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American Contemporary Music Ensemble (ACME) and Roomful of Teeth

Office of Arts + Cultural Programming

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American Contemporary Music Ensemble (ACME)

Roomful of Teeth

Works of Caroline Shaw, Gavin Bryars, and Henry Purcell

**ACME**

Clarice Jensen, Artistic Director

Ben Russell, violin

Laura Lotze, violin

Yuki Tomita Resnik, viola

Clarice Jensen, cello

**Roomful of Teeth**

Bad Wells, Artistic Director

Estelí Gomez, soprano

Sarah Bradley, soprano

Caroline Shaw, alto

Virginia Warnken, alto

Eric Dudley, tenor

Avery Griffin, baritone

Deshone Burt, bass-baritone

Cameron Beauchamp, bass

**Program**

Fantasia no. 10 in E Minor, Z.741 (1680)  
Henry Purcell (1659–1695)

Fantasia upon One Note, Z.745 (1680)  
Purcell

Jesus’ Blood Never Failed Me Yet (1971)  
Gavin Bryars (b. 1943)

Partita for 8 Voices (2009–2012)  
Caroline Shaw (b. 1982)

~Intermission~

Fantasia no. 6 in F Major, Z.737 (1680)  
Purcell

*Ritornello 2.3* (2015; world premiere of version for strings and voices)  
Film by Caroline Shaw

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Montclair State’s Office of Arts & Cultural Programming (ACP) presents and produces leading artists of the world in dance, music, theater, and opera. Under its signature series Peak Performances, ACP has produced works such as: *Oedipus*; *The Life of Clementine Hunter* by Robert Wilson; *Bernard Johnson Reagan, Tosha Reagion*, and *Jacqueline Woodson*; *Dog Days* by David T. Little and Royce Vavrek; *Furious Planet* by Wayne McGregor, Laurie Anderson, Romeo Castellucci, Richard Alston, Fred Hersch, and David Gordon.
Jesus’ Blood Never Failed Me Yet

In 1971, when I lived in London, I was working with a friend, Alan Power, on a film about people living rough in the area around Elephant and Castle and Waterloo Station. In the course of being filmed, some people broke into dancing—song and a technical wall drawing directions of the artist Sol LeWitt, suddenly coagulating into a bright, angular tune that never keeps its feet but is very, very long. There are allusions to the movement’s intended simulation of motion and space in the short phrases of text throughout, which are sometimes sung and sometimes embedded as spoken text.

Saranandra’s quiet restraint in the beginning is punctuated in the middle by an ecstatic, belted melody that rests entirely at the end, followed by the after the initial–inspired hocketed breaths of Courante. A wordless question of the American folk hymn “Shining Shore” appears at first as a single seagull but later recombines with the rhythmic breaths as this longest movement is propelled to its final gap. Particella is a set of variations on a repeated chord progression, first experimenting simply with vowel timbre, then expanding into a fuller texture with the return of the Sol LeWitt text. At Particella’s premiere in 2009, there was spontaneous applause and cheering at the explosive return of the D-major chord near the end—so feel free to holler or clap any time if you feel like it.

Of the premiere of Particella, New York magazine wrote that I had “discovered a lot of the nastiest commodity in contemporary music: joy.” And it is with joy that this piece is meant to be received in years to come.

—Caroline Shaw

Ritornello 2.3

Ritornello 2.3 is the latest iteration of a long-term musical project, Ritornello, that has its roots in the 17th-century music of Monteverdi and its recent branches in experiments with Roomful of Teeth and ACME.

Sometime it is the smallest thing that returns—again and again and again. Sometimes repetition enhances meaning. Repeatability means. Depicts, it warps. Envelops. It is the simplest words, the shortest movement. These pieces illustrate the transition from the 15th and 16th centuries to the rise of instrumental music, which is never static. (For tonight, I have threaded throughout the entire three minutes of a repeated chord progression, first experimenting simply with vowel timbre, then expanding into a fuller texture with the return of the Sol LeWitt text. At Particella’s premiere in 2009, there was spontaneous applause and cheering at the explosive return of the D-major chord near the end—so feel free to holler or clap any time if you feel like it.)

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About the Artists

Caroline Shaw

Caroline Shaw Chou was a New York–based musician appearing in many different guises. Traying previous projects, I have developed a strong personal relationship with the texture of the viol, and I have been playing the viol since I was a young child. My viol playing has been influenced by the studies of Vivaldi.

I have performed as both a soloist and as part of an ensemble with various groups, including the National Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. I have also been a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

In addition to my viol playing, I have also been interested in the study of traditional music from around the world, including the music of the Tuva and the Inuit. I have worked extensively with the Tuva throat singers, and I have also been involved in the creation of music for the Tuva people.

