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A BRUSH WITH OUR TIME by ANDREA CLEARFIELD
World Premiere of Commission for FOURTH COAST ENSEMBLE
Sunday, September 19, 2021, 4 PM CT at Newberry Library



CHICAGO – Fourth Coast Ensemble is excited to present the much-anticipated world premiere of *A Brush With Our Time* by composer Andrea Clearfield and librettist Doreen Rao. Hosted by Newberry Library on Sunday, September 19th at 4pm CT, the performance will also be virtually live-streamed to audiences around the world.

Commissioned by the ensemble, this 40-minute piece for four voices, shakuhachi, percussion, and piano is based on the poetry of Zen artist Kazuaki Tanahashi and explores the tension between peace and conflict. The four singers will move freely throughout the library's modular performance hall, immersing the audience in Clearfield's "vivid and galvanizing" sound world (Opera News), while Tanahashi paints four large-scale enso calligraphy works on canvases stationed throughout the performance space.

The in-person event at Newberry Library will be preceded by a pre-concert lecture beginning at 3 PM CT, featuring a panel including composer Andrea Clearfield. A Spotlight Concert in the 2021 Ear Taxi Festival, the 4 PM CT program will also feature excerpts from Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* arranged by Rao and featuring percussionist Kyle Flens. Pianist Dana Brown will join the quartet and Michael Firman will perform shakuhachi.

Audiences may attend by purchasing individual tickets at <http://www.fourthcoastensemble.com/brush.html>

Full season subscription packages will be available on August 31st for those who wish to wait to buy tickets for this event at a discount. At the above link, viewers may also register for the livestream to watch the performance remotely. Our video transmission will feature a high-quality, multi-camera immersive experience by technical team that produced Fourth Coast's 2021 HD Season.

Please note that in accordance with local guidelines all in-person audience members will be required to wear a mask throughout the duration of the performance, regardless of vaccination status. Please reach out to info@fourthcoastensemble.com with any inquiries.

ARTISTS

Dana Brown is the Associate Professor of Opera and Vocal Coaching at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University. As a pianist, he has been heard many times on 98.7 WFMT Radio, in addition to performances at the Ravinia Festival, the Tanglewood Festival, the Chicago Cultural Center and the Chicago Humanities Festival. He is a staff pianist for the Ryan Opera Center at the Lyric Opera of Chicago where he has played the lessons and masterclasses of Marilyn Horne, Renata Scotto, Renée Fleming and Sir Andrew Davis. In addition to recording with Fourth Coast Ensemble for the group's upcoming debut album, "Human to Human: Contemporary Commissions for Vocal Quartet", his new CD with soprano Michelle Areyzaga, "Were I With Thee", is due to be released in October, 2021.

Andrea Clearfield is an award-winning composer who has written more than 150 works for orchestra, opera, chorus, chamber ensemble, dance and multimedia collaborations. Clearfield creates deep, emotive musical languages that build cultural and artistic bridges. Recent works are inspired by Tibetan music fieldwork that she conducted in the Nepalese Himalaya. She was appointed the Steven R. Gerber Composer in Residence with the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia for their 2018-19 season. She is currently 2020-2022 Composer-in-residence with National Concerts at Carnegie Hall. Her first opera, MILA, Great Sorcerer, to libretto by Jean-Claude van Itallie and Lois Walden, was presented at the acclaimed NYC Prototype Festival in January, 2019. A strong advocate for building community around the arts, she is founder and host of the renowned Salon featuring contemporary, classical, jazz, electronic, dance and world music since 1986.

Michael A Firman has been studying the shakuhachi since 1993. He started his studies with Michael Furuta, a student of Tadashi Tajima. In 1998, he began studying with Dai Shihan (Grand Master) Michael Gould after meeting him at the World Shakuhachi festival in Boulder, Colorado. His interests in the flute vary greatly, although his focus is on traditional Japanese music. He plays and performs Minyo (folk music), Sankyoku (older chamber music), Shinkyoku (more modern chamber music), and Honkyoku (the music of the Buddhist tradition). In 2011 He attained the rank of Jun Shihan (traditional teaching degree). In 2015 he attained the rank of Shihan (traditional masters degree). These ranks were awarded to him by Michael Chikuzen Gould.

Kyle Flens is a percussionist based in Chicago. He is a member of the chamber music collective Ensemble Dal Niente. As a performer Kyle gravitates to experimental music written by composers of our time. This gravitation has led to concerts across the Western Hemisphere. Concert highlights include the Foro Internacional de Música Nueva Manuel Enriquez (Mexico City), the MetLiveArts concert series at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the LA Philharmonic's Noon to Midnight Festival at Walt Disney Concert Hall (Los Angeles), the 5th International Festival of Percussion Ensembles (San José, Costa Rica), Instituto Inhotim (Minas Gerais, Brazil), and the Phillips Collection's concert series (Washington DC). Kyle performs on Pearl Drums and Adams Percussion Instruments, and is honored to be an endorsed artist.

Doreen Rao is celebrated internationally for her moving concerts and inspirational teaching. Her seminal work teaching children to sing inspired a generation of conductors and teachers to lead young choirs in schools and communities around the world. In a national tribute presented to her by the American Choral Directors Association, the eminent conductor Robert Shaw wrote: "The world of choral music owes her special thanks. She is preparing our future." She founded The Rao Center for Choral and Contemplative Arts in 2014 to mentor emerging conductors, singers and music educators. She is the author of *Circle of Sound a Contemplative Approach to Voice Education* which serves as the philosophical and practical foundation for her mindfulness-based approach to conducting and teaching.

Kazuaki Tanahashi, born in Japan in 1933 and active in the United States since 1977, is an artist, writer, and peace and environmental worker. As a painter and calligrapher, he has been pioneering the genres of one-stroke painting, multi solo exhibitions of his brushwork worldwide and has taught numerous workshops, including at seven international calligraphy conferences. As a writer, editor, and translator, he has produced over forty books in English and Japanese. As an environmental activist, was the founding secretary of Plutonium Free Future. As a peace activist, he worked against the nuclear arms race and two Gulf Wars. He is currently the founding director of A World Without Armies. He is also a Fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science.

Fourth Coast Ensemble is a classical vocal quartet specializing in the unique style and repertoire of vocal chamber music. Celebrated for its "horizon-expanding programming", (Chicago Classical Review), Fourth Coast Ensemble embraces a repertoire that spans the history of the genre, from Schubert and Brahms to composers of the present day. Founded in 2013, the ensemble commissioned its first world premiere song cycle in 2018, *I-Thou*, by Wayland Rogers. In 2019, Fourth Coast produced the Chicago premiere of *songSLAM*, an annual competition for emerging art song composers and performers in the region. The ensemble has earned a reputation of excellence "built on the quality of its small roster of artists" (Vocal Arts Chicago) - soprano Sarah van der Ploeg, mezzo-soprano Bridget Skaggs, tenor Ace Gangoso, and bass-baritone David Govertsen. A full schedule of concerts can be found at www.fourthcoastensemble.com

Fourth Coast Ensemble, 4955 S Kimbark Ave, Chicago, IL 60615

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