



AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC ENSEMBLE

Thursday, December 9, 7:30pm



PROGRAM

Qasim Naqvi: *Chukwa*

Chukwa: The World Turtle was written in 2018. It's one of the few string quartets Naqvi has written and the first he's finished. The music is based on the myth of Chukwa — a giant turtle supporting or containing the entire world on its shell.

Clarice Jensen: *For this from that will be filled (b)*

For this from that will be filled explores the variable differences between acoustic and electronic sound and simulated and unconscious depiction. Through repetition and layering, a non-codified and obscured emotional response is solicited.

Gavin Bryars: *The Sinking of the Titanic*

This piece originated in a sketch written for an exhibition in support of beleaguered art students at Portsmouth in 1969. Bryars was working in an art

college environment and wanted to see what might be the musical equivalent of a work of conceptual art. It was not until 1972 that he made a performing version of the piece for part of an evening of his work at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, and during the next three years he performed the piece several times. In 1975, Bryars made a recorded version for the first of the 10 records produced for Brian Eno's Obscure label. In 1990 he re-recorded the piece live at the *Printemps de Bourges* festival where an extraordinary space — the town's disused water tower dating from the Napoleonic period — and the rediscovery of the Titanic wreck by Dr. Ballard reminded Bryars of the music. The piece has always been an open one, based on data about the disaster, but taking account of new information that has come to light after the initial composition. This version forms the basis for the 1994 recording.

All the materials used in the piece are derived from research and speculations about the sinking of the

“unsinkable” luxury liner. On April 14, 1912 the Titanic struck an iceberg at 11:40 pm in the North Atlantic and sank at 2:20 am on April 15. Of the 2,201 people on board only 711 were to reach New York. The initial starting point for the piece was the reported fact of the band playing a hymn tune in the final moments of the ship’s sinking. A number of other features of the disaster which generate musical or sounding performance material, or which ‘take the mind to other regions,’ are also included. The final hymn played during those last five minutes of the ship’s life was identified in an account by Harold Bride, the junior wireless operator “...from aft came the tunes of the band...The ship was gradually turning on her nose – just like a duck that goes down for a dive...The band was still playing. I guess all of the band went down. They were playing “Autumn” then. I swam with all my might. The way the band kept playing was a noble thing...the last I saw of the band, when I was floating out in the sea with my lifebelt on, it was still on deck playing “Autumn.” How they ever did it I cannot imagine.”

This Episcopal hymn, then, becomes the principle element of the music and is subject to a variety of treatments, forming a base over which other material is superimposed. Although Bryars conceived the piece many years ago he continues to enjoy finding new opportunities to look at it afresh.

ABOUT AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC ENSEMBLE

In a little more than a decade, led by cellist and artistic director Clarice Jensen, the **American Contemporary Music Ensemble** (ACME) has risen to the highest ranks of American new music through a mix of meticulous musicianship, artistic vision, engaging collaborations, and unwavering standards in every regard. *NPR* calls them “contemporary music dynamos,” and *Strings* reports, “ACME’s absorbing playing pulsed with warm energy . . . Shared glances and inhales triggered transitions in a flow so seamless it seemed learned in a Jedi temple.” ACME was honored by ASCAP during its 10th anniversary season in 2015 for the

“virtuosity, passion, and commitment with which it performs and champions American composers.”

The ensemble has performed at leading international venues including Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, BAM, The Kennedy Center, Washington Performing Arts, UCLA’s Royce Hall, Stanford Live, Chicago’s Millennium Park, Duke Performances, The Satellite in Los Angeles, Triple Door in Seattle, Melbourne Recital Hall and Sydney Opera House in Australia, and at festivals including the Sacrum Profanum Festival in Poland, All Tomorrow’s Parties in England, Auckland Arts Festival in New Zealand, Summer Nostos Festival in Greece, Boston Calling, and Big Ears in Knoxville, Tennessee.

ACME’s collaborators have included The Richard Alston Dance Company, Wayne McGregor’s Random Dance, Gibney Dance, Satellite Ballet, Meredith Monk, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Max Richter, actress Barbara Sukowa, filmmaker Jim Jarmusch, Blonde Redhead, Grizzly Bear, Low, Matmos, Micachu & The Shapes, Jeff Mangum, A Winged Victory for the Sullen, Roomful of Teeth, Lionheart, and Theo Bleckmann.

In 2017, ACME released its first portrait album on Sono Luminus, featuring music by members Caroline Shaw, Timo Andres, and Caleb Burhans, plus John Luther Adams. The release was featured as Album of the Week on *Q2 Music* and *The Strad* raved, “Warmth and care are fully evident in the ensemble’s immaculate, considered performances – the four composers could hardly wish for more committed, convincing accounts of their music.” ACME’s recordings also appear on Deutsche Grammophon, Butterscotch Records, New World Records, and New Amsterdam Records.

Clarice Jensen, *cello and ACME artistic director*
Ravenna Lipchik and Laura Lutzke, *violins*
Isabel Hagen, *viola*
Chihiro Shibiyama, *percussion*
Grey McMurray, *guitar*
Qasim Naqvi, *modular synthesizer*
Daniel Neumann, *sound engineer*

For more information, visit www.acmemusic.org.

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