

D

Karlheinz Stockhausen
Earle Brown
Elliott Carter
Nicolò Castiglioni

A

Karel Goeyvaerts
Gottfried Michael Koenig
Henri Pousseur
Henry Moore
Jackson Pollack

R

Bruno Maderna
Luciano Berio
John Cage
György Ligeti

M

Unsuk Chin
Mauricio Kagel
Pierre Boulez
W.H. Auden
Luigi Nono

DESIGNING CURTIS'S LATEST ALL-SCHOOL PROJECT

EDITOR'S NOTE

In 2007 Curtis President Roberto Díaz conceived the idea of an all-school project that would tie together performances, coursework, and activities under the umbrella of a season-long theme. Several seasons later, the all-school project is firmly ensconced in the artistic and curricular planning of each school year. Many all-school projects have lasted two years. Each is a collaboration among Mr. Díaz and the council of deans, who chose to focus on the Darmstadt school of composition for 2015–16. Here Curtis's deans outline a personal connection to the Darmstadt school, which originated in post-war Germany, and how the forces unleashed by Darmstadt-style modernism are manifested in performances and academic courses throughout the year ahead.

GENESIS: DARMSTADT

BY MIKAEL ELIASSEN, AS TOLD TO ELIZABETH RACHEVA

Last winter when Roberto Díaz asked me and my fellow deans

to do a bit of homework, to think on what might make for the next compelling all-school project for our students, my thoughts led immediately to Darmstadt.

The music of the Darmstadt school of composers had fascinated me in my youth. I instinctively knew that it could offer us an entirely new angle to explore artistically. For a conservatory, it would be radical—not unlike the movement itself.

The music that came out of Darmstadt in the 1940s and '50s was a *cri de coeur* against the utter devastation of the Second World War. Some people seem to find it difficult. Some people have asked me if I *love* this music. And still others have asked how we can do *this* as an all-school project. I hope my students never ask that question. Curiosity and openness are the best gifts that I can pass on to them, gifts that my own teachers shared with me.

Most people don't know that I was a composer first, as much if not more than a pianist. I began writing at about age twelve. As an adolescent in Copenhagen, I had three primary music teachers. Two—Svend-Erik Tarp and Jørgen Jersild—were composers, neither of whom embraced the Darmstadt school, although they were important figures in Scandinavian music. The third, though, a piano teacher named Viktor Brandt-Jensen, was different. My first major musical influence, Viktor approached music through the lens of Bach, and of Bartók's *Mikrokosmos*. He was very interested in twelve-tone music, and he encouraged me to explore Schoenberg and Webern, composers at the core of serialism. He also encouraged me to attend concerts and lectures at the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) in Copenhagen. This was to be life-changing for me.

All the major composers of the day, the founding fathers of the Darmstadt school, performed there: Pousseur, Cage, Ligeti. David Tudor, Stockhausen. And the leader, Boulez, who was a very young man at that time. I began to write in that vein, and Boulez, in particular, was a tremendous influence. I spent considerable time learning his second piano sonata; I was just a kid at the time, but I knew instinctively that this was an important piece. I would probably have a heart attack if I had to learn this piece today!


Years later, after studying abroad in Canada, I returned to Europe for studies in Vienna. I was 21 years old and, even though it was 1966, the effects of World War II were pervasive. The city was gray, ash-covered, a city that had been under bombardment. There was tremendous poverty, and there were limits on even the simplest of goods, in contrast to the creature comforts I had taken for granted in Copenhagen and Montreal. I led a sort of double life in Vienna: associating with my carefree student colleagues by day and with my neighbors, the impassioned activist-artists of the wartime generation, in the evenings.

