

Interchanging Idioms
(Blog)
March 4, 2009

Two of America's Top Children's Choirs Come Together

A Blending of East and West Coast Voices

Alice Tully Hall Monday, April 13

Young People's Chorus of New York City (YPC) and the San Francisco Girls Chorus (SFGC) in its New York Debut Sing a Program Highlighted by the Joint World Premiere of Gabriela Lena Frank's "Two Mountain Songs"

March 4, 2009...In 2005 the Young People's Chorus of New York City and the San Francisco Girls Chorus were selected as the only two U.S. choruses to represent America at the Seventh World Symposium on Choral Music in Kyoto, Japan. Now, these two acclaimed and award-winning choruses are coming together in New York on Monday, April 13 at 7:30 p.m. for a concert at Alice Tully Hall. The highlight of the concert, which showcases each chorus separately, is their joint performance of the world premiere of a work commissioned specifically for them by American Composers Forum: Gabriela Lena Frank's "Two Mountain Songs," based on Peruvian Indian folk songs, a part of her multicultural heritage.

The San Francisco Girls Chorus, celebrating its 30th anniversary this season, makes its New York debut under its conductor Susan McMane in several works, highlighted by the New York premiere of its Augusta Read Thomas commission "Two e.e. cummings Songs," which was premiered by the SFGC in October. The chorus will also sing works by Mendelssohn, Purcell, Rachmaninoff, Henry Mollicone, David McIntyre, and the premiere of an arrangement of Irving Berlin's "Blue Skies," the third movement of a work entitled *Just Imagine*, which the chorus commissioned from Dwight Okamura for its 30th anniversary.

The Young People's Chorus of New York City under its founder and artistic director Francisco J. Núñez will perform three world premieres: Movement No. 5 of Meredith Monk's "Three Heavens and Hells"; Nico Muhly's "I Drink the Air Before Me," commissioned by the Stephen Petronio Company for the YPC; and a choral arrangement by Mr. Núñez of jazz great Toshiko Akiyoshi's solo piano work "Hope," sung in Japanese, with words by Shuntaro Tanigawa, Japan's most famous poet. The YPC will also sing "Kyrie" from Bok's *Missa Brevis*, "Canticle, In Remembrance" by Mr. Núñez; "Warabe Uta" by Ko Matsushita; and the American spiritual, "Music Down in My Soul."

All tickets are \$25 and are available at the Alice Tully Hall box office, by calling CenterCharge at 212-721-6500 or through the Lincoln Center Web site at www.lincolncenter.org

The American Composers Forum is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the promotion and assistance of American composers and their music. Founded in 1973 as the Minnesota Composers Forum, its mission is "to connect composers with communities and to encourage the making, playing, and enjoyment of new music." American Composers Forum is based in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Composers

Identity has always been at the center of Gabriela Lena Frank's music. Born in Berkeley, California to a mother of mixed Peruvian/Chinese ancestry and a father of Lithuanian/Jewish descent, Ms. Frank explores her multicultural heritage through her compositions inspired by the works of Bela Bartók and Alberto Ginastera. As a musical anthropologist, she has traveled extensively throughout South America and her pieces reflect and refract her studies of Latin-American folklore, incorporating poetry, mythology, and native musical styles into a western classical framework that is uniquely her own. She is known for writing challenging idiomatic parts for solo instrumentalists, vocalists, chamber ensembles, and orchestras.

Toshiko Akiyoshi, a Japanese American jazz pianist, composer/arranger and bandleader, was discovered by Oscar Peterson and is among the very few successful female jazz instrumentalists of her generation. She is also recognized as a major figure in jazz composition, her works noted for their distinctive textures and Japanese influences. Ms. Akiyoshi has received 14 Grammy nominations and was the first woman to win the Best Arranger and Composer awards in Down Beat magazine's Readers Poll. Her biography, *Life with Jazz* was published in 1996, and in 2007 she was named an NEA Jazz Master by the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts.

Meredith Monk is a composer, singer, director/choreographer and creator of new opera, music theater works, films and installations. A pioneer in what is now called "extended vocal technique" and "interdisciplinary performance," Monk creates works that thrive at the intersection of music and movement, image and object, light and sound in an effort to discover and weave together new modes of perception. Her groundbreaking exploration of the voice as an instrument, as an eloquent language in and of itself, expands the boundaries of musical composition, creating landscapes of sound that unearth feelings, energies, and memories for which we have no words. During a career that spans more than 40 years, the MacArthur "Genius" Award recipient has been acclaimed by audiences and critics as a major creative force in the performing arts.

A contemporary classical composer and conductor, Nico Muhly was born in Vermont in 1981. After graduating from Columbia University and earning a Masters Degree in Music from Juilliard, he worked on various composing and film scoring projects. His abilities to move from genre to genre led to his working with such well known names in the music world as Philip Glass, Björk, Antony (of Antony & the Johnsons), Bonnie "Prince" Billy, and most recently Stephen Petronio. In 2006, his debut recording *Speaks Volumes* was released followed in 2008 by a collection of his collaborations with other artists titled *Ekvilibrium*.

Augusta Read Thomas's deeply personal music is guided by her particular sense of musical form, rhythm, timbre, and harmony. But given this individuality, her music is affected by history—in Thomas' words, "Old music deserves new music and new music needs old music." For Thomas, this means cherishing her place within the musical tradition and giving credit to those who have forged the musical paths she follows and from which she innovates. Thomas was the Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from May 1997 through June 2006, a residency that encompassed nine world premieres, culminating in the premiere of "Astral Canticle"—one of two finalists for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Music. She currently devotes her time exclusively to composition.