



MICHAEL HERSCH

Last
Autumn

Jamie Hersch, horn
Daniel Gaisford, cello

Last Autumn

Michael Hersch (b.1971)

DISC 1 TT: 58:06

1	1:36	(mvt. 1)	12	4:28	(mvt. 12)
2	3:19	(mvt. 2)	13	3:20	(mvt. 13)
3	0:52	(mvt. 3)	14	1:13	(mvt. 14)
4	1:34	(mvt. 4)	15	1:08	(mvt. 15)
5	1:24	(mvt. 5)	16	5:21	(mvt. 16)
6	2:06	(mvt. 6)	17	4:24	(mvt. 17)
7	2:48	(mvt. 7)	18	1:19	(mvt. 18)
8	1:30	(mvt. 8)	19	2:16	(mvt. 19)
9	1:29	(mvt. 9)	20	9:20	(mvt. 20)
10	0:43	(mvt. 10)	21	1:01	(mvt. 21)
11	1:03	(mvt. 11)	22	5:52	(mvt. 22)

DISC 2 TT: 54:07

1	2:37	(mvt. 23)	12	3:28	(mvt. 34)
2	2:04	(mvt. 24)	13	2:03	(mvt. 35)
3	1:13	(mvt. 25)	14	2:55	(mvt. 36)
4	0:45	(mvt. 26)	15	1:33	(mvt. 37)
5	3:16	(mvt. 27)	16	5:58	(mvt. 38)
6	3:36	(mvt. 28)	17	2:08	(mvt. 39)
7	4:53	(mvt. 29)	18	2:33	(mvt. 40)
8	6:02	(mvt. 30)	19	4:47	(mvt. 41)
9	1:34	(mvt. 31)			
10	1:07	(mvt. 32)			
11	1:35	(mvt. 33)			

Total Time 112:13

Jamie Hersch, horn
Daniel Gaisford, cello

Recorded February 28 - March 2, 2011 in the Miriam A. Friedberg Concert Hall at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland. Recorded and engineered by Ed Tetreault at the Peabody Institute Recording Studio. Produced by Michael Hersch, Jamie Hersch, and Ed Tetreault. "Last Autumn" is published by 21C Music Publishing, Inc., New York, © 2008. Sculpture: "Herm'unculus" by Kevin Tuttle. All album photography of sculpture by Mike Maguire. Photography of Daniel Gaisford and Jamie Hersch by Richard Anderson. Photography of Michael Hersch by Sam Oberter. Graphic design and layout by ycArt Design Studio.

© & © Michael Hersch. All rights reserved. 2015. www.michaelhersch.com

innova is supported by an endowment from the McKnight Foundation.

Philip Blackburn, director
Chris Campbell, operations director
Steve McPherson, publicist

innova is the label of the American Composers Forum.
© & © Michael Hersch. All Rights Reserved, 2015.
www.innova.mu www.michaelhersch.com

Unauthorized duplication is a violation of applicable laws



innova 907

Michael Hersch's *Last Autumn* for horn and cello

by Aaron Grad

Michael Hersch attracted a bright spotlight early in his career. At 25, he won First Prize in the Concordia American Composers Awards, leading to a premiere in New York City's Alice Tully Hall conducted by Marin Alsop. That same year he became one of the youngest composers ever awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in Music. Still before his 30th birthday he became a Rome Prize recipient, and the following year was awarded the Berlin Prize from the American Academy in Berlin. Major orchestras began to regularly commission and perform his music, and Hersch's large-ensemble catalog grew to include symphonies, concertos, and a range of other works.

During his thirties, however, Hersch largely shifted away from orchestral music and began to explore increasingly expansive forms, trading ensemble heft for the freedom and focus of limited instrumentation. In 2001, he began what would become a pair of two vast pieces, completing the first of these, *The Vanishing Pavilions*, in 2005. The 2.5 hour work for solo piano in two books is built upon fragments of poetry by the British poet Christopher Middleton. Hersch premiered the 300+ page score himself—from memory. Writing in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, music critic David Patrick Stearns noted, "The evening felt downright historic. [Hersch] conjured volcanic gestures from the piano with astonishing virtuosity. Everything unfolds in open-ended, haiku-like eruptions, though built on ideas that recur throughout the 50 movements ... Overtly or covertly, *The Vanishing Pavilions* is about the destruction of shelter - both in fact and concept - and life amid the absence of any certainty."

