

CHAMBER MUSIC OF AARON JAY KERNIS

BEFORE SLEEP AND DREAMS

- 1. Before 4:32
- 2. Play Before Lullaby 3:04
- 3. Lullaby 8:12
- 4. Lights Before Sleep 2:04
- 5. Before Sleep and Dreams 5:51
Evelyne Luest, piano
- 6. AIR 11:54
Andrea Schultz, violin
Evelyne Luest, piano

**7. MEDITATION
(IN MEMORY OF JOHN LENNON)**

- Michael Finckel, violoncello
Aaron Jay Kernis, piano 9:41

**LE QUATTRO STAGIONI DELLA
CUCINA FUTURISMO**

- (The Four Seasons of Futurist Cuisine)
8. Manifesto 4:07
- 9. Heroic Winter Dinner 3:44
- 10. Springtime Meal of the Word 4:23
in Liberty 4:13
- 11. Nocturnal Love Feast 3:18
- 12. Autumn Musical Dinner

© 1999 Phoenix USA
Cover Art: Gerardo Dotti
"Flying at 300 km. per hour above the city"



Produced by:
AARON JAY KERNIS
AND **THE EBERLI ENSEMBLE**

Executive Producer:
JEFFREY KAUFMAN

Engineer:
JOSEPH PATRYCH

THE EBERLI ENSEMBLE
EVAN SPRITZER,
narrator and clarinet
MICHAEL FINCKEL, violoncello
ANDREA SCHULTZ, violin
EVELYNE LUEST, piano

This CD is partially funded by a grant from
the New York Foundation for the Arts

File under Classical/Kernis
Visit us at: www.phoenixcd.com



CHAMBER MUSIC OF AARON JAY KERNIS

PHCD 142

CHAMBER MUSIC OF AARON JAY KERNIS

PHCD 142

The four works contained on this disc span a twelve year period (1981-1993)

In my compositional output and represent a broad range of styles and musical concerns. Consistent in all these pieces is a deep lyricism which is supported by the contrast and flow between consonant and dissonant harmonic worlds. My early student works were especially influenced by the process-oriented Minimalism as found in the early works of Reich or Glass; as time passed, the lyricism and stylistic freedom that is so essential to my work came more to the fore, particularly as I embraced a diverse range of musical influences in the years following graduate study at Yale School of Music.

In 1981 I was a student at the Manhattan School of Music in New York City, living not far from where John Lennon was brutally shot and killed. I found myself deeply moved by the outpouring of grief and love that attended that tragic and unexpected event, and in homage to Lennon, I composed *Meditation* (in memory of John Lennon) for cello and piano, premiering it later that year at the Manhattan School with cellist Jeanne Lewin. Simple and meditative, this gently pulsing and elegant music utilizes techniques borrowed from Minimalism to stretch the tonal harmonies and melodic shapes of Lennon's beautiful song *Imagine*. This piece holds the seeds of my occasional yet ongoing concern with combining elements of popular and contemporary classical music to create a fresh and invigorating synthesis, seen in later works such as *New Era Dance* and *100 Greatest Dance Hits*.

I continued to use compositional processes based upon Minimalism until 1983, when I felt it was time for my music to become freer and less rigorous. Many works from that period were concept-or image-based, taking their inspiration indirectly from, for example, works of art I'd seen, ideas that interested me, or experiences that had been particularly meaningful. I developed an interest in children's games and texts about children in the mid-eighties, and it was through these interests that the piano suite *Before Sleep and Dreams* was created. Its central *Lullaby*, which is often performed on its own, was composed initially as a separate movement in 1987 for pianist Anthony De Mare; the rest of the suite took shape in 1990.

Before Sleep and Dreams is reminiscent of the spirit of works such as Schumann's *Kinderscenen* or Debussy's *Children's Corner*, and contains references to the Romantic and Impressionistic keyboard styles of Debussy and Chopin. The structure of *Before Sleep and Dreams* is based on my idea (not actual experience) of what putting a small child to bed might be like. The peaceful bell-like tones of *Before* lead directly into the gently hyperactive scherzo *Play Before Sleep*. *Lullaby* follows, with a melancholy and searching tone that suggests, through the rocking motion of the minor thirds that open and pervade the movement, the orchestral world of Mahler. *Lights Before Sleep* imitates, through a pulsing repetition as in my earlier Minimal works, the flashing and flickering lights I'd see as a young child on my bedroom wall just before I fell asleep. The sonorous final movement, *Before Sleep and Dreams*, closes out the suite with reminiscences of the earlier scherzo and, ultimately, a peaceful sense of repose.

