



AVANT | GARDEN



OISTRAKH
SYMPHONY OF
CHICAGO

Mina Zikri, Music Director



Kaori Williams,
Soprano



Thomas Nickell, Composer &
Avant Garden Curator



Mina Zikri,
Conductor

Avant Garden

Friday June 10, 2022 at 8pm

Oistrakh Symphony of Chicago

Mina Zikri, Conductor

PROGRAM

Maurice Ravel

Shéhérazade

Kaori Williams, Soprano

Thomas Nickell

Unstuck in Time

Sync

Rust Canon

Three for Orchestra

Venue: Gannon Concert Hall, Holtschneider Performance Center
DePaul University school of music, 2330 n. Halsted, Chicago, IL

PROGRAM

Maurice Ravel

Shéhérazade

Poems by Tristan Klingsor

I. Asie

II. La flûte enchantée

III. L'indifférent

INTERMISSION

Thomas Nickell

*Rust Canon**

*Sync**

*Three for Orchestra**

*Unstuck in Time**

**World Premiere*

SHÉHÉRAZADE POEMS

BY TRISTAN KLINGSOR

Asie

Asia, Asia, Asia!
Ancient, wonderful land of nursery stories
Where fantasy sleeps like an empress,
In her forest filled with mystery.
Asia, I want to sail away on the schooner
That rides in the harbour this evening
Mysterious and solitary,
And finally unfurls purple sails
Like a vast nocturnal bird in the golden sky.
I want to sail away to the islands of flowers,
Listening to the perverse sea singing
To an old bewitching rhythm.
I want to see Damascus and the cities of Persia
With their slender minarets in the air.
I want to see beautiful turbans of silk
Over dark faces with gleaming teeth;
I want to see dark amorous eyes
And pupils sparkling with joy
In skins as yellow as oranges;
I want to see velvet cloaks
And robes with long fringes.
I want to see long pipes in lips
Fringed round by white beards;
I want to see crafty merchants with suspicious glances,
And cadis and viziers
Who with one movement of their bending finger
Decree life or death, at whim.
I want to see Persia, and India, and then China,
Pot-bellied mandarins under their umbrellas,
Princesses with delicate hands,
And scholars arguing
About poetry and beauty;
I want to linger in the enchanted palace
And like a foreign traveller
Contemplate at leisure landscapes painted
On cloth in pinewood frames,
With a figure in the middle of an orchard;
I want to see murderers smiling
While the executioner cuts off an innocent head
With his great curved Oriental sabre.

I want to see paupers and queens;
I want to see roses and blood;
I want to see those who die for love or, better, for hatred.
And then to return home later
To tell my adventure to people interested in dreams
Raising - like Sinbad - my old Arab cup
From time to time to my lips
To interrupt the narrative artfully...

La flûte enchantée

The shade is pleasant and my master sleeps
In his conical silk hat
With his long, yellow nose in his white beard.
But I am still awake
And from outside I listen to
A flute song, pouring out
By turns, sadness and joy.
A tune by turns languorous and carefree
Which my dear lover is playing,
And when I approach the lattice window
It seems to me that each note flies
From the flute to my cheek
Like a mysterious kiss.

L'indifférent

Your eyes are soft as those of any girl,
Young stranger,
And the delicate curve
Of your fine features, shadowed with down
Is still more seductive in profile.
On my doorstep your lips sing
A language unknown and charming
Like music out of tune...
Enter!
And let my wine comfort you ...
But no, you pass by
And from my doorway I watch you go on your way
Giving me a graceful farewell wave,
And your hips gently sway
In your feminine and languid gait...

PROGRAM NOTES

THOMAS NICKELL, COMPOSER

Rust Canon

The *Rust Canon* takes its name after a quote from Alfred Schnittke who said, "I set down a beautiful chord on paper and suddenly it rusts." The music is intended for any combination of four non-sustaining instruments (piano, harp, guitar etc.), with the idea that the natural decay of the sound which is inherent in each instrument effects how the canonic repetition is perceived. Maybe a parallel can be made with memory in the way that the mental substance we absorb from the world doesn't stay intact for long, morphing into something that may reflect our biases or expectations more than the actual event. The canon should be approached with a slow enough pace that emphasis is placed on the life of each individual pitch, rather than on the coherence of the whole as in a typical canon. A sense of unity or self-reference should be felt as coincidental, as if each musician has unconsciously absorbed one-another's playing through the course of the performance. The score is notated proportionally, meaning that the duration or rhythm of notes is directly related to the spacing on the page. All pitches are *laissez vibrer* for the duration of the piece.

