

Upcoming Events

Friday, February 26, 8:00PM

Jazz

Damien Sneed Gospel Extravaganza

Damien Sneed, keyboards, and guests

Saturday, February 27, 8:00PM

Early Music

Church of St. Mary the Virgin (145 West 46th St.)

The Birth of the Renaissance:

Guillaume Dufay

Orlando Consort

Friday, March 5, 8:00PM

Composer Portraits

Sebastian Currier

Christopher Taylor, piano

Argento Chamber Ensemble

Michel Galante, conductor

Monday, March 22, 12:30PM

Tuesday, March 23, 12:30PM

Wednesday, March 24, 12:30PM

Lunchtime Concerts

Philosophy Hall at Columbia University

J. S. Bach: Sonatas and

Partitas for Solo Violin

Jennifer Koh, violin

Saturday, March 27, 8:00PM

William Schuman Award Concert

honoring Pauline Oliveros

International Contemporary Ensemble

Deep Listening Band

Timeless Pulse

and additional guest musicians and speakers

Thursday, April 1, 8:00PM

Composer Portraits

Helmut Lachenmann:

75th Birthday Celebration

Helmut Lachenmann, piano and speaking soloist

Lauren Radnofsky, cello

JACK Quartet

SIGNAL

Brad Lubman, conductor

Friday, April 9, 8:00PM

Saturday, April 10, 8:00PM

Campus Partnerships

Columbia Ballet Collaborative



MILLERTHEATRE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2009-2010 • 21st Season

Thursday, February 25, 8:00PM

Benet Casablanca

Composer Portraits

Major support for the 2009-2010 season is provided by
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Miller Theatre at Columbia University

2960 Broadway at 116th Street, MC 1801, New York, NY 10027

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Perspectives Ensemble

Sato Moughalian, *artistic director/flute*

Angel Gil-Ordóñez, *conductor*

Chuck Cooper, *reciter*

composer portraits
Benet Casablancas

Perspectives Ensemble
Sato Moughalian, *artistic director/flute*
Angel Gil-Ordóñez, *conductor*
Chuck Cooper, *reciter*

BENET CASABLANCAS
(b. 1956)

New Epigrams (1997) (*New York Premiere*)

- I. *Con moto*
- II. *Calmo - Adagio - Estatico*
- III. *Scherzando - Con moto*

Little Night Music (1992) (*U.S. Premiere*)

- I. *Moderato*
- II. *Lento - Quasi passacaglia*

Four Darks in Red (2009) (*World Premiere, Miller Theatre commission*)

- I. *Poco Allegro*
- II. *Ampio e tenuto - Poco estatico*
- III. *Allegro moderato e preciso. Quasi scherzo*
- IV. *Tranquilo assai - Finale. Con moto*

INTERMISSION

Onstage discussion with Benet Casablancas and Paul Griffiths

Seven Scenes from Hamlet (1988-1989) (*U.S. Premiere*)

- I. *Prologue: Misterioso*
- II. *The Court - Suspicions: Allegro moderato*
- III. *To be or not to be: Moderato molto e pensieroso*
- IV. *Ophelia: Larghetto amoroso*
- V. *Party of the players, "A jig": Moderato*
- VI. *Yorick - Burial of Ophelia: Poco grave*
- VII. *The Ending: Allegro furioso*

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Support is provided by Institut Ramon LLull of Barcelona and the Foundation for Iberian Music. This Portrait is part of Composers Now, a festival celebrating the music of our time at venues throughout New York City.



Please note that photography and the use of recording devices is not permitted. Remember to turn off all cellular phones and pagers before tonight's performance begins. Miller Theatre is wheelchair accessible. For more information or to arrange accommodations, please call 212-854-7799.

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We are deeply grateful to Clos du Val for their generous product donation.



