



Visiting Composer Recital

Canetti-menagerie: a surreal soirée

A program of works by Joseph Klein,
based on characters in Elias Canetti's *Earwitness*

Anthony Devea, basset horn • Thomas Snyder, alto saxophone • Christopher Scanlon, trumpet
Andrew Glendening, trombone • Anthony Devroye, viola • Christopher Mendez, violoncello
Gregory Beyer, percussion • Stanton Davis, narrator

Thursday, March 9, 2023
7:00 PM
Recital Hall

Program

- Canetti-menagerie* (2015) All works by Joseph Klein (b.1962)
ensemble
- Die Königskünderin* ("The King-proclaimer") (2006)
Christopher Scanlon, trumpet
- Der Tückenfänger* ("The Wile-catcher") (2014)
Anthony Devea, basset horn
- Die Schadhafte* ("The Defective") (2015)
Christopher Mendez, violoncello
- Der Heroszupfer* ("The Hero-tugger") (2019)
Andrew Glendening, trombone
- Die Müde* ("The Tired Woman") (2004)
Thomas Snyder, alto saxophone
- Der Tränenwärmer* ("The Tear-warmer") (2020)
Anthony Devroye, viola
- Die Sternklare* ("The Starry Woman") (2006)
Gregory Beyer, percussion
- Canetti-menagerie* (2015)
ensemble

Text readings by Stanton Davis. All text excerpts from Elias Canetti: *Der Ohrenzeuge: Fünfzig Charaktere* (*Earwitness*; English translation by Joachim Neugroschel), ©1974; and *Masse und Macht* (*Crowds and Power*; English translation by Carol Stewart), ©1960. Text used by permission of Carl Hauser Verlag. Images by Michael Kvium ©1992; 2007. All rights reserved.



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

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Program Notes:

The works on this program are from a series of short solo pieces based upon characters included in *Der Ohrenzeuge: Fünfzig Charaktere* (*Earwitness: Fifty Characters*), a collection of surreal character studies written in 1974 by the Bulgarian-born British-Austrian writer Elias Canetti (1905-1994). Canetti was a versatile writer whose body of work reflects his rich and varied interests in philosophy, psychology, sociology, and literary criticism, taking the form of novels, memoirs, essays, plays, and non-fiction writings. His most well known work is perhaps *Masse und Macht* (*Crowds and Power*, 1960), an idiosyncratic yet penetrating study of group dynamics and power structures within various societal contexts. Canetti was the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1981, "for writings marked by a broad outlook, a wealth of ideas, and artistic power." The ironic paradigms of human behavior contained within Canetti's *Der Ohrenzeuge* have occupied my interest for over two decades now, and have served as the catalyst for a collection of instrumental reinterpretations: to date, twenty-one of these studies have been completed, composed for contrabass (1997), violin (1997), contrabassoon (1998), ocarina (2000), glass harmonica (2000), bass flute (2001), alto saxophone (2004), trumpet (2006), percussion (2006), guitar (2008), bass saxophone (2008), piccolo (2013), basset horn (2014), organ (2014), violoncello (2015), piano (2017), cimbalom (2018), tromboine (2019), viola (2020), harpsichord (2022), and carillon (2022).

Die Königskünderin ("The King-proclaimer") was completed in April of 2006 for trumpeter John Holt, who first performed the work at the University of North Texas on 17 October 2006. It is included on the album *Facets 3: New American Music for Trumpet* (Crystal CD-768, 2009). In Canetti's depiction of this character, "The King-proclaimer has something majestic about her.... She is tall and stately and her supply of scorn is inexhaustible. She can tell underlings by the least gesture and keeps them away from the king before he is even proclaimed."

Der Tückenfänger ("The Wile-catcher") was completed in December 2014 and composed for clarinetist Kimberly Cole Luevano, who premiered the work at the University of North Texas on 19 September 2016. In Canetti's depiction of this character, "the Wile-catcher looks around corners and will not be deceived. He knows what is hidden behind innocent masks, he knows, as if lightning has struck him, what someone wants from him; and before the mask falls of its own accord, he makes a quick decision and tears it off."

Die Schadhafte ("The Defective") was completed in September of 2015 and composed for 'cellist Madeleine Shapiro, who premiered the work at the University of North Texas on 19 September 2016. In Canetti's depiction of this character, "The Defective keeps examining herself, on and on, and always comes across new defects. She nitpicks on her skin, locks herself up with it, and never tackles more than a tiny area at one time.... if she were done with her entire skin, she would be bound to collapse under the weight of her knowledge, she is kept upright by the realization that there is so much still to do."

