

Yamaha Piano provided courtesy of Yamaha Artist Services, New York, and Hendricks Keyboards, Inc.
in Downers Grove, IL.



Upcoming Concerts

Tuesday, October 11, 7pm
Apple Store, Lincoln Park
music of Jacob TV, Banks, and Charney

Sunday, October 23, 11am
Rush Hour Encores at The Mayne Stage
music of Puts, Davidovsky, Jacob TV, and Villa Lobos

Monday, October 24, 7pm
Preston Bradley Hall at the Chicago Cultural Center
In Transit: #undercoverhero

Friday, October 28, 6:30pm
Ridge Park
In Transit: #undercoverhero

Learn more about Fifth House Ensemble, and sign up
for our mailing list at www.fifth-house.com.

Fifth House Ensemble Presents

Black Violet



Act I: The Leagues of Despair

Story and Illustrations by
Ezra Clayton Daniels

BLACK VIOLET ACT I: THE LEAGUES OF DESPAIR

Program order will be projected
There will be one 15-minute intermission.

Walter Piston.....Divertimento for Nine Players

- I. Allegro
- II. Tranquillo
- III. Vivo

Johannes Brahms.....Trio for Horn, Violin, and Piano Op. 40

- I. Andante
- II. Scherzo (Allegro)
- III. Adagio mesto
- IV. Allegro con brio

Jonathan Keren.....Hungary is Far Away*

Hector Villa Lobos.....Bachianas Brasileiras No. 6

- I. Aria (Choro)
- II. Fantasia

Greg Simon.....Kites at Seal Rock⁺

* denotes winner of 5HE 2009 Young Composers Competition

+ denotes honorable mention of 5HE 2009 Young Composers Competition

The Players

Melissa Snoza, flute
Crystal Hall, oboe
Jennifer Woodrum, clarinet
Karl Rzasa, bassoon
Matt Monroe, horn
Andrew Williams, violin
Breana Bauman, violin
Clark Carruth, viola
Herine Coetzee Koschak, cello
Eric Snoza, bass
Adam Marks, piano

Historical Consultant: Kristen Klebba

Story and Illustrations by Ezra Clayton Daniels

Fifth House Ensemble (5HE)

Truly an ensemble for our time, Fifth House Ensemble is defined by its limitless imagination and energy with an insatiable desire to bring chamber music to audiences of all types. Praised by the New York Times for its "conviction, authority and finesse," 5HE harnesses the collaborative spirit of chamber music to create transformative cross-media performance experiences that bring together elements as diverse as storytelling, physical theatre, graphic novels, and fashion design. With humor and joy, 5HE breathes life into repertoire both established and emerging, equally at home on the most prestigious stages and unexpected venues including aquariums, train stations, and bars. Bringing its signature connective programming from the stage to the classroom, 5HE develops young audiences through curriculum-integrated interactive concerts and residencies for students K-12. Responsive to the needs of young musicians in today's marketplace, 5HE also shares its experiences as a creatively-managed ensemble through higher education workshops that train the next generation of artists in career development, creative presentation, educational outreach, and more. For more information, visit www.fifth-house.com.

The Artist:

EZRA CLAYTAN DANIELS is a writer and illustrator based in CHICAGO, IL. His critically acclaimed graphic novel series, THE CHANGERS, began a unique comics career peppered with a number of collaborative multimedia projects including, most recently, the groundbreaking experimental iPhone App, RUBEN & LULLABY. EZRA is also the creator of the popular live art spectacle, The COMIC ART BATTLE, and LOADED BLANKS GREETINGS, a line of fill-in-the-blank comic-art greeting cards featuring both established as well as up and coming comics artists. For more information on EZRA, please visit WWW.DREAM-CHOCOLATE.COM.

The Story:

BLACK VIOLET takes place during the last major outbreak of the Black Plague in 17th Century London. During this time, it was widely believed that black cats were the source of the disease decimating Europe. They, along with other domestic pets, were systematically rounded up and exterminated in an attempt to contain the spread of contagion. With the resulting lack of natural predators, however, London's rat population skyrocketed—the same population that was in fact the true carrier the plague.

Our story follows Violet, a young black house cat living comfortably in London. When her owner leaves home to do her part to help ease the suffering of London's afflicted and her caretaker falls prey to the plague. Violet is forced to venture out into the world for the first time in her life. In her search for her owner, Violet faces unimaginable dangers, crosses paths with bizarre characters, and forges unexpected friendships, all amidst one of the most terrifying passages of London's history...

Notes on the Program

Piston: Divertimento

We are delighted to open our season with Walter Piston's Divertimento for Nine Instruments, a work that gives us the rare opportunity to play together in larger forces. Commissioned by the International Society for Contemporary Music to write this work, Piston was given free reign to write for any instrumentation he wished. As suggested by the name, this piece is truly delightful, especially in its outer movements, which display a great sense of charm and adventure. The second movement affords us many opportunities for painting the sound with color to enhance the desperation of the scene. Though written in 20th Century America, we thought its jovial mixed meters captured the spirit of 17th Century England, at least before the plague...

