

# THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS

*Multiple (12th c.)*

**Selections from Codex Calixtinus (arr. Alex Fortes)**

Regem regum dominum (Anonymous)

Benedicamus trope: Nostra phalanx plaudat leta  
(Bishop Ato of Troyes)

Prosa: Portum in ultimo (Bishop Ato of Troyes)

Benedicamus trope: Congaudeant catholici  
(Magister Albertus Parisiensis)

*J.S. Bach (1685–1750)*

**Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor BWV 1043**

**Stefan Jackiw & Alexi Kenney, violins**

Vivace

Largo ma non tanto

Allegro

*Lembit Beecher (b. 1980)*

**The Conference of the Birds (World Premiere)**

The Conference

Valleys

The Reflection in the Lake

## INTERMISSION

*Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)*

**Tabula Rasa**

**Stefan Jackiw & Alexi Kenney, violins**

Ludus

Silentium

VIOLIN

Alex Fortes

Guillaume Pirard\*

Jae Cosmos Lee

Jesse Irons

Katherine Winterstein\*

Liesl Schoenberger Doty

Megumi Stohs Lewis

Miki-Sophia Cloud

Zenas Hsu\*

BASS

Erik Higgins

Karl Doty

PIANO/HARPSICHORD

Benjamin Katz\*

\* *Guest Crier*

+ *Crier Emeritus*

VIOLA

Frank Shaw+

Jason Fisher

Margaret Dyer Harris+

Sarah Darling

CELLO

Karen Ouzounian

Loewi Lin

Michael Unterman

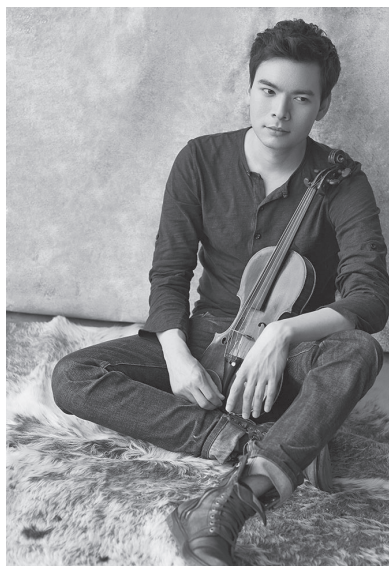


**A FAR CRY** stands at the forefront of an exciting new generation in classical music. According to The New York Times, the self-conducted orchestra “brims with personality or, better, personalities, many and varied.” A Far Cry was founded in 2007 by a tightly-knit collective of 17 young professional musicians, and since the beginning has fostered those personalities. A Far Cry has developed an innovative process where decisions are made collectively and leadership rotates among the “Criers.” For each piece, a group of principals is elected by the members, and these five musicians guide the rehearsal process and shape the interpretation. Since each program includes multiple works, this multiplicity of leaders adds tremendous musical variety to the concerts.

A Far Cry’s omnivorous approach has led the group to collaborations with artists such as Yo-Yo Ma, Jake Shimabukuro, Urbanity Dance, and Roomful of Teeth. By expanding the boundaries of orchestral repertoire and experimenting with the ways music is prepared, performed, and experienced, A Far Cry has been embraced throughout the world with hundreds of performances coast to coast and across the globe, and a powerful presence on the Internet. In October 2014, A Far Cry launched its in-house label, Crier Records, with the album *Dreams and Prayers*, which received critical acclaim and a GRAMMY nomination. The second release, *Law of Mosaics*, followed in November 2014 and has also garnered much critical attention, including many 2014

Top-10 lists, notably from The New Yorker music critic Alex Ross and WQXR's Q2 Music, which named A Far Cry as one of the "Imagination-Grabbing, Trailblazing Artists of 2014."

The eighteen Criers are proud to call Boston home, and maintain strong roots in the city, rehearsing at their storefront music center in Jamaica Plain and fulfilling the role of Chamber Orchestra in Residence at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Collaborating with local students through an educational partnership with the New England Conservatory, A Far Cry aims to pass on the spirit of collaboratively-empowered music to the next generation.



