

Whispers, Hymns and a Murmur

Music for String Quartet

Wayne Horvitz / Koehne Quartet

Released on Tzadik in February 2006, *Whispers, Hymns and a Murmur* debuts Horvitz' first composition for string quartet and improviser combined with his 1989/2001 composition *Mountain Language*. The disc features the "contagiously contemporary" Koehne Quartet, led by Joanna Lewis, as well as guest soloist Eyvind Kang on viola, and electronic processing from Horvitz.

"... another one, filled with space and light, though refracted in ways that only composer Wayne Horvitz could accomplish. His angular chords require a dedicated ear ... but the payoff is tremendous. "

- Ned Wharton, Weekend Edition

The composer

Wayne Horvitz is a composer, pianist and electronic musician who has performed extensively throughout Europe, Asia, Australia, and North America. He is the leader of Gravitus Quartet, Sweeter Than the Day, Zony Mash, Pigpen, The Four plus One Ensemble, and cofounder of the New York Composers Orchestra. He has performed and collaborated with Bill Frisell, Butch Morris, John Zorn, Robin Holcomb, Fred Frith, Julian Priester, Philip Wilson, Michael Shrieve and Carla Bley among others. He has been commissioned by the NEA, Meet The Composer, Kronos String Quartet, Seattle Chamber Players, Mary Flagler, BAM, Earshot Jazz and others. Collaborations with choreographers include work with Paul Taylor with the White Oak Dance Project, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, and Crispin Spaeth. Film work includes music and sound design for 3 PBS specials and Gus Van Sant's *Psycho*. He is the 2001 recipient of the Artist Trust Fellowship (Seattle), the 2002 recipient of the Rockefeller Foundation MAP Grant, and the 2005 recipient of grants from 4Culture and the Mayor's Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs (Seattle).

The ensemble

Joanna Lewis - violin / Anne Harvey-Nagl - violin / Petra Ackermann - viola / Melissa Coleman - cello

The Koehne Quartet, founded in 1987 by Joanna Lewis, counts as one of today's outstanding interpreters of contemporary music in continental Europe. The quartet's expansive list of repertoire ranges from classical quartet repertoire through to the 21st century. Since its formation, the quartet has encouraged and enjoyed building an intense working relationship with the composers whose compositions they perform, aiming for authentic and original interpretations. What began with the string quartets of Graeme Koehne – one of Australia's most renowned, diverse and versatile composers – consequently lead to Austrian Contemporaries such as Friedrich Cerha, Kurt Schwertsik, Francis Burt, Thomas Pernes, Gerd Kühr, Thomas Larcher and Wolfgang Liebhart. The quartet's method of working, breaking new ground together with the composers, was also strongly influenced by attending master classes with Günter Pichler (Alban Berg Quartet), the Amadeus and the Brodsky Quartet, with Hatto Beyerle and György Kurtág. The Koehne Quartet also works regularly with international jazz musicians such as Dave Liebman, Wayne Horvitz and Peter Herbert. The quartet performs regularly in cultural centers and travels to international festivals in Europe, Australia and South Africa.

The compositions

Mountain Language (I) was composed in 1989 for the premiere of Harold Pinter's play of the same name, directed by Carey Perloff, at the CFSC theater in NYC. The piece was twenty minutes in length and played as a loop starting before the show, throughout both acts and the intermission. In 1999, Horvitz was commissioned to revise and expand *Mountain Language*. *MLI* was reworked as a standalone piece (without theater) with three more sections. This recording consists of *MLI*, *MLIII*, and *MLIV*. These sections are not "movements" as such, in that they can be played in any order or individually.

Whispers, Hymns and a Murmur was commissioned in 2003 and is part of a series for chamber ensemble and improviser. Eyvind Kang is the soloist in this realization. Much of the material was written in development for Horvitz' oratorio, *Joe Hill 16 Actions for Chamber Orchestra, Voice and Soloist*. The approach, however, is significantly different in that all the movements, with two exceptions, have electronic manipulations as part of the structure for the soloist. *Whispers, Hymns, and a Murmur* is Horvitz' first composition for string quartet and improviser. His second composition in this series, *These Hills of Glory*, was written in 2005 with performances by the odeonquartet in 2006 with featured soloists Peggy Lee, Ron Miles, and Bill Frisell.