

# Ursula Mamlok @ 100

**Reiko Fütting** (DMA '00), Coordinator

Featuring MSM DMA Candidates

**Lucian Avalon**, oboe

**Minyoung Kwon** (MM '21), harp

**Bixby Kennedy**, clarinet

**Fei-Fei**, piano

**Christa Dalmazio** (BM '16, MM '18), soprano

**Shawn Chang**, piano

**SoYoung Choi** (PS '21), violin

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2023 | 7:30 PM  
GORDON K. AND HARRIET GREENFIELD HALL

# Ursula Mamlok @ 100 Concert

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## PROGRAM

URSULA MAMLOK  
(1923–2016)

*Kontraste (Contrasts)* (2009/10)

*Humoresque*

*Largo e mesto*

**Lucian Avalon**, oboe

**Minyoung Kwon**, harp

*Polyphony I* (1968)

I

II

III

IV

**Bixby Kennedy**, clarinet

*Zwei Klavierstücke* (Two Piano Pieces)

*Inward Journey* (1989)

*In High Spirits* (2004)

**Fei-Fei**, piano

URSULA MAMLOK

*Four German Songs* (1958)

(Text by Hermann Hesse)

*Über die Felder (Across the Fields)*

*September (September)*

*Schmetterling (Butterfly)*

*Nachtgefühl (Night Feeling)*

**Christa Dalmazio**, soprano

**Shawn Chang**, piano

*2000 Notes* (2000)

I

II

III

IV

**Fei-Fei**, piano

*From My Garden* (1987)

**SoYoung Choi**, violin

*Kontraste* (2009/10)

**Lucian Avalon**, oboe

**Minyoung Kwon**, harp

EPILOGUE

*Movements*

A short film portrait of composer Ursula Mamlok, directed by Anne Berrini

# ABOUT THE COMPOSITIONS

## ***Kontraste (Contrasts)***

In about three minutes, the small and charming two-part piece *Kontraste* for oboe and harp captivates with clarity and limitation to the essentials. The name says it all: a lively humoresque is followed by a rather delicate, even almost melancholy second movement, which is headed *largo e mesto*. The composition was written in 2009/10 as a birthday present for the Swiss oboist—and this work’s dedicatee—Heinz Holliger and his wife, the harpist Ursula Holliger.

–Schott Music Publishing

## ***Polyphony I***

In the first movement of *Polyphony I* long high notes and short low notes alternate like dots that can be joined to form two different lines. The polyphony is a product of the memory making a mental connection between similar items. In the second movement, differing characters pervade and take over from one another. In the short third movement a calm melodic line is first bisected, then suppressed by quick figures. It reappears in the fourth movement, whose calm closing tempo leaves it open whether the frequent changes in positions of the notes should be interpreted as the imaginary interaction of two lines or as a single, expressively widely spaced melody.

–Habakuk Traber

## ***Four German Songs***

After emigrating from Berlin at the age of 16, Ursula Mamlok wrote *Four German Songs* in 1958 while studying at Manhattan School of Music. Based on texts from Hermann Hesse’s collection *Vom Baum des Lebens (The Tree of Life)*, the songs reflect her uprooting from home. Mamlok juxtaposes Hesse’s melancholy with an intensive tonal image which proceeds from expressionism with short motifs and tonal transgression, yet ventures into new spheres of expression.

–Boosey & Hawkes

## ***2000 Notes***

When, at the end of the last century, Ursula Mamlok composed the piano piece *2000 Notes* for pianists Sarah Cahill and Marcia Eckert, she had not written a major piece for her own instrument, the piano, for almost half a century. The four movements mingle and juxtapose heterogeneous elements in many ways. The first movement gives the impression of being a chain of ripostes, echoes, and correspondences, which the listener is better able to sense than to pin them down: signaling motifs, rhythmic cells, lyrical passages that rise to climaxes, and multi-voiced interweaving overlap momentarily, whilst otherwise succeeding one another with hardly any connection. The piece gives the impression of being extemporized, of a “recitativo obbligato.”

