

77TH SEASON OF

CONCERTS

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART | DECEMBER 9, 2018



PROGRAM

Jessica Aszodi, soprano

Russell Rolen, cello

Daniel Schlosberg, piano

Sung/Unsung: Weill and Poulenc between the Wars

December 23, 2018 | 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court

Kurt Weill (1900–1950)

Intermezzo for piano (1917)

Sonata for Cello and Piano (1920)

Allegro ma non troppo

Andante espressivo

Allegro assai

Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

Tel jour, telle nuit (1937)

Bonne journée

Une ruine coquille vide

Le front comme un drapeau perdu

Une roulotte couverte en tuiles

À toutes brides

Une herbe pauvre

Je n'ai envie que de t'aimer

Figure de force brûlante et farouche

Nous avons fait la nuit

Francis Poulenc

“Priez pour paix” (1938)

Intermission

Francis Poulenc

Les Soirées de Nazelles (1930–1936)

Préambule: Extrêmement animé et décidé

Le comble de la distinction: Vif et gai

Le cœur sur la main: Modéré

La désinvolture et la discrétion: Presto

La suite dans les idées: Très large et pompeux

Le charme enjôleur: Très allant

Le contentement de soi: Très vite et sec

Le goût du malheur: Lent et mélancolique

L'alerte vieillesse: Très rapide et bien sec

Cadence: Très large et très librement

Kurt Weill

“Prologue, Pride and Lust,” from *Seven Deadly Sins* (1933)

“Ballad of Sexual Slavery,” from *Three Penny Opera* (1928)

“Youkali,” from *Marie Galante* (1934)

“Alabama Song,” from *Mahagonny Songspiel* (1927)

THE MUSICIANS

Jessica Aszodi

Jessica Aszodi's career could best be described as genre-bending and label-defying. The Australian-born, London-based vocalist has premiered dozens of new pieces, performed overlooked composers, devised pieces, projects, and festivals, sung roles from the standard operatic repertoire, and collaborated with artists from the far reaches of the musical palette. Her voice has been praised for its "utmost security and power" (*Chicago Tribune*), while in her native Australia, a critic has named her "one of the finest actress-singers in the country" (*The Age*).

Aszodi has been a soloist with such diverse ensembles as the International Contemporary Ensemble, the Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide Symphony Orchestras, the Pinchgut Opera, the Tirolean Symphony Orchestra, the Victorian Opera, and the Sydney Chamber Opera, as well as with the chamber series of the San Diego and Chicago Symphony Orchestras. Performances this season include collaborations with Ensemble Musikfabrik and violist Tabea Zimmermann, as part of the London Symphony Orchestra's contemporary music chamber series.

Aszodi can be heard on recordings for Chandos, Ars Publica, and Hospital Hill and has sung in festivals around the world. She has been nominated twice for the Australian Greenroom Awards as Best Female Operatic Performer, in both the leading and supporting categories. She is co-director of the Resonant Bodies Festival (Australia), artistic associate of Bendigo International Festival of Exploratory Music, and a 2017 artist-in-residence at High Concept Labs (Chicago). She holds a doctorate of musical arts from the Queensland Conservatorium and a master of fine arts from the University of California. She teaches voice and has written scholarly articles for several books and journals.

Russell Rolan

Russell Rolan is the cellist of the Chicago-based Spektral Quartet, one of the most innovative chamber ensembles today. The *New York Times* has written "[the musicians] have everything: a supreme technical command that seems to come easily, a capacity to make complicated music clear, and, most notably...an ability to cast a magic spell." The group received a Grammy nomination for the album *Serious Business* and has been in residence at the University of Chicago since 2011. Recent projects for the quartet have included the complete Schoenberg Quartets, and this season they are exploring "The World Around US"—environments both physical and metaphysical.

Rolan is an avid performer of new work. He has developed full recital programs consisting entirely of premieres for cello solo and cello/piano, and focusing on the quartet, has commissioned new works by dozens of composers. He also created "moderncellotechniques.com," a multimedia resource for cellists and composers to explore the extended techniques of contemporary music. Rolan holds degrees from the Peabody Conservatory and the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and earned his doctorate at Northwestern University.

Daniel Schlosberg

Daniel Schlosberg has been described as an "expert pianist" (*Boston Globe*), and his performances have been praised for their "intellect and passion" (*Washington Post*). He enjoys a multifaceted relationship with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In addition to appearing on numerous chamber music and new music concerts, he was a featured soloist in subscription performances of Messiaen's *Trois Petites Liturgies*, for which John von Rhein in the *Chicago Tribune* wrote: "Schlosberg played the daunting piano part splendidly," and Lawrence A. Johnson of the *Chicago Classical Review* wrote "a prominent, challenging piano part, played here with great fire and conviction by Daniel Schlosberg in a notable CSO debut." In the new music realm, Schlosberg collaborates frequently with Eighth Blackbird and Third Coast Percussion and was a founding member of Yarn/Wire. He has recorded for the Albany, Bridge, Centaur, New World, Nimbus, and Permelia labels. His latest solo album is *Gaul Me Maybe: French Baroque Keyboard Music*.

