This performance is made possible in part by the generous support from the Joy S. Shinkoskey Series of Noon Concerts endowment.

The Department of Music presents
Shinkoskey Noon Concert

The Left Coast Chamber Ensemble
with Genevieve Lee, piano and Axel Strauss, violin

Program

ONE for speaking pianist on texts of Paul Mann (2009) (26 min.)

Part I
One
Such history
War now
Here I stand
Stones blossom
Commanded to joy

Part II
Held in your hands
Down the throat of the desert
The cave-mouth opens
Or the cave-mouth speaks
The walled kehillah
Ownless

Part III
Two stones ground to dust
Dust culled from death’s west
Thru the two doors

Genevieve Lee, piano

Concertino for Violin and Small Ensemble (2009/2010) (18 min.) Kurt Rohde

I. Moto
II. Sotto
III. Rotto

Michel Taddei, double bass; Jeff Anderle, clarinet; Kurt Rohde, viola;
Leighton Fong, cello; Loren Mach, percussion; Eric Zivian, piano, Stacey
Pelinka, flute; Matilda Hofman, conductor; Axel Strauss, violin solo

12:05 Thursday, May 26, 2011
Room 115, Music Building

We ask you to be courteous to your fellow audience members and the performers. Please turn off your cell phones and refrain from texting. Audience members who are distracting to their neighbors or the performers in any way may be asked to leave at any time.

Also, this performance is being professionally recorded for the university archive. Photography, audio, or audiovisual recording is prohibited during the performance.

so too soul’s Qumran calls
to no answer
turns toward the hidden
& the cave mouth is sealed

Or the cave-mouth speaks
from the pocked cliffs, the forty
year fest
is ended, the gates
of the Wars of the Lord burst open
dark camps of the khitim
who pass unseen among us, thru us
as us

now the first horn, the rope
of our wailing binds them
the feast of moshiach begins

The walled kehillah, the caves
where the little light left
is held fast for millennia

held captive & held against
all other light
beckon

Ownless
stripped so far even
nightless, fogless
even lossless

PART III

Two stones ground to dust
wind-sown to all the earth’s edges
& mixed with all other dust
mortared with straw in the cracks
dust of this dust
mote lodged in the eye, all or
the nothing one sees
heat-pressed by heart
to this alter

Dust culled from death’s west, from all
the dark corners
ingather, mold
not crystal but coal
not glass-flower: furnace
& press
to heat-seed
after-ember, gem memory
of light
buried sun
one stone & the one
stone within it

Thru the two doors
thru paroches & the sealed gate
all thru to the sealed ear
how sing You in Edom
how sing
what song I am given
poverty’s song
one true song of Edom

so too soul’s Qumran calls
to no answer
turns toward the hidden
& the cave mouth is sealed

Or the cave-mouth speaks
from the pocked cliffs, the forty
year fest
is ended, the gates
of the Wars of the Lord burst open
dark camps of the khitim
who pass unseen among us, thru us
as us

now the first horn, the rope
of our wailing binds them
the feast of moshiach begins

The walled kehillah, the caves
where the little light left
is held fast for millennia

held captive & held against
all other light
beckon

Ownless
stripped so far even
nightless, fogless
even lossless

PART III

Two stones ground to dust
wind-sown to all the earth’s edges
& mixed with all other dust
mortared with straw in the cracks
dust of this dust
mote lodged in the eye, all or
the nothing one sees
heat-pressed by heart
to this alter

Dust culled from death’s west, from all
the dark corners
ingather, mold
not crystal but coal
not glass-flower: furnace
& press
to heat-seed
after-ember, gem memory
of light
buried sun
one stone & the one
stone within it

Thru the two doors
thru paroches & the sealed gate
all thru to the sealed ear
how sing You in Edom
how sing
what song I am given
poverty’s song
one true song of Edom

so too soul’s Qumran calls
to no answer
turns toward the hidden
& the cave mouth is sealed

Or the cave-mouth speaks
from the pocked cliffs, the forty
year fest
is ended, the gates
of the Wars of the Lord burst open
dark camps of the khitim
who pass unseen among us, thru us
as us

now the first horn, the rope
of our wailing binds them
the feast of moshiach begins

The walled kehillah, the caves
where the little light left
is held fast for millennia

held captive & held against
all other light
beckon

Ownless
stripped so far even
nightless, fogless
even lossless

PART III

Two stones ground to dust
wind-sown to all the earth’s edges
& mixed with all other dust
mortared with straw in the cracks
dust of this dust
mote lodged in the eye, all or
the nothing one sees
heat-pressed by heart
to this alter

Dust culled from death’s west, from all
the dark corners
ingather, mold
not crystal but coal
not glass-flower: furnace
& press
to heat-seed
after-ember, gem memory
of light
buried sun
one stone & the one
stone within it

Thru the two doors
thru paroches & the sealed gate
all thru to the sealed ear
how sing You in Edom
how sing
what song I am given
poverty’s song
one true song of Edom
I began working on my piece ONE for speaking pianist on texts of Paul Mann in winter 2009 while I was at the American Academy in Rome. The piece was completed at my home in San Francisco during the early fall 2009. The work was composed for my dear friend Genevieve Lee. This twenty-six-minute piece is in three parts, each part separated by a brief pause. There are fifteen poems in total that are set in the work. Parts I and II use six poems each; part III uses three poems. Generally the poems are brief and flow from one into the next. The change in the character of the music is usually the clearest indication that one poem has ended and the next one has begun.

I selected these fifteen poems from an unfinished multivolume set of poetry by the poet. For the purpose of this work, they have been placed in an order that I felt created a flow and ebb of sometimes similar, sometimes contrasting, sometimes unrelated themes. There is no “story” behind these particular poems, but I do feel a strong sense of narrative or storytelling in each, which helps drive the shape and direction of the music. As for the poems themselves, all I can say is that they have tremendous appeal and draw for me. Their moving clarity deals with the sensation of belonging and remembering, the realities of loss and searching, and the powerful realizations behind emptiness and reward. The titles used for the sections in my piece are taken from the opening line of each poem.

My Concertino for Violin and Small Ensemble is an odd piece: it contains a virtuosic solo violin part, and the ensemble writing is highly intricate and interrelated throughout. While not a full-fledge violin concerto, there is no doubt that without the solo violin the “heart” of the piece would be missing. I am pretty sure that should any of the other instruments be removed from the mix, the piece would still operate with a “missing limb” (say, the flute or viola). The “heart” (solo violin), however, must remain intact.

The work is in three movements: Moto, Sotto, and Rotto. Moto (motion) casts the solo violin as the force behind the momentum of music. This is realized in the shorter, repeated rhythmic riffs, long lyrical lines, and abrupt chords. Sotto (under) has the solo violin play a simple, long melody that emerges from underneath or inside the ensemble. I was also attempting to create the impression of a passacaglia without actually composing one: the affect of a series of variations over a repeated bass contributes to the idea of the music being generated from “underneath.” Rotto (broken) has the violin soloist snap to attention, becoming a relentless, implacable force, carrying the ensemble along. The violin acts as if it is unable to stop for anything; its brakes are broken, and its purpose is singular: play on to the end, and drag the rest of the ensemble along, kicking and screaming if need be.

Concertino for Violin and Small Ensemble was composed in Rome and San Francisco during 2009-2010 and is dedicated to Axel Strauss, who was fiercely patient while waiting for a piece from me over the last five years. The piece is 18 minutes long.

—Kurt Rohde