Three for Orchestra

Three for Orchestra is comprised of 3 movements to be played by any large ensemble of pitched instruments with a conductor. The musical material is mostly free, and is meant to be followed as one follows a non-predetermined path while on a leisurely walk. The orchestra is divided into groups that play independently of each other, yet are held together by choices made by the conductor.

Unstuck in Time

As suggested by the title, *Unstuck in Time* was inspired by Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5*. The aim of this piece was not to create a programmatic companion to Vonnegut's work, rather I attempted to mimic his unique literary techniques in music. *Unstuck in Time* tries to create moments or events that will act like memories of one's past (or premonitions of one's future), which are ultimately broken off and followed by something that functions similarly to a dream, where the unconscious is exposed and the fragments of experiences are cast into the foreground. Things move forward, backward, slow, fast, or not at all, ultimately bringing up the question of how time in everyday life relates to time in music.



Oistrakh Symphony of Chicago at Carnegie Hall, June 2, 2019

OISTRAKH SYMPHONY OF CHICAGO

The Oistrakh Symphony of Chicago was founded in 2005. The orchestra draws young professionals and recent graduates from major music programs in the Chicago area, in particular the DePaul University School of Music, with whom it has a strong professional relationship.

The Oistrakh Symphony frequently performs symphonic and chamber orchestra concerts, bringing in well-known featured soloists.

The mission of the Oistrakh Symphony of Chicago is to offer audiences and musicians exposure to a broad classical repertoire performed at the highest level.

www.oistrakhsymphony.org



OISTRAKH SYMPHONY OF CHICAGO ORCHESTRA

Violin I

Victoria Moreira, *Concertmistress*

Vladimir Gene

Dylan Feldpausch

Gabriela Lara

Alec Tonno

Jesus Linarez

Natalie Koh

Yu-Kun Hsiang

Violin II

Naomi Culp, *Principal*

Irina Magill

Sam Sharp

Alison Tatum

Hannah Cartwright

Christina Lee

Tabitha Oh

Viola

Noel Rubio, *Principal*

Oana Tatu

Hanna Pederson

Bethany Pereboom

Annika Sundberg

Zhanna Bullock

Martina Skalova

Cello

Dan Klingler, *Principal*

Magdalena Sustere

Patrycja Likos

Lize Dryer

Gilberto Campa

Bass

Jason Niehoff, *Principal*

Julian Romane

Ayaka Arai

Flute

Katarina Ignatovica

Dominic Dagostino

Michael Hoover - *Piccolo*

Oboe

Grace Hong

Sam Waring

Lillia Wooschlager - *English Horn*

Clarinet

Michael Tran

Emory Freeman

Nora Shaffer

Bass Clarinet

Joseph Sanchez

Michael Tran

Bassoon

Jacob Darrow

Liam Jackson

Horn

Jeremiah Frederick

Sarah Younker

Brian Goodwin

Mary Jo Neher

Trumpet

Sarah Carrillo

Charles Russell Roberts

Trombone

Rachel Castellanos

Catie Hickey

Robin Schulze

Tuba

Josh Wirt

Timpani

Jaime Cárdenas España

Percussion

Savanna Cárdenas

Charles Gillette

Taylor Hampton

Jaime Cárdenas España

Vibraphone

Taylor Hampton

Harp

Jordan Thomas

Emily Melendes

Celeste

Danny Szefer

Piano

Danny Szefer

Lillia Woolschlager

ORCHESTRA ROSTER FOR *RUST CANON***Piano**

Danny Szefer

Lillia Woolschlager

Harp

Jordan Thomas

Vibraphone

Taylor Hampton



BIOGRAPHY

KAORI WILLIAMS SOPRANO

Kaori Williams is an international artist who attracts and delights audiences around the world with her vibrant lyric soprano voice and touching musicality. Her versatility and repertoire - including Western and Japanese Opera, symphonic pieces, and traditional Japanese music - have brought her to many international stages and left audiences enthralled.