Violinist **STEFAN JACKIW** is recognized as one of his generation's most significant artists, captivating audiences with playing that combines poetry and purity with an impeccable technique. Hailed for playing of "uncommon musical substance" that is "striking for its intelligence and sensitivity" (Boston Globe), Jackiw has appeared as soloist with the Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco symphony orchestras, among others.

In recent seasons, Jackiw made his Carnegie Hall recital debut performing Stravinsky, Brahms, Strauss and the world premiere of a new work for piano and violin by David Fulmer. Other recent highlights include performances with the St. Louis Symphony under Nicholas McGegan, and with the Rotterdam Philharmonic under Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Stefan's recent return engagements include performances with the Indianapolis Symphony under Krzysztof Urbanski, the Pittsburgh Symphony under Juraj Valcuha, and the Kansas City Symphony under Michael Stern.

Stefan has recorded for Sony the complete Brahms sonatas, hailed by Fanfare as “now the recording of the Brahms sonatas to have”. He is also a member of Ensemble Ditto, a wildly popular Korea-based chamber music group, with a mission to introduce new audiences to the chamber music repertoire. Ensemble Ditto plays to sold out halls across the country, presenting works from Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven to George Crumb, Steve Reich, and John Zorn.

Stefan made his European debut age 14 to great critical acclaim, playing the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto with the Philharmonia Orchestra. His sensational performance was featured on the front page of London’s Times, and the Strad reported, “A 14-year-old violinist took the London music world by storm.” Stefan has also performed abroad with the London Philharmonic, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, l’Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Ulster Orchestra of Ireland, the Seoul Philharmonic, and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin.

Stefan is also an active recitalist and chamber musician. He has performed in numerous important festivals and concert series, including the Aspen Music Festival, Ravinia Festival, and Caramoor International Music Festival, the Celebrity Series of Boston, New York’s Mostly Mozart Festival, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Washington Performing Arts Society and the Louvre Recital Series in Paris. As a chamber musician, Stefan has collaborated with such artists as Jeremy Denk, Steven Isserlis, Yo-Yo Ma, and Gil Shaham. He is a regular participant at the Seattle Chamber Music Festival, the Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival, and the Bravo! Vail Valley Music and Bard Music Festivals. At the opening night of Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall in New York, Stefan was the only young artist invited to perform, playing alongside such artists as Emanuel Ax, Renée Fleming, Evgeny Kissin, and James Levine.

Born in 1985 to physicist parents of Korean and German descent, Stefan Jackiw began playing the violin at the age of four. His teachers have included Zinaida Gilels, Michèle Auclair, and Donald Weilerstein. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Harvard University, as well as an Artist Diploma from the New England Conservatory, and is the recipient of a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. He lives in New York City.



The recipient of a 2016 Avery Fisher Career Grant, violinist **ALEXI KENNEY** has been praised by the New York Times for “... immediately drawing listeners in with his beautifully phrased and delicate playing.” His win at the 2013 Concert Artists Guild Competition at the age of nineteen led to his critically acclaimed Carnegie Hall debut recital at Weill Hall.

Alexi's 2016-17 season began this summer with unaccompanied recitals at New York's Mostly Mozart Festival at David Geffen Hall, and at Festival Napa Valley (formerly Festival del Sole). Concerto highlights this season include performances with the Indianapolis, Jacksonville (FL), Santa Fe, Riverside, and Tulare County (CA) symphonies, as well as A Far Cry and the Staatstheater Orchester in Cottbus, Germany.

He has given recitals at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., Jordan Hall and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, Napa's Festival del Sole, Chicago's Dame Myra Hess series, and the Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts, and he has been featured on Performance Today, WQXR-NY's Young Artists Showcase, WFMT-Chicago, and NPR's From the Top. Recent concerto engagements include the Santa Fe Symphony, Las Vegas Philharmonic and Roswell Symphony in New Mexico, the Hofheim Academy Orchestra in Bad Soden, Germany, and the NEC Philharmonia at Symphony Hall in Boston.

