



presents

Members of SONOS Chamber Orchestra and Friends

James Nyoraku Schlefer, *shakuhachi*
Min Xiao-Fen, *pipa*

Members of SONOS Chamber Orchestra:
Gabriel Schaff, *violin*
Anna Starkey, *violin*
Junah Chung, *viola*
Eliot Bailen, *cello*

Erik E. Ochsner, *conductor*

March 20, 2009
8:00 pm

Arts at Tenri Cultural Institute
43A W. 13th Street, NYC
(212) 645-2800 / artsat.tenri.org

Program Notes

Program

Impermanence, in memory of Karlheinz Stockhausen for shakuhachi and string quartet (US Premiere)

James Cuddeford b. 1975

Quintet for shakuhachi and string quartet (NY Premiere)

James Nyoraku Schlefer b. 1956

Allegro moderato
Slow Blues - Andante
Allegro

I n t e r m i s s i o n

**Ghost Opera for string quartet and pipa,
with water, stone, paper and metal**

Tan Dun b. 1957

Impermanence, in memory of Karlheinz Stockhausen for shakuhachi and string quartet
James Cuddeford

The composer writes: "Impermanence," for shakuhachi and string quartet, was begun soon after hearing of the death of the great composer Karlheinz Stockhausen in December 2007. Stockhausen has been a tremendous influence on my musical thinking ever since I first encountered his music as a twelve year old.

The string quartet is spaced widely around the shakuhachi player, and it functions almost like a four track tape in its spatial rotations and strict pitch trajectories. The central solo shakuhachi part operates within this activity- a parallel to how each individual soul relates itself to the vastness of the universe. The central calm section, in which the shakuhachi player must walk whilst playing, echoes both the "komuso" tradition and Stockhausen's own integration of movement into instrumental performance."

Quintet for shakuhachi and string quartet
James Nyoraku Schlefer

The composer writes: "Quintet for Shakuhachi, Two Violins, Viola and Cello was written with three of my favorite elements of music at the forefront; rhythm, structure, and the combined sound of a string quartet with shakuhachi. The three-movement form recalls a Baroque-era concerto grosso, with its fast-slow-fast structure, but within a distinctly contemporary musical idiom. Both the first and last movements have substantial solos for both the violins and the shakuhachi.

The first movement is in two sections. The first part revolves around a disturbing melody that recurs several times. This gives way, first to an energetic call and response between the shakuhachi and first violin, and then to a lighter pizzicato section that resolves the unease of the main melody but leaves the listener questioning. The second movement starts as a blues and devolves into a section of despair. The shakuhachi cadenzas are in the style of the traditional music of Zen meditation. The third movement is in rondo form and presents a jagged main theme that recurs throughout and is punctuated by several solo passages for the shakuhachi and violins."

Ghost Opera for string quartet and pipa, with water, stone, paper and metal
Tan Dun

The composer writes: "My whole village was crazy. We had a professional crying team available for hire at funerals and deaths... a shamanistic choir to set the mournful tone. In Hunan, where I grew up, people believed they would be rewarded for their sufferings after death. Death was the "white happiness," and musical rituals launched the spirit into the territory of the new life. Instruments were improvised: pots and pans, kitchen tools and bells. The celebration of the remote was grounded in everyday life.

During the Cultural Revolution my family was completely broken. My mother was transformed into a "barefoot doctor," according to Mao's dictum. My father, the administrator of a research institute, was sent in the other direction, out to the farms to clean bathrooms. Freedom was a poison in that Society.

The tradition of "ghost opera" is thousands of years old. The performer of "ghost opera" has a dialogue with his past and future life – a dialogue between past and future, spirit and nature.

When Ghost Opera debuted in Beijing, there were more than 1,500 people. They knew the folk song and they recognized the ancient tradition, but they did not know that a string quartet could play stones along Bach, and play paper, gongs, water, and voice.

It is really beautiful to see Ghost Opera performed. A great glass bowl is set on a pillar and lit underneath creating fantastic reflections. The first violinist draws his bow across a gong in the water, and plays the water with his hand; the other members of the quartet play Bach; you hear the exhalations of a ghostly monk; and then the pipa player begins to pluck the pipa. The sound of a folk song mingles with the Bach.

The second movement begins with the sound of distant plucking and ends with Bach, melting into the natural elements, becoming part of it. The monk exhales and conducts, but there's no sound. He conducts a silence.

