**Program Notes Borusan Muzik Evi, Feb. 3, 2011**

**Osvaldo Golijov** (b. 1960)

Osvaldo Golijov grew up in an Eastern European Jewish household in La Plata, Argentina. Golijov was raised surrounded by classical chamber music, Jewish liturgical and klezmer music, and the new tango of Astor Piazzolla. He moved to Israel in 1983, where he studied with Mark Kopytman at the Jerusalem Rubin Academy. Golijov then earned his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania with George Crumb, and was a fellow at Tanglewood, studying with Oliver Knussen.

In the early 90's Golijov began to work closely with two string quartets, the St. Lawrence and the Kronos. Both ensembles were the earliest to project Golijov's volatile and category-defying style in its true, full form. In 2002, EMI released *Yiddishbbuk*, a Grammy-nominated CD of Golijov's chamber music, celebrating ten years of collaboration with the St. Lawrence String Quartet, featuring clarinetist Todd Palmer. The Kronos Quartet released three recordings featuring their collaborations with Golijov: *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*, featuring David Krakauer, as well as *Caravan*, and *Nuevo*. Kronos also expanded Golijov's musical family through collaborations with artists such as the Romanian Gypsy band Taraf de Haidouks, the Mexican Rock group Café Tacuba, tablas virtuoso Zakir Hussain, and legendary Argentine composer, guitarist and producer Gustavo Santaolalla, with whom Golijov continues to collaborate.

Golijov collaborates with Miguel Harth-Bedoya; vocalists Dawn Upshaw, Luciana Souza and Biella da Costa; cellists Yo-Yo Ma, Alisa Weilerstein, Maya Beiser and Matt Haimovitz; the Kamancheh virtuoso Kayhan Kalhor and percussionist Jamey Haddad; with ensembles including the Atlanta Symphony, the Boston Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, Silk Road Ensemble and eighth blackbird; and directors Francis Ford Coppola and Peter Sellars. He is Loyola Professor of Music at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA, where he has taught since 1991. In addition to *Ainadamar*, *Ayre, Oceana*, *Youth Without Youth, Tetro,* and the upcoming CD and DVD of the *St. Mark Passion*, Deutsche Grammophon will continue to release recordings of new works. His works are published by Ytalianna Music Publishing/Boosey and Hawkes.

**Osvaldo Golijov-The Dreams and Prayers of Issac the Blind (1994)**

"Eight centuries ago Isaac The Blind, the great kabbalist rabbi of Provence, dictated a manuscript in which he asserted that all things and events in the universe are product of combinations of the Hebrew alphabet's letters: 'Their root is in a name, for the letters are like branches, which appear in the manner of flickering flames, mobile, and nevertheless linked to the coal'. His conviction still resonates today: don't we have scientists who believe that the clue to our life and fate is hidden in other codes?

"Isaac's lifelong devotion to his art is as striking as that of string quartets and klezmer musicians. In their search for something that arises from tangible elements but transcends them, they are all reaching a state of communion. Gershom Scholem, the preeminent scholar of Jewish mysticism, says that 'Isaac and his disciples do not speak of ecstasy, of a unique act of stepping outside oneself in which human consciousness abolishes itself. *Debhequth* (communion) is a constant state, nurtured and renewed through meditation'. If communion is not the reason, how else would one explain the strange life that Isaac led, or the decades during which groups of four souls dissolve their individuality into single, higher organisms, called string quartets? How would one explain the chain of klezmer generations that, while blessing births, weddings, and burials, were trying to discover the melody that could be set free from itself and become only air, spirit, *ruakh*?

"The movements of this work sound to me as if written in three of the different languages spoken by the Jewish people throughout our history. This somehow reflects the composition's epic nature. I hear the prelude and the first movement, the most ancient, in Arameic; the second movement is in Yiddish, the rich and fragile language of a long exile; the third movement and postlude are in sacred Hebrew.

