

DEL SOL STRING QUARTET SCRAPYARD EXOTICA

Works by BATES/UENO/FAIROUZ

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SCRAPYARD EXOTICA

Mason Bates

Bagatelles for String Quartet and Electronica

- 1 I. Rough Math 5:10
- 2 II. Scrapyard Exotica 4:18
- 3 III. On a Wire: Mating Dance 2:17
- 4 IV. Viscera 4:25

Ken Ueno

- 5 **Peradam** 20:52

Mohammed Fairouz

The Named Angels

- 6 I. Mikail's Thunder 5:32
- 7 II. Azrael Malak al-Maut 9:49
- 8 III. Jibreel at HIRA 4:44
- 9 IV. Israfel's Spell 6:57

Total time: 1:04:04

This triumvirate of composers represents leading voices in very different flavors of music within the classical avant-garde. Diverse influences run the gamut from club beats to throat singing to middle eastern dance rhythms, from the melodic beauty of Schubert to swinging jazzy grooves to the world of science fiction. Yet each voice is firmly rooted in the here and now, sharing their experiences of life in the 21st century. Live audiences have been equally stunned by the power of each piece and we are thrilled to bring these recordings to those we haven't yet reached in the concert hall.



Bagatelles for String Quartet and Electronica (2011)
Mason Bates (b. 1977)

This commission was made possible by the Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning program, with generous funding provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Chamber Music America Endowment Fund.

From the Performer

When Mason asked Del Sol to come to the recording studio to make some sample sounds, we were expecting to read down some sketches, but were happily surprised to explore instead how many unusual sounds we could generate. Hitting, caressing, honking, and plunking our instruments became a big part of the day. In time, Mason the alchemist took our experiments in the studio and morphed them into the electronica track that you hear in Bagatelles.

—Charlton Lee, violist

From the Composer

The short, ephemeral nature of a musical bagatelle appealed to me when imaging a collection of miniatures for the wonderful Del Sol string quartet. When paired with cutup electronic samples of the quartet itself, the bagatelle becomes an opportunity for brief, intense touchdowns on rhythmically diverse terrains.

Lurching, lopsided figuration imbues “Rough Math,” which is punctuated by samples of the musicians slapping their instruments. “Scrapyard Exotica” begins in a skittish, plectrum-based soundworld but evolves to a more sustained and lyrical space. The mellow charm of “Mating Dance” pairs the fist violin and viola in a swing-based melody, with the second violin and cello coupling up in the accompaniment. The title of the final movement, “Viscera,” refers to fast-pulsing internal organs, as if the quartet were a many-legged creature on the run. Many thanks to the musicians, who sat patiently in the studio while I asked them to make all manner of strange sounds, and to Chamber Music America for making the piece happen.

Mason Bates

Recently named the second most-performed living composer, Mason Bates currently serves as the first composer-in-residence of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. His music fuses innovative orchestral writing, imaginative narrative forms, the harmonies of jazz and the rhythms of techno, and it has been the first symphonic music to receive widespread acceptance for its unique integration of electronic sounds. Leading conductors such as Riccardo Muti, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Leonard Slatkin have championed his diverse catalogue. Bates’ activities as a DJ have highly informed not only his compositional approach, but his distinctive curating projects. He has become a visible advocate for bringing new music to new spaces, whether through institutional partnerships such as his residency with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, or through his club/classical project Mercury Soul, which has transformed spaces ranging from commercial clubs to Frank Gehry-designed concert halls into exciting, hybrid musical events drawing over a thousand people. In awarding Bates the Heinz Medal, Teresa Heinz remarked that “his music has moved the orchestra into the digital age and dissolved the boundaries of classical music.”

As part of the San Francisco Symphony’s Beethoven & Bates Festival, three of his largest works — Alternative Energy, Liquid Interface, and The B-Sides — have been recorded for an upcoming CD focused on his music. Another major work, his Violin Concerto, was recorded by Leonard Slatkin, the London Symphony, and extraordinary violinist Anne Akiko Meyers. Currently he is composing an opera on the topic of Steve Jobs to be premiered at Santa Fe Opera in 2017.

