

Vanishing Point Ensemble

Thursday, October 30 - 6:00pm | *Harold Washington Library*

Monday, November 3 - 7:30pm | *The CheckOut*

Dylan Feldpausch, violin; Rebecca Miller, viola; J Holzen, cello

PROGRAM

Eslanda Dances, Adolphus Hailstork (1941 -)

Adolphus Hailstork was born in Rochester, NY, and his journey with music began as a boy chorister in his Episcopal church. He studied composition at Howard University and the American Conservatory with Nadia Boulanger. Hailstork's body of work is large, including multiple operas, pieces for orchestra or chorus and orchestra, and a broad selection of chamber and solo works. Self-described as "multistylistic", his writing shows influences of folk traditions, African American spirituals, and the harmonic language of jazz and blues, alongside experimentation with traditional forms. His work fits seamlessly into the landscape of 20th-century American composition, alongside such composers as Copland, Ives, and Bernstein.

Hailstork's string trio, *Eslanda Dances*, was composed as a tribute to Paul Robeson's wife, Eslanda "Essie" Cardozo Robeson. Paul Robeson was a concert vocalist (among many other things) who was one of the first to perform and record African American spirituals in a classical concert setting. His wife, Essie, was an anthropologist and his manager, who accompanied him on many of his travels and did much traveling of her own. This work is intended to depict a series of tribal dances that Essie may have encountered during her travels around the world.

All four movements are performed *attacca*, without pauses in between. The first movement opens with a grand gesture, evocative of the formal bows exchanged between partners in older Baroque styles of dance, but rapidly evolves into something folksier and more athletic, introducing harmonies from gospel and blues music. The second movement is quieter and more intimate, with the voices of the violin and viola alternating between a call and response and a more intricately interwoven dialogue. The third movement features the violin as a solo dancer, accompanied by rhythmic, almost ritualistic lines in the viola and cello. The fourth movement recaps the vitality and joy of the first movement, leading the piece to an energetic finish.

Cloud Trio, Kaija Saariaho (1952 - 2023)

Kaija Saariaho was a Finnish composer who studied in Helsinki and Darmstadt, but spent most of her life researching and working in Paris. Her work was deeply influenced by her research at IRCAM, where she was able to explore spectralism (the acoustic properties of a sound, often delineated by the series of frequencies and overtones which compose a single pitch or sound) and electronic musics. She was a significant figure in the spectralist and musique concrète movements, and her music explores rich, ever-shifting textures, often deceiving the listener by subtly shifting the source or timbre of a sound. While many of her works combine electronics with acoustic performance, this trio in four movements is a fully acoustic one.

On *Cloud Trio*, Saariaho wrote:

"In this piece, the three instruments all have different tasks and functions, they represent very different aspects of string playing. These tasks are sometimes very concrete: the violin tends to behave as an echo or reverberation, the viola creates new clouds next to the existing ones and the cello often has a function of a shadow to the upper instrumental lines.

My ideas for this piece are about common textures; how to create one coherent – still complex and detailed – with individual lines. The four sections of the piece have their own colours and characters, and I leave it to the listener to imagine what kinds of clouds were their sources of inspiration.

When composing this piece in the French Alps (Les Arcs), watching the big sky above mountains I realized once again how rich a metaphor a natural element can be: its state or shape is so recognizable, and yet it is always varied and rich in detail. When you are high in the mountains, one often sees many different layers of clouds, having all different forms, speeds and textures."

While French musical composition is most often defined by Impressionism, with its vague or blurry outlines of a concept or narrative, Saariaho's music more frequently attempts to directly convey and represent concrete images and experiences. In *Cloud Trio*, we experience the multifaceted nature of clouds high in the Alps - frigid air, shifting currents, swirling mist, and eerie stillness.

The Companion Guide to Rome, Andrew Norman (1979 -)

Andrew Norman is an American composer whose music is deeply influenced by architecture and the visual arts. His trio, *The Companion Guide to Rome*, was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in 2012, and is a 9-movement work inspired by different churches throughout Rome, where Norman was in residence after winning the Prix de Rome in 2006.