In the third movement the folk song starts on the pipa, travels to the violin, and the Bach and the folk song are layered together. They fit together perfectly – two entirely different ages – and together they become something totally different.

In the fourth movement the string quartet plays all sorts of cymbals

and stones, striking them against each other; holding them to their mouths and cupping their hands to vary the tone: a stone trio. Then the violins imitate the stones and the gongs, and all is transformed into the string quartet.

A gong marks the transition to the fifth movement, The "little girl" (played by the pipa player) holds tiny bells and sings the lament of the "little cabbage" – a little girl who has lost her parents. Such an odd, sad song, it's the essence of ghosting. You can talk to the past, the stone can talk to the violin, and the cabbage can sing her sorrowful life.

The first violin recites the last text and a huge paper installation drops and is played. Bach returns and is broken into little pieces, mingling with the water gongs, sinking under water and disappearing."

Additional Credits:

Christen Methot, *lighting designer*
George Cowan, *sound designer*

ABOUT SONOS

SONOS Chamber Orchestra strives to be a vibrant alternative in the New York City cultural landscape. In a city that is internationally recognized for its active arts scene, SONOS seeks to discover adventurous works that offer artistic strength and potential beyond common acceptance and to expose audiences to the value of these compositions. At the same time, SONOS seeks to discover new venues and performance spaces, particularly in underserved neighborhoods of the city.

Under the direction of its founders: Music Director and Conductor Erik Ochsner, and musicians Allen Alexander and Pamela Ajango French, SONOS began its work by focusing and exploring artistic opportunities in the diverse and unique neighborhoods throughout Upper Manhattan, including Washington Heights, Inwood, and the Upper East Side.

SONOS currently is a flexible and versatile group of young professional musicians devoted to the promotion and performance of under-appreciated works from the traditional repertoire, along with innovative new works showcasing the talents of dedicated contemporary composers.

The SONOS Chamber Orchestra and Members of SONOS Chamber Orchestra are comprised of a diverse group of musicians drawn from local Manhattan resources, mostly graduates of the three main conservatories, Juilliard, Manhattan and Mannes, and are actively pursuing the rich music opportunities that New York City has to offer.

SONOS has performed in a wide variety of venues, including community concerts, established music series, charitable gala events, collaborative choral concerts, national celebrations, and even outdoor garden parties.

SONOS recently presented an educational workshop sponsored by the Flushing Art Council entitled *Beat in Music*.

SONOS also feels a responsibility to promote artistic development in a music education setting and to provide community outreach services.

Keep up to date with SONOS on the web
www.sonoschamberorch.org

Save the Date(s)!!

May 10, 2009, 3pm Good Shepherd Church (Inwood/Washington Heights)

May 13, 2009, 8pm Merkin Concert Hall at Kaufman Center

May 16, 2009, 8pm First Baptist Church (White Plains)

Join us for two World Premiere SONOS Commissions: James Nyoraku Schlefer's *Concerto for Shakuhachi and Chamber Orchestra* and Brian Wilbur Grundstom's *American Reflections for strings and harp*. In addition to the United States Premiere of Pehr Henrik Nordgren's *Cronaca* (in memoriam). Also on the program is vVaughan Williams' lush romantic writing for strings and harp in *Five Variants on Dive and Lazarus*.