A native of Kashima, Japan Ms. Williams attended Senzoku Music University. Upon graduation she joined Asunaro Opera Company (Tokyo), the Young Artist Program of Fujiwara Opera (the oldest opera company in Japan) and NAOS Opera Company (Tokyo). With these companies she performed main stage roles in *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Barber of Seville*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, and *Amahl and the Night Visitor*. With Asunaro Opera she premiered the role Kotaro in the opera *Yuki and Oninbe*.

For five years Ms. Williams lived in Holland where she appeared often in the productions of Carlo de Luka. Her voice made her a favorite of concert-goers in Amsterdam. While in Holland she traveled frequently to Rome to perfect her Bel Canto technique, culminating in a Special Judges Award at the *International Bellini Vocal Competition* in Sicily.

Moving her career to the USA Ms. Williams appeared in several roles with Opera Memphis including CIO Cio-san in *Madame Butterfly* and Liu in *Turandot* where she performed with the legendary Audrey Stottler. She has

also appeared in her adopted Chicago home in several venues including in a 10th Anniversary Memorial Concert celebrating the life of Akira Ifukube.

In 2014 Ms. Williams was invited to perform with the China Philharmonic Orchestra in Beijing and with the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra. Under the baton of Maestro Massimo Zanetti she performed *Six Songs* by Richard Strauss including China Premieres for *Die Heiligen Drei Könige aus Morgenland* and *Gesang Der Apollonpriesterin*.

Building on the great success of her 2014 performances Ms. Williams was invited again to join the China Philharmonic Orchestra to perform Ravel's *Schéhérazade* at the Forbidden City Concert Hall.

In 2017 she launched a recording projects of Japanese songs which were recommended to her by the ex-General Director of the Japan Opera Association Mr. Hiroshi Oga. In 2018 her recording "Kaori: My Home My Heart" was released on Asian Improv Records and through Amazon.com and Office LUNA PIENA (Tokyo). Prior to this recording Ms. Williams had also recorded for Disney Education Productions under the direction of Mark Watters.

Ms. Williams has produced and performed five "Thinking of my Homeland" charity concerts for her hometown of Kashima; concerts which included both Japanese and international artists.



BIOGRAPHY

THOMAS NICKELL COMPOSER/PIANIST

Inventive young composer and pianist Thomas Nickell, steeped in the classical music tradition with an ear for contemporary soundscapes, has already garnered recognition throughout Europe and the United States for his thoughtful explorations of various musical genres. As a pianist, Mr. Nickell has given many highly lauded public performances of important works by Bach, Beethoven, Berg, Gershwin, Khachaturian, Liszt, David Matthews, Mozart, Rachmaninoff, as well as his own compositions.

Thomas Nickell, longtime guest artist and friend of the Oistrakh Symphony of Chicago, will be collaborating with Music Director Mina Zikri on a newly created series entitled “Avant Garden.” As part of the series’ launch, the Oistrakh Symphony of Chicago premieres four of Mr. Nickell’s orchestral works in June 2022.

Mr. Nickell and duo partner, percussionist Fiona Stocks-Lyons, were honored to be commissioned multiple times by choreographer Christopher D’Ariano to write the music for ballet for Pacific Northwest Ballet Company. Most recently, Mr. Nickell and Ms. Stocks-Lyons wrote and recorded an original score for *Enhance the Dance*, a production premiered at the Southampton Arts Center. In July 2021, Mr. Nickell and Ms. Stocks-Lyons was a part of the *Enhance the Dance* production performing their new ballet at the Southampton Arts Center. This score will form an upcoming album, slated for release later this year.

Increasingly devoting his time to composition and to collaborative efforts, Mr. Nickell has created works including *String Quartet in No. 2, “Heliopause”*, selected for JACK Quartet Readings at Mannes (2019); *Spires of Form* for Voice and Piano, a work co-composed with American soprano Denise Young

which was premiered at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall (2019). When Mr. Nickell gave the world premiere of his composition *Innisfree* in 2018 at Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall, Roriane Schrade of *New York Concert Review* wrote:

Mr. Nickell's own composition, *Innisfree*...revealed the influence of Cowell and possibly Crumb in its extended techniques, all while expressing a mood of meditation and mystery that seems to reflect the beginnings of his own individual style. One eagerly awaits hearing his future compositions. (June 8, 2018)

As pianist, Mr. Nickell most recently appeared as guest soloist in Chicago with the Northbrook Symphony under the baton of conductor Mina Zikri, performing J.S. Bach's Concerto No. 1 in D Minor and Alfred Schnittke's Concerto for Piano and Strings. The ongoing collaborations with the Oistrakh Symphony of Chicago and Maestro Zikri include performances at both the University of Chicago and Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall in June 2019.

