

# The Yasser Collection

Programme notes to the CD

**Anne La Berge's** career as flutist/improviser/composer stretches across international and stylistic boundaries. Her performances bring together a ferocious and far-reaching virtuosity, a penchant for improvising delicately spun microtonal textures and melodies, and her wholly unique array of powerfully percussive flute effects, all combined with electronic processing. Many of her compositions involve her own participation, though she has produced works intended solely for other performers, usually involving guided improvisation and text. Following her studies in the US, she moved to Amsterdam in 1989, where she has lived ever since. In 1999, she co-founded Kraakgeluiden, a improvisation series based in Amsterdam, exploring combinations of acoustic instruments, electronic instruments and computers, and using real-time interactive performance systems. Many of the musical collaborations that have resulted have taken on a life beyond the Kraakgeluiden series, which ceased in 2006. La Berge's own music has evolved in parallel, and the flute has become only one element in a sound world that includes computer samples, the use of spoken text and electronic processing. Her music is published by Frog Peak Music (US) and by Donemus (NL). She is the co-director, with her husband David Dramm, of the VOLSAP Foundation that supports composed and improvised music in Amsterdam.

Away was commissioned in 2008 by Stephen Altoft and is a bit of a nostalgic work for me in that it is directly related to the years I spent at UCSD with flutist John Fonville working out a performance practice for microtonal tuning systems for the flute. The Max/MSP patch plays somewhat brass-like synthesized tones created on the Clavia Nord Modular in a controlled random environment. The performer is given free reign to improvise as he chooses within the 19-tone tempered tuning. This also includes the duration of the work. Away was composed during a period when I was confronted by more than one experiences of separation, including the death of two colleagues and emigration of someone very close to me.

## away

In my head is a room designed by you.  
Fierce love is the floor.  
The room is not empty.  
But you are away  
breaking trail on a beeline forward.

In my heart is a room designed by you.  
Memory is the ceiling.  
Daydreams steer the enduring walls.  
I trust that the room won't ever go missing.  
Goodbye deeply never happens.

**Alexander Grebtschenko** was born in Varna/Bulgaria in 1975. He studied composition with Cornelius Schwehr and electronic music with Mesias Maiguashca at the Musikhochschule Freiburg. From 2004-2012 he was Director of the newly formed Studios for Electronic and Electroacoustic music at the Music School in Constance, Germany and also teaches at the Studio für Elektronische Musik und Akustik der Musikhochschule Freiburg. He has received numerous scholarships (Stipendien u.a. Landesgraduiertenförderung im Fach Akustik, Stipendium des Bundespräsidenten, Stipendium im Rahmen der Donaueschinger Musiktage), radio broadcasts ( DeutschlandRadio Berlin, SWR, RDL, WDR) as well as performances in Europe, Canada, USA and China. He has been commissioned by ensemble recherche, duo Contour, Duo Fluktuation, Ensemble Alarm and ensemble chronophonie.

**John Lely** was born in 1976 and is based in London. He studied at Goldsmiths with Roger Redgate, Dave Smith and John Tilbury, and privately with Michael Parsons. In 2007 he was a resident student at Ostrava New Music Days. His compositions have been featured internationally at festivals such as MaerzMusik (Berlin), Ultima (Oslo), and the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. Broadcasts have included BBC 4 Television, BBC Radio 3, DeutschlandRadio and Resonance FM. He frequently collaborates with various musicians and groups, including Apartment House, Angharad Davies, Rhodri Davies, edges, Pedro Gomez-Egaña, Seth Kim-Cohen, Sebastian Lexer, Ross Parfitt, Michael Parsons, the Post Quartet, Michael Pisaro, Taylan Susam, Philip Thomas, Manfred Werder, John White and Seymour Wright. He has curated and performed in concerts of music by such composers as Antoine Beuger, Cornelius Cardew, Philip Corner, Laurence Crane, Jürg Frey, Michael Pisaro, Tom Johnson, Alvin Lucier, Chris Newman and Christian Wolff. Alongside composers Tim Parkinson and Markus Trunk, he curates the annual Music We'd Like to Hear concert series, described by Tempo magazine as 'an oasis of thoughtful and idealistic music-making' (Tempo, October 2006). From 2003 to 2008 he taught composition and creative strategies at Goldsmiths, and experimental sound at Chelsea College of Arts, and from 2008 to 2010 was a researcher at Bath Spa University. He is co-author, with James Saunders, of Word Events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation (Continuum 2012, in preparation).

**Corona** was written for Stephen Altoft in the winter of 2004-5, after seeing and hearing him perform on his 19-division trumpet at St. Cyprians in London.