GHOST OPERA: Cast & Synopsis

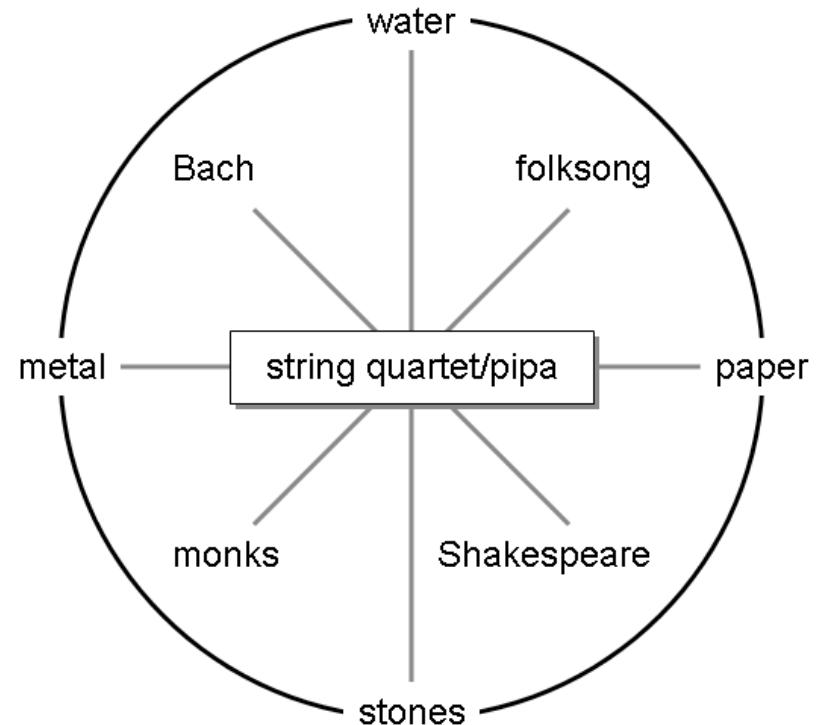
CAST

Now String Quartet and pipa

Past Bach, folksong, monks, Shakespeare

Forever water, stones, metal, paper

SYNOPSIS



LIBRETTO

ACT I: Bach, Monks, and Shakespeare Meet in Water

Bach: Prelude
 Monks: Ya O Ya
 Folksong: Xiao bai tsai ya (little cabbage ya)
 Di li huang ya (earth yellow ya)
 San liang suei ya (three or two years ya)
 Mei die niang ya (no papa, mama ya)
 Ya (ya)
 Shakespeare: We are such stuff
 As dreams are made on, and our little life
 is rounded with a sleep.
 Monk: Ya O

ACT II: Earth Dance

Bach: Prelude

ACT III: Dialogue with “Little Cabbage”**ACT IV: Metal and Stone**

Folksong: Tsai
 Di
 San
 Mei
 Ya

ACT V: Song of Paper

Shakespeare: Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
 leave not a rock behind.
 Monk: Ya
 Bach: Prelude



Brisbane-born **James Cuddeford** (b. 1975) commenced violin and composition studies at age 7, subsequently becoming the youngest student at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music. James won a full scholarship to study at the Yehudi Menuhin School in England, and at age 15 he was the youngest finalist in the BBC Young Composer of the Year. He continued his studies at the Royal Northern College of Music and the University of Manchester, graduating with distinction in composition. His principal teachers were Yehudi Menuhin, Wen Zhou Li and Gyorgy Kurtag. James has won a series of important competitions including the first prize in the 1996 Charles Hennen International Chamber Music Competition in Holland.

James has performed extensively throughout Europe, Asia and Australia as both soloist and chamber musician. He has frequently appeared at major international festivals in many of the world's most prestigious halls. As a chamber musician, James has collaborated with artists such as Charles Rosen, Stephen Kovacevich, Christina Ortiz, Heinz Holliger and Michel Dalberto. James has performed concertos with orchestras including the Camerata Lysy Switzerland, B.B.C. Scottish National, Jena Philharmonic Germany, Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Queensland, Adelaide and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras.

As a highly active and renowned interpreter of contemporary music, James has worked with and premiered the music of many of the most important composers of our time. James' own compositions have been performed and broadcasted in Europe, Asia and Australia by groups such as the Nash Ensemble, Australian String Quartet, Grainger Quartet, Psappha Ensemble and the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra.

He has also appeared as Guest Concertmaster with several orchestras and has given master classes at many major institutions around the world. James has recorded for ABC Classics, Tall Poppies and Melba Recordings.



James Nyoraku Schlefer (b. 1956) is a leading performer and teacher of shakuhachi in New York City. In addition to performing and lecturing on traditional Japanese shakuhachi music, Schlefer performs contemporary music for the instrument and is an active composer. He has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, Tanglewood, the Metropolitan, Brooklyn and Philadelphia Museums, & the Joyce Theater. Schlefer has four solo recordings, Wind Heart (which was aboard the Space Station MIR for over one year) Solstice Spirit, Flare Up, and In The Moment, and his music was featured on NPR's All Things Considered. He received the Dai-Shi-Han or Grand Master's Certificate in 2001, and in 2007, he received a second shi-han license, this one from Kurahashi Yoshio and the Mujuan Dojo in Kyoto. In Japan he has also worked with Aoki Reibo, Yokoyama Katsuya, Yoshinobu Taniguchi, and Mitsunashi Kifu. He holds a Master's degree in flute & musicology from Queens College and is on the CUNY faculty where he teaches courses in Classical Music, World Music and Jazz. www.nyoraku.com