"*The Futurist Cookbook* is a late manifestation of Italian Futurism, a passionate and highly influential movement in art at the beginning of the century. When Marinetti published the first and most famous of his Futurist manifestos in February 1909, it marked a definitive moment in the shift from nineteenth-century Romanticism to a twentieth-century passion for speed and technology. What prompted Futurism were radical innovations in physics, technology, painting and music, and an uneasy political atmosphere which was soon to erupt in global conflict and national revolution. The Italian Futurists strove to liberate language, art and life from tradition and convention. Futurism can be called the first mass art movement of the twentieth century. It was a kind of romanticism about the humanizing possibilities of technology. They chose the accessible form of the manifesto to spread their message, backed up by a publicity tour. Marinetti, a powerful public speaker and a wily journalist, was a master of these popular forms of communication. It was a highbrow matter, to try to raise the artistic consciousness of the nation en masse. It leads, among other things to the unique

joke of *The Futurist Cookbook*. No other cultural movement has produced a provocative work about art disguised as an easy-to-read cookbook."

(from the introduction to the *Futurist Cookbook* by Lesley Chamberlain, Bedford Arts Publishers, San Francisco, 1989).

Around the time I composed *Before Sleep and Dreams* I was given a copy of F.T. Marinetti's *The Futurist Cookbook* as a birthday present. Coincidentally I was approached by Pat Gidwitz to write a celebratory work for her husband John's 50th birthday. Commissioned by John's mother Adele and sister Susan, the premiere of the resulting work, entitled *Le Quattro Stagioni della Cucina Futurismo*, took place on Martha's Vineyard on August 30, 1991, with John's close friends Jorja Fleezanis (violin), Andre Emelianoff (cello), and Christopher O'Riley (piano) performing and Michael Steinberg narrating.

Like *Before Sleep and Dreams*, my *Quattro Stagioni* also looks back to earlier musical styles, yet its tone is entirely different. I intended this piece to be a sort of "historical recreation" of what I imagined music written to accompany these early modernist texts might have sounded like. References to bitoronality and early twentieth-century chromaticism, along with parodies of Wagner and Bruckner and sappy romantic popular song, alternately mirror and foil the text in an appropriate spirit. At the time I composed the work, I was also aware of certain other parallels that made the Marinetti texts both compelling and topical for me. A fascination with new technologies within an atmosphere of political decay and intolerance reflects our own time, and the rise of Fascism in Italy when these texts were published mirrors certain political trends on the current national and international scene. The first movement text, *Manifesto*, contains an excerpt from Marinetti's pathbreaking *Futurist Manifesto* of 1909; the remaining texts come from the *Futurist Cookbook*, written in second wave of Futurism in the 1930's.

Air, the most recent piece on this disc, was composed in 1995 on commission from Joshua Bell and the Houston Society for the Performing Arts. Couched in a sweeter, lyrical language and weighted by the drama of the work's middle section, *Air* presents two singing yet contrasting melodies that are continuously varied and developed inside an nearly symmetrical ABCBA/Coda structure. This piece developed as I became familiar with Joshua Bell's performing style, uniquely lyrical virtuosity, and brilliant sound. Except for a nod to the American sound of the open fifths in the work's first few bars, this piece is in no way an homage to other musics; it represents my journey toward finding an ever more personal voice and style of composing. Since 1995 I have made two other versions of this work, for violin and orchestra and cello and piano. *Air* is dedicated to my wife Evelyn Luest.

Aaron Jay Kernis

TEXTS

LE QUATTRO STAGIONI DELLA CUCINA FUTURISMO (The Four Seasons of Futurist Cuisine)

MANIFESTO

We stand on the last promontory of the centuries! We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multi-coloured, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals: we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervor of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents; factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts, flashing in the sun with a glitter of knives; adventurous steamers that sniff the horizon; deep-chested locomotives that paw the tracks like the hooves of enormous steel horses bridled by tubing; and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd.

