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PROGRAM NOTES

COLIN RILEY (b. 1963) *Squiggle Zipper, Ebb Cast, Double Trio*

The three pieces comprising this trilogy have all been commissioned by Piano Circus over the last five years and reflect many of the musical concerns I have been exploring. All three pieces also utilize visual elements with the music.

Squiggle Zipper

There are many elements of jazz and rock in this fast, sectional piece. The ensemble is used both as a powerful rhythm section, playing groove-based patterns at the start, and as a multiple set of soloists in the main bebop-type sections.

The piece was supported with funds from the PRS for Music Foundation (PRSF).

Ebb Cast

I have always enjoyed things that, on the surface or from a distance, appear simple, calm, and very beautiful, yet the more you look (or listen), the more complex and intricate they actually become. Overall this piece is a calm “slow movement” within which listeners can lose themselves—one full of ever-unraveling filigree and fast decorative lines on the inside and spacious chords on the outside.

The piece was supported with funds from the PRSF.

Double Trio

1. purl
2. bob
3. wane

purl—*v.* to flow with a gentle curling or rippling movement and a murmuring sound;

—*n.* a curling movement of water; eddy [related to Norwegian *purla*, to bubble].

bob—*v.* to jump or bounce; bow, duck, hop, jerk, leap, nod, caper, oscillate, seesaw, weave.

wane—*v.* to decrease in strength and intensity, recede, subdue, taper off, to draw to a close; approach an end, (of the moon) to decrease periodically.

The piece is made for a mirror-image group of grand piano (outside player), grand piano (inside player), and keyboard. The musical content plays on the symmetrical and antiphonal arrangement of the performers in a playful and virtuosic manner. The work centers on the exploration of a set of techniques derived from fluid “preparations” made through the combination of one player playing the keyboard of the piano and another playing the inside strings, and preparing these through the use of two hands alone. This allows for swift changes of preparation as well as a degree of coloristic improvisation. The piece is virtuosic yet delicate and at all times intimate.

The work was commissioned by Piano Circus and has been made possible through an award from the Britten Pears Foundation.

—Colin Riley

William Simpson and Simon McCorry have created an array of visual stimuli in collaboration with Piano Circus and Colin Riley. From the generative and synchronized to the reflective distortion of landscape and CCTV, these new works fuse the auditory and optical worlds to present a highly engaging and unique experience.

Colin Riley has continued to explore the interesting areas where musical aesthetics collide, his work taking fresh and original approaches to engaging with techniques from the avant-garde, jazz, and popular music. He has remained outside the perceived categories of new music during the last 20 years and remained a vibrant and unexpected musical voice, difficult to categorize.

www.colinriley.co.uk

GRAHAM FITKIN (b. 1963) *Log, Line, Loud*

Log

Log was composed in 1990. It is the third piece from a triptych of six-piano pieces and incorporates elements of the other two works, *Loud* and *Line*. The piece unfolds simply through the alternation of slow unison material with faster polyphonic music, each slow passage acting as a massive upbeat to the following rhythmic section.

Line

Line was the final piece composed for Piano Circus in the 1990s. Unlike the previous two works, it is slow and sustained, though still focusing on the nature of unison and counterpoint.

Loud

Loud was composed in 1989 for Piano Circus. The piece focuses on the nature of ensembles performing as one instrument. The six pianos come together in rhythmic unison constantly throughout the piece but also split into trios, duos, and solo lines.

—Graham Fitkin

Graham Fitkin has worked with such orchestras as RLPO, Halle, BBC Symphony, Tokyo Symphony, and London Chamber Orchestra, conducting in venues from Lincoln Center to South Bank to Aula Magna. He has composed for dance companies, including Shobana Jeyasingh, Wayne McGregor’s Random Dance, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, and Bi-Ma and collaborated with ensembles such as Fibonacci, Smith Quartet, and Ensemble Bash, among others.

Performing has always been an important aspect of Fitkin’s work. In two recent projects, *Kaplan* for keyboards and live visuals and *Still Warm* for electronically manipulated harps and sampler, he collaborated with his partner, Ruth Wall. There have been recent collaborations with Yo-Yo Ma, Powerplant, Kathryn Stott, Will Gregory, visual artist John Keys, and Royal Ballet choreographer Jonathan Watkins.

Fitkin’s work has been released on CD by Decca’s Argo label, Factory, Sanctuary’s Black Box, and many others. His album *Circuit* was recently released by BIS.

