

LiveConnections Presents
Kinan Azmeh + Aizuri Quartet

“Music & Migration” • May 31, 2018 • 7:30 p.m.
World Cafe Live, Philadelphia

Armenian Folk Songs Komitas Vartabed (1869-1935)
arr. Sergei Aslamazian

- I. Yergink Ampel A (It's Cloudy)
- II. Haprpan (Festive Song)
- III. Shoushigi (For Shoushig)
- IV. Echmiadzni Bar (Dance from Echmiadzin)
- V. Kaqavik (The Partridge)

The Fence, the Rooftop and the Distant Sea (2018)
Kinan Azmeh (b. 1976)

World premiere of version for clarinet and string quartet, commissioned by the Aizuri Quartet

- I. Prologue
- II. Ammonite
- III. Monologue
- IV. Dance
- V. Epilogue

RIPEFG (2016) Yevgeniy Sharlat (b. 1977)
Commissioned for the Aizuri Quartet by the Curtis Institute of Music

- I. Vivo

INTERMISSION

These Memories May Be True (2012)
Lembit Beecher (b. 1980)

- III. Estonian Grandmother Superhero
- IV. Variations on a Somewhat Old Folk Song

Suite of Micro-commissions for String Quartet and Clarinet (2018)

World premiere, commissioned by the Aizuri Quartet

- I. Irresolvable Fragment Can Bilir (b. 1987)
- II. Diente de León Pauchi Sasaki (b. 1981)
- III. Between Air Wang Lu (b. 1982)
- IV. Lullaby for the Transient Michi Wiancko (b. 1976)

Kinan Azmeh, *clarinet*

Aizuri Quartet

Ariana Kim & Miho Saegusa, *violins*;
Ayane Kozasa, *viola*; Karen Ouzounian, *cello*

LiveConnections

inspiring learning & building community
through collaborative music-making

liveconnections.org



WELCOME FROM LIVECONNECTIONS

Earlier this month, LiveConnections turned 10 years old. We've been spending a lot of time looking back at a remarkable first decade, and also looking ahead to envision what comes next.

We believe music is powerful. It inspires. It builds community. It creates opportunities for learning and connection and empathy. It allows us to express ourselves, to hear stories that are different from our own, to be fully human together.

In our first 10 years, LiveConnections has reached 39,000 participants through our music education programs for under-resourced schools and individuals with disabilities. We've presented 46 concerts—including tonight's—focused on collaboration and innovation, and commissioned 12 new works that bridge musical genres and cultures.

Tonight, to kick off our "10 Collaborations for 10 Years" season—which celebrates 10 years of LiveConnections' socially engaged music-making through a series of collaborative projects—we're thrilled to welcome back artists who collaborated with us in prior seasons. Kinan Azmeh and the Aizuri Quartet's program speaks to their own experiences of migration: loss and change, disruption and uncertainty, beauty and hope.

Additional collaborations in LiveConnections' 2018–2019 season will feature Imani Winds, VOCES8, Joanna Pascale, Sister Cities Girlchoir, Jay Fluellen, Shavon Norris and more, with projects focused on women's empowerment, accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities, and the rich diversity of music present in our city.

Thanks for being part of LiveConnections. Here's to 10 more amazing years!



Mary Wheelock Javian
LiveConnections Presents Curator



Melinda Steffy
Executive Director



“exciting and much-needed programming”

—*Artblog*

“Once again, LiveConnections' musical match-making has produced a lively evening of musical discovery.”

—*DCMetroTheaterArts*

“MUSIC & MIGRATION” PROGRAM NOTES

—*The Aizuri Quartet*

About his piece, **Kinan Azmeh** writes, “A fence, a rooftop and the distant sea were all present there facing my desk while I finished the piece in Beirut... These elements were a reminder of how near my hometown of Damascus was, yet how far it seemed after being away for five years. The piece is about random memories of individuals; more precisely it is about two characters searching for memories from home, and how they jump from one random memory to another while allowing themselves to drift away with their own thoughts, until they realize that the most powerful memories were the simplest, and they hold on to that endlessly.”

