

Preview

Margaret Brouwer's Blue Streak Ensemble returns to Nighttown on March 13

by Mike Telin



“We’ve played at Nighttown before and I really love playing there. It’s sort of like the way chamber music was originally conceived,” composer and [Blue Streak Ensemble](#) founder Margaret Brouwer said in a recent telephone conversation. “In the days before television and Internet, people would go to each other’s homes and entertain each other with a meal and musicians would play the latest music. I think Nighttown is like that. The people are enjoying a meal and a glass of wine. I just really like it for chamber music so I look forward to performing there again.”

On Thursday, March 13 beginning at 8:00 pm at [Nighttown](#), Brouwer and her Blue Streak Ensemble will present a concert featuring the music of J.S. Bach, Brouwer, Bond, Ravel, Debussy and Desmond.

Formed in 2011 to launch a concert series along the shores of Lake Erie, Brouwer named the ensemble after The Blue Streak, Cedar Point’s famed roller coaster. Brouwer is dedicated to presenting concerts with an eclectic array of the latest, most interesting and expressive, and most exciting new music. Her mission is to show the connection between the rich music of the past and recently written new music.

In his review in this publication of the ensemble’s August 27, 2012 performance, Daniel Hathaway wrote, “The players were superb individually and collectively...chamber music presenters who have difficulty programming new music on their series should pay attention to what Blue Streak is doing so successfully. This delightful evening owed a lot to the skill of the performers but just as much to Margaret Brouwer’s sensitivity in creating a musical smorgasbord that made sense and worked.”

For Thursday’s concert, Brouwer has amassed what she refers to as “kind of a big group,” which includes Shuai Wang, piano, Maaike Harding, cello, Sarah Beaty, voice, Tara Lynn Ramsey, violin, Madeline Lucas, flute, Michael Jarrett, percussion and Chris Brosius, trombone. “I’m also trying a lot of different things at this concert which will include the premiere of my new piece *Inner Voices*. I think is s good name because it means many

things. First, it's all about inner musical things and inner things from myself. The first movement, *Lost*, is all about desperation and sadness."

The second movement, *Deserted Delphi Veiled in Mist*, features experimental elements. For example, Brouwer uses the voice like one of the instruments. "Normally the voice is singing a text, but I was interested in discovering what colors the voice could produce." Although the movement was performed this past summer, Brouwer has since made some considerable revisions. "I've added both a flute and trombone," noting that she decided to include a trombone because she thinks the instrument has similar qualities to the voice.

The inspiration for writing the movement 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 concert also includes the first performance of an aria from Victoria Bond's new opera, *Clara*. "Victoria is an opera composer. She wrote *Mrs. President* about Victoria Woodhull who ran for president in 1872. She's now writing an opera about Clara Schumann, Although she's still working on the opera, we will perform the aria."

Rounding out the program will be Brouwer's *Shattered Glass*, which she describes as jabs of sound and blurred melodies, as well as her arrangements of a Bach two-part invention, Debussy's *Clair de Lune*, and Paul Desmond's *Take Five*.

Looking ahead, on Thursday, April 17, at 7:00 pm Blue Steak Ensemble will perform at the Hudson Library and Historical Society and on April 21 the group will travel to New York for a performance on Victoria Bond's [Cutting Edge Concerts New Music Festival](#) at Symphony Space. And during May of this year NAXOS will release a new CD of Brouwer's music.

"It's very exciting and I think it's going to be a terrific CD. They let me name it too. I'm calling it "Shattered." The first piece on it is called *Shattered Glass*. But the whole CD is like an emotional whirlwind. It goes through different music that I wrote since 2003." Indeed, there are a lot for good things happening for Margaret Brouwer.

Published on clevelandclassical.com March 11, 2014