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*The NEA
pays tribute to
chamber music,
American-style*

The great tradition of American chamber music is the focus of the National Endowment for the Arts' AMERICAN MASTERPIECES: CHAMBER MUSIC program.

Encompassing 53 organizations and well over a hundred American composers, past and present, in its first year the program brings NEA funds to concerts and residencies across the country. All of them will bring small-ensemble American music to new and underserved audiences. The first AMERICAN MASTERPIECES: CHAMBER MUSIC events took place earlier this year; what follows are some highlights for November and December.

(FULL DETAILS OF PAST AND UPCOMING EVENTS CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.CHAMBER-MUSIC.ORG).

Music of Remembrance has typically focused its efforts on the works of composers who wrote under the dark shadow of the Holocaust. But in its ten years of operation, the Seattle-based organization has also commissioned a number of works on Holocaust-related themes by contemporary American composers. Several MOR concerts this season will feature these American works; one of them, Jake Heggie's 2007 *For a Look or a Touch*, will be performed at the new Broad Stage at Santa Monica College in Los Angeles on December 4. It is the first musical commission ever to address the issue of gay men and the Holocaust.

Heggie has written: "Because the persecution of gays during the Holocaust is a topic not much recognized or discussed, when [Mina Miller, Music of Remembrance's artistic director] called and asked me to create a new chamber music composition on the subject, I was deeply moved—and hugely challenged. How on earth could we do honor and justice to this subject?"

The work's libretto, by Heggie's frequent collaborator Gene Scheer, takes as its point of departure the journal of Manfred Lewin, a young Jew murdered at Auschwitz. Lewin's lover, Gad Beck, attempted unsuccessfully to rescue him from the camp; Beck survived the Holocaust and is alive today. Scored for piano quintet, *For a Look or a Touch* features a baritone soloist (Morgan Smith) as Lewin and a speaker (Julian Patrick) as Beck.

American choral music holds a special place in the repertoire of **Cantus**, the Minneapolis-based all-male vocal ensemble. "Look at the works of Randall Thompson, Aaron Copland and Samuel Barber—especially the choral works," says Erick Leichte, the group's artistic director. "Take Thompson's 'Alleluia'—how many times has that text been set in European choral music? But there's something more open about its sound, a sense of freedom and individualism."

As part of the *American Masterpieces* program, Cantus is leading a series of five

day-long middle- and high-school outreach programs in the Midwest, focused on American choral music, from an early-20th-century arrangement of “Deep River” by Harry T. Burleigh to *Lux Aurumque* by the contemporary composer Eric Whitacre and the Temptations hit “Get Ready.”

The “American-ness” of the program gives it particular resonance for the young audiences. “The fact we’re singing in our native tongue—there’s something wonderful about that,” says Leichte. “Or that there’s classical music being written now by a tall, blond, model-looking guy like Eric Whitacre. This is music that happens here, is created here, and performed here. That’s a really important part of all of this.”

Through its nearly 50-year history, the **American Brass Quintet** has played Baroque music and arrangements of older European music. But a huge chunk of its repertoire has always been contemporary music. “When [the ABQ] started, there wasn’t much of a base of music for it at all,” says Ray Mase, the group’s trumpeter. “If we were going to have a serious brass group, we had to build a repertoire.” The result of that thinking has been a body of roughly 150 pieces of music commissioned by or composed for the quintet.

Reflecting the group’s very name, much of that music has been American. “I wouldn’t say we’re trying to exclude others,” says Mase, “but most of our operation is in this country. It’s logical we deal with the composers we know. Word on the street is that if you write a piece for the American Brass Quintet, we’ll probably play it and give it our all.”

For *American Masterpieces*, the ABQ is touring this fall and winter with a program that includes works by Gordon Befferman, David Sampson, Joan Tower and Shafer Mahoney.