**Roger Redgate** was born in Bolton, Lancashire. He graduated at the Royal College of Music, where he won prizes for composition, violin performance, harmony and counterpoint, studying composition with Edwin Roxburgh and electronic music with Lawrence Casserley. A DAAD scholarship enabled him to study with Brian Ferneyhough and Klaus Huber in Freiburg. From 1989 to 1992 he was Northern Arts Composer Fellow, he has lectured at Durham and Newcastle Universities. He was invited as guest composer and conductor at the Darmstädter Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992 and 1994 where he received the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis for composition. He is conductor and artistic director of Ensemble Exposé, with whom he performs regularly at European festivals and on BBC Radio 3, and has recently released a CD works by Brian Ferneyhough. He has worked in the fields of jazz, improvised music, performance art, film and television (including programmes for the BBC and Channel 4). His compositions have been performed extensively throughout Europe, Australia and the USA and he has received commissions from the BBC, the French Ministry of Culture, the Darmstädter Ferienkurse für Neue Musik,

the Venice Biennale and Ensemble 21 New York. He has published articles on music and culture, the music of Brian Ferneyhough and Michael Finnissy, including a chapter in the book *Uncommon Ground: The Music of Michael Finnissy*. He has given lectures at UC Berkeley and Stanford University and is currently Head of Composition at Goldsmiths College University of London. CD recordings of his works are available on the NMC, Edition Zeitklang, Oboe Classics and Coviello Contemporary labels. His compositions are published by Editions Henry Lemoine, Paris, United Music Publishers, London and the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music.

**Nadja Gabriela Plein (CH)** completed an MA at York University in 2004 and was awarded a distinction. Later she gained a DMus in composition at the Royal College of Music, London. At York she studied with Nicola LeFanu and Thoma Simaku and at Durham University with Paul Archbold. Nadja has taken part in master classes with Brian Ferneyhough and Peter Maxwell Davies and the Aldeburgh Opera Writing Workshop with Giorgio Battistelli and Ian Burton. Nadja attended the 2007 Royaumont Voix Nouvelles composition course, where she studied with Brian Ferneyhough, Thierry Blondeau and Daniel D'Adamo. Nadja won the prestigious Mendelssohn Scholarship in 2006. Recent performers of Nadja's work include members of the Philharmonia Orchestra, Cairn Ensemble, Okeanos, Gemini, Kosmos Rarescale, Juice Trio, RCM New Perspectives, Gordan Nikolitch and conductor Edwin Roxburgh. Her music has been featured in the Music of Today Series at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the ICA, the Spitalfields Festival and the BMC Cutting Edge series, and has been broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

**Donald Busted** is a composer and film maker based in London. His output is diverse, having worked in the areas of chamber and orchestral music; electronic music, installation and sound art. Since the early 1990s he has been involved in several projects with performers in which pieces and pedagogical materials have been developed for microtonal performance (the most recent manifestation of this work is a manual for microtonal trumpet playing, in collaboration with Stephen Alft). He is Artistic Director of the mixed media performance series Wild Dog and of UK MicroFest.

**Yasser describes his Polemic (and adds some footnotes)** Yasser's book *A Theory of Evolving Tonality* (1932) made a great impression on me when I started researching microtonality in the early 1990s. It's not so much the conclusions he came to, but more an appreciation of his journey which I found inspiring and insightful. My short piece 'evolves' using conventional melodic techniques but also punctuates the melody with figures which outline harmonies.

**Chris Bryan** grew up in the USA playing 'cello, guitar, and writing songs before studying composition at West Chester University, Pennsylvania. It was there that he discovered both microtonality and electronic music, and it was to further both of these interests that he came to the UK in 2005 to pursue a master's degree at the University of York. Since that time he has been engaged as a solo performer, installed multimedia installations, and composed new works for ensembles in York, Leeds, and Texas.

**Dialogue** Dividing the octave into 19 tones presents some exciting and unfamiliar intervals, as well as subtly nuanced versions of familiar ones. With his trumpet, Stephen Alft effectively realised the potential of this tuning in acoustic performance. In this 'dialogue', the computer makes the sound of these intervals even more striking by sampling and re-

presenting the acoustic material as vertical sonorities. The contrast between the acoustic and electronic elements of the piece is mirrored in the composition itself, which juxtaposes stable harmonic sonorities and smooth melodic lines with unpredictable, chaotic dissonances. It is this tension, which moves the piece forward through its various sonic terrains as the performer and computer explore different aspects of this unusual relationship.

