

CeReNeM VISITING ARTIST SERIES

Francesco Dillon

Monday 5 March, 2018

CeReNeM

PROGRAMME

Mary **Bellamy**: Transference (2009/2010)
for solo cello

Fiona **Pacey**: Wilderness Dreaming (2018)
for solo cello and electronics [world premiere]

Jonathan **Harvey**: Curve with plateaux (1982)
for solo cello

INTERVAL

Giovanni **Verrando**: Fifth born unicorn (2016)
for transformed and dismantled cello and electronics [world premiere]

Salvatore **Sciarrino**: Ai limiti della notte (1979)
for solo cello

Kate **Moore**: Rebellion (2016)
for solo cello



Mary **Bellamy**: Transference (2009/2010)
for solo cello

This piece focuses on sounds that operate on the verge of audibility and are characterised by a degree of instability; quiet, fragile sounds are continuously transferred between the different registers of the instrument through glissandi and subtle changes of bow and finger pressure. The aspects of change suggested by the title relate to moments in the piece where there is a redirection of feeling, as passages that convey stillness and distance are contrasted with those that contain more activity and force, and incorporate the more percussive sounds of the instrument. The piece was written in close collaboration with cellist Séverine Ballon, who gave the first performance in 2010, and who's work in improvisation with air sounds and multiphonics inspired the material for the piece.

Fiona **Pacey**: Wilderness Dreaming (2018)
for solo cello and electronics [world premiere]

Wilderness Dreaming was inspired by a visit to an exhibition of work by the sculptor Richard Long in July 2017 at a country house in Norfolk. His work is often ephemeral, designed to disappear in time, which seems to me to reflect on human temporality as against the relative permanence of nature and landscape in which he loves to walk and work. In the Norfolk exhibition I particularly enjoyed 'Wilderness Dreaming', which was a stone spiral set in unwilderness-like manicured grounds. Its flat stones wound round themselves, but which end was the beginning? Outwards to inwards or inwards to outwards? Perhaps wilderness is a state of mind and "dreaming" suggests all possibilities of interpretation, open-ended and inviting the listener to draw their own conclusions.

Jonathan **Harvey**: Curve with plateaux (1982)
for solo cello

This work takes as its starting inspiration a model of human personality. At the bottom of the cello register is the "physical" – arms, legs, muscles, etc. Next in the tenor register is the passionate level. Above that lies the level of thought, which becomes even more refined and delicate as it rises to the top of the cello where the level of transcendence is suggested. The line then curves back to its starting point and finishes with suggestions of mortality.

Giovanni Verrando: Fifth born unicorn (2016)
for transformed and dismantled cello and electronics [world premiere]

While working on my new cello to identify the details of the sounds that I was carefully documenting, little by little I examined the timbre produced by each of the parts that made up the instrument: not just the strings, the bridge, the body and all the segments that are visible and accessible, but also the soundpost, the tailpiece hanger, the ring of the bow and so on. Each detail has its own identity that contributes to the overall sound of the instrument and at the same time distinguishes it. Paraphrasing a well known saying of deconstructionism, "there is nothing outside the cello", and similarly, "there is not just the known sound of the cello" because it is a system, an apparatus made up of various parts, each with its own specific timbre.

Fifth Born Unicorn, written for Francesco Dillon, is a piece for cello and electronics which in reality was conceived as "for transformed and dismantled cello". The transformed cello is the one used on stage by the soloist. With this I obtain the sounds, initially imagined using electronics, using specifically chosen devices (for example, a strip of cloth rubbed on the strings). The dismantled cello is the instrument that produced around half of the pre-recorded electronic sounds, or rather the single parts of the disassembled instrument.

For some years now I have been carefully transcribing my imaginary musical ideas, taking me beyond the instruments as I knew them. This need, totally personal and without belonging to any inexistent ultimate truth, stems from being spontaneously tired (obviously as a composer, not a listener) of the already familiar and hetero-determined sound. The traditional sound wouldn't offer me any expressive force or even a faithful translation of my imaginary musical repertory. *Fifth Born Unicorn* constitutes an important step in this direction as it allowed me to look more deeply, also in a conceptually simple way, into how traditional acoustic instruments are "systems", and lets me express more easily my personal idea of instruments. It also entails single parts of the instrument being made to sound separately. To represent the musical figures I have in mind, I always need to start from the sound, from my sound. In this case, it was sufficient to look for it in the details of the means I had in front of me

Salvatore Sciarrino: Ai limiti della notte (1979)
for solo cello

The title does not specify what threshold of the night is referred to. But listening to the piece puts paid to any doubt: here in fact the music appears to conserve that tension — heavy and yet at the same time sharp and vigilant — characteristic of the very depth of the night, during which it was written. The morning after, I was due to depart for Paris where the composition was copied. The piece plots *senza sforzo visibile* a world apparently fixed but in reality as instable as water and allows the listener to rediscover the sounds of silence, from which it in fact descends: those internal sounds, one's own breathing, the beating of one's heart, as well as external ones, the faintest sounds, the "echoes of echoes": the fading footsteps of a nocturnal wayfarer, the sounds perceived through the thickest of walls; the sonic dimension, in other words, of the human microcosm, violated today by the diurnal ruckus.

A few years ago, I composed *Tre notturni brillanti* for viola. *Ai limiti della notte* parts company from these, and overturning their standards of virtuosity, sets up a further technical challenge, with the result that while the hands tend to remain firm, the control of the sound — of the distance of the sound — tends to sharpen, and the sound itself to spatialize. "There's no moon, nor lanterns, but at night we see one another," as the ancient Chinese poet affirms.

Kate Moore: Rebellion (2016)
for solo cello

Rebellion, inspired by the tradition of Italian tarantism, was written upon the eve of the feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in 2016. It is a tarantella, invoking the frenzied dance mania of a spider bite, a crisis call, that provides a release for the poison entrapped within the body.

Francesco Dillon (b.Turin, 1973) already has a brilliant international career to his credit, characterised by the originality and variety of the repertoire that he has embraced. As a soloist he has performed on such prestigious concert stages as the Konzerthaus in Vienna, the Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam, the Berlin Philharmonie, the Herkulessaal of Munich, the Laeiszhalle in Hamburg, the Jordan Hall in Boston and the Colon Theatre of Buenos Aires, with such orchestras as the Italian National Radio Orchestra (RAI), the Southwest Radio Symphony Orchestra of Stuttgart, the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Vienna, the Orchestra of the Colon Theatre, Ensemble Resonanz, Oulu Sinfonia Finland, and the Tuscany Regional Orchestra (ORT). Most recently he made an acclaimed debut with the Philharmonic Orchestra of La Scala, Milan, conducted by Susanna Mallki. Dillon's performances have been transmitted by such important broadcasters as the BBC, RAI, ARD, Radio France, ORF, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and WDR. He has recorded for the ECM label, as well as Kairos, Ricordi, Stradivarius, Die Schachtel and Touch.

UPCOMING CeReNeM EVENTS

Thursday 8 March

Pierre Boulez: Dialogue de l'Ombre Double
Richard Ingham | Pete Stollery

Monday 19 March

Joshua Hyde: Saxophone

Tuesday 20 March

Bordersounds: Language - Sound - Silence
Colin Frank | Irine Røsnes | Peyee Chen

Monday 16 April

Morton Feldman: Crippled Symmetry
Richard Craig | Damien Harron | Philip Thomas

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