

Kenji Bunch - Composer

Heralded as “A Composer to Watch” by the New York Times, Kenji Bunch has quickly emerged as one of the most prominent American composers of his generation, appealing to audiences and performers alike with a distinctive, vibrant voice in contemporary American music.

As one of only three composers selected nationwide to inaugurate the Meet the Composer “Magnum Opus” Project, Mr. Bunch wrote his “Symphony no. 1: Lichtenstein Triptych”, which was premiered to critical acclaim by the Bay area symphonies of Santa Rosa, Marin, and Oakland.

Based on the success of his 2-week “Music Alive” residency with the Mobile Symphony during the 2003-2004 season, Mr. Bunch was selected by the American Symphony Orchestra League and Meet The Composer to participate in an extended 2-year residency with that orchestra.

In the 2005-06 season, Mr. Bunch’s works were performed by the New World, Colorado, East Texas, Stockton, Missouri, Asia America, and Honolulu Symphonies, as well as by the acclaimed St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. He also served as composer in residence with both the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival in Colorado, and the Spoleto USA Festival in Charleston, SC.

Recent commissions have come from the English Chamber Orchestra, the Phoenix Symphony, the St. Luke’s Chamber Ensemble, Wolftrap, the Naumburg Foundation, the Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival, Fear No Music, the New Juilliard Ensemble, the Zoom! Festival of New Music, the Lucy Moses School, and Young Concert Artists, Inc., where he served from 1998-2000 as composer-in-residence. Mr. Bunch’s music has been performed in premiere venues from New York to Ho Chi Minh City, and is regularly broadcast on nationwide radio including NPR, BBC, and NHK in Japan.

A long association with the renowned Ahn Trio has led to the commissioning of several works that the trio has recorded on EMI Classics, as well as a collaboration with the Parsons Dance Company, and upcoming performances of his “Hardware Concerto” for piano trio and orchestra with the Louisville and Honolulu Symphonies. His works have also been recorded on the Kleos Classics, RCA, Pony Canyon, GENUIN, Capstone, and Crystal record labels.

A native of Portland, Oregon, Mr. Bunch studied at the Juilliard School, receiving his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees in viola with Toby Appel, and in composition with Robert Beaser. Other composing mentors include Eric Ewazen and Stanley Wolfe. Upon graduation from Juilliard, Mr. Bunch received both the Lillian Fuchs Prize for Viola and the prestigious William Schuman Prize for Outstanding Leadership in Music. Other awards include grants from ASCAP (1999 and 2000) Meet the Composer (2000, 2003, 2004), and the Leonard Bernstein Composer’s Fund (2000).

Mr. Bunch still maintains an active career as a performer. As a founding member of the Flux string quartet (1996-2002), he premiered and recorded Morton Feldman’s epic six-hour String Quartet no. 2. Now as a solo and collaborative musician, and as a member of the performing composer group Ne(x)tworks, Mr. Bunch continues a presence as one of New York’s premiere interpreters of new and experimental music. His groundbreaking work as a violist has led to recital appearances across the country and a feature article in the Spring 2006 Journal of the American Viola Society. Comfortable in many musical genres and a noted improvising musician, he also plays fiddle and sings in the bluegrass band Citigrass, and has been a featured guest performer with many noted rock and jam bands.

A dedicated teacher, Mr. Bunch has developed and conducted residencies, workshops, and master classes across the country in composition, performance, and music appreciation to students ranging in age from kindergarten to colleges including Rice University, SUNY Fredonia, and The University of Hawai’i. In 2002 he was a visiting professor in composition at Bennington College in Vermont. He has served as a teaching artist for the Lincoln Center Institute and the Westchester Philharmonic, and in public school residencies in Vermont, Maine, and Kentucky. Currently he teaches viola and composition at the Juilliard School Pre-College and at the Mark O’Connor Strings Conference in San Diego.