Continuing performances of works such as Mothership, which premiered at the Sydney Opera House by the YouTube Symphony to an online audience of 1.8 million, have demonstrated that electronic sounds can be a welcome addition to the orchestral palette with minimal logistics. While Bates often performs the electronica onstage with orchestras, dozens of repeat performances of his symphonic music happen without him. For more info, go to masonbates.com and mercurysoul.org.



*Peradam (2011)
Ken Ueno (b. 1970)*

Commissioned by Other Minds for the Del Sol String Quartet.

From the Performer

Ken is an amazing vocal performer who utilizes the full range and capacity of his body to create music. When I jokingly made a mock throat-singing sound for him, (much to my chagrin) he became convinced that I could learn to throat sing. That technique immediately became part of *Peradam*. To make matters worse, I am simultaneously playing so high up on the instrument that I lose the support of my left hand and have to hold the weight of the viola with my head and shoulders only. Learning this piece became an incredible physical journey for the quartet, in addition to a sound world odyssey. The result is a phenomenal work for which we feel great ownership.

—Charlton Lee, violist

From the Composer

At one formal dinner function at the American Academy in Berlin, where I was a fellow for the 2010-2011 academic year, I was seated next to the filmmaker, Tacita Dean. Getting to know her films through my own research after that initial contact, I was struck by her work, *The Green Ray*. The title refers to an optical phenomenon of the highest frequency light appearing as the last rays of a sunset. I found it beautiful that in Tacita's work the green ray is visible in the film, but cannot be isolated on any single frame: It champions faith and belief in what you see. Her commitment, over years of effort, to go to extraordinary means to capture this light resonated with what I have been striving to achieve in my work as a composer.

I believe that a sound, in and of itself, can have communicative power that one cannot translate into anything else. My favorite sounds deliver a similar feeling of the transcendental power of natural phenomena that Tacita Dean's film delivers to me visually.

In a quest to discover sounds that speak to me on that level, I often conduct tests on instruments for which I am composing. These independent tests are augmented by what I learn through intense collaborations with performers for whom I am composing. Many of my works derive their structural aspects from considerations of the special instrumental skills of the performers with whom I collaborate, in a manner I term "person-specific." *Peradam* is person-specific for the Del Sol String Quartet. Having heard them play a number of times, I was particularly inspired by the fact that all the members can sing and play beautifully, as well as the fact that they are whole-heartedly invested in

the performance of microtones (which is important to me since my harmonic world mixes equal tempered notes, quarter-tones, justly intoned notes, and microtonal harmonies derived from formant analysis of sung vowels). These aspects are prominently featured throughout my piece.

The most person-specific aspect of this piece is dedicated to what the violist, Charlton, can do. He can throat sing. As a composer who lives a double life as a vocalist specializing in extended techniques including throat singing, I was blown away when Charlton showed me he could throat sing. It was at that moment that I knew I had to write a piece for him and the Del Sols!

The title of my piece, Peradam, refers to a rare mythical diamond-like stone that is the invention of René Daumal and appears in his novel, Mount Analogue. The novel is an allegorical spiritual quest in the guise of an alpine ascent. In Daumal's novel, peradam is found on the slopes of Mount Analogue and appears to whomever "seeks it with sincere desire...it reveals itself by its sudden sparkle, like that of dewdrops." Peradam is a metaphor for a rare, beautiful, natural phenomenon, an object that stands for discoveries we can attain over a lifetime of searching for them, much like Tacita Dean's Green Ray. Spending my life looking for musical peradams, I feel blessed whenever I meet and have the opportunity to collaborate with musicians like Charlton and the Del Sols, where together we journey toward the summits of our Mount Analogues. Musicians such as these help expand my imagination for what might be possible, and make it real in performance.

