



HOPKINS CENTER
FOR THE ARTS

presents

New Hampshire Debut/World Premiere/Hop Co-Commission

Roomful of Teeth with Tigran Hamasyan, piano

Post-performance discussion with the artists

Funded in part by the Expeditions program of the New England Foundation for the Arts, made possible with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional support from the six New England state arts agencies; the National Endowment for the Arts ARTWORKS; the William B. Hart Memorial Fund; and a gift of Marilyn and Allan H. Glick '60, T'61, P'88, GP'19.

Spaulding Auditorium's Hamburg Steinway concert grand piano was purchased with generous gifts from Members of the Hopkins Center and Members of the Hood Museum of Art; the class of 1942, in memory of Allan Dingwall '42; and anonymous donors. Its New York Steinway concert grand piano was restored with a generous gift by Huntley Allison '42 P'74.

Tue • January 9, 2018 • 7 pm
Spaulding Auditorium • Dartmouth College

Program

Partita for 8 Voices (2009-2011)

- I. Allemande
- II. Sarabande
- III. Courante
- IV. Passacaglia

Caroline Shaw (b. 1982)

Intermission

a promise in the stillness (2016)

Ambrose Akinmusire (b. 1982)

Superstition (2017)

Richard Beaudoin (b. 1975)

Ser Aravote (2018)

Tigran Hamasyan (b. 1987)

Quizassa (2011)

with Dartmouth College Glee Club

Merrill Garbus (b. 1979)

*Ser Aravote was co-commissioned by the Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College and Carnegie Hall.
The world premiere is being given by Roomful of Teeth, Brad Wells, Artistic Director, and Tigran Hamasyan,
at the Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, on January 9, 2018.*

Roomful of Teeth

Estelí Gomez, soprano
Martha Cluver, soprano
Caroline Shaw, alto
Virginia Warnken Kelsey, alto
Eric Dudley, tenor
Thann Scoggin, baritone
Dashon Burton, bass-baritone
Cameron Beauchamp, bass

Brad Wells, artistic director

Program Notes

Partita for 8 Voices

The score's inscription reads: "*Partita* is a simple piece. Born of a love of surface and structure, of the human voice, of dancing and tired ligaments, of music, and of our basic desire to draw a line from one point to another."

Each movement takes a cue from the traditional Baroque suite in initial meter and tone, but the familiar historic framework is soon stretched and broken, through "speech, whispers, sighs, murmurs, wordless melodies and novel vocal effects" (Pulitzer jury citation). Roomful of Teeth's utterly unique approach to singing and vocal timbre originally helped to inspire and shape the work during its creation, and the ensemble continues to refine and reconsider the colors and small details with every performance. The Allemande opens with the organized chaos of square dance calls overlapping with technical wall-drawing directions of the artist Sol LeWitt, suddenly congealing into a bright, angular tune that never keeps its feet on the ground for very long. There are allusions to the movement's intended simulation of motion and space in the short phrases of text throughout, which are sometimes sung and sometimes embedded as spoken texture. The Sarabande's quiet restraint in the beginning is punctured in the middle by an ecstatic, belted melody that resolves quietly at the end, followed soon after by the Inuit-inspired hocketed breaths of the Courante. A wordless quotation of the American folk hymn *Shining Shore* appears at first as a musical non sequitur but later recombines with the rhythmic breaths as this longest movement is propelled to its final gasp. The Passacaglia is a set of variations on a repeated chord progression, first experimenting simply with vowel timbre, then expanding into a fuller texture with the return of the LeWitt text. At the Passacaglia's premiere in 2009, there was spontaneous applause

and cheering at the explosive return of the D-major chord near the end—so feel free to holler or clap any time if you feel like it.

Of *Partita's* premiere, *New York* magazine wrote that I had "discovered a lode of the rarest commodity in contemporary music: joy." And it is with joy that this piece is meant to be received in years to come.

—CS

a promise in the stillness

This piece is about solitude, stillness, and their impact on the passage of time; the experience of rawness; the fact that we are all animals (and how this relates to our vulnerability); the beauty and unifying force of individuality (in that even every leaf is different); a reminder that in our day-to-day lives we are surrounded by layers of sound, home, familiarity and all of their opposites.

—AA

Superstition

I have painted a picture of a ghost
Upon my kite,
And hung it on a tree.
Later, when I loose the string
And let it fly,
The people will cower
And hide their heads,
For fear of the God
Swimming in the clouds.

—Amy Lowell (1874–1925)

Amy Lowell was something of an oracle. Her poems read like coded messages from a wise soul. "Superstition"—from her 1919 collection *Pictures of the Floating World*—is inspired by Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. The poem involves a startling combination: the lines have a childlike perspective, but the topic is the mechanism of the politics of fear.

Program Notes continued

My setting of Lowell's "Superstition" is also connected to oracles: this short work is partially based on a transcription of millisecond-level microtiming measurements of Debussy's performance of his own prelude *Danseuses de Delphes (The Dancers of Delphi)* made in Paris on November 1, 1913, on the Welte-Mignon reproducing piano.

—RB

Ser Aravote

Ser Aravote is rooted in a *tagh* (an ancient form of Armenian chant) of the same name by Grigor Narekatsi (Gregory of Narek), the famous 10th-century Armenian monk, poet, Christian theologian, composer and saint of the Armenian Apostolic Church. *Ser Aravote* is a *tagh* of resurrection.

