

## Late Night Soundscapes

Friday, May 11 – 9:30 pm

Alexander Prior, conductor

**J.S. BACH**

*The Well-Tempered Clavier, Bk. II: Fugue No. 16 in G minor* (arr. Prior) (3')\*

**STAFYLAKIS**

*Never the Same River* (11')\*

**MILLER**

*Palimpsest* (17')\*

**PRIOR**

*The Banshee* (14')\*

program subject to change

\*indicates approximate performance duration

Please note: There is NO intermission in tonight's performance. Please join us in the lobby following the concert.

***The Well-Tempered Clavier, Bk. II: Fugue No. 16 in G minor*** (arr. Prior)

**Johann Sebastian Bach**

(b. Eisenach, Saxony, 1685 / d. Leipzig, 1750)

Last ESO performance: May 2016

Depending on the instrument being composed for, or the time period in which a piece of music was written, the "spaces" between two notes in the familiar western scale are not equidistant. If they were, they would be considered "equally tempered." Bach was an organist, and in order to make the notes played on the organ work the way it was felt they needed to work, the tuning of the individual notes was altered slightly, into a kind of tuning called "well tempered." It is from that that we get the name of the two books of preludes and fugues, written for solo keyboard by Johann Sebastian Bach.

Each book contains 24 sets of Preludes and Fugues, one for each of the major and minor scales familiar to us in western art music. The sixteenth Prelude and Fugue from Book II is in G minor. Alexander Prior

has orchestrated the fugue from this set for a fairly large orchestra which includes numerous percussion instruments and piano, as well as harp, timpani, woodwind, brass, and strings.

***Never the Same River***

**Harry Stafylakis**

(b. Montréal, 1982)

First performed: January 31, 2017 in Winnipeg

Last ESO performance: November 2017

Program note by the composer:

“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.”

- Heraclitus

The above aphorism, attributed to pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus (quoted by Plato in the dialogue *Cratylus*), expresses a view of the universe as being in a constant state of change. A musical analogue to this concept of impermanence is the chaconne, a Baroque form wherein a constantly repeating pattern (e.g. harmonic progression, bass line, etc.) provides a foundation for a process of continuous variation, decoration, figuration, and melodic invention.

*Never the Same River* is a texture-based composition that attempts to embody Heraclitus's philosophy of simultaneous constancy and flux. The work is propelled by a 26-note melody that outlines a perpetually-repeating harmonic progression, serving as the chaconne theme. First presented by the harp and percussion, the theme serves as a vehicle for the gradual textural development of the musical surface. The orchestra slowly emerges as captured harmonic resonances of the harp and percussion theme accumulate and gradually take over the texture.

Throughout the work, the instruments of the orchestra act as semi-independent musical streams whose ever-shifting interactions conspire to effectuate a large-scale rhythmic, melodic, articulative, registral, and dynamic intensification. At the peak of this textural crescendo, the music buckles under its own weight and breaks off into disconnected fragments that struggle to rekindle the musical flow in fits and starts. Although the chaconne theme has been looping almost continuously, as the music winds down to its calm conclusion there is a sense of having traversed a great distance.

— HS

The orchestral version of *Never the Same River* was commissioned by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts. It is based on a chamber piece for 5 players of the same title, composed in 2013 for the New Music on the Point Festival and members of the International Contemporary Ensemble.

***Palimpsest***

**Jared Miller**

(b. Los Angeles, 1988)

First performed: May 2016 in Victoria, B.C.

This is the ESO premiere of the piece

Program note by the composer:

Although the term “palimpsest” specifically refers an old manuscript whose contents have been effaced beyond recognition, it can also be thought of as something that has changed over time and shows evidence of that change.

In the fall of 2015, I was helping my parents downsize their home, which involved me going through all of my musical scores from childhood and my teenage years and deciding what I wanted to keep and what I wanted the discard.

Although I initially saw this task as being a bit of a chore, I was surprisingly moved when I opened up a box that contained some of my favourite scores by Beethoven and Tchaikovsky that I studied when I was a child and teenager. On one hand, I was affected by the fact that such beautiful music on the page had degenerated over time. Ink was running and fading, which distorted the music to an almost unrecognizable degree. Consequently, this also made me feel my own passage through time and the changing impressions that this orchestral music had on me throughout. As a child, I always thought of the orchestra as this whimsical circus of sounds where as an adolescent, classical music was the catharsis to my teenage angst.

I hoped to bring both of these impressions of a palimpsest to life in this piece. As a result, you will hear quotations from Beethoven’s *Seventh* and *Ninth Symphonies* and Tchaikovsky’s *First Piano Concerto* in various guises: sometimes directly quoted, sometimes fading away, and sometimes distorted and re-imagined in a new musical context. In doing this, I ultimately hoped to convey the angst, catharsis, whimsy, and eventual nostalgia that classical music has expressed to me throughout my life thus far.

***The Banshee***

**Alexander Prior**

(b. London, 1996)

This is the World Premiere of the piece

Mr. Prior will introduce his work from the stage.

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