

Press Release
June 16, 2014

The Crossing receives \$200,000 grant from the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage

Record grant to support June 2016 premiere of *Seven Responses*

The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage has named The Crossing among their fortunate recipients of Project Grants announced today, June 16, 2014. The 24-voice professional choir will receive \$200,000 to fund a large-scale collaborative project titled *Seven Responses*, the brainchild of Crossing conductor, Donald Nally.

Continuing and expanding its role as a curator of new music, The Crossing will commission *Seven Responses*, engaging seven of the world's foremost composers to create seven individual responses to Buxtehude's *Jesu Membra Nostri*, an iconic sacred work of the German Baroque consisting of seven cantatas. The Crossing will perform the new works in repertory with Buxtehude's 17th-century work with two leading ensembles in their respective fields of performance: Robert Mealy's Quicksilver Baroque and Claire Chase's International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE). *Seven Responses* will challenge artists and audiences alike to explore our relative distance from, or closeness to, music across centuries and cultures. The works will be presented over two evenings, alternating between old and new works throughout each evening. Each composer has been invited to collaborate with an author of their choice, or to create their own libretto.

The Crossing's commissions have increasingly addressed issues related to the environment, to equality, and to the individual's place in the community, the latter being a topic that is driving media content worldwide at an extraordinary volume. Human suffering is often a theme in contemporary secular works, similar in character to sacred words of the past. *Membra Jesu Nostri* (1680) addresses the suffering of Christ; this will serve as a starting point for the secular cantata each composer of *Seven Responses* will write.

The composers for the project have been chosen for their diverse styles and common interest in works with political or social themes. They are: Caroline Shaw (USA, Pulitzer 2013), David T. Little (USA), Santa Ratniece (Latvia), Lewis Spratlan (USA, Pulitzer 2000), Anna Thorvaldsdottir (Iceland), Hans Thomalla (Germany), and Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgren (Denmark).

Lewis Spratlan will collaborate with poet Paul Kane of Vassar College; Santa Ratniece has constructed a libretto looking back to the time of the hymn on which Buxtehude's work is based and focusing on the life of St. Clare of Assisi and her work with the poor; David T. Little, whose libretto to his own *Soldiers Song* anchors that opera, will write his own response; Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgren will combine excerpts from the Song of Songs with work of Danish poet Ursula Andkjaer Olsen; Hans Thomalla, also

accustomed to composing his own opera libretti, will compose his literary response; Anna Thorvaldsdottir will collaborate with Icelandic poet Gudrun Eva Minervudottir; Caroline Shaw, having both sung and played *Membra Jesu Nostris* many times, will write her own response. The resulting collage of works represents a collection of creative minds from across the globe.

All artists will come together in 2016 at the Philadelphia Cathedral for the performances, scheduled for June 24-25. The new works will be recorded and released by Innova Records.

The Crossing will produce a book to accompany the premiere, with designs by Elizabeth Haidle of Taos, New Mexico. Buxtehude Scholar Kerela Johnson Snyder of the Eastman School of Music will present two lectures on the form, origin, and meaning of his *Membra Jesu Nostris* before each performance.

Like all performances of The Crossing, the performances will be broadcast on WRTI, 90.1 FM, Philadelphia's Classical and Jazz Public Radio.

The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage (the Center), established in 2005, is dedicated to stimulating a vibrant cultural community in the greater Philadelphia region. The Center makes project grants in two areas, Performance and Exhibitions & Public Interpretation, as well as awarding grants to individual artists through our Pew Fellowships. The Center also makes Advancement grants, substantial awards to high-performing organizations seeking to make lasting improvements to their programming, audience engagement, and financial health. Each year, Center funding makes possible numerous performing arts events, as well as history and visual arts exhibitions and other public programs for audiences in Philadelphia and its surrounding counties. The Center is also a hub for research and knowledge-sharing on issues critical to cultural practice.

The Crossing is honored and thrilled at this announcement and is grateful for the confidence shown by the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage.