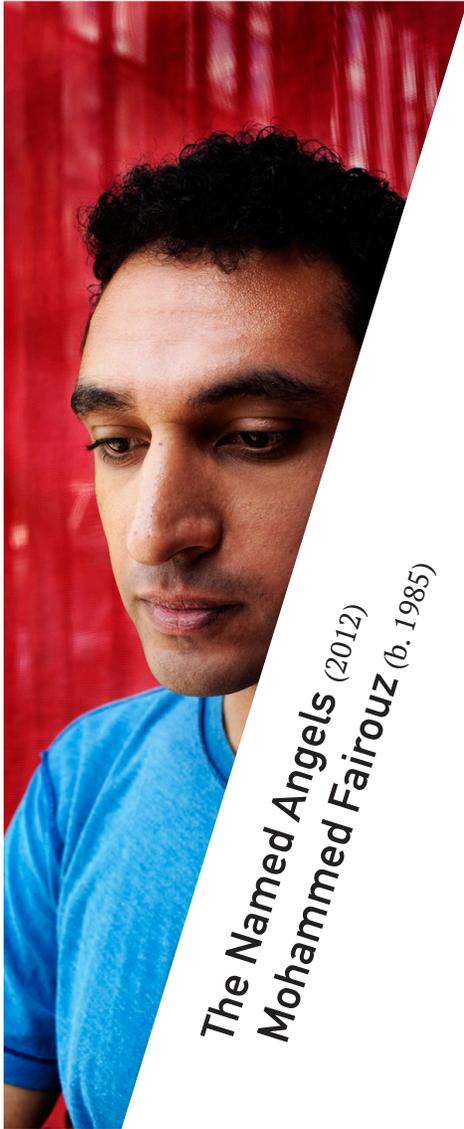
One additional feature that makes the premiere of this piece special is having the opportunity to collaborate again with the video artist, Johnny Dekam. Years ago, he created an interactive video for the premiere of my saxophone and electronics piece, whatWALL?, at the Duderstadt Center at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. It's inspiring to me that he not only has the talent and taste to create stunning visual works, but he also has the skill to create custom software which interacts with parameters controlled by live musical input. The

software helps make each performance unique: It privileges the live experience, a quality that resonates fully with my aesthetic.

Ken Ueno

A recipient of the Rome Prize and the Berlin Prize, Ken Ueno, is a composer/vocalist/sound artist who is currently an Associate Professor at UC Berkeley. Ensembles and performers who have played Ken's music include Kim Kashkashian and Robyn Schulkowsky, Mayumi Miyata, Teodoro Anzellotti, Aki Takahashi, Wendy Richman, Greg Oakes, BMOP, Alarm Will Sound, Steve Schick and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the Nieuw Ensemble, and Frances-Marie Uitti. His music has been performed at such venues as Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MusikTriennale Köln Festival, the Muziekgebouw, Ars Musica, Warsaw Autumn, Other Minds, the Hopkins Center, Spoleto USA, Steim, and at the Norfolk Music Festival. Ken's piece for the Hilliard Ensemble, Shiroyoshi, was featured in their repertoire for over ten years, with performances at such venues as Queen Elizabeth Hall in England, the Vienna Konzerthaus, and was aired on Italian national radio, RAI 3. Another work, Pharmakon, was performed dozens of times nationally by Eighth Blackbird during their 2001-2003 seasons. A portrait concert of Ken's was featured on MaerzMusik in Berlin in 2011. In 2012, he was a featured artist on Other Minds 17. In 2014, Frances-Marie Uitti and the Boston Modern Orchestra premiered his concerto for two-bow cello and orchestra, and Guerilla Opera premiered a run of his chamber opera, Gallo, to critical acclaim. He has performed as soloist in his vocal concerto with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project in New York and Boston, the Warsaw Philharmonic, the Lithuanian National Symphony, the Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra, and with orchestras in North Carolina and California. Ken holds a Ph.D. from Harvard University. A monograph CD of three orchestral concertos was released on the Bmop/sound label. His bio appears in The Grove Dictionary of American Music. More at kenueno.com.





*The Named Angels (2012)
Mohammed Fairouz (b. 1985)*

From the Performer

The first time we met Momo in person, he shared with us some secrets about *The Named Angels*, including that the melody in the 3rd movement was set to Edgar Allen Poe’s *Annabel Lee*. We were delighted with how words shaped that melody and encouraged him to make a version with voice. A couple months later, Momo sent us a gorgeous audio file of Thomas Hampson singing the tune with the composer on piano!

—Charlton Lee, violist

From the Composer

Since I was a little boy, I’ve been fascinated with the mythology of angels in Middle Eastern folklore. They embody justice, power, kindness, healing, death, and other universals that have made them pervasive in many of the world’s cultures. It is natural to express these attributes musically, since music is present in all human communities — it transcends the present and expresses the eternal, never-changing truths of the human condition.