Immediately after completing *The Vanishing Pavilions*, Hersch turned to a sibling work, *Last Autumn* for horn and cello. He completed *Last Autumn* in 2008, and the piece was premiered the following year. For the performance of these works, and newer large-scale pieces such as his monodrama, *On the Threshold of Winter* (2012), Hersch relies on a select cadre of singers and instrumentalists.

Cellist Daniel Gaisford is known especially for his highly regarded performances of Hersch's two early *Sonatas for Unaccompanied Cello*, which Hersch completed in 1994 and 2000, respectively. Hornist Jamie Hersch has been performing his brother's music for over twenty years. It was these two musicians and their particular skills and sensibilities that the composer had in mind when writing *Last Autumn*. There is one other key voice in this work, that of the late German novelist and poet W. G. Sebald (1944-2001). As in *The Vanishing Pavilions*, Hersch has excerpted fragments of poetry, ranging from a few words to a dozen or so lines. The text fragments are placed in the score, each relating to a specific movement, though the correspondences between text and music are not necessarily literal ones. The texts are not intended to be sung or spoken, but the presence of Sebald's rich imagery reinforces the work's tone.

BOOK I

"The air stirs the light ..." provides a violent point of entry to the sound world of *Last Autumn*. Both musicians are instructed to play "with great ferocity throughout." As with other key movements, this music returns verbatim later in the piece, an approach Hersch also used in *The Vanishing Pavilions*. The sonic illusion is that identical passages—in this case, the first and 33rd movements—take on new meaning based on their placement in a larger context, while still echoing as familiar reference points.

After the biting prelude, the next sequence trends toward small forms and unified gestures, a trajectory matched by the poetry's focus

on singular objects: "a fig tree ... a crow ... a dress." The earliest solo movements, beginning with the cello in No. 4 and continuing with the horn in No. 6, have a quality of inner dialogue, as heard in the cello's simultaneous *arco* (bowed) and *pizzicato* (plucked) playing, and in the horn's quick leaps between extreme ranges. Much of the music in the early stages of the work is veiled and mysterious. It is also the region of the piece with the highest concentration of movements divorced from text fragments, labeled instead with the musical headings of *Scherzo*, *Intermezzo*, *Lullaby*, *March* and *Psalm*.

There is an order and stability to these miniature sound worlds, and they start to reveal certain connective threads. The ferocity of the first movement has ties to Nos. 5, 8, 10 and 15—linked most clearly through rapid-fire repeated notes. Nos. 2 and 13 share a sense of distance and hollowness, with long-tones circling each other but kept apart by the harmonic friction of tight intervals. The mournful melodic strains of the fourth movement return with a new counter-line in No. 14, and also belong to the same family as the haunting *Lullabies*, Nos. 7 and 11. These discreet moods and sounds form the essential vocabulary of *Last Autumn*, and they play important and transformative roles as the piece continues to unfold. The 12th movement, *Psalm*, again features the cello alone in a form that traverses practically the entire range of pitches, dynamics and intensity available to the instrument.

Breaking away from unity, the poetic scale widens in the latter half of Book I, encompassing "the stars ... the planets ... the desert ... the great city," and concurrently the music begins to expand. Instead of singular cells, the movements become complex organisms that combine material heard earlier in the piece into evolving forms. These much larger statements establish the scope of *Last Autumn* as something well beyond a collection of miniatures. It will become apparent in Book II, as the piece burrows inward toward its emotional core, that the major movements late in Book I established the external boundaries and polarities of the music. One of these outer limits comes in No. 20, for solo cello, the longest and broadest movement of the entire work.

First No. 16, a daunting and extended *Intermezzo* for solo horn, initiates this expansion. Then the process continues in No. 17, which is linked to a text that begins with "the breaking of time." Up until this point forces have remained in a tenuous balance—sound and silence, singularity and multiplicity, stasis and evolution. However, movements 17, 19, and 22 especially, indicate a shift of direction, in which initially stable sounds seem compelled to mutate and veer toward a brewing cataclysm. No. 17 starts with contracting cello intervals, and the horn joins in for a line that first descends slowly but then climbs over the cello's droning low C, building speed and intensity throughout. The process breaks off, tests other variants, and stages another long tandem climb, this time over the cello's open G-string. When the rise falters again, the connection is lost, and the instruments work in opposition: The cello reaches high above the horn, and muscles through a solo passage; the horn traces the cello's line a semitone off, and withdraws to taunting repetitions of a single pitch. The cello returns to the contracting intervals, getting quieter, and finally releases a frustrated bounce of the bow's wood across all four strings.