Convinced that in the probable future conflagration those who are the most agile, most ready for action, will win, we Futurists have injected agility into world

literature with words-in-liberty and simultaneity. We have generated surprises with illogical syntheses and dramas of inanimate objects that have purged the theatre of boredom. Having enlarged sculptural possibility with anti-realism, having created geometric architectonic splendour without decorativism and made cinematography and photography abstract, we hereby announce the imminent launch of Futurist cooking to establish the way of eating best suited to an ever more high speed, airborne life.

While recognizing that badly or crudely nourished men have achieved great things in the past, we affirm this truth: men think, dream and act according to what they eat and drink.

Let us consult on this matter our lips, tongue, palate, taste buds, glandular secretions and probe with genius into gastric chemistry.

It is not only that Futurist cooking proposes a complete revolution in the nourishment of our race, with the aim of making it more joyful, spiritual and dynamic. Futurist Cooking also proposes, through the art of harmoniously combining Futurist dishes, to evoke and provoke essential states of mind which cannot otherwise be evoked or provoked. We have put together some dinner programmes that we call provocative and evocative: LE QUATTRO STAGIONI DELLA CUCINA FUTURISMO.

HEROIC WINTER DINNER

A group of soldiers who at three o'clock on a January afternoon will have to get into a lorry to enter the line of fire at four, or go up in an aeroplane to bomb cities or counter-attack enemy flights, would seek in vain the perfect preparation for these in the grieving kiss of a mother, of a wife, of children or in re-reading passionate letters.

A dreamy walk is equally inappropriate. So is the reading of an amusing book.

6

Instead these fighters sit down round a table, where they are served a "Drum Roll of Colonial Fish" and some "Raw Meat Torn by Trumpet Blasts".

DRUM ROLL OF COLONIAL FISH: poached mullet marinated for twenty-four hours in a sauce of milk, rosolio liqueur, capers and red pepper. Just before serving the fish, open it and stuff it with date jam interspersed with discs of banana and slices of pineapple. It will then be eaten to a continuous rolling of drums.

RAW MEAT TORN BY TRUMPET BLASTS: cut a perfect cube of beef. Pass an electric current through it, then marinate it for twenty-four hours in a mixture of rum, cognac and white vermouth. Remove it from the mixture and serve on a bed of red pepper, black pepper and snow. Each mouthful is to be chewed carefully for one minute, and each mouthful is divided from the next by vehement blasts on the trumpet blown by the eater himself.

When it is time for the *Peralzarsi*; the soldiers are served plates of ripe persimmons, pomegranates and blood oranges. While these disappear into their mouths, some very sweet perfumes of roses, jasmine, honeysuckle and acacia flowers will be sprayed around the room, the nostalgic and decadent sweetness of which will be roughly rejected by the soldiers who rush like lightning to put their gas masks on.

The moment they are about to leave they swallow the Throat-Explosion, a solid liquid consisting of a pellet of Parmesan cheese steeped in Marsala.

SPRINGTIME MEAL OF THE WORD IN LIBERTY

Walking across a spring garden through the gentle flames of a dawn full of childish timidity has plunged three young men dressed in white wool, without jackets, into a state of literary and erotic anxiety that cannot be appeased by a normal meal.

7

NOCTURNAL LOVE FEAST

They sit down at a table out of doors under an arbor that allows the warm fingers of the sun to pass through.

They are immediately served with a synoptic-syn gustatory plate, not hot, but gently warmed, of peppers, garlic, rose petals, bicarbonate of soda, peeled bananas and cod liver oil equidistant from each other.

Will they eat it all? Will they taste just parts of it? Will they grasp the imaginative relationships without tasting anything? It's up to them.

Next they dutifully eat a bowl of traditional clear soup with tortellini. This has the effect of making their palates take flight quickly to search on the synoptic-syn gustatory plate for an indispensable new harmony.

Instantly they make an unusual metaphorical connection between the peppers (symbol of rustic strength) and the cod liver oil (symbol of ferocious northern seas and the need to cure sick lungs) so they try dipping the peppers in the oil. Then each clove of garlic is carefully wrapped in rose petals by the same hands of the three guests, who thus entertain themselves with the coupling of poetry and prose. The bicarbonate of soda is available for use as the verb in the infinitive of all food and digestive problems.