About Miller Theatre

Miller Theatre at Columbia University is the leading presenter of new music in New York City and one of the most vital forces nationwide for innovative programming. In partnership with Columbia University School of the Arts, Miller is dedicated to producing and presenting unique events in dance, contemporary and early music, jazz, opera, and performance. Founded in 1988 with funding from John Goelet, Brooke Astor, and the Kathryn Bache Miller Fund, Miller Theatre has built a reputation for attracting new and diverse audiences to the performing arts and expanding public knowledge of contemporary music.

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About the Program

Music is an attempt to capture the most valuable of human possessions: time, made from a myriad fleeting moments consumed in the very flash of light that marks their birth.
—Benet Casablanças

Born in 1956, Benet Casablanças belongs to the strong generation of Spanish composers that emerged after the death of General Franco, in 1975, and—perhaps just as important for Spain’s sense of itself—after the country joined NATO (1982) and the European Economic Community (1986). Thus installed among the great western nations, Spain rapidly set about developing a musical culture to match, a culture not necessarily beholden to the land’s immensely powerful traditions.

It was partly to counterbalance those traditions that, back in 1923, Roberto Gerhard had gone to Vienna to study with Schoenberg. Casablanças—like Gerhard, a Catalan, from Sabadell in the Barcelona hinterland—chose the same destination almost 60 years later to complete his training with Friedrich Cerha and Karl-Heinz Füssl. In his case, though, a stay in the Austrian capital merely confirmed the Schoenbergian allegiance he had been expressing abundantly since his late teens.

Nearly all his early works are for solo instruments or small combinations such as string quartet (*Five Interludes*, 1983, written in Vienna) or piano trio (*Movement*, 1984, the piece with which he made his New York debut in 1986, at Carnegie Recital Hall). In 1988 came his first orchestral scores, followed by *Epigrams* for mixed sextet (1990), which represents a watershed, his music becoming more concise, more incisively characterful, more colorful, and more harmonically impelled, without losing the surging polyphonic activity and lively pulsed rhythm that mark it out.

Though short forms—more epigrams, aphorisms, haiku—occur repeatedly in his subsequent output, he has recently been producing compositions on a much larger scale, including his *Third String Quartet* (2008-2009) and three symphonic works: *The Dark Backward of Time* (2005), *Alter Klang* (2006), and *Darkness Visible* (2008). While keeping up his energetic creative activity, he has also devoted time to scholarship and teaching, gaining his doctorate for a thesis on humor in music and becoming director of the Conservatori del Liceu in Barcelona. Recordings of his music include three on the Naxos label, one pretty much replicating tonight’s program—without the new piece, of course, but with older compositions including *Epigrams*.

New Epigrams

Epigrams was scored for the regular new-music sextet of flute and clarinet, violin and cello, piano and percussion; *New Epigrams*, written seven years later, in the spring of 1997, is for an 11-piece ensemble. As befits the title, the movements are short, lasting together not much more than 10 minutes, and each is formed from smaller elements, down to solos and ensembles just a few measures long in the volatile first. This provides an excellent introduction to Casablanças’s way of thinking—how instruments will circle around emphasized pitches along the harmonic course, how harmonies are established by arpeggios and ostinatos, whose repetitions bring rest or an urge toward onward motion, and how a regular pulse drives a music of dancing energies.

The harmonic procedures—even the harmonies—are not so different in the second piece, but this is a slow movement. After the introduction, an adagio is proposed by the cello at the head of a string trio. Then comes a passage marked *estatico*, mostly in the high treble, with string harmonics and, at first, effects produced with their fingernails by the pianist and horn player. The region of Bartók’s insect-filled night

music is close by. Eventually, the strings restore the adagio; finally, the music evaporates.

A scintillant scherzo-finale rounds off the set, with, the composer suggests, the piano sneaking forward to assume a quasi-concerto role.

Little Night Music

It is a title that has come through barriers of time and language: *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (Mozart, 1787), *Piccola musica notturna* (Dallapiccola, 1954), *A Little Night Music* (Sondheim, 1973). Casablancas's contribution—*Petita Música Nocturna*, to give it its original Catalan title—clears its own space within this diverse repertory, being a pair of atmospheric movements for the unusual but highly effective ensemble of flute and clarinet with piano, harp, and percussion, written in February-March 1992 and dedicated to the composer's daughter, then a small child.