A passionate chamber musician, Alexi has performed at Caramoor, “Chamber Music Connects the World” at the Kronberg Academy, ChamberFest Cleveland, the Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival, Marlboro, Music@Menlo, Open Chamber Music at Prussia Cove, Ravinia, Yellow Barn, and on tour with Musicians from Ravinia’s Steans Institute, collaborating with artists including Pamela Frank, Miriam Fried, Gary Graffman, Steven Isserlis, Kim Kashkashian, Gidon Kremer, and Christian Tetzlaff. He has an upcoming tour with Musicians from Marlboro in 2017.

He is the recipient of top prizes at the Yehudi Menuhin International Competition (2012), the Mondavi Center Competition (2010), and the 2013 Kronberg Academy master classes. He was praised by Strings magazine for his “beautiful, aching tone” for a performance of the Sibelius Concerto with the China Philharmonic Orchestra in Beijing during the Menuhin Competition.

Born in Palo Alto, California in 1994, Alexi Kenney received his Bachelor’s of Music degree from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, where he is currently the only violinist in its selective Artist Diploma program. At NEC he studies with Donald Weilerstein and Miriam Fried on the Charlotte F. Rabb Presidential Scholarship. Former teachers include Wei He, Jenny Rudin, and Natasha Fong.

Alexi plays on the “Joachim-Ma” Stradivari of 1714, the violin used by Joseph Joachim for the premiere performance of the Brahms Concerto, through the generosity of the New England Conservatory.



Praised by The San Francisco Chronicle as “hauntingly lovely and deeply personal,” **LEMBIT BEECHER**’s music combines “alluring” textures (The New York Times) and vividly imaginative colors with striking emotional immediacy. Noted for his collaborative spirit and “ingenious” interdisciplinary projects (The Wall Street Journal), Lembit is currently the composer-in-residence of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, having previously served a three-year term as the inaugural composer-in-residence of Opera Philadelphia in collaboration with Gotham Chamber Opera and Music-Theatre Group.

A constant across his wide range of works is a potent sense of drama, which manifests itself through a quirky, thoughtful musical language, filled with both poignant intimacy and propulsive rhythmic energy. Born to Estonian and American parents, Lembit grew up under the redwoods in Santa Cruz, California, a few miles from the wild Pacific. Since then he has lived in Boston, Houston, Ann Arbor, Berlin, New York and Philadelphia, earning degrees from Harvard, Rice and the University of Michigan. This varied background has made him particularly sensitive to place, ecology, memory, and the multitude of ways in which people tell stories.

Recent and upcoming premieres include “The Conference of the Birds” for A Far Cry, as well as new works for the Diderot Quartet, Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings/University of Michigan Symphony Band, Opera Philadelphia and the Juilliard Quartet.

THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS



Many of Lembit's latest projects involve the incorporation of non-traditional elements into operatic form, working with baroque instruments, electronic sounds, animation, new technologies, and devised theatre actors.

In 2015 he received a major grant from the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage to develop and produce "To Hide in a Tree of Sound," a chamber opera for soprano Kiera Duffy, the Aizuri Quartet, and a multi-piece sound sculpture, built in collaboration with architects and engineers at the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University's ExCITE Center. Lembit's New York City opera debut came in 2014 with Gotham Chamber Opera's premiere of "I Have No Stories To Tell You", written with librettist Hannah Moscovitch and staged in the medieval sculpture hall of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Grand Prize Winner of the S&R Foundation's 2015 Washington Award, Lembit has been in residence at the MacDowell Colony, Copland House, Penn Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, White Mountains Festival, and Scrag Mountain Music. He was also a graduate fellow at the University of Michigan Institute for the Humanities, and served as Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at Denison University. His primary teachers have included Evan Chambers, Bright Sheng, Karim Al-Zand, Pierre Jalbert, Kurt Stallmann and Bernard Rands.