But tedium and monotony can arise after the tastebuds have savoured the garlic and roses. So then a buxom country girl in her twenties enters, holding in her arms a huge bowl of strawberries floating in the well-sweetened Grignolino wine. The young men invite her with high-flown words-in-illiberty devoid of all logic and directly expressing their nervous condition, to serve them as quickly as possible. She serves them by tipping it over their heads. They end up eating, licking, drinking, mopping themselves up, fighting each other across the table with illuminating adjectives, verbs shut between full stops, abstract noises and animal cries which seduce all the beasts of springtime, as they ruminate, snore, grumble, whistle, bray and chirrup in turn.

A terrace in Capri, August. The moon pours a stream of curdled milk straight down on the tablecloth, the brown-skinned, heavy-breasted native mama enters carrying an enormous ham on a tray and speaks to the two lovers who are lying stretched out in the two deck chairs, uncertain if they should renew the fatigues of the bed or begin those of the table:

"This is a ham that contains a hundred different pork meats. In order to sweeten it and free it from any possible bitterness and virulence I have soaked it for a week in milk. Real milk, not that illusory milk of the moon. Eat as much of it as you like."

The two lovers devour half the ham. Large oysters follow, each with eleven drops of Muscat wine from Syracuse mixed into its sea water.

Then a glass of Asti-Spumate. Then the War-in-Bed. The bed, vast and already full of moonlight, fascinated, comes to meet them from the back of the open room. They get into it, toasting each other and sipping from the War-in-Bed. It is composed of pineapple juice, eggs, cocoa, caviar, almond paste, a pinch of red pepper, a pinch of nutmeg and a whole clove, all liquidized in Strega liqueur.

AUTUMN MUSICAL DINNER

In a hunter's cabin secluded in a green-blue-gilded forest, two couples sit down at a rough table made from trunks of oak.

The brief blood-red twilight lies in agony beneath the enormous bellies of darkness as if under rain-soaked and seemingly liquid whales.

As they wait for the peasant woman to cook, the only food that passes along the

still empty table is the whistle that the wind makes through the door lock, to the left of the diners.

Duelling with that whistle is the long, sharp wail of a violin note escaping from the room on the right belonging to the peasant woman's convalescent son.

Then, silence for a moment. Then, two minutes of chick peas in oil and vinegar. Then, seven capers. Then, twenty-five liquor cherries. Then, twelve fried potato chips. Then, a silence of a quarter of an hour during which the mouths continue to chew the vacuum. Then, a sip of Barolo wine held in the mouth for one minute. Then, a roast quail for each of the guests to look at and inhale deeply the smell of, without eating. Then four long handshakes to the peasant woman cook and off they all go into the darkness-wind-rain of the forest.

Text from THE FUTURIST COOKBOOK by F.T. Marinetti, translated by Suzanne Brill, Bedford Arts, Publisher, San Francisco 1989.

AARON JAY KERNIS, one of the youngest composers ever to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize, has become among the most esteemed musical figures of his generation. Each of Kernis' works bears the unmistakable stamp of a wildly fertile musical imagination and a distinctive voice forged out of the wide-ranging musical languages of the 1980s and 1990s. His music bursts with rich poetic imagery, brilliant instrumental color, distinctive musical wit, and infectious exuberance. His work is as likely to be inspired by the horrors of the Persian Gulf War (as in the much-talked about *Second Symphony*) as the love poems of Anna Swir (*Love Scenes*), the earthy rhythms of Salsa (*100 Greatest Dance Hits*) as the antics of a child (*Before Sleep and Dreams*), the surrealism of Gertrude Stein (*Fragments of Gertrude Stein*) or the complexities and high-craftsmanship of Italian mosaics (*Invisible Mosaic III*).