PROJECT STAFF

Donald Nally, Artistic Director

Steven Gearhart, Operations Manager

Maya Choldin, Project Manager

Elizabeth Haidle, Project Artist

Jay Sprogell, Videographer

Kerela Johnson Snyder, Buxtehude Scholar

Jiyoun Chang, Lighting Designer

Adrian Peacock, Recording Producer

Paul Vazquez, Recording Engineer

Jim Cotter, WRTI, Broadcast Producer

Megan Wendell, Canary Promotion, Publicist

Artist Profiles



Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen (Denmark) studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen, with Finn Høffding, Svend Westergaard, Bjørn Hjelmborg, and Vagn Holmboe (instrumentation), graduating in 1958 (Jakobsen 2001). He has won several prizes such as the Lange-Müller Stipend in 1965, the Herman Sandby Prize in 1971, the Carl Nielsen Prize in 1973, the Music Prize of the Nordic Council for his Symphony, Antiphony in 1980 and the Wilhelm Hansen Prize in 1996. His music strives for perfect structure, requiring that each piece have its own unique personality and musical style. His works include: *Variationer* (1954); *Chronos* (1962); *Collegium Musicum Konsert* (1964); *Je ne me tairai jamais. Jamais* (1966); *Tricolore I* (1966); *Tricolore IV* (1969); *Plateaux pour deux* (1970); *Genbrug* (1975); *Symfony, Antiphony* (1977); *Stringquartets 5-8* (1982-86), *Triptykon* (1985) *For cello and orchestra* (1996).

David T. Little's (USA) potently dramatic music draws upon his experience as a rock drummer, and fuses classical and popular idioms to powerful effect. Often undertaking political and existential themes, he has been described by *The New York Times* as having “a knack for overturning musical conventions...an accomplished theatrical creator.” *The New Yorker* has called him, “one of the most imaginative young composers on the music-theatre scene.” His music has been performed throughout the world by such performers as the London Sinfonietta, Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, So Percussion, ensemble courage, Dither, NOW Ensemble, PRISM Quartet, the New World Symphony, Beth Morrison Projects, Peak Performances, American Opera Projects, the New York City Opera, the Grand Rapids Symphony and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra under Marin Alsop. He has received awards and recognition from The American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Meet The Composer, the American Music Center, the Harvey Gaul Competition, BMI, and ASCAP, and has received commissions from Carnegie Hall, the Baltimore Symphony, the Albany Symphony, the New World Symphony, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, the University of Michigan, and Dawn Upshaw's Vocal Arts program at the Bard Conservatory.



Santa Ratniece's (Latvia) music has been played in Europe, Australia, Canada, United States and South America. With her music, Santa Ratniece participated in well-known festivals, such as Présences 2006, Tenso Days Paris 2007 (France), Klangspuren 2006, Klangraum im Herbst 2012 (Austria), The Baltic Sea Festival (Sweden), MusiMars 2006, Soundstreams 2012 (Canada), Tenso Dagen Amsterdam 2009, Koorbiennale Haarlem 2011, Operadagen

Rotterdam 2012 (The Netherlands), 2010 ISCM World New Music days Sydney (Australia), La Biennale di Venezia 2010 (Italy), Usedomer Music Festival 2010 (Germany), SOCO Festival 2011 (Uruguay), Vale of Glamorgan festival of music 2011 (United Kingdom), Month of Moderns 2013 (United States), Warsaw Autumn 2013 (Poland) and others. Most of Ratniec's music is devoted to the chamber choir; she has received regular commissions from Latvian Radio choir: *Saline* (2006), *Hirondelles du Coeur* (2007, for choir and orchestra) *horo horo hata hata* (2008, for 12 voices), *Chu Dal* (2009) and *Fuoco Celeste* (2011 for cello solo and choir). Her first stage work - multimedia opera *WAR SUM UP. Music. Manga. Machines.* was premiered at the Latvian National Opera in 2011, having had further performances at Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, BAM Howard Gilman Opera House in Brooklyn New York, Brighton Festival 2012, ULTIMA Oslo Contemporary Music Festival 2011, Café Budapest Contemporary Arts Festival 2012, Materia Prima Festival 2012 (Poland), Transart Festival 2013 (Italy).



Caroline Shaw (USA) is winner of the 2013 Pulitzer Prize. She performs primarily as violinist with the American Contemporary Music Ensemble (ACME) and as vocalist with Roomful of Teeth. She has also worked with the Trinity Wall Street Choir, Alarm Will Sound, Wordless Music, Ensemble Signal, AXIOM, The Yehudim, Victoire, Opera Cabal, the Mark Morris Dance Group Ensemble, Hotel Elefant, the Knights, the Oracle Hysterical, Red Light New Music, the Yale Baroque Ensemble, and in collaboration with tUnE-yArDs, Glasser, the National, A Winged Victory for the Sullen, Stars of the Lid, John Cale, Max Richter, and Steve Reich. Caroline's original music has been described as "dazzling, emotionally generous" (*The New York Times*) and "a tour de force of vocal mischief-making" (eMusic). Her works have been performed by Roomful of Teeth, So Percussion, ACME, the Brentano Quartet, the Knights, New Morse Code, and others.

