

## Preview

### Blue Streak Ensemble to premiere new Brouwer work at Nighttown and Lakeside on July 15 & 16

by Mike Telin



Composer Margaret Brouwer's [Blue Streak Ensemble](#) will return to the shores of Lake Erie for its second summer season, with a concert in Hoover Auditorium at Lakeside on Tuesday, July 16 at 8:15 pm and an indoor preview at Nighttown in Cleveland Heights on Monday, June 15 at 7. The performances include the world premiere of Brouwer's new work for voice, violin, cello, clarinet, and piano, *Deserted Delphi Veiled in Mist*.

Founded in 2011, Blue Streak comprises young professional musicians from around the globe who trained at the Cleveland Institute of Music (left, the ensemble in 2012). The current personnel includes violinist Jinjoo Cho, pianist Irwin Shung, cellist Maaïke Harding, cello, mezzo-soprano Sarah Beaty, and clarinetist Robert Davis. When not performing locally, the ensemble tours the country offering innovative programming of repertoire that spans 400 years and includes many of Brouwer's own acclaimed compositions. Blue Streak will be playing at Symphony Space in New York in April of 2014.

The original impetus for creating Blue Streak was to perform Brouwer's *Lonely Lake*, a work commissioned from her a few years ago, Brouwer said in a telephone conversation. "I also formed the group because for years I had thought it would be fun to have an ensemble that would perform classical and newly composed works at the resorts along the shores of Lake Erie. I felt that was a real need."

It's fun to have your own group because you can try things out early on, Brouwer says. "As a composer, if you receive a commission and you don't arrive until the dress rehearsal it's too late to try things out." One example of that was her attempt to imitate bird calls in *Lonely Lake*. "The sound of the Sand Hill Crane doesn't sound like any instrument so we had to experiment quite a bit to get the correct sound from the instruments."

The work to be premiered in July, *Deserted Delphi Veiled in Mist*, also features experimental elements. The vocal line is like one of the instruments, but unlike the violin, clarinet and cello, the singer doesn't have any melodies. Here, Brouwer was interested in discovering what colors the voice could produce.

Although Brouwer just composed the piece, its inspiration goes back to a time when she was studying in Europe and traveled to Greece with a friend for Christmas vacation. They ended up in Delphi on Christmas Day. “It was a very misty day, and we were the only two people there. We were walking around the ruins of the ancient city of the gods, a place where people would travel many centuries before Christ to get advice from the oracle. The piece is reflective of the ancient feeling of the place.”

The voice will be like a call from the distance— like a calling out, Brouwer says, but then she laughs: “of course I haven’t heard this piece yet either.” Other than that, the voice is just one member of the ensemble, with colors just like the colors that are specific to the violin. “I have always been into the timbres or colors the instruments can produce. I think a lot about that when I am writing a piece and it has been fun to add the voice in this capacity. Normally with the voice you have words that tell the story, so this is very different. It is something I have wanted to do for a long time, so it will be fun to hear how it turns out.”

The vocal part will be handled by Sarah Beaty, “a wonderful young singer who I first heard in New York. But less than a year ago she returned from China where she was singing with an Italian opera company in Macao. She is a very versatile singer. She’s currently in rehearsal for some experimental operas.”

In addition to *Delphi*, Beaty will sing selections from Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* and Rossini's *Una Voce Poco Fa* from *The Barber of Seville* in Brouwer's own arrangements. She especially loves the Rossini aria. “I’m having loads of fun writing the orchestral arrangement. It’s such a great piece — and what a wonderful composer Rossini is!”

Putting contrasting pieces together on the same program is one of Blue Streak's specialties. In addition to Brouwer's *Delphi* and her Gershwin and Rossini arrangements, the concerts on July 15 and 16 will include her *Ballad*, *Joyful Moment* from *Trio*, *Whom do you call Angel now*, Milhaud's *Suite*, Rachmaninoff's *Prelude in c*, Dvorak's *Silent Woods* and Mark Summer's *Julie-O*.

“I’m interested in programming concerts that have a mix of styles. I’ve gotten uninterested in segregated concerts where there is only one style. I love performing some of the classical music that everybody knows and loves and that we know and love but also mixing it in with very new things that are hot off the press that are exciting and adventurous,” Brouwer says, adding that this is a terrific time to be a composer and performer. “I love all the possibilities of the twenty-first century: there are so many new things going on in music, new styles being written and new ways of performing the older pieces in venues like Le Poisson Rouge, The Happy Dog and Nighttown. I think we are at a crossroads where we have to find new ways to bring the classics to people.”

Brouwer also loves being located on the shores of Lake Erie. “It’s really wonderful to be based in Cleveland and there are all these wonderful young musicians at CIM. I feel like a kid in a candy store.” That also gives Brouwer the possibility of more flexible instrumentation. “I may go even further afield and write for the trombone. I love the trombone and so far I haven’t used it but I am considering it for a piece for next year, so we’ll see.”

Margaret Brouwer has two CDs coming out in 2014. One is a Naxos chamber CD featuring Blue Streak playing her *Lonely Lake* and *Shattered Glass* and also includes her clarinet quintet and her vocal piece *Whom do you call angel now?* with Sandra Simon. The other includes both her violin and viola concertos with Jaap van Zweden, the Dallas Symphony, violinist Gary Levinson and violist Ellen Rose, That's especially meaningful because Brouwer played in the Dallas orchestra as a freelancer many year ago. "I loved working with them all and I still know a lot of people in the orchestra."

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