His music figures prominently on orchestral, chamber, and recital programs around the world. He has already written works for many of America's foremost musical institutions, including *New Era Dance*, commissioned for the 150th Anniversary of the New York Philharmonic and recorded by the Baltimore

Symphony: *Still Movement with Hymn*, a piano quartet commissioned by American Public Radio for Christopher O'Riley, Pamela Frank, Paul Neubauer, and Carter Brey; *Colored Field*, an English horn concerto for Julie Giacobassi and the San Francisco Symphony; *Goblin Market* for narrator and ensemble, on a text by Christina Rossetti, for the Birmingham [England] New Music Group; *Air* for violinist Joshua Bell; *Ecstatic Meditations* for the Birmingham Bach Choir and the Plymouth Music Series; *Lament and Prayer*, a work for violin and string orchestra for Pamela Frank and the Minnesota Orchestra; and *Double Concerto for Violin, Guitar, and Chamber Orchestra*, commissioned by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Aspen Music Festival, and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra for Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg and Sharon Isbin. Mr. Kernis helps to usher in the next century with a momentous choral symphony for the Millennium commissioned by the Disney Company. Other upcoming commissions include works for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and a song cycle for Renee Fleming in two versions - one for voice and piano to be premiered on Lincoln Center's Great Performers Series and the other with orchestra to be premiered with the Minnesota Orchestra.

Mr. Kernis is one of the most honored young American composers. In addition to the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for his *Siring Quartet No. 2* (musica instrumentalis), his many awards have included the Stoeger Prize from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Rome Prize, an NEA grant, a Bearn's Prize, a New York Foundation for the Arts Award, and three BMI Student Composer Awards. Aaron Jay Kernis was born in Philadelphia on January 15, 1960. He began his musical studies on the violin; at age 12 he began teaching himself piano, and, in the following year, composition. He continued his studies at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Yale School of Music, working with composers as diverse as John Adams, Charles Wuorinen, and Jacob Druckman. Kernis received national acclaim for his first orchestral work, *Dream of the Morning Sky*, premiered by the New York Philharmonic at the 1983 Horizons Festival.

THE EBERLI ENSEMBLE

Acclaimed for their virtuosic and exhilarating performances of old and new repertoire, the Eberli Ensemble is comprised of four talented artists whose instruments include clarinet, violin, cello and piano (the clarinetist, Evan Spritzer, is also a narrator). The ensemble performs a mix of duos, trios and quartets, presenting innovative and entertaining programming ranging from the Baroque to the avant-garde. The Eberli Ensemble has worked with many living composers and has premiered works of Aaron Jay Kernis, Michael Torke, Yehudi Wyner, and Ben Weber, among others. The group has been invited to perform in Europe and across the United States. Their concert appearances have included performances at Carnegie's Weill Hall, Merkin Hall and live appearances on New York's WNYC Radio and the nationally syndicated Saint Paul Sunday radio program. Their concert tours have taken them as far west as the 1998 Festival of New American Music in Sacramento, and Old First Concerts in San Francisco to the International Deia Festival and Clasicos del Siglo XX del Palacio March in Mallorca, Spain. The Eberli Ensemble has been honored with awards and grants from the American Composers Forum, Meet The Composer, the New York Foundation for the Arts and the Scarmolin Foundation.

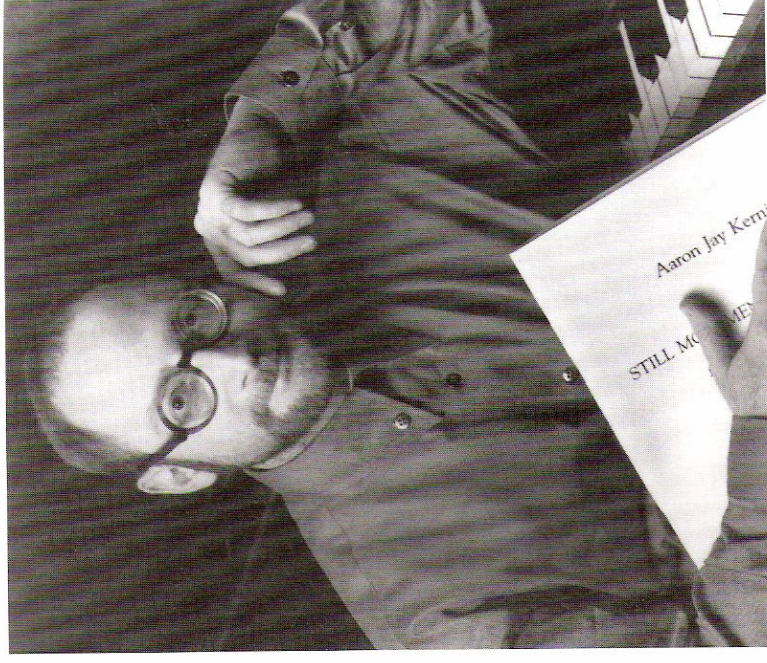
Michael Finckel, cellist, is acclaimed for his insightful performances of new compositions for cello. Mr. Finckel has been a member and frequent guest performer with numerous contemporary music ensembles including the American Composers Orchestra, The Group for Contemporary Music, Speculum Musicae, The S.E.M. Ensemble, Essential Music, Steve Reich and Musicians, The Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, and the New York New Music Ensemble. He is musical director and principal conductor of the Sage City Symphony in Bennington, Vermont. Mr. Finckel's own compositions explore a diversity of musical expressions and are scored for instrumental ensembles ranging from full orchestra to solo instruments. As a cellist, he has recorded new works for CRI, Opus One, Vox/Candide, Vanguard and ECM/Warner Bros.