ABOUT THE COMPOSERS



Tan Dun (b. 1957) spent his early childhood with his grandmother in the rural Si Mao Village in central Hunan. He planted rice during the cultural Revolution and then worked as a fiddle player for a provincial Peking opera troupe before being selected for the Central Conservatory of Beijing, where he spent eight years. When Tan Dun came to America in 1986, he was already a celebrity in China with a history of awards and controversy. Since winning the *Academy Award for Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, his career has continued to skyrocket both as a composer and conductor. He

has received commissions from the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic, and the Metropolitan Opera, and performed with international superstars like Yo-Yo Ma, and Placido Domingo, etc.

In 1983, Tan was awarded a Weber prize in Dresden for his String Quartet: *Feng Ya Song*. Although he was the first Chinese composer to win an international prize since 1949, Tan Dun was criticized for his inclination toward Western taste and lack of ideological fervor. For six months, performances and broadcasts of his music were prohibited!

In January 1986, at the invitation of composer Chou Wen-Chung, Tan Dun was offered a fellowship at Columbia University in New York, where he went on to earn his Doctor of Musical Arts degree. In 1998, he became the youngest winner of the Grawemeyer Award in Music, the world's most prestigious prize for composers, for his opera *Marco Polo*. He has composed three other operas: *Peony Pavillion*, *Tea: A Mirror of Soul*, and *The First Emperor*. www.tandunonline.com

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Please visit www.sonoschamberorch.org for more information.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

James Nyoraku Schlefer (see composer listing)



Pipa soloist and composer **Min Xiao Fen**, internationally known for her virtuosity and fluid style, has received high acclaim for her classical, new music and jazz performances. She learned the pipa from her father, Min Ji-Qian, a professor and pipa master at Nanjing University. At age 17, she was chosen by famed Nanjing Traditional Music Orchestra of China and became a pipa soloist for more than ten years. She also won first prize at the Jiangsu National Pipa Competition and eventually became a first class artist in China.

After Min moved to the United States in 1992, she was a featured soloist with the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the Pacific Symphony and the San Diego Symphony. She premiered Tan Dun's *Peony Pavilion*, an opera directed by Peter Sellars. She has also worked with composers John Zorn, Carl Stone, Chen Yi, Zhou Long, and Philip Glass, among many others. Min's solo recording *The Moon Rising* was hailed by BBC Music Magazine as "one of the best CDs of 1996." Her recording *Viper*, improvisations with Derek Bailey, was one of *The Wire Magazine's* 199B Albums of the Year.

In 2003, Min became the first Chinese musician invited to play at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City when she performed a solo set of the music of Thelonious Monk. In 2004, she was invited by the Preservation Hall Jazz Band of New Orleans to play as a special guest, and she also premiered composer Anthony De Ritis' pipa concerto *Ping Pong* with the Taipei Chinese Music Orchestra. Her piece *The Loneliest Monk* was commissioned and performed by The Kitchen House Blend in New York City. 2006 highlights included appearances with her Blue Pipa Trio at the JVC Jazz Festival and recordings for Bjork's new album *Volta*. She was a featured composer and performer for the American Composers Orchestra's "Composer Out Front" project. In March 2006, she premiered Huang Ruo's solo pipa work, "Written on the Wind," for *Meet the Composer*. Min is the founder of Blue Pipa Inc., and currently lives in New York City. www.bluepipa.org



Gabriel Schaff comes from a strong musical background. His mother was the renowned Philadelphia composer, musicologist, and flutist, Claire Polin, and one of his musical ancestors was the pre-eminent nineteenth century pianist and composer Anton Rubinstein. At the age of 16, he was accepted into Philadelphia's New School of Music, whose faculty included members of the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Curtis String Quartet. He transferred later to the Manhattan School of Music to begin a four-year scholarship with internationally acclaimed violin virtuoso, Erick Friedman. During his last two years at Manhattan, Schaff

served as Friedman's teaching assistant, and later chamber music collaborator.