—Habakuk Traber

## ***From My Garden***

Ursula Mamlok dedicated the viola piece *From My Garden*, which also exists in a version for violin, to her husband. It belongs to a group of works with titles referring to nature, which were written mainly from 1983 onwards. It was then that Ursula and Dwight Mamlok decided to live in Dwight’s late parents’ house in San Mateo, California during the summer months to escape the heat and closeness of New York. There, they experienced nature with a contradictory intensity: as lush, colorful vegetation and as a subterranean threat—close to their house ran the San Andreas fault, the geographical manifestation of the existence of two tectonic plates whose movement repeatedly causes major earthquakes in the region.

—Habakuk Traber

# ABOUT THE FILM

## *Movements*

The idea for this film came out of a short portrait of Mamlok that I shot in 2011 for the annual commemoration of *Kristallnacht*, the Nazi-led nationwide pogroms of November 1938. After meeting the composer, we quickly realised that we'd need a much longer film to tell the story of this remarkable artist. What finally decided things was the fact that she'd made plans to travel to New York, the city she'd lived in for more than 60 years and where one of her works was to be performed at the League of Composers' season finale concert. Mamlok was determined to oversee the orchestral rehearsals, while also taking the opportunity to revisit some of her friends in New York. By accompanying her on her journey, we had the chance not only to learn more about her life and her music, but also to watch her at work.

While we were preparing to shoot in New York, the cameraman Ronald König and I began thinking long and hard about exactly how we'd make this portrait. Mamlok's agent Bettina Brand, who helped get this film off the ground and provided a great deal of support for it, had given us a long list of concerts, events, public meetings, and musical performances for the months ahead. It wasn't exactly the typical itinerary of an 89-year-old composer. Before she'd returned to Berlin, Mamlok's music had been largely unknown in Germany. Changing this state of affairs mattered a great deal to her.

In view of this, it quickly became clear to me that portraying Mamlok meant following her about. This was the best way I could show what mattered and had always mattered to her, what she had worked at her whole life, what had sustained her when times were hard, what had enabled her to make brave decisions, and what had influenced and shaped her and kept her going—"movements" in every sense of the word.

The result is a film about Mamlok that is very much of its moment; a film that offers insights into her work and her life, and in so doing reflects the most important moments of that life. Therefore, the film shows a woman between Berlin and New York, someone who has found her way through her faith in the power, indeed the necessity, of a new form of music, and who has managed to preserve her hopes while keeping both feet planted firmly on the ground. As we are only too aware, for most of her life it was very far from clear that things would turn out for her the way they did.

—Anne Berrini, Director

## ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Ursula Mamlok was born in Berlin in 1923 and began her musical training very early. She attended primary school in Berlin's Pestalozzistrasse and then went on to the Fürstin-Bismarck-Lyzeum (today the Sophie-Charlotte-Oberschule). Her Jewish ancestry meant that she faced persecution under the Nazis, and she and her family fled Berlin before emigrating to live with relatives in Ecuador in 1939.

Just a year later, at the age of 17, she left Ecuador without her parents to take up a scholarship at the Mannes School of Music in New York. She was able to spend her first months there living in the Bronx with another émigré, a business friend of her father's. An anonymous patron of the Mannes School enabled her to survive financially. It wasn't until a year later that her parents were able to join her in the United States. In the summer of 1944, she spent a few months at the famous Black Mountain College, known for its close ties with the Bauhaus and for its many renowned lecturers, among them Walter Gropius, Albert Einstein, and Ernst Krenek, whose master classes she attended and through whom she first encountered the musical theories of Arnold Schoenberg. In 1947 she married Dwight (Dieter) Mamlok, a native of Hamburg who had fled with the *Kindertransport*, the rescue mission to save German Jewish children. He pursued a writing career alongside a day job as a businessman, although his work has remained unpublished.