Narekatsi is most famous for his *Book of Lamentations*, considered among Armenians the most divine text after the Bible. This mystic book of prayers is famous for its healing powers and is considered one of the most innovative, profound and daring works of its time.

Narekatsi is also celebrated for his series of *taghs*. Sung religious poems with biblical references, these monodic songs were often written and sung for specific church rites and celebrations. In comparison to other forms of Armenian sacred hymns, *taghs* are very complex in melodic structure and do not adhere to just one type of musical mode. They are rich with ornamentation, full of shifting rhythmic meter and are typically sung *ad libitum*.

Although Narekatsi originally composed music for all of his *taghs*, the music of *Ser Aravote* did not survive. I felt a sort of pressure and responsibility

while I was writing music to this poem, but the melody of the composition came to me naturally and suddenly. When I was looking through the text and I read the first verse of *Ser Aravote*, a melody came to me right away.

I really love the form of the poem and how musical the verses are. The rhythmic structure of the text became the melodic and rhythmic foundation of the whole composition. Each verse has seventeen syllables divided into three lines arranged in groups of five, five and seven. Throughout the piece I develop polyrhythmic ideas based on this structure. The idea that each verse of the poem would have the same rhythmic basis but different "sound designs"—a sort of variation on a theme—felt very close to the way I like to compose. I like to take a small idea (like a melody in five-five-seven rhythm) and make it into a fifteen-minute composition.

The score includes only the vocal parts; I never write out my piano parts. Some sections I play the same most of the time but many others are fully improvised.
—TH

Quizassa

I needed to drum up some courage to compose for these amazing singers, so I decided to draw inspiration from some powerful folk music, in particular Bulgarian and other Eastern European choral traditions. The nasal resonance and odd meters of that style of singing offered exciting possibilities. I have been thrilled to work with singers who cry, "more, more!" instead of, "we can't do that!" and they have taught me so much (including the Inuit throat-singing games that begot the middle section of the song).

—MG

About the Artists

Roomful of Teeth is a Grammy-winning vocal project dedicated to reimagining the expressive potential of the human voice. Through study with masters from vocal traditions the world over, the eight-voice ensemble continually expands its vocabulary of singing techniques and, through an ongoing commissioning process, forges a new repertoire without borders.

Founded in 2009 by Brad Wells, Roomful of Teeth gathers annually at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) in North Adams, Massachusetts, where they've studied with some of the world's top performers and teachers in Tuvan throat singing, yodeling, Broadway belting, Inuit throat singing, Korean *p'ansori*, Georgian singing, Sardinian *cantu a tenore*, Hindustani music, Persian classical singing and Death Metal singing. Commissioned composers include Rinde Eckert, Fred Hersch, Merrill Garbus (of tUnE-yArDs), William Brittelle, Toby Twining, Missy Mazzoli, Julia Wolfe, Ted Hearne and Ambrose Akinmusire, among many others. This is Roomful of Teeth's first engagement at the Hopkins Center for the Arts.

Tigran Hamasyan pianist/composer fuses potent jazz improvisation with the rich folkloric music of his native Armenia. At just 30 years old, Hamasyan is one of the most remarkable and distinctive jazz-meets-rock pianists of his generation. His fresh sound is marked by an exploration of extended time signatures, charged dynamics, and an affinity to the grind of heavy metal.

Hamasyan's career has included many accolades, including top piano award at the 2013 Montreux Jazz Festival and the grand prize at the prestigious 2006 Thelonious Monk Jazz Piano Competition. One of his earliest albums, 2008's *New Era*, was championed by one scribe who wrote, "Hamasyan is certain to elevate his art to a top tier of jazz and world music expressionism." Several years later, NPR Music wrote: "With startling combinations of jazz, minimalist, electronic, folk and songwriterly elements ... Hamasyan and his collaborators travel musical expanses marked with heavy grooves, ethereal voices, pristine piano playing and ancient melodies. You'll hear nothing else like this in 2015."

He has recorded on various labels—Nonesuch, EMC and France's Red Loins—with his electro-acoustic powerhouse trio, as well as with the Yerevan State Chamber Choir for his 2015 *Luis i Luso* project.

Hamasyan's latest album, *The Ancient Observer*, is his second solo album and his sophomore recording for Nonesuch. Conceptually, it is a poignant album focusing on the art of observing, with influences ranging from classical Baroque dance to J-Dilla-esque hip-hop grooves. Of it, Hamasyan says: "*The Ancient Observer* is presenting the observation of the world we live in now and the weight of our history we carry on our shoulders that is influencing us even if we don't realize it. This album is the observation of influences and experiences I had." This is Tigran Hamasyan's first engagement at the Hopkins Center for the Arts.

Connecting Artists to the Community

While at Dartmouth, Roomful of Teeth hosted a public Community Sing, worked with the Dartmouth College Glee Club, and will participate in a post-performance discussion. For more information on Hop Outreach & Arts Education, call 603.646.2010 or visit hop.dartmouth.edu/online/outreach.

Upcoming Events



Daymé Arocena

Thu • April 12 • 7 pm

Dazzling young Havanan sings Afro-Cuban music suffused with jazz, soul and funk.



Dartmouth College Gospel Choir

Sat • April 28 • 2 pm

Classic and cutting-edge gospel, with full band and guest soloists.



For tickets or more info, call the Box Office at 603.646.2422 or visit hop.dartmouth.edu. Share your experiences! #HopkinsCenter

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