For many years Kinan split his time between New York and Damascus, working as a composer and clarinetist, both as a soloist and as a member of the Silkroad Ensemble and leading his own CityBand in New York. But since the beginning of the war in Syria, he has not been able to return to Damascus. This experience of a dear friend and much-admired colleague brought into close focus the emotional realities of war and migration that we read about with increasing regularity in the news.

The **Aizuri Quartet's** own members' families hail from Japan, Korea, the United States, and Armenia by way of Lebanon and Canada, and we were inspired to build a concert centered around the theme of migration viewed through a personal lens. We were particularly interested in the various and nuanced ways in which this issue resonated in our own musical community. For the occasion of our final concert as the 2017-2018 MetLiveArts String-Quartet-in-Residence, the members of the Quartet each invited a composer whose work she particularly admired to respond to the theme of migration in whatever way they saw fit, whether through a direct reflection on personal or family experience, or a more general, abstract, or emotional response.

A native of Ankara, Turkey, **Can Bilir** explores via a haunting palette of sounds “the unspeakable, intangible and irresolvable” nature of traumatic events and memories in his “Irresolvable Fragment.” In “Diente de León,” composer **Pauchi Sasaki's** music reflects the uncertainty of migration and finds parallels between the plant Diente de León (dandelion, or tiger's tooth in Spanish), whose flying seeds don't know where they are going to land before they start a new cycle, and the experience of migrators, who “ignore the exact latitudes of their new soil.” She explores the “blurring nature of memories, as migrators rebuild their place of origin in their minds. A new subjective and individual space is then constructed based on nostalgia and will.” About her piece “Between Air,” **Wang Lu** writes: “Between the flow of naturally pulsating motion and the inhaling and exhaling of instrumental bodies, [this piece] gently explores breath-like phrases through subtle micro-shading and timbral deviations to create a continually deepening emotional journey.” And **Michi Wiancko's** “Lullaby for the Transient” tells a current immigration story from an emotional perspective, as she imagines the insecurity and aftermath experienced by a single mother and son who have successfully completed a border crossing. She writes, “It begins with the simple song texture of melody plus accompaniment, though often containing an underlying feeling of conflict, expressed through unexpectedly shifting meters, percussive strikes on instrument bodies, or wildly interruptive atonal flourishes. The listener will hopefully hear that “song” transform gradually into the volatile and virtuosic voice of an instrumental soloist — our transient heroine moving from space

to space, searching for a final resting place of peace and beauty, but in the end being forced to accept the persistence of unrest.”

One of the first composers the Aizuri Quartet worked with was **Lembit Beecher**, whose quartet “These Memories May Be True” we first performed in 2013. Of this work he writes: “My grandmother, Taimi Lepasaar, died as I was beginning work on this piece. She had had an amazing life, growing up in Estonia before World War II, surviving both the Soviet and Nazi occupations of her country, and immigrating to the United States, where she raised two daughters by herself (her husband was lost in the final chaos of the war) while working as a public school music teacher and church organist. Her stories about Estonia and her journey to the United States exerted a strong spell over my childhood. As I worked on this piece, I thought about the sense of exile she must have felt after she left Estonia and I thought about the way stories and memories define us, whether or not they are complete or even true. This piece is a little like the scattered image of Estonia that I had while growing up: a few songs and a few stories, all filtered through many layers of retelling, and touched by a sense of nostalgia, a sense of something beautiful that has been lost in the wash of time.”

Most of the works on the program are intimate and personal in their reflections, but the music of **Komitas Vartabed**, considered the father of Armenian music, is deeply treasured throughout the Armenian diaspora. A composer, priest, choir master, ethnomusicologist, and survivor of the Armenian genocide, Komitas's music has become an enduring symbol of home and identity for a people separated from their homeland.

We're so excited to share this program with you all, and thank you for being with us.