He writes: “*Like many of the buildings in Rome, this piece is the product of a long gestation marked by numerous renovations, accretions, and ground-up reconstructions. What has emerged is a collection of portraits—nine in all—of my favorite Roman churches. The music is, at different times and in different ways, informed by the proportions of the churches, the qualities of their surfaces, the patterns in their floors, the artwork on their walls, and the lives and legends of the saints whose names they bear. The more I worked on these miniatures, the less they had to do with actual buildings and the more they became character studies of imaginary people, my companions for a year of living in the Eternal City.*”

The inspiration for each movement is as follows (illustrations sourced from L. Lanzilotti’s 2016 dissertation, “Andrew Norman’s *The Companion Guide to Rome*: Influence of Architecture and Visual Art on Composition”):

Teresa: *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* by Gian Lorenzo Bernini in the Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della Vittoria



Figure 1.1: Bernini’s *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*.
Photo by Lanzilotti.

Benedetto: the Cosmatesque floors in *San Benedetto* in Piscinula



Figure 2.1: Sinusoidal two-strand guilloche in San Benedetto in Piscinula. Photo by Lanzilotti.



Figure 2.2: Sierpinski triangles in San Benedetto in Piscinula. Photo by Lanzilotti.



Figure 2.4: Two tangent quincunxes in the entryway of San Benedetto in Piscinula. Photo by Norman.



Figure 2.3: Example of an oblique grid in San Benedetto in Piscinula. Photo by Lanzilotti

Susanna: a decaying fresco of the Mary in Majesty in the *Chiesa di Santa Susanna*

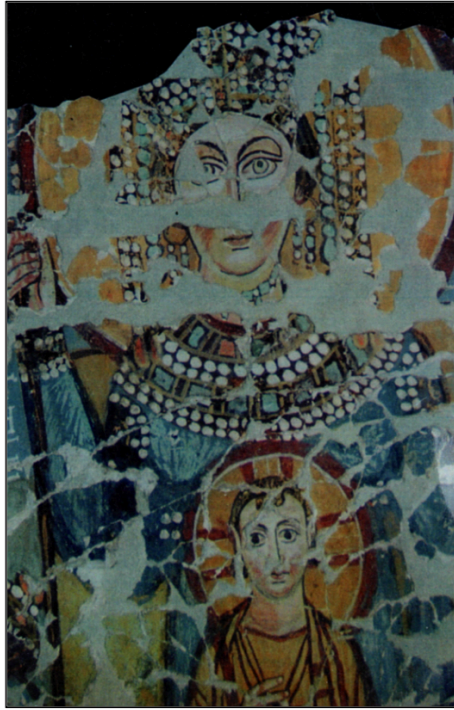


Figure 3.1: Postcard from the Chiesa di Santa Susanna showing the fresco of the Virgin in Majesty. Courtesy of Norman.

Pietro: Donato Bramante's *Tempietto*

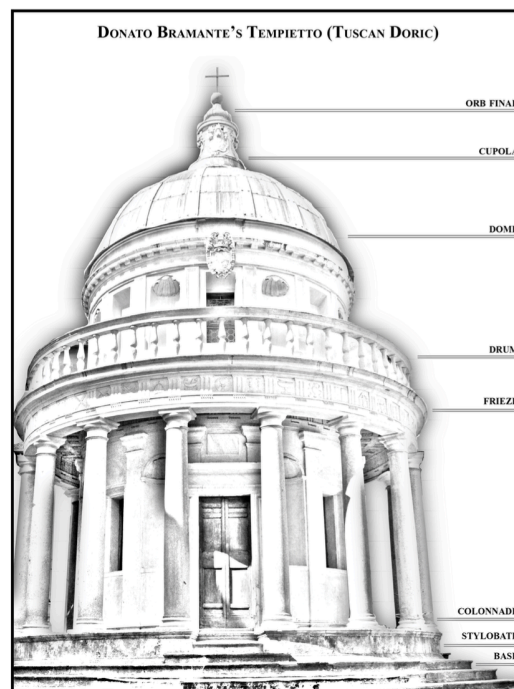


Figure 4.1: Donato Bramante's Tempietto (Tuscan Doric).
Diagram from a photo by Lanzilotti.

Ivo: Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza



Figure 5.1: Silhouette of Borromini's Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza
Photo by Lanzilotti



Figure 5.3: Partial view of the cornice and dome, Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza.
Photo by Norman.