Playing in a large, mixed-instrumentation ensemble presents unique challenges in listening and blend, for which we are rewarded with a rich, varied, symphonic sound. This is one of the main reasons we started 5HE, and one of the many reasons we love this piece.

-Melissa Snoza

Brahms: Horn Trio

Johannes Brahms' Trio for Piano, Violin, and Horn in Eb Major (Op.40) is one of the most loved pieces in the chamber music literature. Brahms was the son of a horn player, and had a knowledge of and respect for the instrument that shines clearly in the Trio. Although the combination of violin, horn, and piano was unique, Brahms used the natural qualities of the instruments to weave a brilliant musical tapestry that ranges from wistful to gallant, anguished to exuberant. Brahms was an admirer of the natural horn, an ancestor of the modern horn that used hand motions in the bell to change notes rather than the valves we use today. The natural horn was commonly associated with pastoral and hunting music, two styles which Brahms develops to artistic heights in the Horn Trio. The famous theme of the opening Andante was inspired by strolls in the "dark, wooded mountains, the roads winding up and down them, and the pleasant houses" surrounding his summer retreat of Baden-Baden. The Scherzo evokes the nobility of nature, unfolding to reveal an introspective, bittersweet trio section that showcases Brahms' coupling of violin and horn. The Adagio mesto movement is a clear expression of grief over the recent death of his mother. In the middle of this movement, a special moment occurs when Brahms again pairs the violin and horn to reference a folk song he sang as a child. This song eventually becomes the melodic basis for the fourth movement. The Finale is reminiscent of final movements of Mozart's horn concerti, both in exuberance and in deference to the horn's roots as a tool of the hunt. Musically, this piece is such a thrill to play, and was one of the first to be slated for this season. Every rehearsal has brought us more understanding, but also a sense that there are always more gems to uncover and special moments to share with you. However, to me, the true wonder of Brahms' Trio is how he conveys his feelings about the peacefulness of nature and the angst of death through music. While using one to cope with the other, Brahms shows that these two things are undeniably intertwined, and both fundamental to the experience of living, either in our time or in Violet's.

-DeAunn Davis

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Keren: Hungary is Far Away

The first time I heard Jonathan Keren's piece, "Hungary is far away," I was immediately taken with the gorgeous palette of colors rendered by the composer in this unique and unusual instrumentation. Subsequently, we awarded him the Grand Prize in our Young Composer's Competition. Inspired by the eponymous poem by Atilla Jozsef, Keren's piece evokes an older, distant culture in a way that seems to me is reminiscent of Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring." The instruments all have very distinct roles at first; strings create an ethereal, misty landscape, while the clarinet adds an element of chaos with a repetitive, babbling line. The horn then anchors the work with a simple folk-like melody. This unravels into a fierce dialogue between the upper instruments, and then gives way to an exploration of all of the motives by each instrument. The piece ends like it begins, disappearing into the ether of the evoked vision.

In the context of Black Violet, the piece underscores the setting of dusk (and thus, imminent creepiness in the streets of London), the meeting between Tibia and Violet, and the ensuing friction of Dominic St. Claire harboring an additional tenant in the abode shared by he and Tibia.

-Herine Coetzee Koschak

Villa Lobos: Bachianas Brasileiras No. 6

This piece is the sixth in a series of nine compositions written by Villa Lobos in which he fused popular Brazilian folk music with the style of Johann Sebastian Bach. It is also an unusual instrumentation, reflected in the unusual alliances you will see developing on screen. The first movement is in Choro style, a popular form of instrumental music originating in 19th Century Rio de Janeiro. The flute and bassoon take turns with the wistful melody while the other instrument supplies the running sixteenth note obbligato. This one happens to remind me of the Praeludium from JS Bach's 2nd cello suite. Perhaps it's because they're both in d minor, the saddest of all keys for all you Spinal Tap fans. In many cases, the title Fantasia or Fantasy Piece suggests lots and lots of notes. This second movement Fantasia is no exception. The music is very brightly colored with virtuosic swells, scales, and staccatos. Villa Lobos didn't forget to throw in a few moments of choro-esque lamenting for good measure before the big fiery finish. If you look closely, you might see sparks coming out of Melissa's flute.

-Karl Rzasa

Simon: Kites at Seal Rock

In only the second year of our competition, we received scores of scores in our Young Composers Competition. Greg Simon's "Kites at Seal Rock" was our Honorable Mention, and we are pleased to incorporate it into Black Violet. Simon is an Oregon Native, and this piece evokes his memories at a beautiful coastal park. The piece's whispery beginning unfolds slowly into a soundscape that toes the line between minimalism and romanticism. His lush harmonies are supported by soaring melodies, making a texture as satisfying for performers as for listeners.

The tension and anticipation in the piece is reflected on screen as the first installment of Black Violet concludes. We reflect on the journey we've witnessed, and examine the loss felt by many of the characters we have already grown to know and love. Truth be told, when I watch Ezra's work with this music, I get goose bumps every time. If that isn't magic, what is?

-Adam Marks

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