Mr. Schaff is a free-lance violinist in the New York area, appearing regularly with symphony, opera, and ballet orchestras in the region, in addition to frequent chamber music and recital collaborations. In recent seasons, he has appeared with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra on their North American tour, the American Symphony Orchestra, the Stamford Symphony, Long Island Philharmonic, the Orchestra of St.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Luke's, Opera Orchestra of New York, Glimmerglass Opera, New Jersey Symphony, and is concertmaster for the SONOS Chamber Orchestra in New York City. International appearances have included collaborations in Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Finland, Holland, Russia, Jordan and Egypt, and many of his performances have been aired on National Public Radio and Television. His second CD of vocal chamber music was released in early 2004 on Ganymede Records.

Schaff is founder and artistic director of the Englewood Chamber Players, a non-profit organization consisting of some of the finest musicians in the New York area who perform for the communities in which they live. Additionally, he is a member of both the SONOS and Solo String Quartets. Mr. Schaff has been on the faculty of the Westminster Choir College, Eastern Music Festival, JCC on the Palisades, and Rutgers University, as a guest performer and lecturer. He is the author of *The Essential Guide to Bows of the Violin Family*.



Anna Starkey is an active, freelance violinist performing in chamber music ensembles and symphony orchestras in Europe and the US, including the International Festival of Contemporary Music, Strasbourg; St Endellion Festival, Cornwall and Bowdoin Summer Music Festival, Maine.

Anna came to New York eighteen months ago and has since performed with a variety of ensembles in and around the City; Manhattan Symphonie, Scandinavian Chamber Orchestra of NY, Allentown Symphony and the New Jersey Philharmonic Orchestra. In the Europe and the UK, Anna has appeared with the Camerata of London, New Chamber Opera, EMFEB Chamber Orchestra and the Young Janacek Philharmonic Orchestra among others.

Studying Musicology at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University, Anna was forefront in the city's musical scene, founding the Aldate String Quartet and playing concertmaster for the University orchestras as well as winning awards from her college and the University. The Aldate String Quartet regularly performed contemporary works, including the commission and premier of 'Poem' by John Caldwell. At the Royal College of Music, Anna continued her violin studies with Itzhak Rashkovsky and chamber music with Hugh Bean and the Chilingirian Quartet. Anna is delighted to be invited to play with SONOS, pursuing her interest and promotion of innovative new music.



Violist **Junah Chung** is an active chamber musician and recitalist. He is a member of Trio St. Germain, American Modern Ensemble and New York Philomusica. He has performed with groups such as the New York Philharmonic, American Ballet Theatre, and The Orchestra of St. Lukes. He studied with Lillian Fuchs and William Lincer at the Juilliard School where he received his Masters degree. Junah is an avid golfer.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS



Strings Magazine writes, "At Merkin Hall (NYC) 'cellist **Eliot Bailen** displayed a warm focused tone, concentrated expressiveness and admirable technical command always at the service of the music" (July, '99). Eliot Bailen is principal cello of the New York Chamber Ensemble, Westfield Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra New England, Teatro Grattacielo and the New Choral Society. Founder and Artistic Director of the Sherman Chamber Ensemble whose performances the New York Times has described as "the Platonic ideal of a chamber music concert."

(July, 2005), Mr. Bailen also performs regularly with the Saratoga Chamber Players, 'Modern Works, the Sebago-Long Lake Chamber Music Festival and is founder of Chamber Music at Rodeph Sholom in New York. He is assistant-principal cello of the Stamford Symphony and appears frequently with leading New York area orchestras such as New Jersey Symphony, New York City Opera, American Symphony and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. He has recorded for Nonesuch, Koch International, Deutsche Grammophon, Delos, New World, Beanstalk and Flying Dutchman Records and has been heard as solo cello in numerous Broadway shows. Mr. Bailen received his Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) from Yale University and is on the cello and chamber music faculty at Columbia University. He was awarded the 2002 Norman Vincent Peale Arts Award for Positive Thinking, the Slater Entrepreneurial Prize from NYU Stern School, a 1990 Parent's Choice Award and numerous ASCAP Popular Awards. Mr. Bailen has also received national attention as a prize-winning songwriter for children; his *Song to Symphony* project which presents children's original work in an orchestral setting was the subject of a 2006 New York Times feature article.



