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They Say It's Your Birthday

by Jan Jezioro

A Musical Feast celebrates David Felder's birthday

David Felder, Birge-Cary Chair in music composition at the University at Buffalo, and the director of June in Buffalo, is turning 60, and his good friends, Charles and Irene Haupt, the artistic director and the managing director, respectively, of the flourishing, eclectic, independent classical music series known as A Musical Feast, are celebrating his birthday anniversary with a special concert, consisting entirely of the composer's own music, in the Tower Auditorium of the Burchfield Penny Art Center on Friday, November 7 at 8pm. The event will feature several solo works, including some in newly revised versions, and a preview look at an entirely new commissioned work for mixed ensemble.

Norrbottn NEO, a new music ensemble based in North-Eastern Sweden that has visited UB twice in recent years, commissioned *Three Songs from Three Watches*, the newest work on the program. "It is an independent work," says conductor Daniel Bassin, "that is inextricably linked with David Felder's recent large-scale masterpiece, *Les Quatre Temps Cardinaux*. The poems by Robert Creeley and Dana Gioia, set in that large-scale work, are now set as chamber pieces for solo bass voice, chamber ensemble and electronics. We'll be performing a preliminary version of the work for Norrbotten, which includes two of the three poems for the final version: Creeley's 'Buffalo Evening' and Gioia's 'Insomnia.'"

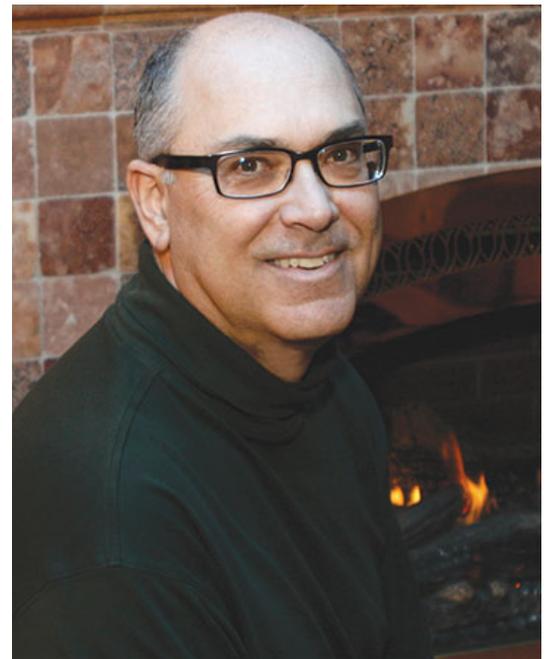
Bass Ethan Herschenfeld, who offered an outstanding interpretation of these texts in the earlier version, returns for this performance.

Bassin says, "The world-class caliber of performers and performances brought in by the Robert and Carol Morris Center for 21st Century Music, in complement with that of UB's outstanding performance faculty, many of whom have recently expanded their roles in our community from outstanding instrumentalists to superb concert promoters—like Eric Huebner, Jon Nelson—and the composers and performers who come to UB each year to study have all been part of the inspiring backdrop for Felder's recent, important output."

Felder composed his multi-media work *Shamayim*—the title refers to the Hebrew word for heavens—between 2006 and 2008 in collaboration with the noted independent American filmmaker Eliot Caplan, best known for his collaborations with John Cage and Merce Cunningham. Structural principles are derived from the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, letters that contain both a numeric value and imply a sense of movement and direction. The computer generated sound throughout draws on the virtuosity of the bass vocalist. Caplan's accompanying video effectively makes use of images from nature, such as a lake, trees and clouds, along with video processed images of hexagons that mirror the abstract nature of the music.

TweenerB is a new, solo version of *Tweener*, a concerto for percussion and orchestra. UB professor of percussion Tom Kolor says, "It uses only the KAT mallet instrument, an electronic instrument configured like a marimba and played with mallets in the normal fashion, from the instrumentation of the original piece. It is run through a computer, allowing me to trigger a whole universe of sounds, and David indeed employs a vast timbral arsenal. I've been a big fan of David's music for many years. He can do just about anything; his structures are really coherent without being predictable, he can bowl you over with hair-raising orchestral textures, but he can also break your heart in lyrical adagios."

"*Boxman* is an extraordinary work originally written for the incomparable trombonist Miles Anderson," says horn player Adam Unsworth, who asked Felder to consider adapting *Boxman* for horn. "I am greatly looking forward to this performance, as one of my goals as a musician is to expand the boundaries of the horn, an instrument largely pigeonholed into a strictly orchestral role. The solo horn part to *Boxman*, which covers the entire range of the horn in rapid fashion and calls upon every color one could imagine, coming out of a brass instrument, is one of the most challenging pieces I have encountered."



David Felder (photo by Irene Haupt)

About *Another Face*, for solo violin, former UB faculty member and virtuoso violinist Movses Pogossian, who recorded the piece, says, "It truly tests the performer to the extreme in a 'take-no-prisoner' style—in a sort of emotional tornado. A hellishly difficult and intensely beautiful solo violin piece."

Luckily, violinist Yuki Numata Resnick, one of the UB Music Department's new faculty members, has already proved that she has the chops to make the most challenging music come to life.

Flutist Emi Ferguson, another new UB faculty member, will perform *November Sky*, a work that utilizes solo flute, doubling piccolo, alto and bass flutes and the soloists' electronically altered sounds. The composer writes, "The title refers obliquely to the psychologically shifting perspectives that accompany seasonal change; particularly the affect surrounding the inexorably failing light as fall gives way to winter."

Tickets are \$20 general admission, \$10 for Burchfield Penney members and students. For more information, visit www.burchfieldpenney.org.

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