

Concerts at The University

Tuesday 6 March 2012

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

The Amar Quartett

Anna Brunner · violin

Igor Keller · violin

Hannes Bärtschi · viola

Péter Somodari · cello

with

Benjamin Engeli · piano

Programme of works by MICHÈLE RUSCONI
and ROBERTO DAVID RUSCONI.



String Quartet No.1 'Ratafià (Breathless)

Michèle Rusconi (b.1960)

String Quartet No.2 'Postumi'

Michèle Rusconi

Piano Trio 'A Bit of Bungling on the Battlefield'

Michèle Rusconi

The title of this piece, 'a bit of bungling on the battlefield', is taken from a sentence out of John Banville's novel *The Infinities*. My composition admittedly has nothing to do with either *The Infinities* or with the story of Amphitryon and Thebes referenced in this quote. However, while writing music I often find myself in a mental state resembling a battlefield. Sometimes a wrong decision can kill a whole section, and often I find myself stumbling among bloody leftovers of musical ideas, some of which I leave to rot and die, while others I patch up and resurrect. Is any of this musical triaging reasonable? Does the bungling serve any higher purpose? I leave it to the listener to judge—but in the end I would argue that music, like life, is inherently a form of blind fumbling, while combat of one kind or another is as integral to human nature as illness or recovery. 'a bit of bungling on the battlefield'

M.R.

Piano Quintet No.1 'Chrysalis'

Roberto David Rusconi (b.1976)

A chrysalis (Latin chrysalis, from Greek χρυσάλλις = chrysalís, pl: chrysalides) or nympa is the pupal stage of butterflies. The term is derived from the metallic gold colouration found in the pupae of many butterflies, referred to by the Greek term χρυσός (chrysós) for gold that resembles the strings bows heel or the inside gold like tuners of the piano strings. The body of the string instruments resembles the form of the protective insect silk case called cocoon. The chrysalis stage is one in which there is little movement. The same immobility defines silence in my piano Quintet No.1 in which careful listening must be given at the harmonics produced and at the notes that are taken away, instead of looking for the ones that are layered down. The work is a poetical sublimation of sound, an alchemic distillation of frequencies in order to create a reflection of silence. Some butterfly pupae are capable of moving the abdominal segments to produce

sounds or to scare away potential predators. The same subtle internal movement is created with microtonal contraction of the spectral textures in order to defend the natural raising of harmonics. Sound arises from earthly fundamentals anchoring at polarized pitches that redefine space as a perspective of time. Within the chrysalis, growth and differentiation occur. Within the Piano Quintet appears a developmental and structural growth of sound, an harmonic modulation, a differentiation of timber and dynamics. The adult butterfly emerges (ecloses) and expands its wings by pumping haemolymph into the wing veins. In the every same natural act some shades of sound are unfolded into the vertical slides of the harmonics and a sudden expansion leads the pitches into an anti egocentric movement in order to define frozen melodic lines, poetical routes of a lost chant hidden in the matter itself. The final stage of the metamorphosis is the result of the whole series of transformations that sound has lived. The purpose is for matter to be able to recognize itself and reconcile with a form that through its negation becomes real and structural, poetically and esthetically functional. When the butterfly emerges from the chrysalis, usually it will sit on the empty shell in order to expand and harden its wings. In the still interludes of the ending section Euterpe herself is shaping her hairs looking at us lost in our never-ending search for an unreachable equilibrium that defines our human condition as irreparably perfect.

©Robert David Rusconi

The members of the **AMAR QUARTETT**, based in Zurich, are: Anna Brunner and Igor Keller, violins, Hannes Bärtschi, viola, and Péter Somodari, cello. On the occasion of Paul Hindemith's 100th birthday in 1995, the Hindemith Institute in Frankfurt awarded the ensemble the historic name Amar Quartett. Under this name Hindemith founded in 1922 a quartet named after its principal violinist, Licco Amar. Since its creation the Amar Quartett has been showing passionate engagement for Paul Hindemith's work. The Amar Quartett combines time-honoured tradition with the conscious promotion of contemporary music in its programming. Thus the Amar Quartett regularly commissions new works from both well-known and lesser-known composers, with priority consideration given to Swiss composers.

BENJAMIN ENGELI comes from a family of musicians and started his musical education on various instruments at an early age. Only when he was fifteen did he decide to take his first regular piano lessons, studying with Adrian Oetiker with whom he continued to work until he completed his first diploma at the Musikhochschule Basel, Switzerland. As of October 2000 he studied with Homero Francesch at the College of Music in Zurich. His lessons with Lazar Berman, Andrzej Jasinski, Maurizio Pollini and Andrés Schiff were also of major importance for his creative development. Benjamin Engeli has won prizes at many music competitions and has received various scholarships and support

funding. His concert activities have taken him to most European countries as well as to Australia, India, North and South America. In 2009 he received the cultural prize of his home state, the canton of Thurgau. In 2003 he became a founding member of the Tecchler Trio, which is one of today's leading chamber music ensembles.

MICHELE RUSCONI has lived in many countries around the world and has learned to perform quite different types of music. Born in Basel, Switzerland in 1960, she became a member of the Gamelan orchestra there in 1979. Two years later, after studying Jazz piano at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts, she travelled to Bali to study Grantang and Joged Bumbung (bamboo instruments) for several months. 1983-87 she spent in Madrid, playing with jazz ensembles, rock bands, and flamenco singers. In 1988 she moved to New York City, where she lived in Harlem and studied with jazz bassist Ron Carter at The City College of New York while also learning from jazz pianists Kenny Baron and Ronnie Matthews. She founded jazz bands, played salsa and merengue and travelled twice to Haiti to learn to play Compas, Haiti's traditional music. After then living two years in Malaysia, she returned to New York City, where she earned the Bachelor of Arts degree in performing arts from City College while studying composition with David del Tredici from Juilliard. She returned to Basel, Switzerland in 2000. In 2003, she received the Master of Arts degree in composition at the Musikhochschule Freiburg, where she studied composition with Matthias Spahlinger and electronics with Mesias Maiguashca. Michèle Rusconi's music has been commissioned and performed by many ensembles in Europe and the United States.

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ROBERTO DAVID RUSCONI developed an early interest in both classical and contemporary music. He studied first under the supervision of his grandfather, outstanding first violin under Toscanini. He then graduated from Padova Conservatory in Composition, Piano, Choir Conducting and Electronic Music. He won several international prizes and was invited to many continental residencies and fellowships. Roberto Rusconi studied with C. A. Grandi e W. Dalla Vecchia and A. Guarnieri. In 1994 he moved to the UK as a cultural refugee, where he now lives and works as freelance producer and composer. He has been Artistic Director of Intrasonus Festival in Venice. In 2008 he has been shortlisted for SPNM. His composer catalogue includes a wide number of acclaimed chamber and ensemble works, but he is also known for his electronic music productions. His music has been played by outstanding performers like the Klangforum Wien, Contrechamps, members of the Arditti Quartet, the JACK and KAIROS string quartet and Trio Fibonacci. His works have been performed all over Europe, in South Korea, Canada, Russia and the USA.