



THOMAS KRAINES & KINAN ABOU-AFACH

Thursday, March 4 @ 7 PM

Cello Thomas Kraines
Cello/Oud Kinan Abou-afach

PROGRAM

Prelude	Kinan Abou-afach and Thomas Kraines
Suite for Two Different Cellos Slapdash – Shelter – Backsplash (world premiere)	Thomas Kraines
<i>JANUS</i> (world premiere)	Gene Coleman
<i>Litany</i> (world premiere)	Kinan Abou-afach
<i>Let Them In</i>	Kinan Abou-afach
Epilogue	Thomas Kraines and Kinan Abou-afach

PROGRAM NOTES

Suite for Two Different Cellos (2019-21)

I wrote “Slapdash,” the first movement of this suite, in 2019, for a performance with Kinan in a parking lot, as part of a festival celebrating the opening of the Rail Park in Philadelphia. The “Different Cellos” of the title refers to the technique of scordatura, or unconventional tuning of the instruments. In this instance, one cello tunes its lowest string a whole-step lower, to Bb instead of C, and the other tunes its highest string down from A to G. I found the combination of two almost, but not quite, identical instruments fascinating and challenging to write for; each cello has access to harmonic possibilities that the other doesn’t have. “Slapdash” is characterized by a rhythmic motto, perhaps Bach’s Sixth Prelude as performed by King Crimson, interrupted by various contrasting sounds and a couple of improvised solos.

The second movement, “Shelter,” was written almost a year later, shortly after the lockdown in 2020, and was premiered in a livestream from Turtle Studios in Philadelphia. This piece is certainly influenced by the unreal feeling of ominous quiet in a city paralyzed by pandemic. Slow melodies in unconventional harmonies drift over and around open-string drones, ending in a place of acceptance, if not actual optimism.

“Backsplash,” the third movement, will receive its world premiere at this performance, and is basically an attempt to write a pop song, with a few pretensions. The piece is played entirely without the bow, with both cellos mostly in rhythmic unison; I was treating the duo as a large, eight-stringed folk guitar. The celebratory strumming gives way to a somewhat grimy, blues-influenced section, which manages to work its way partly back to the music of the first section before ending with a pair of valedictory chords. Perhaps some would find it interesting to know that the opening rhythm of this movement is in heroic hexameter; you could recite the first line of the *Iliad* (in Greek) to it.

Thomas Kraines (b. 1970)

JANUS (2021)

JANUS is a series of compositions for two instruments or voices based on models from auditory neuroscience, focusing on the duality of perception and the cognitive differences of the left and right hemispheres of the brain. The image of the Roman god Janus (which depicts a head with two faces) becomes a metaphor for this duality, which is buried deep in the biological architecture of all human beings. The first piece in the *JANUS* cycle is for two cellos, written for Tom and Kinan. For this performance, we hear the first part of a three-section work. I'm using musical material from Western and Arabic classical sources (reflecting the background of the two musicians). In the first section, a process reflecting the patterns of auditory perception and cognition transforms musical "source codes" from Monteverdi.

Gene Coleman (b. 1958)

Litany (2021)

This is a simple, wordless litany, probably for a better world, and an invocation for a better tomorrow. Written to be premiered with Tom, the melody, which alternates between the two cellos, combined with microtonal approach, makes the piece feel like a distorted ancient chant.

Kinan Abou-afach (b. 1977)

Let Them In (2019)

Premiered by Tom and me in 2019, this piece was written for people who are trying to cross borders looking for safety. Instead, they are put in cages, torn away from their families, living in temporary tents... They are trying to escape wars, famine or a horrible life, only to discover that the border guardians are less humane than the circumstances from which they escaped. The piece is a call for policymakers to *Let Them In*.

Kinan Abou-afach (b. 1977)

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Thomas Kraines (Cello)

Thomas Kraines has forged a multifaceted career as a cellist and composer, equally comfortable with avant-garde improvisation, new music, traditional chamber music and solo repertoire. A member of the Daedalus Quartet, Kraines also performs frequently with the Network for New Music, the Arcana Ensemble and as a duo with cellist Kinan Abou-afach. He is also an accomplished composer of chamber music; his works have been performed around the world by artists including pianists Awadagin Pratt and Wayman Chin, violinists Corey Cerovsek and Jennifer Frautschi, sopranos Maria Jette and Ilana Davidson, and the English Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Kenneth Woods. Kraines has given musical improvisation workshops and performances at the Longy School of Music, the University of Florida at Gainesville and the University of Pennsylvania. He has taught at the Peabody Conservatory, the Longy School of Music, the Killington Music Festival, Yellow Barn and Princeton University, and currently teaches at the University of Pennsylvania. He lives in Philadelphia with his wife, violinist Juliette Kang, and their two daughters, Rosalie and Clarissa.

Kinan Abou-afach (Cello/Oud)

Kinan Abou-afach is a cellist, composer and 2013 recipient of the Pew Fellowship. His work is described by critics as “phenomenal,” “a journey in sound” and “brilliant.” Abou-afach crafts music that goes beyond classical or traditional, where his music is saturated with unique scales, rhythmic grooves and improvisation-esque progressions. He has composed for concerts, film, theatre and live visual art, and regularly performs and conducts workshops and masterclasses. His recent appearances include Cornell University, NIU, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University and the Arab American National Museum. As a composer and a performer, Abou-afach has worked along with notable names such as Grammy®-winners Jason Vieaux, The Crossing and Yo-Yo Ma; Syrian film director Hatem Ali; the Civic Orchestra of Chicago; Vermont Symphony Orchestra; and conductors Daniel Barenboim, Cliff Colnot, Solhi Al-Wadi, Roberto Abbado and Sir Andrew Davis.

Gene Coleman (Composer)

Gene Coleman is a composer, musician and director. He is the recipient of a 2014 Guggenheim Fellowship and the 2013 Berlin Prize in music composition from the American Academy in Berlin. His work explores ideas about global culture and music's relationship

with architecture, video and science. Coleman was the William Penn Foundation composer-in-residence at the American Academy in Rome (Fall 2011). Other residencies include the Shofuso House (Philadelphia, 2009), Westwerk (Hamburg, 2007), Taipei Artist Village (Taipei, 2007), Irtijal Festival (Beirut, 2005), Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin, 2003-04), Takefu Music Festival (Echizen, 2002) and in Tokyo (2001 and 2021 Japan-U.S. Fellowships). Many groups have commissioned his music and video works including Ensemble N_JP, Klangforum Wien, Japan Society (New York), The Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation, Chamber Music America, Network for New Music, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, the Graham Foundation, International House Philadelphia, Ensemble PHACE, The Museum of Modern Art, The Crossing, Maerzmusik Festival, Warsaw Autumn Festival, the Venice Biennale, the Fromm Foundation, JACK Quartet and others. genecolemancomposer.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

11 HopeBoykinDance

APRIL

1 Rennie Harris Puremovement

8 Zakir Hussain

15 Keyon Harrold

22 Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers

MAY

6 Ayodele Casel

7 Eddie Palmieri
Afro-Caribbean
Jazz Quartet

27 Matthew Neenan



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