Lewis Spratlan (USA) is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, including Guggenheim, Rockefeller, and NEA fellowships; an American Academy of Arts and Letters composer award; and the 2000 Pulitzer Prize in Music for his opera *Life is a Dream*, premiered by the Santa Fe Opera in 2010. Producing new works at a prodigious rate, the last half-decade has seen the premieres of: *Wonderer* (commissioned by pianist Jonathan Biss and performed frequently in the United States and Europe); *Shadow* (commissioned by cellist Matt Haimovitz and performed more than fifty times in the U.S., Canada, and Europe; on the Oxingale CD "After Contemplating Shakespeare"); *Concerto for Saxophone and Orchestra* (a consortium commission performed in Holland MI, Athens GA, and Long Beach CA; BMOP Sound CD release, 2012); *Architect* (a chamber opera drawn from the life and work of Louis Kahn - video version screened in New York, Chicago, New Haven, Fort Worth; Parma CD/DVD release 2012); *Elephant Rocks* (nine a cappella choral songs on poems by Kay Ryan premiered in Amherst MA – Yale University, October 2012); *A Summer's Day* (Boston Modern Orchestra Project Commission; BMOP Sound CD



release, 2012); *Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano* (Albany CD release, Spring 2013); *City Song* (double chorus SATB/SATB; commissioned by the Yale Glee Club for its 150th anniversary; poem by Elizabeth Alexander); *Process/Bulge* (chamber ensemble; commissioned by Wet Ink; New York April 2011); *Travels* (commissioned by the Rutgers University Glee Club; South Hadley MA, New Brunswick NJ); *Vespers Cantata: Hesperus is Phosphorus* (a 65-minute, nine-movement work for chorus SATB and chamber sextet, commissioned by The Crossing and Philadelphia's Network for New Music; Philadelphia and New York, June, 2012; Parma CD release 2014).

Hans Thomalla (Germany) is a Chicago-based composer. He is Associate Professor of Composition at Northwestern University, where he also co-directs the Institute for New Music. His works explore the double-bind character of music as acoustic reality as well as culturally and historically formed expression, constantly following materials transforming from one form of musical experience to the other. He has written chamber music as well as orchestral works, and a particular focus of his activity lies in composing for the stage: his opera *Fremd* for soloists, choir, large orchestra and electronics, was premiered at the main stage of the Stuttgart Opera in July 2011. Hans Thomalla received degrees from the Frankfurt Musikhochschule and from Stanford University. He has been awarded numerous awards and fellowships, among others the Composer Prize of the Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung, the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis, and the Christoph-Delz-Prize.



Anna Thorvaldsdottir (Iceland) frequently works with large sonic structures that tend to reveal the presence of a vast variety of sustained sound materials, reflecting her sense of imaginative listening to landscapes and nature. Her music tends to portray a flowing world of sounds with an enigmatic lyrical atmosphere. Anna's music has been featured at several major music festivals such as ISCM World Music Days, Nordic Music Days, Ultima Festival,

Beijing Modern Music Festival and the Composer Portraits Series at NYC's Miller Theatre. Her works have been nominated and awarded on many occasions. Her chamber orchestra piece *Hrim* was awarded Composition of the Year at the Icelandic Music Awards 2011, as well as the International Music Prize for Excellence in Composition 2011. At the Icelandic Music Awards 2012, Anna was awarded Composer of the Year and her debut album *Rhízōma* was awarded Classical/Contemporary Album of the Year. Anna is the recipient of the prestige Nordic Council Music Prize 2012 for her work *Dreaming*. Anna's debut portrait album - *Rhízōma* - was released in October 2011 through Innova Recordings. The album was very well received and, in addition to being selected Classical/Contemporary Album of the Year at the Icelandic Music Awards 2012, the album also appeared on a number of "Best of 2011" lists, e.g. at *TimeOut New York* and *TimeOut Chicago*.

Claire Chase (USA) is a young arts entrepreneur and flutist who is forging a new model for the commissioning, recording, and live performance of contemporary classical music. As artistic director of the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), which she co-founded in 2001, Chase has assembled a cadre of approximately thirty conservatory-trained musicians, including herself, devoted to advancing new music and playing an expansive repertoire and range of styles. Their eclectic programming, often curated by Chase, combines well-known works imaginatively interpreted alongside premieres of exciting contemporary compositions. ICE performs in settings ranging from traditional orchestra venues to art galleries, warehouses, clubs, and public spaces. In addition to her leadership of ICE, Chase is an accomplished solo flutist. Her debut album, *Aliento* (2009), brings to life new works by young composers with a purity of tone, technical virtuosity, and delicacy of expression. As an entrepreneur, curator, educator, and musician, Chase is engaging audiences in the appreciation of contemporary classical music and opening new avenues of artistic expression for the twenty-first-century musician. As a soloist and with ICE, she has performed at such venues as the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, the Guangzhou Opera House, and the Pinacoteca Museum in Brazil. Her additional recordings include *Terrestre* (2012) and, with ICE, *Complete Crumb Edition, Volume 12* (2008), *Undersong* (2011), and *Bright and Hollow Sky* (2011), among others.