During the summer of 2017, Mr. Nickell embarked on a tour of the United Kingdom with the Orchestra of the Swan and Artistic Director David Curtis, continuing his collaboration with the highly regarded Stratford-upon-Avon Orchestra, which began in 2015. Tour performances took place in Stratford-Upon-Avon, Litchfield, and London featuring selections from Gershwin, Copland, and Dvořák.

In February 2015, Mr. Nickell made his official debut at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall as soloist with the Orchestra of the Swan. The program featured the United States premiere of England's prominent composer David Matthews' Piano Concerto, Op. 111. Mr. Nickell gave the London premiere of the Matthews' work with the same forces in July 2016. Michael Miller of *New York Arts* praised the performance:

At 18, Thomas Nickell, even in a world populated by numerous prodigies who began to play in public at very young ages, still deserves to be considered a young, emerging artist, and this concert showed him to be a notably mature and tasteful one. [...] Mr. Nickell played [Mozart's Piano Concerto in No. 12] with the finely articulated passagework and crystal-line tone that has become a sort of lingua franca in Mozart playing on modern instruments. ...Nickell was able to use it to give us a winning and persuasive performance.

Having won us over with this Mozart, Nickell proceeded to amaze us with Olivier Messiaen's exquisite early preludes for piano, still evocative of works Debussy was writing fifteen years earlier, but imbued with a fiery mysticism that is Messiaen's own. Nickell's beautiful tone in the higher registers served the composer's moods and atmosphere well,

and he avoided over-pedaling. He most definitely had his own concept of these pieces, and his freedom from the more obvious clichés was impressive. (March 26, 2017)

Previous engagements included an appearance as a special guest artist at the tenth Annual ABC Gala at Carnegie Hall. During the summer of 2016, Mr. Nickell appeared in recital in London and made his debut as soloist with the Cheltenham Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of David Curtis. Mr. Nickell has performed recitals at the 53rd *Festivale Pianistico di Brescia e Bergamo* in Mozzo, Italy, and played additional recitals in Bergamo, Milan, Venice and Bologna, Italy; in León and Madrid, Spain; in Warsaw, Poland; and in Fujisawa and Tokyo, Japan.

Mr. Nickell holds double bachelor of music degrees from the New School, Mannes College of Music—a B.M. in piano, having studied with J Y Song, and a B.M. in composition under the tutelage of composer David T. Little. Mr. Nickell, who makes his home in New York City, likes to paint in his spare time and enjoys photography, the occasional foray into writing, and reading non-fiction, especially about composers.





BIOGRAPHY
MINA ZIKRI
MUSIC DIRECTOR

As founder, music director, and conductor of the Oistrakh Symphony of Chicago, Mina Zikri uses his considerable talents to forge relationships with artists and musical organizations throughout the world, all in the name of developing new audiences for classical music. As a violinist and assistant conductor to Daniel Barenboim, he travels with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra on their annual tours to major music festivals and concert halls around the world. He returns each season to his native Egypt to guest-conduct the National Symphony.

At a time when even some of the greatest orchestras in the United States are falling under the immense pressures of financial and cultural uncertainty, Mr. Zikri believes that the future of symphony orchestras can be, should be, and must be different from what everyone seems to expect.

As a faculty member of the DePaul University Community Music Division, his many career distinctions include being named one of the twelve finalists in the 2007 Gustav Mahler International Conducting Competition, where he was chosen from 223 candidates from 40 countries. He holds a Bachelor's, Master's, and Performance Certificate in violin from DePaul University.

Mr. Zikri has been the resident conductor for the Lira ensemble since 2011. In 2018 Mr. Zikri made his conducting debut at Carnegie Hall with the Oistrakh Symphony of Chicago, with a return performance in June 2019. He is in third season as Music Director of the Northbrook Symphony Orchestra.

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