—The Aizuri Quartet

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

AIZURI QUARTET. Praised by the *Washington Post* for “captivating” performances that draw from its notable “meld of intellect, technique and emotions,” the Aizuri Quartet was awarded First Prize at the 2017 Osaka International Chamber Music Competition in Japan, and Third Prize at the 2015 Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition in London. Through its engaging and thought-provoking programs, the Quartet has garnered critical acclaim for bringing “a technical bravado and emotional power” to bold new commissions, and for its “flawless” (*San Diego Union-Tribune*) performances of the great masterpieces of the past in which “every note is lovingly crafted and savored” (*Washington Post*).

Based in New York City, the Aizuri Quartet is the 2017-2018 MetLiveArts String Quartet-in-Residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, presenting five unique programs throughout the season, which the *New York Times* has called “genuinely exciting” and “imaginative.” Previously the Quartet was the 2015-2016 Ernst Stiefel String Quartet-in-Residence at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, and from 2014-2016, the String Quartet-in-Residence at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

Highlights of the Quartet's recent and upcoming seasons include a multi-city tour of Japan, debut recitals at the Kennedy Center's Fortas Chamber Music Concerts, the Women's Musical Club of Toronto, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Wolf Trap's

Chamber Music at the Barns, Schneider Concerts in New York City, Princeton University's Summer Chamber Music Concerts, the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota, Chamber Music Society of Bethlehem, the Artosphere Festival and the Honolulu Chamber Music Series, and residencies with Cornell University, Scrag Mountain Music, North Carolina State University, Chamber Music Abu Dhabi, and IRIS Orchestra.

Finding great joy in working with contemporary composers and exploring unusual collaborations, the Aizuri Quartet is proud to have commissioned and premiered works by Pulitzer Prize-winner Caroline Shaw (*Blueprint*), Paul Wiancko (*LIFT*), Yevgeniy Sharlat (*RIPEFG*), Gabriella Smith (*Carrot Revolution*), Rene Orth (*Stripped*), and Alyssa Weinberg (*Parallels*). The Quartet's many and varied collaborative partners include pianists Jonathan Biss and Ignat Solzhenitsyn, clarinetist Kinan Azmeh, eighth blackbird in specially-curated performances of Terry Riley's “In C,” and the Aeolus Quartet. They previously performed in a LiveConnections collaboration with poet Denice Frohman and singer-songwriter Andrew Lipke. Most recently the Quartet premiered the 65-minute chamber opera *Sophia's Forest* by Lembit Beecher, featuring the Aizuri Quartet, soprano Kiera Duffy, and expansive, custom-built sound sculptures in Philadelphia in September 2017. Its debut album, featuring new works written for the Aizuri Quartet, will be released by New Amsterdam Records in Fall 2018.

Comprising four distinctive musical personalities, “each one a magnificent musician in her own right” (*Washington Post*), the Aizuri Quartet “is in full possession of that most elusive of string quartet qualities: the balance between charisma of the individual and cohesion of the collective” (*Philadelphia Inquirer*). Formed in 2012, the Aizuri Quartet draws its name from “aizuri-e,” a style of predominantly blue Japanese woodblock printing that is noted for its vibrancy and incredible detail.

www.aizuriquartet.com

KINAN AZMEH. Hailed as a “Virtuoso” and “Intensely Soulful” by the *New York Times* and “Spellbinding” by the *New Yorker*, and “Incredibly Rich Sound” by the CBC. His utterly distinctive sound across different musical genres has gained him international recognition as clarinetist and composer. Kinan was recently named composer-in-residence with Classical Movements for the 2017-2018 season.

Kinan has been touring the world as soloist, composer and improviser. Notable appearances include: Opera Bastille, Paris; Tchaikovsky Grand Hall, Moscow; Carnegie Hall and the UN's general assembly, New York; the Royal Albert hall, London; Teatro Colon, Buenos Aires; der Philharmonie; Berlin; the Library of Congress, the Kennedy Center, Washington DC; the Mozarteum, Salzburg, Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie and the Damascus opera house for its opening concert in his native Syria.