**Cornelius Schwehr** was born in 1953 in Freiburg/Breisgau. He studied Composition, with K. Huber, and music theory and guitar at the Musikhochschule Freiburg. Later, he studied composition with Helmut Lachenmann at Musikhochschule Stuttgart. From 1981-95 he held a teaching position in music theory and composition at Musikhochschulen Freiburg, Karlsruhe and Winterthur. In 1995 he was appointed Professor of Composition, Music Theory and Filmmusik at Musikhochschule Freiburg. Since 2009 he has been Director of the "Institut für Neue Musik" Musikhochschule Freiburg. His opus includes chamber works, solos, some orchestral pieces, an opera, and many stage, film and radio pieces.

**Le bonheur** is a reference to the film of the same name by Alexander Medvedkins. It is a two-minute study, a melody which has lost its harmony. It is dedicated to Stephen Alft.

**Christopher Bailey** was born outside of Philadelphia, PA and turned to music composition in his late 'teens, and to electroacoustic composition during his studies at the Eastman School of Music, and later at Columbia University. He was a 2nd-Prize recipient in the Seoul 2005 International Composers Competition in Korea. His work *Walking Down the Hillside* at Cortona, and *Seeing it's Towers Rise Before Me* won a mention in the 2009 Salvatore Martirano Competition at the University of Illinois; *Balladei* was a finalist at the Earplay competition in 2007; *Sand* won a mention at Denmark's 2007 Infinite Composing interactive computer-music competition. His new CD *Immolation Ritual* (out on the Innova label) features works for piano, violin, saxophone, electronics, and the notorious Mergurs Ehd Ffleweh Bq Nsolst, ostensibly a field recording of denizens of the planet Mercury. He currently resides in Boston MA.

**Can't Sleep** (2008) (with electronics) is vaguely reminiscent of Alban Berg in its rhetoric and a/tonal-ness, wending its way through a serious of moods and masks.

**Eleonora M. Ravasi** studied composition and electronic music at the Conservatorio in Milano and at the Musikhochschule in Freiburg (Germany). She attended several Masterclasses (Chigiana Academy, Stockhausen Foundation, Ferienkurse in Darmstadt). Currently, she works with synthesizer, electronic keyboards and in the field of sonic art.

**Micros** is articulated in different sections: these sections arise from 'developing variations' that are made of one or two notes or more, and making a continuous variation from them. These techniques create developing units of pitch. The idea is also to concentrate on a few pitches to make clear the use of 19-div intervals and to make the listener more conscious of this tuning system. This piece was commissioned by Stephen Alft in 2007.

**Michael Parsons** has been active as a composer and performer of experimental music since the 1960s. In 1969 he was co-founder with Cornelius Cardew and Howard Skempton of the Scratch Orchestra. In the 1970s he was also associated with the Systems group of visual artists, and many of his pieces are based on using strict permutational procedures with a limited range of pitches.

**Melody in 19-division tuning** was written for Stephen Altoft in July 2004. The melody covers a span of one and a half octaves, divided into 28 equal steps, each slightly less than a third of a tone. It is based on a cyclic permutation of a set of 5 pitches, which is transposed to different degrees of the 19-note scale, in such a way as to focus attention on fine details and subtle differences in tuning. The pause following each note or phrase of the melody is always the same length as the previous note or phrase.

**Jürg Frey** was born in 1953 in Aarau. Following his musical education, which finished with the examen de virtuosité in the class of Thomas Friedli at the Conservatoire de Musique de Genève, he turned to a career as a clarinetist, but his activities as composer soon came to the foreground. He developed his own language as a composer and sound artist with the creation of wide, quiet sound spaces. His work is marked by an elementary non-extravagance of sound, a sensibility for the qualities of the material, and precision of compositional approach. Sometimes his compositions bypass instrumentation and duration altogether and touch on aspects of sound art. He has worked with compositional series, as well as with language and text. Some of these activities appear in small editions or as artist's books as individual items and small editions: *Edition Howeg*, Zurich; *weiss kunstbewegung*, Berlin; *complice*, Berlin. His music and recordings are published by *Edition Wandelweiser*. He has been invited to workshops as visiting composer and for composer portraits at the Universität der Künste Berlin, the Universität Dortmund and several times at Northwestern University and CalArts. Some of the other places his work has developed are the concerts at the Kunstraum Düsseldorf, the *Wandelweiser-in-Residence-Veranstaltungen* in Vienna, the *Ny* music concerts in Borås (Sweden), the cooperation with Cologne pianist John McAlpine, the *Bozzini Quartet* (Montréal), *OO-2* (Bruxelles), *Die Maulwerker*, incidental music, as well as the regular stays in Berlin (where during the last years many of his compositions were premiered). Jürg Frey is a member of the *Wandelweiser Komponisten Ensemble* which has presented concerts for more than 15 years in Europe, North America and Japan. Frey lives with his family in Aarau (Switzerland), teaches clarinet, and organises the concert series *moments musicaux aarau* as a forum for contemporary music.

