

Roger Reynolds' *Odyssey* to make U.S. premiere May 15 at UCSD

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The Department of Music at the University of California, San Diego will present the United States premiere of Roger Reynolds' *Odyssey* at 8 p.m. May 15 in UCSD's Mandeville Auditorium.

The work will be performed by SONOR, the UCSD contemporary music ensemble, under the direction of Harvey Sollberger. Soloists for the work are mezzo-soprano Marie Kobayashi, who will sing the French version, and bass-baritone Philip Larson, who will sing the English version of the text by Samuel Beckett. Lighting for the performance will be done by Chris Parry of UCSD's Theatre Department.

Composer Reynolds, UCSD professor of music and Pulitzer prize-winner, will speak at a pre-concert lecture at 7 p.m. in the Mandeville Recital Hall.

Reynolds was commissioned by Ircam, the French government's facility for research and creation in music, to create *Odyssey*. It premiered at the Georges Pompidou Center in Paris on June 17, 1993.

In addition to the soloists' singing, the complex seventy-five-minute performance involves 16 SONOR instrumentalists, as well as computer spatialized voices speaking in French and English in an interwoven continuity.

Odyssey is based on Reynolds' fascination with poetic language, the intricacies of word meanings, and how they are conveyed. "I am captivated," Reynolds writes, "not only by the surface meanings of words, and by all that they might mean in slightly different combinations or contexts, but most of all by the (not so) incidental music of a human voice as it carries all of this to our ears as sound."

Reynolds combined this fascination with his interest in different languages and in how they are conveyed via music, and thus the foundation for *Odyssey* was laid: "Might it be possible to generate a single stream of sound that could contain more than one language at a time?" Reynolds queries. "Might we who speak in different tongues be able somehow to share our thoughts and feelings directly? Or alternatively, is there a way that we might communicate that is more fundamental, more general than any particular language?"

Reynolds attempts to answer these questions in *Odyssey*, utilizing the works of Irish-French master Samuel Beckett who wrote in both English and French and who was noted for the sparseness of his language, never using one syllable more than necessary.

"I approached Beckett as a metaphoric collaborator," Reynolds writes. "What I set out to do was to create a frame within which his words (in both French and English) could make their own statement largely untouched, and to use my own music as a commentary and response.

"I present the two languages as one interwoven fabric of vocal sound. The French and English phrases are closely interwoven so as to occur virtually simultaneously, and the voices (French and English lines, spoken by

the same person) float in space. They hover near to and retreat from one another as they spin out their parallel messages."

Reynolds says the title of his piece, *Odyssey*, refers to a spiritual *Odyssey* he imagined Beckett taking, moving through life's often ambiguous, sometimes conflicting stages and concluding: "...I may cease from treading these long shifting thresholds and live the life of a door / that opens and shuts."

The founding director of the Center for Music Experiment and Related Research, which has since become UCSD's Center for Research in Computing and the Arts, Reynolds is trained in science as well as in music. He has been honored with the Pulitzer Prize, and by the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the British Arts Council, Radio France, the Suntory and Koussevitzky foundations, and the National Endowment for the Arts. His work has been featured at numerous festivals, including Music Today (Tokyo), Edinburgh, Bath, Warsaw Autumn, the Helsinki Biennale, the New York Philharmonic, and Telluride's "Composer-to-Composer."

Though composition is his central concern, he is active as a lecturer, organizer, and teacher, and he has written three books and numerous articles. Writing in *The New Yorker*, Andrew Porter described Reynolds as "at once an explorer and a visionary composer, whose works can lead listeners to follow him into new regions of emotion and imagination."

Mezzo-soprano Kobayashi was born in Japan, graduated from the National University of Fine Arts and Music in Tokyo, and has studied at the Paris Conservatory. Since 1985, she has performed 20th-century music with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Radio France and the French National Orchestra.

Bass-baritone Larson is an associate professor of music at UCSD. In addition to *Odyssey*, he has performed other works by Reynolds, as well as other noted composers, has worked in music theater, and has recorded on CRI, Nonesuch, Neuma, and Lovely Music.

Tickets for the 8 p.m. May 15 performance of *Odyssey* are \$8 general admission and \$6 for students and seniors. The pre-concert lecture at 7 p.m. is free and open to the public. For further information on the lecture or performance, call 534-5404.

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