MARTI EPSTEIN
HYPNAGOGIA

LUDOVICO ENSEMBLE

The Ludovico Ensemble is a Boston-based chamber ensemble specializing in modern music. Founded in 2002 by percussionist Nicholas Tolle, the group is known for its carefully curated programs focusing primarily on the European avant-garde. From 2007–2014, the group held the position of Ensemble-In-Residence at the Boston Conservatory. In 2010, the group released its first album featuring chamber music by the late Dana Brayton, former composition teacher at the Boston Conservatory. The group consists of many of the best freelancers and new music specialists in Boston, and its instrumentation varies wildly from concert to concert as the repertoire demands. The group's name is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the fictional medical treatment featured in the Anthony Burgess novel and Stanley Kubrick movie A Clockwork Orange, in which the protagonist is subjected to a classical conditioning regimen that induces nausea at the sight of violent or exploitative acts, but also, inadvertently, to the music of Beethoven.

MARTI EPSTEIN

Marti Epstein (b. 1959) is a composer whose music has been performed by the San Francisco Symphony, The Radio Symphony Orchestra of Frankfurt, the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Ensemble Modern, and members of the Boston Symphony. She has completed commissions for the Fromm Foundation, The Munich Biennale, the Iowa Brass Quintet, the CORE Ensemble, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra, the Ludovico Ensemble, Guerilla Opera, the Radius Ensemble, the Callithumpian Consort, Duo Harpverk, and the Tanglewood Music Center. Marti is Professor of Composition at Berklee College of Music and also teaches composition at Boston Conservatory.
My music is generally slow-paced. I always tell people that “You can take the girl out of Nebraska, but you can’t take the Nebraska out of the girl.” The wide open spaces that I experienced as a child, not so much in my living environment, but in the many car trips we took to Colorado to see my grandparents, were and are an integral part of my artistic psyche.

One of my favorite composers is Jean Sibelius. One time I saw a documentary about him, which showed the place where he lived and worked — it was a wide-open expanse of frozen lake and snow — one of the most beautiful images I have ever seen. I love living in the east, but I long for the space and expanse of the place in my childhood memories. I feel like my music is an expression of that longing.

My music is also mostly very quiet, although there are occasional outbursts here and there for various reasons. I often feel oppressed by noise, and I want my music to be heard by being listened to carefully. I want it to whisper rather than shout.

Grand Island is my only piece that has a direct connection to Nebraska. When my family would take those long car rides between Nebraska and Colorado, one of the things I was especially struck by was the glow of lights from a city off in the distance. Grand Island is a small city in Nebraska several miles from Interstate 80.
I always loved the name of that place — it seems like such a wonderful incongruity to name a city in the middle of the plains Grand Island. The piece, scored for piano, 2 harps and 2 percussionists, is a musical reflection on one of those nighttime car rides.

A Little Celestial Tenderness is a tiny piece I wrote for Nick Tolle to celebrate the Ludovico Ensemble’s 10th birthday. The title comes from a remark Messiaen made when told about criticism his former student, Pierre Boulez, had made about his music. Messiaen said that all Boulez needed was “a little celestial tenderness”.

hothouse was written for David Beyer and Gisela Krause and is about tropical flowers and plants trying to grow in a “non-tropical” climate. The piece is made up of alternating musical phrases and phrases made up of silence. Gradually the musical phrases get shorter, and the silent phrases grow longer so that by the end, there are just very short musical gestures punctuated by large expanses of silence.

Hypnagogia is the state between wakefulness and sleep; a state of mind in which creation and revelation often happen. Hypnagogia is about being in that state for a prolonged period of time. Written in 2009 for clarinet, oboe, violin, cello, harp, piano, and cimbalom, the music for Hypnagogia exists only in parts for the individual players; there is no unified, synchronized score. Each player is asked to perform the piece as if alone, without purposefully coordinating with the other performers. I want the piece to have a certain fluidity of rhythm and form (it is indeterminate which instrument arrives first at each section, and even which instrument ends the piece!) that would be nearly impossible- and unnecessary- to notate precisely. Hypnagogia was written for and is dedicated to Nick Tolle and the Ludovico Ensemble.

— Marti Epstein
THE LUDOVICO ENSEMBLE
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The Ludovico Ensemble and Marti Epstein would like to thank John McDonald / Tufts University for their help in facilitating our use of the acoustically phenomenal Distler Hall for this recording.

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LUDOVICO ENSEMBLE EDITION 2

MARTI EPSTEIN HYPNAGOGIA

1 HOTHOUSE (2000)
Marti Epstein, piano
John McDonald, piano

2 GRAND ISLAND (1986)
Jeffrey Means, conductor
John McDonald, piano
Amanda Romano Foreman, harp
Krysten Keches, harp
Nicholas Tolle, percussion
Mike Williams, percussion

3 A LITTLE CELESTIAL TENDERNESS (2013)
Ona Jonaityte, flute
Gary Gorczyca, clarinet
Nicholas Tolle, cimbalom

4 HYPNAGOGIA (2009)
Micah Brightwell, violin
David Russell, cello
Gary Gorczyca, clarinet
Rob Sheena, oboe
John McDonald, piano
Franziska Huhn, harp
Nicholas Tolle, cimbalom

Executive Producer: Marti Epstein
Tracks 1 and 2 recorded, mixed, and mastered by Joel Gordon
Tracks 3 and 4 recorded, mixed, and mastered by Ernest M. Gillis
All tracks recorded at Distler Hall, Tufts University
Illustation: Nicole Margaretten / endlessdrawings.etsy.com
Marti Epstein photo by Paul Fake
Grand Island photo by Andrew Frohling, www.lamorerose.com

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