with the Marion (Indiana) Philharmonic, the Buffalo Philharmonic, and the Kalamazoo Symphony, recently performing Gershwin's *Concerto in F Major*, and Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. He continues to be actively involved as a recital accompanist and chamber musician.

## COMPOSER BIOGRAPHIES & PROGRAM NOTES

Christopher Biggs is a composer and intermedia artist residing in Kalamazoo, where he is Assistant Professor of Digital Composition at Western Michigan University. His recent projects focus on integrating live instrumental performance with interactive audiovisual media. In addition to collaborating with artists in other disciplines on projects, Biggs treats all of his works as collaborations between himself and the initial performing artist by working with the performers during the creative process and considering their specific skills and preferences.

Biggs' music has been presented across the United States and Europe, as well as in Latin America and Asia. His music is regularly performed on conferences and festivals, including the SEAMUS Conference, Visonos Sonoras, Electronic Music Midwest, and Society for Composers, Inc. His music is available on Ravello Records, Irritable Hedgehog, and Peanut Shell Productions.

Biggs received the 2008 Missouri Music Teacher's Association composer of the year award, the 2009 SEMAUS/ASCAP first place award, the 2011 MACRO International Composition Award, and the 2012 A&D Issa Music and Dance Faculty Award. Dr. Biggs was a Preparing Future Faculty Fellow at the University of Missouri-Kansas City from 2007-10.

Biggs teaches acoustic and electronic music composition, electronic music, and music theory. He received degrees from American University (bachelor's in print journalism), The University of Arizona (master's in music composition), and the University of Missouri-Kansas City (Doctorate of Musical Arts in music composition). He studied music composition with Pulitzer Prize winning composer Zhou Long and Charles Ives Award recipient Chen Yi, in addition to renowned composers James Mobberley, Joao Pedro Oliveira, Daniel Asia, and Paul Rudy.

*Biodiversity* was created with the generous support of the A&D Issa Music and Dance Faculty Award. The work abstractly reflects on biodiversity and human interactions with the environment that support or threaten biodiversity. The focus of the work progresses non-linearly; however, as the work evolves it tends to move from representing negative human behaviors and a lack of diversity to depicting positive human behaviors and a wealth of diversity. The work is organized in three movements, each of which culminates in a section that represents one type of biodiversity. The digital audio consists of both live processing of the instrumental sounds and sound file triggering. The digital audio represents the environment in which the human instrumentalists exist, and it either depicts environmental reactions (consequences) of human action or provides a layer of sound that reinforces the extra-musical content of the section. The digital video operates similarly; it both reinforces extra-musical content and interacts with the performers. As the work progresses the video work is increasingly created by other artists or in collaboration with other artists, in order to reflect increased diversity.

For information on the collaborating video artists, please visit: Barry Anderson ([barryanderson.com](http://barryanderson.com)), Kevin Abbott ([www.wmich.edu/digitalmedia](http://www.wmich.edu/digitalmedia)), Richard Johnson ([composerjohnson.com](http://composerjohnson.com)), and Eric Souther ([unseensignals.com/unseen](http://unseensignals.com/unseen)). Special thanks to Kevin Abbott's effects assistant, Jeremy Davidson.

\* All dancers are members of the Western Dance Project ([wmich.edu/dance/performance/western-dance-project](http://wmich.edu/dance/performance/western-dance-project)), David Curwen, Director ([wmich.edu/dance/faculty/curwen](http://wmich.edu/dance/faculty/curwen)): Sam Assemany, Tess Renaud, Sarah Rot, Julie-Ann Gambino, Grace Bialka, Jalisa Brown, and Emily Rayburn.

Robert G. Patterson resides in Memphis, Tennessee. His music is infused with the popular rhythms and melodic fragments around him, and these provide source material for his personal voice. Commissions from the Iris Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra confirm an emerging interest in his innovative musical style that has led to performances in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Patterson holds degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Memphis, and Oberlin College, having studied composition with George Crumb and Don Freund. His compositions have received numerous awards, including the University of Michigan Bands Commission, the International Composition Prize from the City of Tarragona in Spain, and the Distinguished Composer of the Year award from the Music Teachers National Association. He was a resident at the Visby Centre for Composers in Visby, Sweden.

In addition to his musical activities, Patterson also has helped to develop PC-based hotel software for Hilton Hotels, and his interest in computers has led him to become an expert in musical engraving using a computer. His Patterson Plug-Ins Collection for Finale software has become a staple of composers worldwide.

Langston Hughes was one of the most important writers and thinkers of the Harlem Renaissance, which was the African American artistic movement in the 1920s that celebrated black life and culture. Hughes' creative genius was influenced by his life in New York City's Harlem, a primarily African American neighborhood. His literary works helped shape American literature and politics. Hughes, like others active in the Harlem Renaissance, had a strong sense of racial pride. Through his poetry, novels, plays, essays, and children's books, he promoted equality, condemned racism and injustice, and celebrated African American culture, humor, and spirituality.

– [www.americaslibrary.gov/aa/hughes/aa\\_hughes\\_subj.html](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/aa/hughes/aa_hughes_subj.html)

*American Pierrot: A Langston Hughes Songbook* is a setting of twelve poems by Langston Hughes. The poems are so uniquely musical that it is impossible to hear them without hearing the swing and blues rhythms embodied in them. In the poem "Midnight Dancer" Hughes coined a word that I have embraced as a description for most of the music in this cycle: "jazz-tuned."

The cycle is comprised of three sub-cycles. "Pierrot's Passion" presents poems about women, from lovers to an anonymous club dancer to a passing society lady who might be going to a concert of music by Bach. "Pierrot's Estate" struggles with some of his thornier poems describing the black experience in America. Hughes's frustration with the slow progress of civil rights permeates his oeuvre, and though I personally have not and could never have experienced it other than as an observer, I feel that any honest survey of his work must include a liberal sampling.

The final sub-cycle "Pierrot's Heart" includes the poem "Heart" in which Hughes famously described himself as "Pierrot," one of the stock characters of pantomime in the *Commedia dell'Arte*. Pierrot's part is that of the sad clown who harbors unrequited love for the heroine, Columbine. In my song, the word "Pierrot" sometimes has two syllables and sometimes three. Both ways of setting the word (in terms of rhythm and contour) come directly from Arnold Schoenberg's masterwork for soprano and chamber ensemble, *Pierrot Lunaire*.

Special thanks to John Griffin, rehearsal pianist/coach for *American Pierrot: A Langston Hughes Songbook*.