He has appeared as soloist with the New York Philharmonic, the Seattle Symphony, the Bavarian Radio Orchestra, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, the Qatar Philharmonic and the Syrian Symphony Orchestra among others; and has shared the stage with Yo-Yo Ma, Marcel Khalife, Aynur, Daniel Barenboim and Jivan Gasparian. His compositions include several works for solo, orchestra, and chamber music; film, live illustration, and electronics. His discography include three albums with his ensemble Hepar, several soundtracks for film and dance, a duo album with pianist Dinuk Wijeratne and an album with his New York Arabic/Jazz quartet the Kinan Azmeh CityBand. He serves as artistic director of the Damascus Festival Chamber Players,

a pan-Arab ensemble dedicated to contemporary music from the Arab world. He is a frequent guest faculty at the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music and is on the advisory board of the Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra. He is also a member of Yo-Yo Ma's Silkroad Ensemble with whom he was awarded a Grammy in 2017.

Kinan is a graduate of New York's Juilliard school as a student of Charles Neidich, and of both the Damascus High Institute of Music where he studied with Shukry Sahwki, Nicolay Viovanof and Anatoly Moratof, and Damascus University's School of Electrical Engineering in his native Syria. Kinan earned his doctorate degree in music from the City University of New York in 2013. www.kinanazmeh.com

ABOUT THE COMPOSERS

LEMBIT BEECHER. Praised by *The San Francisco Chronicle* as "hauntingly lovely and deeply personal," Lembit Beecher's music combines "alluring" textures (*The New York Times*) and vividly imaginative colors with striking emotional immediacy. Lembit is currently the composer-in-residence of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, having previously served a three-year term as the inaugural composer-in-residence of Opera Philadelphia. Recent and upcoming premieres include works for A Far Cry Chamber Orchestra, Diderot Quartet, Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings/University of Michigan Symphony Band, Gotham Chamber Opera, Opera Philadelphia and the Juilliard Quartet. Many of Lembit's latest projects involve the incorporation of untraditional elements into operatic form, working with baroque instruments, electronic sounds, animation, new technologies, and devised theatre actors. Recent honors include a MacDowell Colony Fellowship, the S&R Foundation Washington Award Grand Prize, and a major grant from the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage to develop and produce "To Hide in a Tree of Sound," a chamber opera for soprano Kiera Duffy, the Aizuri Quartet, and a multi-piece sound sculpture. www.lembitbeecher.com

CAN BILIR. Can Bilir's works have been performed in the US and Europe at music events such as Klarafestival, IMPULS, Composer's Voice New York, MUSMA V, Ankara Music Festival, Le storie vita nel legno, and June in Buffalo. He has had commissions for Ariana Kim, JACK Quartet, Rachel Calloway and Xak Bjeken, Ensemble Adapter, Distractfold Ensemble, I Solisti Del Vento, NY New Music Ensemble, Turkish Radio and Television Corporation Polyphonic Choir, OSSIA, and Continuum Ensemble NY. Can is a doctoral candidate in composition at Cornell University where he has studied with Kevin Ernste, Roberto Sierra, and Steven Stucky. He is currently an exchange scholar at Harvard University where he is studying composition with Chaya Czernowin. He is also a Fulbright Scholar. www.canbilir.com

WANG LU. Composer and pianist Wang Lu (born in Xi'an, China) writes music that reflects a very natural identification with influences from traditional Chinese music, urban environmental sounds, linguistic intonation and contours, and freely improvised traditions, through the prism of contemporary instrumental techniques and new sonic possibilities. She is an Assistant Professor of Music at Brown University, after receiving her doctorate degree in composition at Columbia University and graduating from the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music. Wang Lu's works have been performed internationally, by ensembles including the Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Alarm Will Sound, Minnesota Orchestra, American Composers Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lille, Taipei Chinese Orchestra,

Musiques Nouvelles, Le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, International Contemporary Ensemble, among others. Her most recent works have been written for violinists Miranda Cuckson and Jennifer Koh. Wang Lu received the Berlin Prize in Music Composition (Spring 2019 residency) and was a 2014 Guggenheim Fellow. www.wanglucomposer.com