The opening is for the wind players alone; one might recall the seductive duet for these instruments in the middle movement of the *New Epigrams*. A sudden move to a quicker tempo challenges the mood, but alert calm is restored.

After this comes a movement the composer likens to a passacaglia for its slowness, regularity, and weight. Once again, this time following a beautiful solo for alto flute, the feeling switches, moving swiftly to fearsome multiphonics (chords) on the wind instruments, and switches again before the music settles back into itself.

Writing of the piece, Casablancas refers to "the different colors of silence and the tremor of the night, palpating and mysterious."

Four Darks in Red

Invited by George Steel and commissioned by Miller Theatre, Casablancas wrote this 12-minute chamber symphony between May and October last year. Its starting point, acknowledged in the title, was the Mark Rothko painting of 1958, a canvas normally on show at the Whitney Museum but on loan to Tate Modern when Casablancas was visiting London in October of 2008, for a performance of his *Seven Scenes from Hamlet*. In that respect, the work belongs with his *Alter Klang*, similarly stimulated by Paul Klee's checkerboard of glowing dusky colors. It belongs, too, with other "darks" among the composer's recent works—not only his orchestral compositions *The Dark Backward of Time* and *Darkness Visible* but also his *Third Quartet*, with its epigraph from W.B. Yeats: "raging in the dark—the night's remorse."

Casablancas has said something about how he hears the Rothko painting, with its characteristic array of hovering and shadowy rectangles, the second down of the four being the biggest and blackest: "The formal organization of the musical piece—the score consists of four sections that develop seamlessly—somehow reveals a connection with the four major areas that shape the picture, read from top to bottom (so, for example, the dark zone motivates the general shift toward the lower registers of the orchestra). In any case, as is typical of my musical thinking, the mood of the piece is never descriptive or programmatic. It is an empathic, abstract response to the deep admiration I feel for the language and achievement of this great artist, for his work's powerful presence and naked expressivity, animated by intense internal drives."

A sense of animation arrives at once in the brilliant and propulsive opening, which lasts not much more than a minute before a downward turn in the bass takes the music into its second section. This much longer and calmer movement reaches its goal in a solo from the alto flute, which is immediately followed by the third section: a quasi-scherzo with a contrasting middle section and an imposing end.

Casablancas's words take us on from here: "The slow section that opens Part IV gradually moves toward a contemplative and more ecstatic atmosphere, whose quietness leads to a suspension of time

Chuck Cooper is a veteran of Broadway plays and musicals, numerous television programs, and film appearances over the span of his 30 years as a professional actor. He is currently appearing as Bill in the Broadway revival of *Finian's Rainbow*. He won the 1996 Tony Award for Best Featured Actor in a musical for his portrayal of Memphis in *The Life*. Cooper has also appeared in other Broadway shows including *Lennon*, *Caroline Or Change*, *Chicago*, and *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*. He has toured nationally for many off-Broadway shows including *Avenue X*, *Marco Polo Sings a Solo*, *Police Boys*, *Four Short Operas*, and *Thunder Knocking on the Door*. On television Cooper has appeared in *Gossip Girl*, *Nurse Jackie*, *3lbs*, *Without a Trace*, *Law & Order*, *Oz*, *100 Centre Street*, and many others. His film appearances include *Noise*, *American Gangster*, *Find Me Guilty*, *Downtown*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *Our Song*, *The Hurricane*, *Gloria*, *The Peacemaker*, and *The Juror*, among others. Cooper is a Beinecke Fellow at the Yale University School of Drama.

Angel Gil-Ordóñez has attained an outstanding reputation as he carries on the tradition of his teacher and mentor, Sergiu Celibidache. *The Washington Post* has praised his conducting as "mesmerizing" and "as colorfully textured as a fauvist painting."