"Darkness comes" in the last movement of Book I, No. 22. Like No. 17, it begins with the instruments joined together, this time for a somber chorale. And once more, a climbing motive reaches into unexpected ranges. The cello takes over the horn's highest pitch, and the voices battle in a counterpoint of syncopated repetitions and wild leaps. At the frantic height of the movement there is a sudden descent into the coda that soon breaks abruptly into the silence of intermission.

BOOK II

Book II begins by reaching back to the more secure and condensed mood of Book I; the first *Lullaby* returns, followed by three brief vignettes (the last of which distills the horn's contribution to a single held pitch). Then the shape-shifting dissolution that marked the end of Book I re-emerges in No. 27, matched in the poem by "the cotton clouds, those white ones / into which without a word the breath / of legions of human beings had been absorbed." No. 29 continues the disappearance: "a landscape reaches so far into the depth / that our eyes cannot see its limits," and the music strains in the darkness, the cello executing low, rumbling double-stops, seemingly seeking release as it navigates a massive fugue. The next movements bounce through ideas—a halting and conflicted new *Lullaby*, three short movements recapped from Book I—as if grasping for something solid and tenable. But No. 34 washes over like another wave of disorienting fog, in which "the forest recedes, truly, / so far that one cannot tell / where it once lay." The music is ominous and covered (an extension of the "distant" strain begun in No. 2), and full of stark pitches that stick and shudder (echoing the ferocity of No. 1). The cello's perfect intervals (linked to the hallowed simplicity of the *Lullabies*) seem an almost monastic plea for relief. The deep, chattering incantations of the horn provide a new and unsettling response.

In No. 36 the wide, global imagery of the poetry zooms in to a frighteningly personal level: "I know that the old coat is tearing / and I am afraid / of the ending of time." As with "the breaking of time" in No. 17, the music responds with increasing urgency—as if the breaking or ending of time is both the greatest fear and the inescapable fate of *Last Autumn*. After beginning together in a darkly harmonious chorale (recalling the texture of No. 22), the voices split apart and conclude, as Hersch instructs, with "greatest possible intensity."

Once more, the music steps back from the void by seeking the familiar: a repeat of a simple cello solo from Book I, and a return to the searing third movement. Between those re-examinations comes a foreboding new movement, No. 38, joined to the text "... already the storm was hanging ..." It also reworks material established earlier in the piece, but this time starts at maximum discord and dissolves into stasis. Where No. 36 ended with the horn rooted on the single pitch E, No. 38 finds the cello held in the gravity of a low E and G double-stop. Quavering bursts rear up again, but fail to dislodge the cello. The horn tugs with a succession of themes, but neither gentle lulls nor impassioned outbursts break the spell. The cello tries stepping out of the fixed intervals on its own; then the horn acts the major-key optimist with a G-sharp, still not breaking the E-minor harmony of the held E and G-natural. The cello is alone from this point, and ends with a glassy echo of the fixed interval.

Approaching its conclusion, *Last Autumn* does not deliver its listeners into comforting resolution or tidy catharsis. The penultimate movement brings "the eclipse of the sun" and "the secret sickening away of the world," and then only emptiness is left, reflected in the closing text: "so soundlessly I glided, / scarcely moving a wing, / high above the earth." Hersch does not mimic the external silence, or trace the poetic lift with a literal rise to the upper range. Instead, he ends with an inner world, stripped to its elemental core: The cello sustains long drones, and the horn blasts a series of low tropes, like an ancient priest executing an atavistic ritual. Even in this arcane void, the music grasps for order—momentarily coalescing around a stable triad, gathering isolated gestures into hushed melodies—and, ultimately, silence.

Last Autumn

Texts by W. G. Sebald (1944-2001)
From *After Nature*

BOOK I

1. The air stirs the light ...
2. Spreading out above them
is the branch work
of a fig tree with fruit, one of which
is entirely hollowed out by insects.
3. ... in a different consistency
of the air, whose deoxygenated void
in the gasping breath of the figures ... (A)
4. A crow on the wing lost a white feather.
The vicar, a limping messenger in a black coat,
appeared on New Year's morning
alone on the wide snow-covered field.
5. *Scherzo (A)*
6. *Intermezzo (A)*
7. *Lullaby I*
8. *Scherzo (B)*
9. *March*
10. ... a dress entangled in thistles ...
11. *Lullaby II*
12. *Psalm (A)*
13. ... with tiny lanterns
they haunted the rubbish dumps ...
14. ... shade
in the heat of noon,
light in darkness,
shelter from frost and rain,
conveyance at the hour of weariness,
help in extremity, so that
under Thy guidance
safely we may attain that place
to which we are drawn;

... so that the stars propitiously conjoin above us
15. In the end, awaiting recovery
she is placed in a hospital where ...