As chamber musician and soloist, violinist **Andrea Schultz** has performed in concert venues throughout the world. She has been guest artist with some of the country's leading chamber ensembles including the New York Chamber Ensemble, Apple Hill Chamber Players, Da Capo Chamber Players, and An Die Musik. In addition to touring the US and Japan as a member of Alexander Schneider's Brandenburg Ensemble and as concertmistress of his New York String Orchestra, Ms. Schultz regularly performs with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and Mostly Mozart. She has performed in a host of summer festivals including the Tanglewood, Banff, Aspen, Ravinia, Caramoor, Vermont Mozart, and the Cape May music festivals in the US, as well as the Pundakit International Chamber Music Festival in the Philippines. Ms. Schultz received a D.M.A. from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, an M.M. from the Cleveland Institute of Music, and graduated *summa cum laude* from Yale University, where she received the Whexam Prize in Music.

Pianist **Evelyne Luest**, wife of composer Aaron Jay Kernis, is an accomplished soloist and chamber musician and has performed and toured in Europe, South America and the USA. She has won many competitions and awards including the Artists International Competition in New York and the Coleman Chamber Music Competition in Los Angeles with the Bay Piano Trio. Ms. Luest has performed as soloist at Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall, the Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds in Italy and on the Saint Paul Sunday national radio show. She recently toured a recital of Women Composer's works in Texas and New York. Her long list of local and world premieres include compositions by Joan Tower, Virgil Thomson, Aaron Jay Kernis, Michael Torke, Ben Weber, Ralf Yttrehus, Jing Jing Lou and Sheila Silver. Currently the main coordinator and pianist of the Eberli Ensemble, Ms Luest has also performed with the Lark Quartet, An Die Musik, Musicians' Accord, CYGNUS, New York Women Composers, and Composers Concordance. Ms. Luest's recent CD releases include solo works on CRI and Phoenix USA as well as chamber works on North/South Recordings, North Pacific Music, and Phoenix USA. She studied with Gilbert Kalish at SUNY Stony Brook where she received an M.M. and D.M.A. in Piano

Performance. She is currently on the faculty at Marymount College in Tarrytown, New York.

Clarinetist/Actor **Evan Spritzer** has performed throughout Europe and the United States. As clarinetist, Mr. Spritzer has performed at the Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds in Italy, at Lincoln Center with the Bang on a Can All-Stars and at Merkin Hall with An Die Musik. He studied at the State University of New York at Stony Brook as a student of Charles Neidich where he received a Doctorate of Musical Arts. He also studied at The Paris Conservatory as a recipient of the Frank Huntington Beebe Prize. As narrator, he has been invited to perform with some of the country's outstanding chamber ensembles including the New York New Music Society and the Guild Trio. Currently clarinetist and narrator with the Eberli Ensemble, Mr. Spritzer also performs narration and improvised dialogue with the Rivingtons, a Manhattan based multi-media performance art group. Mr. Spritzer is currently on the faculty and conductor of the orchestra at St. Ann's School in Brooklyn, New York.



Aaron Jay Kernis

Photo Credit: Daniel Vogel