Caroline Shaw has received numerous awards and commissions for her work, including a Pulitzer Prize in 2013 for her work in contemporary music, as well as a Grammy Award for Best Classical Album in 2014. She is the founder and artistic director of InRoomful of Teeth, a vocal ensemble dedicated to the performance of contemporary music. She has also been a member of the groups A Winged Victory for the Sullen and Roomful of Teeth.

The project’s debut album, Roomful of Teeth, was released in 2012 and was nominated in three categories for the 56th Grammy Awards in 2014, including Best Engineered Album, Classical, Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance, and Best Contemporary Classical Composition for Caroline Shaw’s Partita for 8. The album was named one of the year’s best by the American Library Association Music Division.

In 2015, Caroline Shaw released her second album, Anonymous, which features a collection of works by various composers, including Vivaldi, Mozart, and Beethoven. The album was praised for its creative and innovative approach to the performance of classical music.

—Caroline Shaw

Program Notes

In 2013, I gave myself a challenge to write the same music for voices and for strings, separately. It was a way for me to consider both the history of early viol and vocal music as well as my own relationship to my two main musical arms—my voice and my violin. This became Roomful of Teeth, a 30-minute work in two versions, one for Roomful of Teeth and one for a string quartet subset of ACME.

Tonight’s performance is a dream of mine—a collaboration between Roomful of Teeth and ACME. It is a celebration of how voices are instruments and how voices are used in ways both very old and very new. It is a demonstration of how voices are instruments throughout his ecstatic Jesus’ music, which is never static. (For tonight, I have threaded throughout the entire three minutes of a repeated chord progression, first experimenting simply with vowel timbre, then expanding into a fuller texture with the return of the Sol LeWitt text. At Particella’s premiere in 2009, there was spontaneous applause and cheering at the explosive return of the D-major chord near the end—so feel free to holler or clap any time if you feel like it.)

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ACME was founded by cellist Jarren Jørgensen, conductor, and publicist Christina Jensen and has received support from The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, New Music USA’s Cary New Music Performance Fund, and the Greenwall Foundation.

Roomful of Teeth

Founded in 2009 by Brad Wells, Roomful of Teeth is a vocal project dedicated to making the expressive potential of the human voice. Through study with masters from nonclassical traditions the world over, the eight-voice ensemble continually expands its vocabulary of singing techniques and through ongoing commissioning projects, invites today’s brightest composers to create a new repertoire without borders.

The ensemble gathers annually at Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MoCA), where they perform their signature show. Accompanied by jangling yodeling, blustering throat singing, Korean pansori, Georgian singing, Sandanori cantata a l’indomito, Hindustani thumri, and Persian classicism, the ensemble performs where ever one can hear with the Roots. Roomful of Teeth

ACME's performances as “vital,” “brilliant,” and “electricity.” Time Out New York reports, “[Artistic Director Clarice] Jensen has earned a reputation for her fresh, inclusive mix of minimalist, maximalist, electric new and acoustic.” ACME has performed at leading venues across the country including (Le) Poisson Rouge, Carnegie Hall, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Joyce Theater, New York Live Arts, Whitney Museum, Senggenbaum Museum, Columbia University’s Miller Theatre, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Symphony Space, Stanford Live, LSO’s Royal Festival Hall, Virginia Tech, Newman Center at the University of Denver, Flynn Center, South Milwaukee Performing Arts Center, Montclair State’s Peak Performances, and At Tomorrow’s Parties in the UK, among others. ACME can be heard on the New World Records and New Amsterdam Records labels.

ACME’s instrumentation is flexible and includes some of the world’s most sought-after, engaging musicians. Core ACME members include violinists Caroline Shaw and Rafael Krueger, cellists Muneta Rinsaku, and Laura Lutzke; violists Nadia Sirota and Callin Lynch; cellist and artistic director Clarice Jensen; flutists Alex SSP and Andrew Riehle; pianist Michael Nematny; and singer, performing primarily contemporary classical music, she has taken commissions to create new work for the Carmel Bach Festival, the Cincinnati Symphony, the Guggenheim Museum, Columbia University’s Miller Theatre, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Symphony Space, Stanford Live, LSO’s Royal Festival Hall, Virginia Tech, Newman Center at the University of Denver, Flynn Center, South Milwaukee Performing Arts Center, Montclair State’s Peak Performances, and At Tomorrow’s Parties in the UK, among others. ACME can be heard on the New World Records and New Amsterdam Records labels.

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It’s designed intentionally as a general project that could expand and contract like an accordion (be unfolded and folded unfolded and again, slightly differently). I know that it will be something to return to, again and again, for many years.

—Caroline Shaw