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## **SELECTIONS FROM THE CODEX CALIXTINUS**

It is thanks to a handful of codices that have miraculously survived wear and tear, weather, war, fire, or any of a laundry list of types of loss, that we have a concrete connection to the thoughts and music of the past. The Codex Calixtinus, which deals mostly with accounts of the life and work of Saint James, is attributed to Pope Callixtus II and originates from the 12th century for pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago, or “Way of St. James,” pathways that lead to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, where the remains of the saint are said to be at rest.

The manuscript is divided into several books and appendixes, three of which include music. Valued as early examples of polyphony (or music with multiple lines occurring simultaneously, in contrast to the single-line chant that was typical of earlier centuries), the codex includes what some scholars believe is the first (documented) example of music for three voices.

### **JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750) CONCERTO FOR TWO VIOLINS IN D MINOR, BWV 1043**

Often referred to by the simple nickname “Bach Double,” Bach’s concerto for two violins remains one of his most popular works. The exact date of composition is unknown, though it begins to appear on lists of Bach’s compositions around 1730.

A likely period for the double concerto’s inception might have been during Bach’s years working for the Prince of Anhalt-Köthen in the early 1720s. Whereas most of Bach’s employment posts revolved around composing music for the church, here his services were directed toward composing secular court music. These years produced the orchestral suites, solo partitas, and the great solo cello suites, among other works.

It is known that Bach’s introduction to the Italian concerto style began during his second tenure in Weimar, where he was

employed from 1708-1717. Given his cornerstone status in the world of music today, it can be easy to forget that in his lifetime Bach barely traveled more than a few hundred miles from his hometown, and spent most of his career nurturing and developing his enormous creative capacity in environments that did not always appreciate the scope of his ambitions—ambitions not for fame, but for excellence in every aspect of music making. In an era when the only way to hear music of different composers was through live performance, and copies of music were few, Bach was fortunate enough to have found then opportunity in the court in Weimar to study the scores of the Italians, Antonio Vivaldi (making transcriptions of several of his works) and Arcangelo Corelli (who was a superstar violinist and composer known throughout all of Europe). This proved to be deeply impactful on him, as multiple works in the concerto style would be written (and re-written as Bach tended to repurpose his compositions—the “Double” eventually became the concerto for two harpsichords in C minor, for example) over the rest of his lifetime.

#### LEMBIT BEECHER (B. 1980) THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS

*“The Conference of the Birds” is a 12th-century Sufi epic poem by the Persian poet Farid ud-Din Attar. It tells a story about the birds of the world who gather together in a time of strife. Led by the hoopoe bird, they decide to set out on a long journey to find their king. Many birds desert or die along the journey, but after passing through valley after valley, the remaining 30 arrive at a lake at the top of a mountain. Looking in the lake at their own reflection, they finally see their king. I first came across it through an adaptation by the brilliant Czech-American illustrator and author Peter Sís. This was one of the most beautiful books I had ever seen: an adult picture book with an unusual graphic sensibility, a concise and beautifully ambiguous text, and full-page illustrations of mysterious landscapes that carried surprising emotional weight. Numerous adaptations of the original poem, including plays, children’s books and pieces of music, emphasized the story’s simple yet colorful narrative and moral didacticism, but what drew me to Sís’s version, aside from the expressive, textural*

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*drawings which so suggested music, was the deep sense of loss in the pages. So many birds are left by the wayside during this journey towards truth and enlightenment. Does progress or attempted progress always come at a cost?*