Christien Methot has designed lighting for entertainment and architectural projects in the United States and internationally for the last 18 years.

Credits include *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: The Music of Tan Dun*, for the Eos Orchestra, where his work was received with much critical acclaim. More recently, Mr. Methot collaborated on a staging of Mr. Tan's *Water Passion*, for the Perth International Music Festival in Australia; the LG Arts Center in South Korea; The Macau International Music Festival in China; at Brooklyn

Academy of Music's Harvey Theatre; and at the Bach festival in Eugene, Oregon (which was its US Premiere). Other credits include the original lighting design for *Spirit, the 7th Fire*, a Native American touring show conceived and composed by Peter Buffet.

Mr. Methot is the principal designer at **design one corporation**, a multi-disciplinary lighting design studio in New York City, with expertise in all aspects of theater, TV/Video, concerts, fashion and special events. The company's corporate clients including AT&T, Merck Pharmaceuticals, Banana Republic, Deutsche Bank, Target, and Heineken regularly seek out Mr. Methot and his formidable team.

Mr. Methot and design one offer fashion show and special event clients a proven team of dedicated senior designers as well as access to top production resources and personnel around the world.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Architectural lighting projects include Tumi Stores worldwide, The Jian Fu Palace Garden Complex in the Forbidden City in Beijing, China; numerous projects for Macklowe properties including the lobby and sales center at 340 Madison Ave, W Hotel Miami Night Club and many private homes all over the country.



Born and raised in the New York City area, **George Cowan** became enthralled with music, sound and recording at an early age. His first session -playing drums for a jazz band- at Marvin Gaye's studio in Hollywood captured his imagination and sealed his fate. From there George set his sights and went full throttle toward a career in recording and mixing. After earning degrees in recording and electronics, he landed a gig with Todd Rundgren and then on to working at Bearsville Studios, a world-class recording facility in the thriving musical community of Woodstock, NY.

During his tenure there, he came through the ranks learning from great mentors and as a result, developed a pragmatic approach that inspires confidence in the artists he works with and earns rave reviews from the audiences that enjoy the results. From recording and mixing Grammy-nominated albums to mixing live for audiences as large as forty thousand people (The Rose Bowl- Lillith Fair - Natalie Merchant), he has the experience and confidence needed to get the desired results.



SONOS Music Director **Erik Eino Ochsner** has recently returned from Luzern, where he was Assistant Conductor for Howard Shore's *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, Live to Projection*. The film is shown in high definition, while a live symphony orchestra and chorus perform the soundtrack. Ochsner conducted *The Lord of the Rings Symphony* with the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra, and has toured extensively.

Ochsner's association with Tan Dun began in 2002, and has since taken him around the globe with such projects as Assistant Conductor and Chorus Master for the workshop recording sessions of *The First Emperor*, Tan Dun's latest opera, a Metropolitan Opera commission. In 2007, Ochsner was one of three conductors invited by Tan Dun to perform in Stockholm's two-week Tan Dun composer festival. In 2008, Erik was rehearsal conductor for Tan Dun's *Tea: A Mirror of Soul* in Beijing.

As founder and Music Director of SONOS Chamber Orchestra, Ochsner has now performed 12 U.S. Premieres, 3 World premieres, and 1 New York premiere! A highpoint was to conduct the the United States premiere of Karl Jenkin's Requiem, in Inwood, New York. Erik and SONOS were the recipients of the 2003 American Scandinavian Society's Scandinavian Culture Advocacy Award.

In 2007, Ochsner conducted the Chinese premiere of Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, as part of the Beijing Modern Music Festival. In 2006, he conducted the West Saxony Symphony Orchestra in two concerts: all-Gershwin, and all-Mozart. The Leipziger Volkszeitung hailed his Gershwin concert as being "exact and rhythmic," and his Mozart as being "straightforward and dramatic."

Born in Würzburg, Germany, Erik attended Dartmouth College and currently resides in New York City. He is dual Finnish-American citizen, and collects requiems.

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CONCERT SEASON:**

Sunday, May 3, 7:30 PM

Albert Lotto, *piano*

Program to be announced.

For more information and updates please visit our website at
artsat.tenri.org

Friday, May 8, 8:00 PM

Yumi Kurosawa, *koto* - Marianna Rosett, *piano*

Contemporary music for koto and 20-string koto by Kurosawa,
and others.