The Named Angels refers to those angels that are named and recognized in the Islamic, Christian and Jewish traditions: Michael, Israfael, Gabriel and Azrael. Each of the four movements represents a character portrait of a specific Angel. The piece begins with a quick and vigorous movement titled *Mikhael’s Thunder*. Mikhael (Arabic for Michael, an archangel in Jewish, Christian and Islamic teachings) is an angel attributed with great visceral strength. He brings thunder to Earth but is also identified in the *Quran* as an angel of mercy, and in *Book of Revelation* he leads God’s armies against Satan’s forces. The movement captures that dichotomy as it vacillates between thunderous gestures and what I’ve marked as a “Hymn of Mercy” in the score.

Following Michael’s explosive portrait is a slow movement called *Azrael, Malak Al Maut* (Arabic for Azrael, Angel of Death). Azrael is the name used commonly used to refer to the Angel of death in the three Middle Eastern Monotheistic faiths. This narrative movement is framed by two chorales: an opening funeral chorale and a closing transformative chorale. It captures the attitude of the naturalness (even innocence) of death described in the *Quran*. This movement is more programmatic in structure than the others. It begins with a depiction of the exhalation of a last breath and proceeds to depict Azrael carrying the spirit beyond life and the metamorphosis of the human spirit in the apotheosis that ends the movement.

The next movement, *Jibreel at Hira*, begins without a pause. Jibreel (Gabriel) is the chief angel in Islam. He is the main messenger to the Prophets, delivering important words from God to Moses, Abraham, Jesus and others according to the *Quran*. In the *Quran* as well as the *New Testament*, Gabriel foretells the birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary while in the *Old Testament* he appears on several occasions as

a messenger to the prophets. Gabriel delivers his final message to Mohammed at a cave called Hira. On a night that Muslims celebrate yearly as the Night of Power, Gabriel appears to Mohammed as he is meditating and commands him to read. The illiterate Mohammed begins to miraculously read in what becomes the first revelation of the Quran. The first part of the movement captures Jibreel's tender and simple voice as he speaks to Mohammed and the movement builds in intensity capturing the transfixed ecstasy of the Prophet repeating the Angel's revelation.

The final movement *Israfael's Spell*, begins with an invocation of Israfael's trumpet sounding the Day of Judgment. This heralding theme interweaves with hints of a quick dance. In the Quran, the shaking of the Earth is described as the Earth dancing a dabkeh (a vigorous and ancient Arabian dance form). This develops into a fullyfledged apocalyptic dance. Edgar Allen Poe's rendition of *Israfael* was the point of departure for this musical movement. At the opening of the poem *Israfael*, Poe quotes a particularly musical passage of the Quran: "And the angel Israfael, whose heartstrings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures." This informs the first lines of the poem that, in turn, gave me the title for this movement:

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell
"Whose heartstrings are a lute"
None sing so wildly well
As the angel Israfael,
And the giddy stars (so legends tell),
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
Of his voice, all mute.

Mohammed Fairouz

Mohammed Fairouz, born in 1985, is one of the most frequently performed, commissioned, and recorded composers of his generation. Hailed by The New York Times as "an important new artistic voice" and by BBC World News as "one of the most talented composers of his generation," his large-scale symphonies, operas and oratorios all engage major geopolitical and philosophical themes with persuasive craft and a marked seriousness of purpose. Fairouz recently became the youngest composer in the 115-year history of the Deutsche Grammophon label to have an album dedicated to his works with the spring 2015 release of *Follow, Poet*. The album, which launched the label's *Return to Language* series, includes two works that exalt the transformative power of language: his elegiac song cycle *Audenesque* and the ballet *Sadat*. The album has met with broad critical acclaim and received "highbrow and brilliant" distinctions in *New York Magazine's* taste-making *Approval Matrix*. Fairouz's solo and chamber music attains an "intoxicating intimacy," according to *New York's WQXR*. A composer who describes himself as "obsessed with text," he has been recognized by *New Yorker* magazine as an "expert in vocal writing" and described by Gramophone as "a post-millennial Schubert." His principal teachers in composition include György Ligeti, Gunther Schuller, and Richard Danielpour, with studies at the Curtis Institute and New England Conservatory. Fairouz's works are published by Peermusic Classical. He lives in New York City. Find out more about Mohammed at mohammedfairouz.com.