Still she lives on, infirm
in body and mind.
16. *Intermezzo (B)*
17. ... the breaking
of time from day to day
and from hour to hour,
it is rust and fire
and the salt of the planets
darkness even at noon and
luminaries absent from heaven.
18. *Intermezzo (C)*
19. *Lullaby III*
20. *Psalm (B)*
21. ... a dress entangled in thistles ...
22. ... while behind us already the green trees are
leaving their leaves ...

The black bird that in its beak
carries a break-time meal
to St. Anthony on his site
in the desert may be the one with
the heart of glass, the bird
flying ever closer to us ...

... the water boils itself out,
... the earth trembles and the great city
with the iron tower stands in flames,

and darkness comes and with it a yellow dust
that covers the land.



BOOK II

23. *Lullaby I*

24. Whoever closes the wings
of the altar in the Lindenhardt
parish church and locks up
the carved figures in their casing
on the lefthand panel
will be met by St. George.

25. *March*

26. *Fragment*

27. ... azure-blue,
carmine-red and glaucous green,
in their glow reflecting
the cotton clouds, those white ones
into which without a word the breath
of legions of human beings has been absorbed.

28. Spreading out above them
is the branch work
of a fig tree with fruit, one of which
is entirely hollowed out by insects.

29. On the Basel *Crucifixion* of 1505
behind the group of mourners
a landscape reaches so far into the depth
that our eyes cannot see its limits.
A patch of brown scorched earth
whose contour like the head of a whale
or an open-mouthed leviathan
devours the pale green meadow plains,
and the marshily shining stretches
of water. Above it, pushed off
to behind the horizon, which step
by step grows darker, more glowering,
rise the hills of pre-history ...

30. *Lullaby IV*

31. *Scherzo (B)*

32. *Lullaby II*

33. The air stirs the light ...

34. Peer ahead sharply,
there you see in the greying of nightfall
the distant windmills turn.
The forest recedes, truly,
so far that one cannot tell
where it once lay, and the ice-house
opens, and rime, on to the field, traces
a colourless image of Earth.
So, when the optic nerve
tears, in the still space of the air
all turns as white as
the snow on the Alps.

35. *Intermezzo (D)*

36. ... under the rainbow arching
over the land, the horsemen
advance from their camp

I know that the old coat is tearing
and I am afraid
of the ending of time.

37. A crow on the wing lost a white feather.
The vicar, a limping messenger in a black coat,
appeared on New Year's morning
alone on the wide snow-covered field.