American Masterpieces Chamber Music

Performances in November and December

NOVEMBER Benton Harbor, MI
Opus 21 (residency project) R. Adams, *Free Fall*; Dancigers, *Thaw*; D. DeSantis, *One Trick Pony*; Reich, *New York Counterpoint*; Bill Ryan, *Rapid Assembly*; Rzewski, *Attica* (J. Moonert, percussion (A. Muhly, cello); H. Schröder, saxophone; G. Secor, percussion; Yu-Lien The, piano; B. Wong, clarinet)

NOVEMBER 2, 3 San Francisco
San Francisco Contemporary Players *Luimen*, Elliott Carter; *Synchronisms 12*, Davidovsky; *Littoral*, R. Tharp; Trio, Lei Lang; *Gated Eclipse*, D. de León; *Four Dreams*, Tymocko

NOVEMBER 5 New York
Miller Theatre Babbitt: Complete String Quartets (Zukofsky Quartet)

NOVEMBER 6–8 Northfield, MN
(St. Olaf College);

NOV. 9–10 Louisville, KY
American Brass Quintet Befferman, Brass Quintet; Sampson, *Entrance*; Tower, *Copperwave*, Nov. 11-13
PROVO, UT & Nov. 15 RHINEBECK, NY: Tower and Sampson

NOVEMBER 14 Boston
Boston Musica Viva “Credo in US: An American Kaleidoscope” Childs, *Rilke Songs*; Huggler, *Capriccio sregolato*; Cage, *Credo in U.S.*; Harris, *Ludus II*; Sims, *Four Landscapes*

NOVEMBER 14 New York
Western Winds Vocal Ensemble from *Vessels*, P.Glass; *Batéy*, T. de León & M. Camilo; *Basket Rondo*, Monk; *Maternity Ward*, *Late Show*, Bolcom; *America the Beautiful*, S.A. Ward; “America,” Bernstein; Ellington, Gershwin and more.

NOVEMBER 14 Chicago
University of Chicago Presents Babbitt String Quartets (Zukofsky Quartet)

NOVEMBER 16 Dallas
Voices of Change Jerod Tate’s *Spirit Chief Names the Animal People* (woodwind trio, piano, narrator)

NOVEMBER 18 Minnetonka, MN
Cantus Vocal Ensemble works by E. Whitacre, S. Paulus, Edie Hill, M. Bosch, D. Gawthrop, & songs arr. by Burleigh, Hatfield and M. Hogan

NOVEMBER 19
Easton PA (Lafayette College)
Kronos Quartet: restaged performance of Crumb’s *Black Angels*

NOVEMBER 20, 21, 22 New York
Carnegie Hall Society Nov 20: Elliott Carter’s *Night Fantasies*; Crumb’s *Music for a Summer Evening* (G. Kalish, A.-M. McDermott, G. Vonsattel, Wu Han, pianos; A. Kataoka, percussion). Nov. 21: Crumb, *Black Angels* (Pacifica SQ; C. McFadden, soprano; G. Kalish, piano) Nov. 22: Crumb, *Apparition*, for soprano and piano

NOVEMBER 23 New York
Elaine Kaufman Cultural Center/Merkin Hall Elliott Carter: Canon for Three Equal Instruments; Eight Etudes and a Fantasy; Woodwind Quintet; *Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux*; *Gra Polish*; *Retracing*; *Scrivo in Vento*; *Steepest Steps*; Quintet for Piano and Winds (New York Woodwind Q; pianist U. Oppens)

NOVEMBER 24 New York (Merkin Hall)
New York New Music Ensemble Elliott Carter, Triple Duo

DECEMBER 4 New York
Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Irving Fine, Partita for Wind Quintet (members of the Society)

DECEMBER 4 Seattle
Music of Remembrance Heggie, *For a Look or a Touch* (Morgan Smith, baritone; Julian Patrick, actor; Z. Dombourian-Eby, flute; Laurie DeLuca, clarinet; Mikhail Shmidt, violin; Page Smith, cello; Mina Miller, piano)

DECEMBER 5 New York (Zankel Hall)
Kronos Quartet: restaged performance of Crumb’s *Black Angels*

DECEMBER 6 San Francisco
Other Minds Ruth Crawford Seeger & Her Milieu (K. Stenberg, violin; E.-M. Zimmerman, piano, S. Cahill, piano) performance & lecture

DECEMBER 6, 7 San Francisco
San Francisco Performances Elliott Carter: String Quartets No. 1-5; *Retrouvailles*, *Two Diversions*, *Night Fantasies*, Sonata, *Two Thoughts about the Piano*, *Intermittances*, *Catenaire*s (Pacifica SQ, U. Oppens, piano; R. Greenberg, music historian-in-residence)

DECEMBER 11 Santa Fe
Santa Fe New Music Ives, Concord Sonata; John Cage works tba.

DECEMBER 10, 11
Rustin, LA (Louisiana Tech)
American Brass Quintet D. Sampson, *Entrance*; J. Tower, *Copperwave*