In 2010 Fitkin created a new production for the Royal Ballet, a concerto for midi-harp and orchestra for harpist Sioned Williams and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and a new work for Ensemble 10/10.

www.fitkin.com

ABOUT PIANO CIRCUS

Piano Circus formed in 1989 to play Steve Reich’s *Six Pianos* and has since created a repertoire of over 100 works; the majority are written specially for the ensemble and include pieces by Kevin Volans, Julia Wolfe, Graham Fitkin, Brian Eno, Louis Andriessen, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Terry Riley, Nikki Yeoh, and Heiner Goebbels. Piano Circus has released seven CDs with Decca and now has three CDs available on its own label; the latest release is 2009’s *Skin & Wire*, featuring drummer Bill Bruford.

The six pianists have a broad range of experience, from traditional western classical music to jazz, pop and rock, improvisation, and composition. Piano Circus has worked in collaboration with film and video makers, theater and circus performers, dancers and choreographers, and in a variety of educational settings.

The group performs throughout the UK and tours internationally, with appearances including the Southbank Centre, London; Lincoln Center, New York; Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Edinburgh Festival, Bath International Festival, Big Chill, Enchanted Garden Festival, the Hong Kong and Singapore Festivals, the Istanbul Festival, NYFD Festival (Estonia), Musica Ficta Festival (Lithuania), MARTE, the CREA and 38eme Rugissants Festivals (France), Settembre Musica (Italy), Banff Centre (Canada), and elsewhere in the USA, Sweden, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain.

The ensemble celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2009–10, curating the 20in09 Festival, supported by Arts Council England and PRS for Music Foundation, with a series of events across London including Hoxton Hall, Oxford House, Mossbourne Community

Academy, Brunel University, Trinity College of Music, and the Ether Festival at the Southbank Centre.

Piano Circus has a strong commitment to music education and has built a reputation for “hands on” good-quality education projects throughout its existence, both in the UK and internationally. Their education program has included projects at UK summer schools, Dartington Plus, and Vale of Glamorgan Festival; workshops in Indonesia, France, and Budapest; composition and technology sessions with Contemporary Music for All (CoMA); and workshops for London music universities and colleges.

Recent projects include a project in partnership with Newcastle and Durham Universities, as part of I3, the composition strand of the Centre for Excellence in Music and Inclusivity. Workshops in 2009–10 included the Exhibition Road Festival for young composers and performers, presenting the BBC Proms “Family Music Intro for Multiple Piano Day” broadcast on BBC Radio 3, Keyboard Collective Project (sound festival, Scotland), and the company’s new role as associate ensemble for Young Composer of Dyfed. They have been Associate Artists at Brunel University, West London, since 2004.

The ensemble has made numerous radio and TV appearances over its 21-year history, including the BBC’s *National Lottery Show*, *The Score*, *What’s That Noise?*, *The Late Show*, *Radio 3 In Tune*, *Resonance fm*, *Late Junction*, *Mixing It*, *Radio 4 Kaleidoscope*, *World Service International Recital*, and *Meridian*, as well as appearances on Classic FM and stations worldwide. UK features on Piano Circus have appeared in *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *Time Out*, *BBC Music Magazine*, *The Wire*, *Scotland on Sunday*, *Classical Music Magazine*, and *The Piano*.

www.pianocircus.com

COMPANY ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Piano Circus acknowledges the support of the British Council, the Britten Pears Foundation, Brunel University, PRS for Music Foundation, and the Yamaha Corporation.



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Peak Performances presents:

Piano Circus Trilogies

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PROGRAM

US Premieres!
Squiggle Zipper, Ebb Cast, and Double Trio Colin Riley (b. 1963)

Film created by William Simpson and Simon McCorry.

~~Intermission~~

Log, Line, Loud Graham Fitkin (b. 1963)

Grand pianos provided by:  STEINWAY & SONS

Double Trio was commissioned by Piano Circus, supported in part by the Britten Pears Foundation.

Piano Circus's 2011 US performances are supported in part by Brunel University, PRS for Music Foundation, and the British Council.

Duration: 1 hour 50 minutes, including one 20-minute intermission.

In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted inside the theater.

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To view our complete season and for more information, visit www.peakperfs.org.

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Peak Performances

SEASON
 11/12



Credit: Al Lapkovsky

Piano Circus Trilogies October 1, 2011 • 8:00pm Alexander Kasser Theater Montclair State University