Gil-Ordóñez has conducted symphonic music, opera, and ballet throughout Europe, the United States, and Latin America. In the United States, he has appeared with the American Composers Orchestra, Opera Colorado, the Pacific Symphony, the Hartford Symphony, the Brooklyn Philharmonic at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Perspectives Ensemble, and the National Gallery Orchestra in Washington. Abroad, he has been heard with the Munich Philharmonic, the Solistes de Berne, at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, and at the Bellas Artes National Theatre in Mexico City.

Born in Madrid, he studied with Pierre Boulez and Iannis Xenakis in France. Currently the music director of Post-Classical Ensemble in Washington, D.C., Gil-Ordóñez also holds the positions of director of orchestral studies at Wesleyan University in Connecticut and music director of the Wesleyan Ensemble of the Americas. A specialist in the Spanish repertoire, Gil-Ordóñez has recorded four CDs devoted to Spanish composers, in addition to Post-Classical Ensemble's Virgil Thomson and Aaron Copland CD/DVDs on Naxos.

In 2006, the King of Spain awarded Gil-Ordóñez the country's highest civilian decoration, the Royal Order of Queen Isabella, which is equivalent to a knighthood, for his work in advancing Spanish culture in the world, and in particular for performing and teaching Spanish music in its cultural context.

Paul Griffiths was born in Bridgend, Wales, in 1947. He studied biochemistry at Oxford, and began work as a music critic in 1971, an occupation he followed for over 30 years in London and New York. He has also published many books on music, including most recently *A Concise History of Western Music* (2006), as well as novels (*Let me tell you*, 2008) and librettos for composers including Elliott Carter (*What Next?*, 1999), Mozart (*The Jewel Box*, 1991) and Beethoven (*The General*, 2007). The third edition of his book on music since 1945, *Modern Music and After*, will be published later this year. For more information see www.disgwylfa.com.

About the Artists

PERSPECTIVES ENSEMBLE

Sato Moughalian, *artistic director*

Timothy Fain, *violin*

Robin Zeh, *violin*

Nardo Poy, *viola*

Wendy Sutter, *cello*

Gregg August, *bass*

Sato Moughalian, *flutes and piccolo*

James Austin Smith, *oboe and English horn*

Todd Palmer, *clarinets*

Mark Timmerman, *bassoon*

Angela Cordell, *horn*

Tom Hoyt, *trumpet*

Tom Hutchinson, *trombone*

Eric Poland, *percussion and celesta*

Bridget Kibbey, *harp*

Stephen Gosling, *piano*

Perspectives Ensemble was founded by its artistic director Sato Moughalian in 1993 as the resident ensemble for the Perspectives in Music and Art series at Columbia University. The ensemble has presented thematic concerts as well as programs on subjects that bridge the visual, musical, and literary arts, consistently receiving the highest critical accolades. Perspectives Ensemble collaborates with some of the most dynamic and visionary conductors today, including Angel Gil-Ordóñez, Rob Kapilow, Roger Nierenberg, Francisco Nuñez, and George Steel, in concerts and recordings that feature the works of living composers and historic figures, shedding new light on their work through explorations of their music in the context of their time and place. Over the last decade, the ensemble has explored both Spanish and Catalan music and has collaborated with IberArtists in programs of music of the Modernist movement in Spain; for world premieres of music by Vadillo, Artero, Sotelo, and Erkoreka; and with The Foundation for Iberian Music for an exploration of the work of Carlos Surinach and its relationship to modern dance. Perspectives Ensemble has been presented in Carnegie Hall, the 92nd Street Y, Lincoln Center, Columbia and New York Universities, and the Ethical Culture Society, and the group has recorded for Sony Classics, Newport Classics, Innova, and New World Records, among others. It is resident ensemble for the Young People's Chorus of New York's Transient Glory commissioning program, and served as a participating ensemble for the Miller Theatre's groundbreaking Pocket Concertos commissioning project.