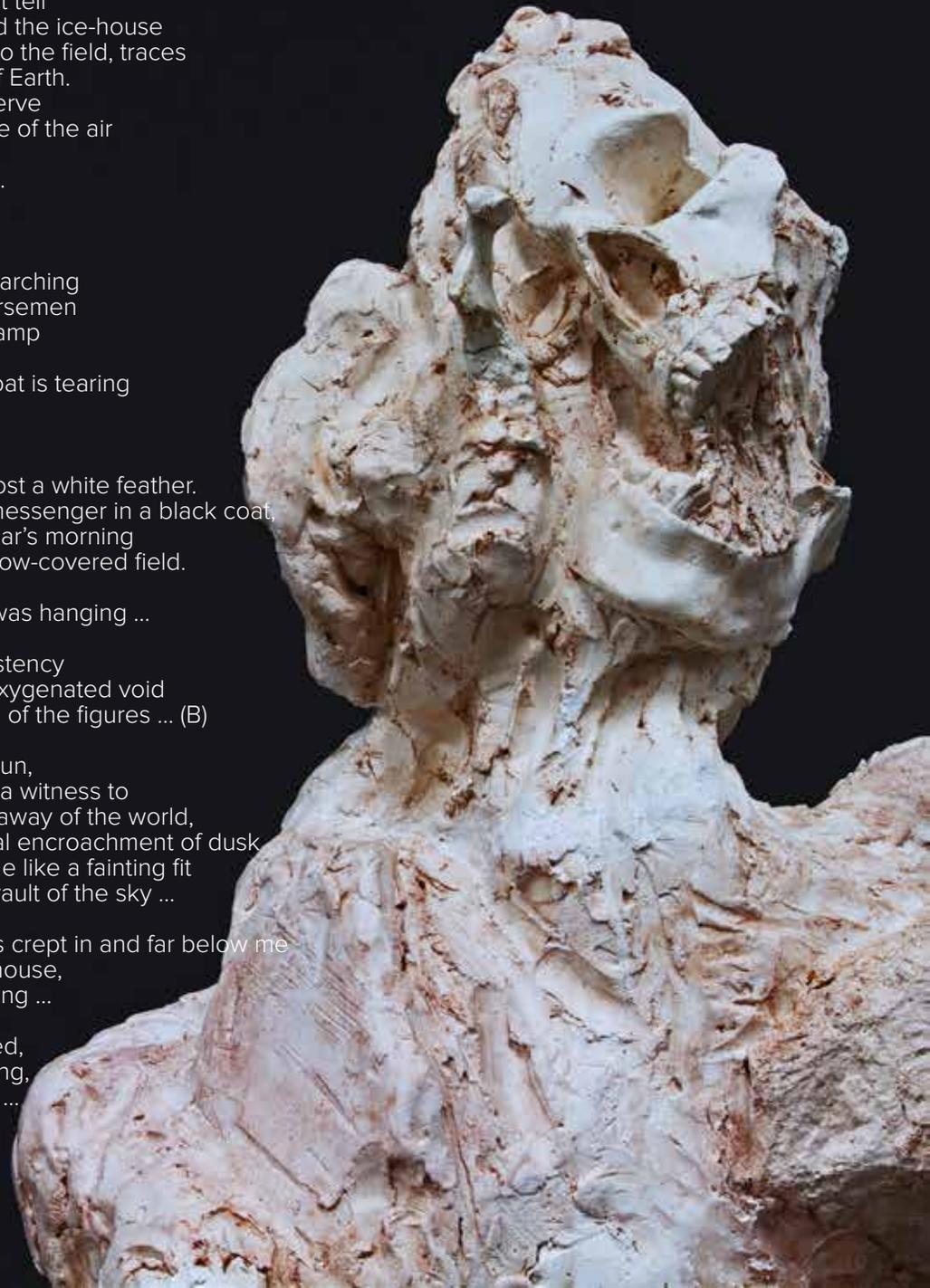
38. ... already the storm was hanging ...

39. ... in a different consistency
of the air, whose deoxygenated void
in the gasping breath of the figures ... (B)

40. ... the eclipse of the sun,
so will have become a witness to
the secret sickening away of the world,
in which a phantasmal encroachment of dusk
in the midst of daytime like a fainting fit
poured through the vault of the sky ...

41. It was when darkness crept in and far below me
I saw the roof of my house,
saw the shadows falling ...

so soundlessly I glided,
scarcely moving a wing,
high above the earth ...



Jamie Hersch

Widely considered among the finest hornists performing today, Jamie Hersch is currently co-principal horn with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. An active soloist and chamber artist throughout the world, Mr. Hersch has performed as soloist with the Boston Pops, the George Enescu Philharmonic, the Romanian State Radio Orchestra, the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, the Network for New Music, and in various chamber orchestras and ensembles in the United States, including those in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C., among others, and throughout Europe and Asia. As a lecturer, Mr. Hersch has given master classes at institutions and universities internationally. Playing professionally since the age of 17, when he performed regularly and recorded with the National Symphony Orchestra under Mstislav Rostropovich, Mr. Hersch remains the only musician to have ever recorded with that orchestra while still in high school. Mr. Hersch began his formal musical studies with Edwin Thayer, continuing on at Boston University where he won the Concerto and Aria Competition in 1995. In 2009, along with cellist Daniel Gaisford, Mr. Hersch gave the world premiere of Michael Hersch's *Last Autumn* for horn and cello. The performance was listed as one of the year's top classical events by *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Mr. Hersch plays exclusively on Patterson Horns, crafted by Jim Patterson.



Jamie Hersch would like to thank Jeffrey Ng, Liesel Duhon, John Winksi, as well as Cora, Phil, and Jim Patterson for their support and generosity.