**Un champ de tendresse parsemé d'adieux (3)** The title of the piece refers to a text by Edmond Jabès and is a quote from his book *Le Livre de l'Hospitalité* (The Book of Hospitality). Jabès speaks about various forms of hospitality, about the stranger and strangeness. The last part in the book is about farewells, and opens a wide range of questions about the transparency of saying goodbye.

**Eleonora M. Ravasi** studied composition and electronic music at the Conservatorio in Milano and at the Musikhochschule in Freiburg (Germany). She attended several Master-classes (Chigiana Academy, Stockhausen Foundation, Ferienkurse in Darmstadt). Currently, she works with synthesizer, electronic keyboards and in the field of sonic art.

**Versuch eines heroischen Trompeters** (Essay of a heroic Trumpeter) takes its title ironically from Johann Ernst Altenburg's Essay on an introduction to the heroic and musical trumpeters and kettledrummers art of 1795. The book then describes the usual instruments and performance practice of that time. The interesting aspect of instrumentation is in the use of the microtonal trumpet and the double meaning of the German word *Versuch* as an essay on the one hand and as experiment on the other.

**Michael H Dixon** was born in New Zealand in 1961. Michael has held full-time positions with a number of Australian orchestras including that of Principal Horn in the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra and Associate Principal with the Queensland Orchestra (now QSO). Michael now freelances mostly in Sydney and in the recent past has been guest principal for the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, the Canberra Symphony Orchestra and the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, the latter on natural horn. Teaching is an important part of his work and he has developed a tutor book, *Tuning the Horn: Beginnings* for his students in Sydney and Wollongong. Composition is also a significant part of his musical life having written much ensemble music along with songs, percussion works and orchestral pieces. A considerable number of his compositions include intervals from the harmonic series, extended just intonation. His music is published by Wirripang Pty Ltd ([www.australiancomposers.com.au](http://www.australiancomposers.com.au)) and he has recently completed his thesis for the degree of Doctor of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong, researching and composing just intonation music for brass.

**A Hundred Valleys** was inspired by chapter LXVI in the Tao Te King the music presents each 'valley' as a low note. 330 higher notes in total approach the 'valleys,' this number chosen as a way of integrating the text and music. In all sentence one has 70 alphabetic letters, sentence two has 60. 330 equals twice 60 plus 3 times 70. The music follows the text pattern to a large extent in Section 1 and in the first line of Section 3, though is more like a reflection of words in Section 2. Line one of Section 1 relates directly to "The Rivers and the Seas; the Seas and the Rivers." The full text:

The Rivers and the Seas (because they seek a lowly place)  
are Lords of a hundred valleys.  
Let your love flow, seek a lowly place,  
you will be Lord of a hundred valleys.

All the pitches are in just intonation and are close to the natural harmonics arising out of each tube length of the 19-tone trumpet.

**Óscar Garrido de la Rosa** was born in Moreda de Aller in Spain. He studied composition with M. Spahlinger and bassoon with K.-O. Hartmann at the Musikhochschule Freiburg in Germany. He has performed with various groups throughout Europe including *Ensemble SurPlus*, *Basel Sinfonietta*, *Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias* and the *Nationaal Jeugd Orkest Holland* and was member of the *Spanish National Youth Orchestra (JONDE)*. Óscar has received scholarships from the *Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung* and other public institutions. In 2002 he was awarded scholarship prize of the *Darmstadt International Summer Course for New Music*. He is a founding member of ensemble *chronophonie*. His compositions have been performed by ensemble *chronophonie*, ensemble *recherche*, the *Tirol New Music Ensemble* and the *Ensemble of the Institute for New Music Freiburg*, among others.

**tom reads useless magazines privately every tuesday** As a western musician educated in the tradition of well (or worst) tempered music, I am a bit sceptical as to whether one may be able to hear microtonal music as such, and not as out of tune tempered music. For this reason I try to use microintervals in a way that one may become aware of the fact that we always hear by comparing what we are currently hearing with what we have heard



before (the same way we see, think, love or hate). Therefore, for this piece I have selected a number of pitch structures with common notes, through which “modulations” take place.