"The prelude and the first movement simultaneously explore two prayers in different ways: The quartet plays the first part of the central prayer of the High Holidays, 'We will observe the mighty holiness of this day...', while the clarinet dreams the motifs from 'Our Father, Our King'. The second movement is based on 'The Old Klezmer Band', a traditional dance tune, which is surrounded here by contrasting manifestations of its own halo. The third movement was written before all the others. It is an instrumental version of K'Vakarat, a work that I wrote a few years ago for Kronos and Cantor Misha Alexandrovich. The meaning of the word *klezmer*: instrument of song, becomes clear when one hears David Krakauer's interpretation of the cantor's line. This movement, together with the postlude, bring to conclusion the prayer left open in the first movement: '...Thou pass and record, count and visit, every living soul, appointing the measure of every creature's life and decreeing its destiny'.

"But blindness is as important in this work as dreaming and praying. I had always the intuition that, in order to achieve the highest possible intensity in a performance, musicians should play, metaphorically speaking, 'blind'. That is why, I think, all legendary bards in cultures around the world, starting with Homer, are said to be blind. 'Blindness' is probably the secret of great string quartets, those who don't need their eyes to communicate among them, with the music, or the audience. My hommage to all of them and Isaac of Provence is this work for blind musicians, so they can play it by heart. Blindness, then, reminded me of how to compose music as it was in the beginning: An art that springs from and relies on our ability to sing and hear, with the power to build castles of sound in our memories."

**Lera Auerbach**

Lera Auerbach was born in October, 1973 in Chelyabinsk, a city in the Urals bordering Siberia. She received her first musical training from her mother, writing her first opera at the age of twelve, which was performed in many cities of the former Soviet Union. In 1991, whilst travelling in the USA, she decided to remain in the West. She graduated from the New York Juilliard School in piano (with Joseph Kalichstein) and composition (with Milton Babbitt and Robert Beaser), simultaneously studying comparative literary science at Columbia University. She gave her Carnegie Hall debut in 2002, where she performed her own Suite for Violin, Piano and String Orchestra with Gidon Kremer and the Kremerata Baltica. Since then the worldwide career of the composer, pianist and author has undergone an unusually rapid development.

Lera Auerbach’s music seems to be primarily based upon traditional influences. For her it is no contradiction to use classical tonality and classical formal language in order to find new paths. Upon closer listening, however, an entire cosmos of unusual sounds, colours and fantasies opens up, which characterises her highly developed personal style. Active performers of Lera Auerbach’s compositions include: the Tokyo, Borromeo, Artemis and Granados String Quartets; violinist Gidon Kremer, and orchestras such as The New York Philharmonic, National Symphony, Bamberger Symphony Orchestra, Dresden Philharmonie, Munich Chamber Orchestra, Kremerata Baltica, Xalapa Symphony Orchestra, Amsterdam Sinfonietta, Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa, Louisiana Philharmonic, Bremen Philharmonic, Düsseldorf Symphony, Radio-Symphony Orchestra SWR Stuttgart, Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra.

**String Quartet #2 Primera Luz (The First Light) (2006)**

Commissioned by the XLV Semana de Música Religiosa de Cuenca

In this work, the boundaries between the secular and sacred are blurred. Six movements become six prayers. The act of praying here is seen not in a traditional religious manner, but rather as a most intense act of soul searching, a hard and honest look into oneself, questioning and searching for answers. To pray is to relinquish defenses, pretenses, to quiet everyday’s noise, to accept the strength and fragility of one’s own naked soul. Musical gestures become symbols, the four musicians play different roles, from the solitude of a monologue to an understanding of a duo; from the four distinct personalities to the unity of the quartet as a whole. A prayer is a way to connect to one’s own origins, to the distant memories of the primordial light. All the threads lead back to childhood, we are our memories. The First movement is an attempt to find this forgotten melody that is still alive somewhere within – a simple yet longing sound from the past. The Second movement begins with a unsettled viola monologue followed by the cello’s passionate reply, joined later by the violins. The four questions of the Third movement bring back the lonely, fearful, lost sense of the doubtful mind. The Fourth movement is agitated and burning with hopeful fervor of the viola’s almost-human voice. The ecstatic duo of the lower strings, accompanied by trembling violins, grows to a climax that results in the tragic intensity of the Fifth movement. The unbearable tension protrudes between the sustained pedal points of the lower strings and the main thematic material in parallel fifths in the violins. At the end of the movement, the ever-questioning viola brings back the memory of the beginning. The Sixth movement is a postlude, which grows from the darkness of a lament to a quiet chorale that brings if not yet peace - a chiaroscuro sense of hope to find the lost harmony of the primordial light.

(Lera Auerbach)