The starkness of the Darmstadt school made perfect sense in this environment, and I think it's why music related to this idiom has always spoken to me. It's why I'm drawn to produce Henze's *Elegy for Young Lovers*, Berg's *Wozzeck*, even Adams's *Death of Klinghoffer*. I don't question whether I love it; I just *know* it. I think it's why, frankly, I'm so often frustrated

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ALL-SCHOOL

S T A D T



JOURNEY TO THE NEW

BY DAVID LUDWIG

The Darmstadt school emerged as Europe was reeling from the effects of the Second World War. Composers like Boulez, Stockhausen, Berio, and Cage met at the Darmstadt International Summer Course for New Music, and there one of the dominant musical movements of the 20th century was born—as renowned for its advocates as it was notorious for its detractors. The Darmstadt aesthetic was known for complexity, abstraction, and tearing down artistic traditions, reflecting the ubiquitous devastation of post-war Europe.

In reaction to this avant-garde, uncompromising aesthetic, American minimalist composers like Steve Reich and Philip Glass emerged, as well as Neo-Romantic composers who rejected the challenging orthodoxy of the Darmstadt school.

As its all-school project for the coming year, Curtis will explore the Darmstadt school and the counter-cultural reactions to it. The Curtis 20/21 Ensemble will play a central role in the project with a new series presenting programs of iconic works that led into and out of the music of Darmstadt, as well as exemplary pieces from the Darmstadt period. This five-concert series (see page 16) will include a musical portrait of 2015–16 Curtis Composer-in-Residence Unsuk Chin, herself an heir to Darmstadt traditions.

Ever committed to performing diverse repertoire at the highest level, Curtis will present the Darmstadt experience throughout its concert programs. We've put together a daring orchestral season, with 20th-century masterpieces on every program and a similarly compelling opera series. Collaborations with faculty and guest artists further make for a truly exciting school year. Students will have the opportunity to explore some of the most controversial music of the modernist past to broaden their artistic perspectives and prepare for the performing, conducting, and composing careers of the future.

David Ludwig is Gie and Lisa Liem Dean of Artistic Programs and Performance, a member of the composition faculty, and artistic director of the Curtis 20/21 Ensemble.

DARMSTADT IN THE CLASSROOM

BY PAUL BRYAN

The Darmstadt school of composition was one of many reactions to the aftermath of the Second World War. In addition to music, art and literature changed dramatically during this turbulent post-war period.

Throughout 2015–16, Curtis students will have the opportunity to strengthen their understanding and connection to the season's concert and opera repertoire, exploring these areas through courses being offered by the liberal arts and musical studies departments.

Art history courses will examine Surrealism, abstract expressionism, and minimalism; and students focusing on post-World War II poetry will read the works of W. H. Auden, Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, Paul Celan, Anne Sexton, Elizabeth Bishop, Randall Jarrell, and Robert Lowell.

Musical studies classes will investigate the music of notable composers of the period, including Stockhausen, Berio, Boulez, Nono, and Cage, as well as contrasting works from the same era by Britten, Carter, Penderecki, and Lutoslawski. Contemporary composers like Pärt and Nørgård whose techniques, if not their styles, were directly influenced by the Darmstadt school, will be covered as well.

Paul Bryan is dean of faculty and students.

More Online

Learn about performances related to the all-school project at www.curtis.edu/Darmstadt

L P R O J E C T



with contemporary music. How can one truly communicate through the arts after the devastation of the Second World War?

Capriccio, which we will produce in collaboration with Opera Philadelphia and the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts next spring as part of the all-school project, is in fact an attempt to answer this question. It represents the utmost decadence, the ultimate squeezing-out of beauty. We can contemplate Strauss in a very different way when we consider the reactionary music that followed, as imagined by Boulez and his cohort. Luciano Berio's wild, kaleidoscopic *Sinfonia*—which members of the Curtis Opera Theatre will perform this season with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and esteemed guest conductor Ludovic Morlot—is the perfect reaction to Strauss. These composers were young revolutionaries, full of blood and incredibly strict: "Write this way, believe this way, paint this way." But something like that can't live forever. The humanness of living takes over.

Eventually the music born of the Darmstadt school became generally perceived as not viable for a wider audience. On a personal level, after having captivated me initially for its austere radicalism, this music became a dead-end road, emotionally. I returned to writing tonal music, and after a time, I stopped writing altogether and focused on my collaborations with singers in the world of opera and Lieder.

