

Music From Almost Yesterday

Yehuda Yannay, director

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Department of Music

arts.uwm.edu/music

Transylvanian Connections

with

The Unison Piano Duo

Xiao Hu & Du Huang

Ana Ruth Bermudez, cello

William Helmers, clarinet

Joseph Ketchum, violin

Jayne Latva, piano

Josh Schmidt, piano

Tim Splain, toy piano and melodica

Thursday, October 11, 2007

7:30 pm

Peck School of the Arts
Recital Hall
2400 East Kenwood Blvd.

Program Notes

The connections in "Transylvanian Connections" are represented by the origins of three composers in this program, who share a common birthplace located in the western part of Romania. They all came from Hungarian speaking Jewish families and spent their adult professional lives as immigrants in other countries. **Alexander Uriyah Boskovich** moved to Palestine in 1938, and became one of the founding fathers of Israeli art music. Quickly realizing the need to create a new musical language that integrates Middle Eastern music with modern composition, he dedicated his compositional career to create works that expressed this idea.

Alexander Uriyah Boskovich (1907-1964)



Short Circuit is short, fast, frenetic and technically challenging. After hearing Xiao and Du perform, I knew that was the kind of music I wanted to write for them. The piece that first came to mind was Prokofiev's Seventh Piano Sonata. *Short circuit* (2005) is a nod to the perpetual motion movement from that work.

György Kurtág, now in his eighties, spent most of his working life in Budapest as a teacher of chamber music at the music academy in Budapest. His international reputation as a composer has grown tremendously in the last decade. The selection of piano pieces performed today is part of a collection of eight volumes of short, didactic piano pieces intended to introduce young musicians to contemporary music.

Semitic Suite, which started as a series of piano pieces and also has an orchestral version, is a landmark in Israeli music. Yehuda Yannay, who discovered his own fascination with modern music in the 1950s, was looking for a composition teacher in Tel-Aviv. After hearing a two-piano performance of the Suite, he approached Boskovich for composition lessons. Boskovich became his most influential teacher and mentor.

Psalm for a melody instrument and piano is based on the manuscript of an unfinished work by Alexander U. Boskovich from 1962. The manuscript ends after measure 66. After analyzing the manuscript, Yannay decided to continue the musical narrative in its original style and round it out into an integrated form. The score from measure 67 to the end is his contribution.

The time span and geographical distance from the original are by now overwhelming: forty-four years and two continents apart. This concert is a small contribution to his centennial, which was celebrated in Israel by a number of events and concerts.

Songs of a bad seed for solo toy piano and melodica (2005-2007) is a suite of pieces originating from sketches of an unproduced score for Maxwell Anderson's play *The Bad Seed*. In adapting this music into a stand-alone performance suite (in the tradition of Cage's *Suite For Toy Piano*), much energy was invested in attempting to push both the technical and sonic limitations of the instrument to certain extremes in hope of creating a varied concert experience. Thus, each movement assumes a contrasting aesthetic that culminates as a theatrical whole.

End was commissioned by the First Unitarian Society in Madison, Wisconsin as a memorial for pianist Ellsworth Snyder, who was musical director at the Unitarian for many years and died in 2005. Ellsworth was an extraordinary pianist and teacher, a tireless champion of contemporary music and a close friend. We collaborated many times on musical and non-musical projects.