Robert Mealy (USA), one of America's leading baroque violinists, has been praised for his "imagination, taste, subtlety, and daring" by the *Boston Globe*; *The New Yorker* called him "New York's world-class early music violinist." He has recorded over 50 CDs of early music on most major labels, ranging from Hildegard of Bingen with *Sequentia*, to Renaissance consorts with the Boston Camerata, to Rameau operas with *Les Arts Florissants*. At home in New York, he is a frequent leader and soloist with many ensembles, and serves as concertmaster at Trinity Wall Street in their series of complete Bach cantatas and passions. He has recorded and toured with many early music ensembles both here and in Europe, including (from early to late) *Sequentia*, *Ensemble Project Ars Nova*, the *Newberry Consort*, the *Folger Consort*, *Tragicomedia*, *Les Arts Florissants*, *La Fontegara* (Mexico), the *Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal*, *Seattle Baroque*, *Boston Baroque*, and the *Handel and Haydn Society*. He has led Baroque ensembles for the *Mark Morris Dance Company*, including a tour to Moscow, and accompanied *Renée Fleming* on the *David Letterman Show*. Mealy has been concertmaster of the internationally-acclaimed *Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra* since 2004, and has led them in performances and Grammy-nominated recordings of Lully's *Thésée* and *Psyché* and *Conradi's Ariadne*, as well as productions of Monteverdi's *Poppea* and the modern premiere of *Mattheson's Boris Godenouw*. *The Boston Phoenix* remarked of the *Boris* production that "the most exceptional music came from the pit."

Donald Nally is conductor of The Crossing, the award-winning professional chamber choir in Philadelphia focused on new music. He is also a professor, conducting ensembles at Northwestern University, and chorus master of The Chicago Bach Project, an annual performance of the Bach masterworks. Nally has served in many prestigious international positions: as chorus master at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Welsh National Opera, Opera Philadelphia, and for many seasons at the Spoleto Festival in Italy. Under his direction, the Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia won the 2002 Margaret Hillis National Award for Excellence in Choral Music. He has also served as music director of Cincinnati's Vocal Arts Ensemble and has guest conducted throughout Europe and the United States, most notably with the Philharmonia Chorus (London) and the Latvian State Choir (Riga).



In 2012, Nally received both the alumni merit award from Westminster Choir College and the 2012 Louis Botto Award for Innovative Action and Entrepreneurial Zeal from Chorus America. His book *Conversations with Joseph Flummerfelt* was published in 2011. In addition to its Philadelphia performances, this season The Crossing will be heard at Carnegie Hall with the American Composer's Orchestra, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and at Disney Hall with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.



The Crossing is a twenty-four-member professional chamber choir conducted by Donald Nally dedicated to new music. Originally formed by a group of friends in 2005, the ensemble has since grown exponentially and “has made a name for itself in recent years as a champion of new music.” (*The New York Times* 2/14). Highly sought-after for collaborative projects, The Crossing was the resident choir of the Spoleto Festival, Italy in

2007; appeared at Miller Theatre of Columbia University (in the American premiere of James Dillon's *Nine Rivers*) with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE); performed during Bang on a Can's first Philadelphia Marathon; and has appeared with Network for New Music, Lyric Fest, Piffaro, red fish blue fish, Tempesta di Mare Baroque Chamber Orchestra, PRISM Saxophone Quartet, Toshimaru Nakamura, Dolce Suono; and in the summer of 2013, The Rolling Stones.

The Crossing frequently commissions works and has presented over 40 world premieres. Current projects include commissions with John Luther Adams, Ted Hearne, Joel Puckett, Toivo Tulev, and Gavin Bryars. The ensemble recently released two recordings on the Innova label: *Christmas Daybreak* - with world premiere recordings of James MacMillan and Gabriel Jackson—and *I want to live* with the complete choral works for women by David Lang. In January of 2014, The Crossing made its Carnegie Hall debut with The American Composers Orchestra, and in April of 2014, its Disney Hall debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.