Der Heroszupfer (The Hero-tugger) was composed in July of 2019 for trombonist Andrew Glendening, who first performed the work on 23 January 2020 at Northern Illinois University). In Canetti's depiction of this character, "the hero-tugger potters around monuments and tugs on the trousers of heroes.... [He] jumps out, heaves himself skillfully onto the pedestal, and stands next to the hero.... He senses the greatness passing over to him and he shudders. But if he works hard... the day will come, the radiant day, when he will heave himself up in a powerful surge and, in front of the whole world, he will scornfully spit on the hero's head."

Die Müde ("The Tired Woman") was composed in September 2004 for saxophonist Eric Nestler, who first performed the work at the University of North Texas on 19 October 2004. In Canetti's depiction of this character, The Tired Woman "is no longer young, she is not all that old either, but old enough to sigh over too much work"; but when angered, "she flares up and starts yelping and screeching away in her language, and keeps yelping and yelping tirelessly... All her sentences end shrilly on a very high note... When she finally collapses on her seat, she peers around, her eyes begging for pity, and whimpers: "Tired."



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Der Tränenwärmer (The Tear-warmer) was composed in May 2020 for violist Michael Capone, who first performed the work on 20 February 2023 at the University of North Texas. In Canetti's depiction of this character, "the tear-warmer goes to movies every day.... all that counts is that they fulfill their purpose and elicit tears galore from him.... there were times when he was dependent on his own misfortune.... He tried any number of things, he even tried joys... [though] tears of joy do not go very far.... Nor do fury and anger prove to be any more productive. There is only one cause to be counted on: losses, whereby the irrevocable kind are preferable to all the rest, especially when happening to people who do not deserve them."

Die Sternklare ("The Starry Woman") was completed in June of 2006 for percussionist Christopher Deane, who premiered the work at the University of North Texas on 20 February 2007. It is included on the album *Improbable Encounters* (innova 873, 2014) In Canetti's depiction of this character, The Starry Woman "shuns the crude light of the sun. [She] sighs in relief when the sun is gone and she wishes it would never come again... Her skin is as pure as the light of the sun. But she does not realize this in herself. Her only mirror is the illuminated night, and this mirror consists of so many dots that it has no unity."

Composed in March 2015, *Canetti-menagerie* is a semi-improvisational, open-form work for five to eight performers, based on the composer's collection of solo character studies after Elias Canetti. In this work, the performers improvise in various duo, trio, and quintet combinations, developing musical fragments from these solo studies, which are used as raw material for a variety of musical conversations—not unlike the interaction of distinct personalities at a social gathering. *Canetti-menagerie* was first performed at the University of North Texas on 19 September 2016.

Born in Los Angeles in 1962, **Joseph Klein** is a composer of solo, chamber, and large ensemble works, including instrumental, vocal, electroacoustic, and intermedia compositions. His music—which has been described as “a dizzying euphoria... like a sonic tickling with counterpoint gone awry” (*NewMusicBox*) and exhibiting a “confident polyvalence [that] heightens its very real excitement” (*The Wire*)—reflects an ongoing interest in processes drawn from such sources as fractal geometry, chaos, and systems theory, often inspired by natural phenomena. His works frequently incorporate theatrical elements, whether as a component of the extra-musical references or as an organic outgrowth of the musical narrative itself. Literature is another important influence on his work, with recent compositions based on the writings of Franz Kafka, Elias Canetti, Alice Fulton, W.S. Merwin, Milan Kundera, and John Ashbery.

Klein's compositions have been performed and broadcast internationally and his work has been recognized by such organizations as the National Endowment for the Arts, American Music Center, Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, Gaudeamus Foundation, International Society for Contemporary Music, International Confederation of Electroacoustic Music, Society of Composers, Inc., Society for Electroacoustic Music in the United States, American Composers Forum/Jerome Foundation, Meet the Composer, National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, and ASCAP. Commissions, recordings, and other collaborations with new music specialists in the US and abroad include the International Contemporary Ensemble, the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, Orchestra 2001, Voices of Change, the Texas New Music Ensemble, TrioPolis, Amorsima Trio, saxophonist Andreas van Zoelen (Raschèr Saxophone Quartet), flutist Helen Bledsoe (Ensemble Musikfabrik), contrabassoonist James Rodgers (Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra), bassist Michael Hartt (Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra), glass harmonica player Thomas Bloch, and vocalists Joan LaBarbara and Dora Ohrenstein (Philip Glass Ensemble). He has been a featured guest composer at academic institutions, conferences, and music festivals throughout the Americas, Europe, and Asia. His recorded works are available on the Innova, Centaur, Crystal, and PARMA labels.

Klein holds degrees in composition from Indiana University, University of California, San Diego, and California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, where he studied composition with Harvey Sollberger, Claude Baker, Robert Erickson, and Roger Reynolds. He is currently Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of North Texas College of Music, serving as Chair of Composition Studies since 1999.