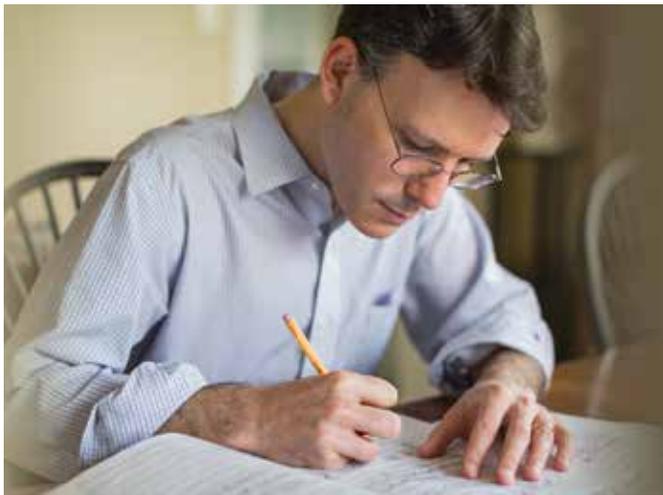
Daniel Gaisford

Hailed by *The New York Times* as “transfixing,” and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* as “remarkable,” American cellist Daniel Gaisford has appeared with ensembles throughout the world; among them the major orchestras of Saint Louis, Seattle, Toronto and Montreal, under the direction of conductors such as Robert Spano, David Zinman and Hermann Michael. Equally active as a recitalist and chamber musician, Mr. Gaisford has been heard in cities ranging from New York, San Francisco and Berlin, to Boston, Rome and Tokyo. He has been a featured guest at festivals around the globe including New York City's Mostly Mozart Festival, the Chautauqua Festival, the Caramoor Festival, and the Davos Festival in Switzerland. Other festival appearances include New Jersey's Festival of the Atlantic, Michigan's Matrix Festival, the Prince Albert Festival in Kauai, the Aspen Music Festival and the Vail Valley Music Festival in Colorado.

In 2003, Mr. Gaisford premiered Michael Hersch's *Sonata No. 2 for Unaccompanied Cello* at the Romaeuropa Festival in Italy, and recorded the work the following year. The recording was selected by *The Washington Post* and *New York Newsday* as among the most important recordings of 2004. He later recorded both Hersch unaccompanied sonatas for Vanguard Classics. Upcoming releases include J.S. Bach's Suites for Solo Cello.

Mr. Gaisford grew up in Salt Lake City, Utah where he studied with Richard Hoyt and Gayle Smith. Further studies took him to the University of Southern California where he studied with Gabor Rejto and Ronald Leonard. Gaisford continued his studies with Harvey Shapiro and Channing Robbins at The Juilliard School of Music in New York. While at The Juilliard School, Gaisford was principal cellist of the symphony orchestra and first prize winner of the Shostakovich Cello Competition, the latter resulting in his Lincoln Center debut.

Mr. Gaisford performs on his “Shapiro” Goffriller Cello and Tourte bow, crafted by the internationally famed luthier, Christophe Landon.



Michael Hersch

Michael Hersch's work has been performed in the U.S. and abroad under conductors including Mariss Jansons, Alan Gilbert, Marin Alsop, Robert Spano, Carlos Kalmar, Yuri Temirkanov, Giancarlo Guerrero, and James DePreist; with the major orchestras of Cleveland, Saint Louis, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Cincinnati, Seattle, and Oregon, among others; and ensembles including the String Soloists of the Berlin Philharmonic, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, the Kreutzer Quartet, the Blair String Quartet, Ensemble Klang, and the Network for New Music Ensemble. He has written for such soloists as Thomas Hampson, Midori, Garrick Ohlsson, Boris Pergamenschikow, Shai Wosner, Walter Boeykens, Peter Sheppard-Skaerved, Ah Young Hong, and Michael Sachs. His solo and chamber works have appeared on programs around the globe, including the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall in the U.S., Germany's Schloss Neuhausen Festival in Brandenburg and the Philharmonie in Berlin; in the U.K. on the Dartington New Music Festival and in the British Museum, and on Italy's Romaeuropa and Nuova Consonanza Festivals.