I think this all-school project can be of great importance for Curtis, for our students. These composers open your eyes. I hope our students will emerge not thinking of this music as difficult, but simply as part of the landscape of music. As Jackson Pollock is part of the landscape of painting. As Martha Graham is part of the landscape of dance. As W. H. Auden is part of the landscape of poetry. This music is not to be feared or deemed ugly. It takes some effort to listen to a symphony by Mahler. It takes a different kind of effort to listen to the music of Ligeti. We have to be open to that effort. We have to bear witness. It's our job as educators and performers to give our students this opportunity. ♦

Mikael Eliassen is the artistic director of the Curtis Opera Theatre and Hirsig Family Dean of Vocal Studies. Elizabeth Racheva was vice president of external affairs and patron engagement at Curtis through Summer 2015.

REVOLUTIONARY IMPACT



THE CURTIS 20/21 ENSEMBLE DEDICATES ITS SEASON TO DARMSTADT.

Wednesday, November 11

GOULD REHEARSAL HALL,
CURTIS INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

BEYOND DARMSTADT WITH UNSUK CHIN, COMPOSER IN RESIDENCE

Renowned 2015-16 Curtis composer in residence Unsuk Chin cites as major influences Anton Webern and her teacher, György Ligeti, both closely linked to the Darmstadt school. Experience works of this Grawemeyer Award-winning, Berlin-based, South Korean composer in the culminating recital of her residency.

The 2015-16 composer-in-residence program is supported by a grant from the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia.

Thursday, December 3

SEI INNOVATION STUDIO
AT THE KIMMEL CENTER

I: BEGINNINGS DUENDE WITH THE CURTIS 20/21 ENSEMBLE

PART OF THE CURTIS PRESENTS SERIES
An irreverent and electric evening of song and dance, anchored by Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, evokes the origins of the Darmstadt movement. This program features Duende—a collective founded by Gabriel Cabezas (Cello '13), student composer Alyssa Weinberg, and dancer/choreographer Chloe Felesina—in a cabaret-infused collaboration with the Curtis 20/21 Ensemble.

Friday, January 22

WORLD CAFE LIVE,
PHILADELPHIA

II: ENTRE-DEUX- GUERRES WITH JOANNA PASCALE, VOCALS

PRESENTED BY LIVECONNECTIONS
Between the great wars, composers found new avenues of experimentation and influences for their music, including the jazz they were hearing in the cafés and concert halls in Paris and New York. The Curtis 20/21 Ensemble, presented by LiveConnections, partners with acclaimed jazz vocalist Joanna Pascale in the intimate atmosphere of World Cafe Live. The program features the world premiere performance of a new vocal work by Curtis ArtistYear Fellow Gabriella Smith (Composition '13) and the mellifluous songs of Michel Legrand, as well as seminal works by Gershwin, Milhaud, and Varèse.

Friday, April 1

FIELD CONCERT HALL,
CURTIS INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

III: THE WAR WITH MIKAEL ELIASSEN, PIANO

The Darmstadt Summer Courses were born from the ashes of a Europe devastated by war. Two defining chamber works—Messiaen's epic *Quartet for the End of Time* and the song cycle *Aftermath* by Ned Rorem (Composition '44)—movingly illuminate the horrors of destructive conflict across eras. These dramatic and hauntingly beautiful works are presented side-by-side, perhaps for the first time ever.

Friday, April 29

FIELD CONCERT HALL,
CURTIS INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

IV: THE ROAD TO DARMSTADT

Explore an astonishing array of solo works by a colorful range of composers, tracing paths toward and away from the Darmstadt school. This finale to the 20/21 season highlights the early modernism of Messiaen, Schoenberg, and Webern; the experimentalism of Berio, Boulez, and Cage; Darmstadt-inspired works by Carter, Kurtág, and Judd Greenstein; and a new commission from Riho Maimets (Composition '14).