PAUCHI SASAKI. Described by *The Wire* as an artist "unafraid of working within different disciplines and stylistic constraints," Pauchi Sasaki's interdisciplinary approach integrates musical composition with the design of multimedia performances, the application of new technologies, and the development of self-designed instruments seeking the embodiment of electronic music performance. A composer, performer and improviser, her music has been performed at Tokyo Experimental Festival, The Mario Testino Museum, Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart, The Kitchen, Grand National Theater from Peru, Zankel Hall, among other venues. An active film scorer, "Sasaki's effective scores" [Variety] are also featured in more than 30 feature and short films. Pauchi is the recipient of three international "Best Original Score" awards, the Ibermúsicas Latin American grant for sound composition with new technologies (2015), the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative selected by American composer Philip Glass, and the Goethe-Institut's Vila Sul artist residency in Brazil (2017). www.pauchi.com

YEVGENIY SHARLAT. Yevgeniy Sharlat has composed music for orchestra, chamber ensembles, solo, theater, ballet, mechanical sculptures, animations, and film. His commissions came from such institutions as the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, the Caramoor Festival, The Curtis Institute of Music, Texas Performing Arts, Gilmore Keyboard Festival, Astral Artistic Services, and the Seattle Chamber Players. He has written string quartets for the Amphion, the Aizuri, and the Aeolus Quartets. He was among the composers commissioned by the Kronos Quartet for its "Fifty for the Future" project. His music has been performed by such ensembles as Kremerata Baltica, the Seattle Symphony, Hartford Symphony, NCSA Symphony, Mikkeli City Orchestra (Finland), Chamber Orchestra Kremlin, the NOW Ensemble, and Le Train Bleu. Mr. Sharlat was the recipient of the 2006 Charles Ives Fellowship from American Academy of Arts and Letters; other honors include a Fromm Music Foundation Commission to write for the Viney-Grinberg Piano Duo, fellowships from MacDowell and Yaddo, and ASCAP's Morton Gould, Boosey & Hawkes, and Leiber & Stoller awards. Mr. Sharlat is Associate Professor of Composition at The University of Texas at Austin. www.ysharlat.com

MICHI WIANCKO. Michi Wiancko is an internationally-acclaimed composer, violinist, and cross-genre collaborator. *The Strad* described her music as "intriguing and exquisitely beautiful...music that breaks through the pop classical barrier." Michi's work has been commissioned by the Ecstatic Music Festival, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Liquid Music, Enso Quartet, Sybarite5, East Coast Chamber Orchestra, Mark Fewer, NOW Ensemble, and for film, commercial, and her own band, Kono Michi. Highly valued as a collaborator, Michi has worked closely with musicians across a vast musical spectrum, including Missy Mazzoli, Steve Reich, Silk Road Ensemble with Yo-Yo Ma, Wye Oak and Jenn Wasner, Emily Wells, Bill Brittelle, Daniel Wohl, Emanuel Ax, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Vijay Iyer, EL VY, Alarm Will Sound, A Far Cry, and ICE, to name only a few. Michi gave her debut concerto performances with both the NY and LA Philharmonics, and studied violin with Donald Weilerstein and Robert Mann at CIM and Juilliard, respectively. www.michiwiancko.com

ABOUT LIVECONNECTIONS

Celebrating 10 years, LiveConnections' programs **inspire learning and build community through collaborative music-making**. We approach live music as an essential social and educational experience that helps create engaged and well-rounded global citizens. **Bridge Sessions**, our signature educational performances, blend live music with hands-on activities, introducing students from Philadelphia public schools and people with disabilities to diverse musical cultures. Our **in-school and after-school residencies** provide students from under-resourced schools with sustained, in-depth music-making experiences. In addition, our critically acclaimed **LiveConnections Presents concert series** features unique artist collaborations and boundary-crossing new music. We are a nonprofit organization in residence at World Cafe Live.

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Join us as a LiveConnections Presents Producer, contributing \$1000 or more toward a specific concert that inspires you, or make a smaller gift as an Associate Producer (\$500) or a Friend of LiveConnections Presents (gifts up to \$500). Whatever your gift, know that it directly supports artists who are building the vibrant cultural life of our region.

Donate online at liveconnections.org/give, or contact director of development Blair Bodine at 267-295-2946 or blair@liveconnections.org. LiveConnections is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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