**Stuart Paul Duncan** was born in Dover, England in 1983. He received his doctorate in Composition from Cornell University where he completed his dissertation entitled “The Concept of New Complexity: Notation, Interpretation and Analysis.” This research has led to publications in Perspectives of New Music and Search: Journal of New Music and Culture. Prior to his doctorate, Duncan completed a Master’s degree in composition with Roger Redgate at Goldsmiths College and his Bachelors under the guidance of Dr. Roderick Watkins at Canterbury Christ Church University. Duncan’s compositions have been performed across the US, UK and Continental Europe. Major performances include Spiral Density Waves for solo Saxophone, performed in 2007 at the North American Saxophone Alliance, in 2008 the Johnson Art Museum commissioned and hosted a non-staged performance of his Chamber Opera Abyssinia, and noted Swedish duo Mats and Johannes Möller regularly perform his works for flute and guitar across Europe. Currently Duncan is pursuing a further doctorate in Music Theory at Yale University.

**501.567nm** As an amateur Astronomer I would often spend hours gazing at distant stars, which can be parsed into their constituent elements via a spectrometer. This spectroscopic analysis reveals differing wavelengths, representing various elements in the star’s compositional make-up. 501.567nm (nanometers) is the spectral wavelength for Helium. Such a wavelength presents only a single part of the star’s composition; likewise, this piece suggests only a strand of something much larger, as though we’re only focusing intently on a particular view or strand of thought. 501.567nm stands as a single element among a multi-stranded Yasser collection that exemplifies the ‘spectroscopic analysis’ Stephen Altoft’s 19-division trumpet employs on the acoustic domain.

**Peter Ivan Edwards** was born in New York in 1973. His work has been performed throughout the world by numerous ensembles, including the Mutare Ensemble, Ensemble SurPlus, Ensemble Chronophonie, Ensemble Ascolta, the Noise Ensemble, and the La Jolla Symphony. He has been an invited participant at both the Darmstadt Ferienkurse für neue Musik in 2002 and the June in Buffalo Festival in 2005. His works have been performed at major international festivals including the Darmstadt Ferienkurse für neue Musik, the MATA Festival, Donaueschinger Musiktage, and Wien Modern. In addition to a DAAD Grant in 2001, Edwards has also been awarded three ASCAP Standard Awards, 3rd Prize in the Deutscher Studienpreis 2002, and was a winner of the Klangraum-Raumklang competition that was part of the 2002 Internationale Ferienkurse für neue Musik in Darmstadt, Germany. Edwards studied composition at Northwestern University; the University of California, San Diego; and the Folkwang Hochschule Essen. His principal composition instructors are Chaya Czernowin and Nicolaus A. Huber. Currently, Edwards is an Assistant Professor at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music in Singapore, where he teaches music composition and music theory. His recent debut CD Object Lessons is available on Albany Records.

**Knapp** The 19-div trumpet offers smaller intervals and a set of pitches that are near those one is more accustomed to in music. In this regards, the sense of “nearly” or “just about” reoccurred to me when listening to this tuning. The German word *knapp* encompasses this sense. My work fashions a short dramatic course by threading a series of associations that start and end with the word *knapp*: the word “nearly” leads to “bordering on” which leads to “edges”. These

simple English words or phrases develop toward very remote ideas like bonus and premium. For its part, the music reinforces the text through characterization and reference.

**Neil Haverstick** (Stickman) has been playing guitar since 1965, and has been playing/composing in microtonal tunings since 1989. His 10 CD’s feature music in 19, 34, and 36 tone equal temperaments, as well as fretless guitars, Oud, and fretless banjo. In 1992, he won Guitar Player magazine’s Ultimate Guitar Competition (Experimental Category) for “Spider Chimes,” a 19 tone piece; and in 1999 he also won a Composition Fellowship from the Colorado Council on the Arts for his “Acoustic Stick” CD, featuring music for 19 and 34 tone guitars. His 19 tone piece “Mysteries” is published by Editions Christine Paquelet in Paris, and he has written two music theory books, as well as a series of articles for Guitar Player. His blues CD, “Way Down by the Mississippi” received a 3 & 1/2 star review in Downbeat, and Guitar Player said: “Bold and daring, Haverstick ventures into distant aural galaxies.”

### **Miniature Spider**

I have a series of pieces based on the “Spider” theme...for solo guitar (electric and acoustic), jazz trio, and with chamber orchestra. The piece is based off of a 19 tone serial row, and will doubtless have more incarnations in the future. It reflects my longtime fascination with spiders. Donald and Stephen made this CD version with the 19-division trumpet from the manuscript I provided them with.

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