Clemente: *Basilica di San Clemente*

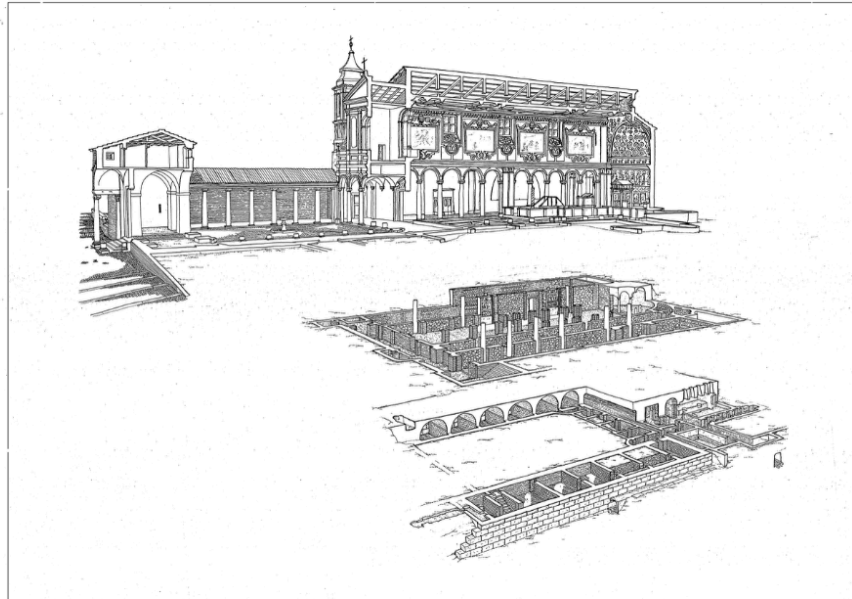


Figure 6.1: *Isometric Perspective of the Three Archaeological Levels of San Clemente*. Drawing by Valerio Cosentino



Figure 6.2: "Tree of Life" apse mosaic, twelfth century
Photo by Lanzilotti

Lorenzo: a part of the Cosmatesque floor in the Basilica Papale di San Lorenzo fuori la mura



Figure 7.1: Floor in (dis)repair in San Lorenzo fuori le Mura.
Photo by Norman



[left] Figure 7.5a: Oblique grid found in San Lorenzo fuori la Mura.
[right] Figure 7.5b: Oblique grid found in San Benedetto in Piscinula.
Photos by Lanzilotti.

Cecilia: The statue of *St. Cecilia* by Stefano Maderno in Santa Cecilia in Trastevere



Figure 8.1: Moderno's *St Cecilia*, marble, life size, 1600 (Rome, Santa Cecilia in Trastevere). Photo by Lanzilotti.

Sabina: Santa Sabina



Figure 9.1: Santa Sabina at sunrise.
Photo by Norman.



Figure 9.5: Santa Sabina at dawn. Photo by Lanzilotti.

The last movement, *Sabina*, was first written in 2006 for the Janaki Trio, who premiered it at Carnegie Hall. It exists both as a separate work and as part of this collection of pieces.

It is the only movement composed while Norman was still in Rome, and was actually played in its namesake church. The rest of the movements — *Santa Maria della Vittoria* (which Norman calls “over-the-top Baroque”), *San Benedetto*, *Santa Susanna*, *Tempietto Bramante*, *St. Ivo*, *San Clemente*, *San Lorenzo Oltre Le Mura*, and *Santa Cecilia* — were written in Berlin, where he also was a fellow at its academy.

On *Sabina*, Norman writes, *"In October 2006 I visited the ancient church of Santa Sabina on Rome's Aventine Hill. I entered very early in the morning, while it was still dark, and as I listened to the morning mass I watched the sunrise from within the church. The light in Santa Sabina is breathtaking; the large clerestory windows are not made of glass but of translucent stone, and when light shines through these intricately patterned windows, luminous designs appear all over the church's marble and mosaic surfaces. As I watched the light grow and change that morning, I was struck by both its enveloping, golden warmth and the delicacy and complexity of its effects. I sketched the material for this piece soon after that unforgettable experience."*