2014/15 saw several major premieres, including his concerto for trombone and ensemble, *Black Untitled*, premiered by Ensemble Klang in the Netherlands, and his program-length work for violin and piano, *Zwischen Leben und Tod: twenty-two pieces after images by Peter Weiss*, premiered by Carolyn Huebl and Mark Wait. A new work commissioned for the 30th anniversary of the Network for New Music in

Philadelphia, *a breath upwards* for soprano, clarinet, horn, and viola, premieres during the spring of 2015. Other notable events include European performances by the Kreutzer Quartet of *Images From a Closed Ward* in the U.K. and Sweden, and pianist Jacob Rhodebeck's performance of *The Vanishing Pavilions* in New York City, the first complete performance of the work since the premiere given by the composer in 2006. Upcoming projects include commissions from the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., and a new violin concerto for Patricia Kopatchinskaja and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

2013/14 saw several European premieres, including his string quartet at London's Waterloo Festival, and his concerto for piano and orchestra, *along the ravines*, with the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie (Shai Wosner, piano/Tito Muñoz, conducting) in Germany. The concerto was also presented as part of the George Enescu International Festival in Romania (Timisoara and Bucharest) with pianist Matei Varga under the direction of Radu Popa. Pianist Garrick Ohlsson gave the world premiere of *Tenebrae* for solo piano as part of the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and Soheil Nasserli gave NY premieres of Hersch's *Tenebrae* and *Two Lullabies*. In June 2014, a work for solo violin commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, *Of Sorrow Born*, premiered at the orchestra's inaugural Biennial, and Mr. Hersch's acclaimed two-act monodrama, *On the Threshold of Winter*, received its premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York by NUNC (Miranda Cuckson, Artistic Director).

Other recent performances include *Night Pieces*, commissioned and premiered by the Cleveland Orchestra, and a song cycle for baritone and piano, *Domicilium*, premiered by Thomas Hampson and Wolfgang Rieger on San Francisco Performances (commissioned by Mr. Hampson and the ASCAP Kingsford Commissions for Art Song). In 2012, Mr. Hersch's *Images from a Closed Ward*, commissioned by the Blair String Quartet, received premiere performances in New York, Philadelphia and Nashville, and during the summer of 2010, Mr. Hersch's *Symphony No. 3* was premiered by Marin Alsop and the Cabrillo Contemporary Music Festival Orchestra, a festival commission.

His music increasingly recorded, Vanguard Classics has released five Hersch recordings over the past decade including his *Sonatas Nos. 1 & 2 for Unaccompanied*

Cello performed by Daniel Gaisford, and his complete works for violin as performed by Miranda Cuckson and Blair McMillen. In 2007, Vanguard Classics/Musical Concepts released Hersch's 140-minute solo piano work *The Vanishing Pavilions*, with the composer at the keyboard. His second disc for the label features the composer performing his own works in addition to those of Feldman, Rihm and Josquin. Hersch's debut recording, released in 2003, features Mr. Hersch performing his *Two Pieces for Piano* and *Recordatio*, with additional performances of his chamber works for strings performed by the String Soloists of the Berlin Philharmonic. In 2006, a recording of Mr. Hersch's early orchestral works, including his *Symphonies Nos. 1 & 2*, was released on the Naxos American Classics series with Marin Alsop conducting the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. In 2013, Innova Records released a live concert performance - Mr. Hersch's first appearance as a pianist in New York City in over a decade - *Michael Hersch: Live in Concert*, and in 2014 Innova released Hersch's *Images From a Closed Ward* as performed by the Blair Quartet.

Also regarded among today's most formidable pianists, Mr. Hersch has appeared on the Van Cliburn Foundation's *Modern at the Modern Series*, the Romaeuropa Festival, the Phillips Collection in Washington D.C., Cleveland's Reinberger Chamber Hall, the Festival of Contemporary Music Nuova Consonanza, the Warhol Museum, the Network for New Music Concert Series, the Left Bank Concert Society, the American Academy in Berlin Series, Festa Europea della Musica, St. Louis' Sheldon Concert Hall, and in New York City at Merkin Concert Hall, the 92nd St. Y - Tisch Center for the Performing Arts, and Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, among others.

Michael Hersch has been the recipient of awards and honors including First Prize in the Concordia American Composers Awards, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Rome Prize, Berlin Prize, and both the Charles Ives Scholarship and Goddard Lieberman Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts & Letters. He was a fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center, the Norfolk Festival for Contemporary Music, and the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan. His primary studies were at the Peabody Institute of Music in Baltimore under Moshe Cotel, with additional studies at the Moscow Conservatory in Russia. Mr. Hersch currently chairs the Department of Composition at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University.