Del Sol String Quartet



Kate Stenberg, violin
 Rick Shinozaki, violin
 Charlton Lee, viola
 Kathryn Bates, cello

**STRING
 QUARTET**

Hailed by Gramophone as “masters of all musical things they survey” and two-time top winner of the Chamber Music America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, the

Del Sol String Quartet is a leading force in 21st century chamber music.

Founded at Banff Centre for the Arts in 1992 and based in San Francisco, the ensemble enjoys a unique vantage point. From its West Coast perch, Del Sol’s performances explore narratives and cultures that represent the depth and range of human experience around the world, reflecting the stories and sounds of the Pacific Rim as vibrantly as those heard in European concert halls or East Coast art spaces.

Del Sol’s collaborative performance projects and chamber music programs, which have become highly anticipated happenings in the Bay Area and beyond, embrace this panoramic and emotionally rich worldview. Del Sol has breached the wall between pit and stage in *STRINGWRECK*, its cheeky collaboration with critically acclaimed choreographers Janice Garrett and Charles Moulton; explored the intimate impact of AIDS in composer Ricky Ian Gordon’s deeply moving, autobiographical chamber opera *GREEN SNEAKERS* with baritone

Jesse Blumberg; and immersed the audience in *GARDEN*, a four-dimensional soundscape created with composer and video artist Chris Jonas. Whether diving deeply into a single work or transcending the limits of genre, Del Sol’s carefully crafted chamber music programs engage audiences fully in the concert experience.

Through its extensive commissioning of composers and innovative performances, Del Sol has premiered well over 100 works representing a diverse range of contemporary voices, including Mason Bates, Gabriela Lena Frank, Chinary Ung, Mohammed Fairouz, Tania León, Ken Ueno, Peter Sculthorpe, Reza Vali, and Per Nørgård. The group recently commissioned Terry Riley to write a new work for string quartet and guitar to be premiered with guitarist Gyan Riley next season.

Many of these works are included in Del Sol’s eclectic discography — seven full-length albums that reflect the ensemble’s fascination with the intersection of place and culture. The New York Times praised Del Sol’s most recent recording, Sculthorpe Complete String Quartets with Didjeridu on GRAMMY Award-winning label Sono Luminus, as “a hypnotic sound world well worth exploring.” The Strad described the Quartet’s performance on this album as “thoroughly committed [and] passionate”; and the San Francisco Chronicle called the recording “transfixing... [with] sumptuous sound... [and] luminous performances.” Other Del Sol recordings have illuminated the string quartets of George Antheil, Marc Blitzstein (First Life) and Robert Erickson; featured composers from the Pacific Rim (Ring of Fire); reveled in musical languages from Peru, Turkey, Spain, Iran and Uzbekistan (Zia); and created a vibrant dialogue between 20th century masters and young composers from the Americas (Tear).

The Quartet has performed at prestigious venues around the world, including the Kennedy Center, Library of Congress, Smithsonian Museum and National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC; Symphony Space in New York City; Other Minds Festival of New Music in San Francisco; Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, Santa Cruz, CA; Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Houston; Santa Fe Opera in NM; Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, NY; Candlelight Concerts, Columbia, MD; University of Vermont Lane Series in Burlington, VT; Davos and Hirzenberg Music Festivals in Switzerland; and the Chengdu Festival of Contemporary Music in China.

With its deep commitment to education, Del Sol has reached thousands of K-12 students through inventive school performances, workshops, coaching sessions and residencies. The Quartet members also have worked closely with student composers, musicians and faculty artists at universities across the country, including Dartmouth, MIT, Brandeis, Northeastern, University of New Mexico, University of California at Berkeley and at Santa Cruz, the Peabody Institute, the Manhattan School of Music and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

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Scrapyard Exotica
Del Sol String Quartet
DSL-92193

Ueno/Fairouz recorded at Sono Luminus Studios, Boyce, Virginia
April 23-26, 2014, sonoluminusstudios.com

Bates recorded at Osher Salon, San Francisco Conservatory of Music
December 20-21, 2012

Producer: Dan Merceruio

Recording, Mixing & Mastering Engineer: Daniel Shores

Editing Engineers: Dan Merceruio, Daniel Shores

Cover: Joshue Ott

Photography: Ryan Schude (p. 3), Peter Gannushkin (p. 4), RJ Muna
(p. 6), Samantha West (p. 7), Strider Jordan (p. 9).

Graphic Design: Caleb Nei



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