The range of **Sato Moughalian's** activities as an artistic director includes the founding of Perspectives Ensemble in 1993; the creation of touring chamber groups for Columbia Artists over a period of seven years; artistic direction of Rutgers University's SummerFest and Music on the Island; critically acclaimed recordings for Sony Classics, Newport Classics, and New World Records; and collaborations with conductors, composers, musicians, and artists in other media. As founder of MAYA, she is active in seeking and identifying emerging composers and working with them through the commissioning process. Perspectives Ensemble was created, in part, to present works within a cultural context, and to create performances which are informed by the influences prevailing on composers at the time of composition. Under her direction, the group has considered subjects including the influence of traditional music on "classical" composers and, in particular, music of the Romani people in Spain and Hungary, and the development of a distinctly American style in architecture, dance, and music. Perspectives Ensemble has presented the New York City premieres of works of Aaron Jay Kernis and Gabriel Erkoreka, and has recorded music by Richard Danielpour, Charles Tomlinson Griffes, and Karel Husa.

and the threshold of silence. At this point, the score includes the following quotation from Rothko: 'Silence is so accurate.' There follows the lively and vigorous conclusion, with the character of a stretta, including some highly stylized references to American popular music and leading the work to an exultant close."

Seven Scenes from Hamlet

Shakespeare's longest play has proved endless in its ramifications—not least, musical, including scores by composers ranging from Berlioz, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, and Richard Strauss to Shostakovich, Wolpe, Knussen, and Wolfgang Rihm, not to mention full-scale operatic treatments by Ambroise Thomas, Franco Faccio (on a libretto by Boito), and Humphrey Searle. Casablanca's 1989 take is a sequence of scenes played out in music to prompts from an actor, speaking mostly for the prince. Since the piece thus incorporates its own rather superior program notes, any further commentary may be superfluous.

However, perhaps some of the movements call for a little more comment. The first, uniquely, is cued by a character other than Hamlet: Horatio, to whom the Ghost declines to speak, so that what we hear could be, after the eeriness of the supernatural being's appearance (celesta, string harmonics, fluttertonguing clarinet, fingernails tapping on brass instrument bells), the sound of its silence. There follows a labyrinth of overt and covert signs for Claudius's court, and then a double fugue on Hamlet's most famous soliloquy, led by the viola naming him in its opening notes, H–A(ml)–E(t) in German nomenclature representing B–A–E. This movement ends with its beginning played in reverse.

Ophelia is portrayed in a slow movement, *largo amoroso*, on a flute theme, and the players in a jig, rumbustious yet exact. The sixth scene is the only one with speech and music together, as Hamlet turns from Yorick's grave to Ophelia's, at which point her music returns. His own dying words, "The rest is silence," are succeeded by distinctly unsilent music: a *moto perpetuo* in which different instruments and groups race after each other to make their statements over the bodies on the stage. Some of this is recollection, and eventually we meet the Ghost again. But the very last measures, with string quartet climbing away, leave many questions open.

© Paul Griffiths (www.disgwylfa.com)

CASABLANCAS IN CONTEXT

Some months before the birth of Benet Casablanças in 1956, a group of artists including Antoni Tàpies, Joan Brossa, and J. E. Cirlot placed a plaque on the façade of the Barcelona house where Schoenberg and his family had lived during the period 1931-1933. “He loved his window,” asserted his former student Robert Gerhard in a *BBC* radio interview. “He had his table right against the window. And he lifted his eyes up from the score *Moses and Aron*, which, as you know, he finished the second act in Barcelona in that room—this signed at the end, *Barcelona, 10th of March, 1932*. When he lifted his eyes from the score, what he saw was that fantastic panorama. It was a smallish room. It had a small upright piano, a table perhaps, a sofa, and a few armchairs and that was all.”