Schlosberg is also passionately devoted to art song and directs the Baltimore Lieder Weekend, held each October. Recent projects include performance of the Mahler/Zemlinsky Symphony no. 6 at the National Gallery of Art and Ravinia, Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* at the University of Michigan and Interlochen, and solo recitals at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Since 2005, Schlosberg has been on the faculty at the University of Notre Dame, where he is also faculty advisor to the Table Tennis Club.

PROGRAM NOTES

Kurt Weill and Francis Poulenc, roughly contemporaries, had as many commonalities as differences. Both had a penchant for the human voice, song in particular, and both were more than happy to bridge the divide between highbrow and popular forms. Yet there are also stark contrasts: Weill couldn't help making bold socio-political statements in his text-based music, not least his intense collaboration with that beacon of Marxism and modernism, Berthold Brecht. Poulenc was happy holding forth about art and food and gossiping about friends, but by all accounts, he was little interested in Europe's political situation between the wars. Still, it was inevitable that a composer like Poulenc, who used text as much as he did, and who also had a deep well of religious feeling, would make political statements through his craft, and that Weill, who had studied with the august Ferruccio Busoni, would take a stab at instrumental, "absolute" music.

Weill's *Intermezzo* for piano is his only known solo piano piece and did not premiere until 1999. It shows a composer emerging from the late romantic tradition—like virtually everyone, he was heavily under the influence of Wagner's *Tristan* and *Parsifal* for a brief period. In the Sonata for Cello and Piano, written three years later, you can hear the additional layers of Busoni and Debussy, and in hindsight his style here smacks more of Paul Hindemith and Richard Strauss. Despite its pervasive thorniness, the sonata is an accomplished, sophisticated work which at times opens a window to the Weill we know, whether through an unexpectedly glamorous harmonic progression (particularly in the slow movement), or even in the occasional snatch of melody that seems, momentarily, cabaret-bound.

Like Schubert paired to Goethe and Schumann paired to Heine, the music of Poulenc and the text of the poet and surrealist Paul Éluard were destined for each other. In keeping with that aesthetic movement's antipathy towards reason and traditional narrative, Pierre Bernac suggests that both the poems of Éluard and Poulenc's settings "should be felt intuitively and left to the transcendent power of dreams." Given this directive, it's only natural that reactions to the images and music will be extremely varied, but one cannot deny the profundity of the opening and closing songs, in particular "Nous avons fait la nuit." Whether this has anything to do with a between-the-wars frisson of alarm is left unanswered. "Priez pour paix" (Pray for peace) is one Poulenc song with a distinct social message, and it is programmed here as a postlude to the Éluard cycle, and in the spirit of holiday-season good tidings.

Poulenc's delightful suite "Les Soirées de Nazelles" presents clandestine portraits of friends, continuing in the tradition of Schumann's *Carnaval* and Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. The style more often than not evokes the cafés and cabarets of Montmartre, with intermittent nods to Bach, Stravinsky, and religious music. The sense of foreboding felt in the bookend songs of "Tel Jour" reappears in "La suite dans les idées," even if a carefree enjoyment is the work's overriding sentiment.

With the exception of "Youkali," all of the songs presented in the Weill set were in collaboration with Berthold Brecht, each one an "épat" of the bourgeois. In the three excerpts from *The Seven Deadly Sins* (their final collaboration), the short but potent "Ballade of Sexual Slavery" (from *Three Penny Opera*) and "Alabama Song" (from *Mahagonny Songspiel*), the satire is fierce, the depravity (real or implied) fully supported by Weill's luscious, almost lascivious music. Weill and Brecht fled Germany in 1933 (Brecht returned to East Berlin in 1949), and "Youkali" (text by Roger Fernay), perhaps represents an idyllic land which Weill found, to an extent, in New York later in his life.

Program notes by Daniel Schlosberg

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Seventh Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin Concerts

Unless otherwise noted, concerts are held in the West Building, West Garden Court.

Eric Mintel Quartet

Location will be posted the day of the concert.

December 28, 12:10

Suchertorte Chamber Ensemble

Jeffrey Schindler, conductor

December 30, 3:30

New York Opera Society

The Evolution of Fools:

From Jesters to Buffoons

Celebrating Sense of Humor

January 6, 3:30

Air Force Strings

The Latin American Spirt

January 13, 3:30

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

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Cover Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Pianist and Singer* (detail), 1928, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ruth and Jacob Kainen Collection, Gift in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art