*I initially thought about trying to turn the story into an opera—but I realized I was less interested in the narrative scope of the story than in the emotions and visceral energy of specific moments. I also knew I wanted to write music as Sís created his drawings, with strong gestures and lots of small figures combining to form large shapes. A string orchestra seemed perfect for creating solo lines that gathered into clouds of sounds. When I began talking to A Far Cry about writing a piece, I realized this would be a perfect project for the group. Having gotten to know the group, I wanted to write music for individual personalities: each member of the ensemble has his/her own part. These parts join each other in different combinations, but just as quickly split up again. The leadership of the music, and the relationship of individuals to the group is always changing. As I wrote I thought about the power of crowds, and the value of individuality versus unity, but I also thought about the players of A Far Cry, and how much I admire the way they function as an ensemble, share leadership, and make music together. “The Conference of the Birds” is about 20 minutes long and is in three movements. The final two are played without a pause.*

—LB

## ARVO PÄRT (B. 1935)

### TABULA RASA

In the earlier years of his career, the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt composed his music in a modernist style, sometimes experimenting with serialism, and atonality. Soviet government officials frowned upon this, but Pärt would soon find an entirely new sound based on ancient tones. After taking time to reevaluate his compositional methods in the late 1970s, along with studying Bach, Gregorian chant, and Russian Orthodox sacred music, Pärt arrived at a new compositional philosophy that he called “tintinnabulation” (“bells”). Explaining the technique, the composer has noted: “Tintinnabulation is like this. Here, I am alone in silence. I have discovered that it is enough when a single note is beautifully played...I build with the most primitive materials—with the triad, with one specific tonality. The three notes of a triad are like bells. And that is why I call it tintinnabulation.”

Tintinnabuli, the ringing/sound of bells, alludes to the mathematical division of a note’s sound wave into the overtone series, the basis of Western music theory and its harmonic progressions, which is heard in the chaotic timbre of a ringing bell. Essentially, if you strike a single note, you are not just hearing that note but an entire sequence working together (the “fundamental” and its “partials,” to use the lingo). Thus, when you hear A-natural you also sympathetically hear other tones from the A scale in a sequence of 5ths, 4ths, 3rds, and so on: A, E, A, C-sharp, E, etc.—a musical universe orbiting a single note.

For a decade Pärt was effectively silent as he studied, contemplated, and crafted. In 1977 he reemerged with three pieces using tintinnabulation as their compositional syntax: *Fratres*, *Cantus In Memoriam Benjamin Britten*, and *Tabula Rasa*. He has been writing in this style ever since.

*Tabula Rasa*, meaning “blank slate” in Latin, is divided into two sections: *Ludus* (“games”), and *Silentium* (“silence”), and was dedicated to the violinist Gidon Kremer, who premiered the piece along with violinist Tatjana Gritenko, and includes a “prepared” piano, where objects are lodged in the instrument’s string to manipulate the emission of a metallic, almost chime-like sound.

After an arresting opening where the two violins play the same pitch (A) in distant octaves the games commence. Silence and sound alternate, and everything revolves around the A pitch with one voice weaving a melody while the other outlines the triad of A minor (A-C-E). Variations on patterns occur throughout the duration, as lines are expanded, contracted, and reversed. In *Silentium* the lines move in pairs at varying speeds, punctuated by the prepared piano every time the solo violins, whose parts have been slowly adding notes, reach the central note of this movement: D. In the tintinnabular style, there are very few pitches employed, but their distribution in time, and their relationship to the silence that surrounds their existence, builds out the haunting beauty of the sound.

*Program Notes by Kathryn J Allwine Bacasmot. Kathryn is a pianist/harpsichordist, musicologist, music & cultural critic, and freelance writer. She is a graduate of New England Conservatory, and writes program annotations for ensembles nationwide.*

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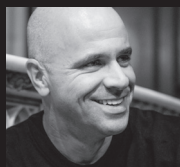
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A special thank you to our network of Crier volunteers, and to those generous hosts who house our guest musicians.

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Joy Wang  
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*If you would like to learn more about housing a musician—or other volunteer opportunities—speak to any Crier or contact us at: [info@afarcry.org](mailto:info@afarcry.org)*

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# A FAR CRY — 10



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