The connection between Barcelona and the members of Second Viennese School, however, had started quite a few years before, with the friendship between Schoenberg and Pau Casals, who met in 1912 when they appeared together at a Vienna concert (Schoenberg conducted his *Pelleas und Melisande*, and Casals played one of the Saint-Saëns concertos), and in 1913 Schoenberg prepared a realization of the figured bass and cadenzas for a G-minor cello concerto by the Baroque composer Georg Matthias Monn for Casals—who did not, however, perform them. Gerhard became Schoenberg’s student in 1923, and a few years later, in 1925, the Arnold Schoenberg Festival presented *Pierrot Lunaire*, *Kammersymphonie*, and a selection of songs in a tour around Catalonia. Of course, in 1931, Schoenberg arrived in Barcelona and in 1932 finished *Moses und Aron* and the *Klavierstück* Op. 33b. Later that year, Webern conducted *Verklärte nacht* and *Acht Lieder* Op. 6, among other works, and in the winter, Schoenberg adapted a 1746 harpsichord concerto by Monn for cello, intending for Casals to play it, but Casals turned this down as well. Lastly, in 1936, Alban Berg’s Violin Concerto was premiered and *Erwartung* was also performed—all in Barcelona. As a result, for the interwar period, the Catalan city became momentarily the capital of musical modernism—its ensuing musical life being shaped forever by the Second Viennese School.

A composer growing up in Barcelona in the 1960s had few clear artistic choices. Generally speaking, the path taken by recognized masters such as Albéniz and Granados was considered exhausted. Composers such as Frederic Mompou and Xavier Montsalvatge followed their own distinctive course, albeit one tinted by French models. A third stream, though, was the universe unlocked by Schoenberg. In the period after World War II, what might be called, for lack of a better term, a “Germanic” idiom was adopted by a generation of Catalan composers under the guidance of Cristòfor Taltabull (1888-1964), who had been a student of Max Reger. These included a student of Gerhard, Joaquim Homs, and Josep Soler, who taught Casablanças. It was only logical that later, Casablanças would go on to study in Vienna with Friedrich Cerha, a respected composer in his own right as well as one of the foremost performers of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern. (Cerha also orchestrated the unfinished parts of Berg’s *Lulu*.)

Casablanças’s affinities with the Second Viennese School thus seem inevitable. Yet his music is at the same time original and unique. Like Mompou, Casablanças has been a miniaturist attracted to the world of children (see for example his *Tríptic infantil* for piano). Like Webern, he strives for concision—shortness and succinctness being revealed in many of his titles: “epigram,” “aphorism,” “haiku,” “bagatelle” and even “little” (as in the *Little night music* in tonight’s program). Like Schoenberg, Casablanças is an accomplished essayist on the most diverse topics. He willingly seeks to fill in the porosity of the aesthetic experience with words, working to his advantage the capillaries that connect all the arts in his writings and in his compositions as well. Consider his orchestral work *Alter Klang* after Paul Klee’s painting and *Four Darks in Red*, which of course is inspired by Rothko. The world of literature seems equally important, with compositions based on Shakespeare (tonight’s *Seven Scenes from Hamlet* as well as *The Dark*

Backward of Time based on *The Tempest*) and song cycles on texts by, among many others, E. A. Poe and the early surrealist Catalan poet J. V. Foix (*Poema d’E.A. Poe* and *Jo tem la nit*, respectively).

Since Casablanças’ music adheres to some basic principles of musical modernism (dissonance, rhythmic ultra-complexity, and timbral exploration), it tends to be challenging for the audience. Art and literature, however, establish a sound foundation for the listening experience and Klee, Rothko, Shakespeare, Poe, and Foix introduce helpful keys to the ciphers. Beyond that, a constellation of meanings emerges through persistently returning allusions: notice, for instance, the recurrences of “darkness,” “silence,” and “night.” At first, it might come as a surprise that many of his edgy, testing scores are labeled with titles worn out by two or three generations of amateur musicians. *Album Leaf*, *Moment Musical*, *Two Sketches*, *Tombeau for J. Homs*, and of course *Little Night Music* are subtle winks to Schumann, Schubert, Gerhard, Ravel, and Mozart. It is a welcome comic touch from a man who, incidentally, has produced a hefty treatise on the subject of humor in music.

—note by Antoni Pizà, Director, Foundation for Iberian Music