In the following years, Mamlok studied composition under Roger Sessions, Jerzy Fitelberg, Stefan Wolpe, and finally under the latter's pupil, Ralph Shapey, who had a lasting influence on her artistic development and the radical change in her compositional style. At the age of 32, she began another degree at Manhattan School of Music, in order to gain a Bachelor's and Master's degree in music. In the circumstances of the time, this was not an obvious decision to make. The qualifications she gained eventually enabled her to win an academic lectureship. She taught theory and composition at New York University, Columbia University, Temple University and, for over forty years (until 2003), at Manhattan School of Music.

By the early 1960s, Ursula and Dwight were thinking about returning to Europe. However, a return to Germany was never considered, and in the end they both decided to remain in New York, partly because their careers appeared to be going well there. Ursula first had her work performed at New York's famous Town Hall in 1947, gaining a mention in the *New York Times*. But it wasn't until the 1960s that her music began to be continuously performed in the United States. It was at this time that she definitively worked out her own compositional style,

and she remained committed to it, irrespective of any success it may or may not have brought her. Over the years, many renowned American musicians have performed Mamlok's work, including Lucy Shelton, Charles Neidich, and the Continuum Ensemble of New York, to name just a few. However, a milestone in her oeuvre is undoubtedly *Constellations*, an orchestral work that began as a commission from the San Francisco Symphony, and which was first performed in 1994 under the direction of Herbert Blomstedt.

In 2006, following the death of her husband, Mamlok returned to Berlin, taking with her the Baldwin grand piano she had bought in New York. This was a brave decision for the 83-year-old artist, and at the same time marked the beginning of a new career. Thanks to the efforts of the musicologist Bettina Brand, and the enthusiasm of well-known ensembles such as the Klenke Quartett, musikFabrik, and the Ensemble SurPlus and established musicians such as Kolja Lessing, Holger Groschopp, and Jakob Spahn, she also soon became an important figure in contemporary music circles in Germany. She continued to travel to almost every performance of her music, to give talks about her life at schools and public events, and to compose for musicians on both sides of the ocean. Her meeting with Swiss oboist and composer Heinz Holliger initiated an important artistic exchange.

In 2013, for her 90th birthday her works were performed at the Philharmonie, Berlin's main concert hall, and she received the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany First Class. In 2012, Böhlau-Verlag published her biography, *Time in Flux: Die Komponistin Ursula Mamlok* by Habakuk Traber. Her work has been released in five CDs by Bridge Records.

On 4 May 2016 Ursula Mamlok died at the age of 93 in Berlin. She was laid to rest at the Jewish cemetery Weißensee in Berlin. Following her death, the Dwight and Ursula Mamlok Foundation was established. On 3 February 2017 the inaugural event took place, hosted in collaboration with the Academy of the Arts Berlin. Her archive is located in the Academy of Arts Berlin.

More info at [www.mamlokstiftung.com](http://www.mamlokstiftung.com)



# ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

## **Lucian Avalon**, oboe

Lucian Avalon has enjoyed an eclectic musical career spanning from Zimbabwean marimba to classical oboe. This has led him from his home in the small, rural village of Coyote, New Mexico to study and perform in New York City. Currently completing his doctoral studies at Manhattan School of Music with James Austin Smith, he recently completed his undergraduate and graduate degrees at the Juilliard School under the tutelage of Elaine Douvas. Previously, he attended the Interlochen Arts Academy, studying with Daniel Stolper, and received the IAA Young Artist Award. His other primary teachers include Linda Strommen, Scott Hostetler, Titus Underwood, Alex Klein, and Pamela Epple.

Lucian was an Apex Ensemble Fellow in 2021–22 and was principal oboe of the New York String Orchestra Seminar 2020. He was the winner of the National Society of Arts and Letters 2018 Texas Woodwind Competition and a Juilliard Concerto Competition 2018 Finalist. He performed in 2019 with the Juilliard Orchestra on tour at the BBC Proms; has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, NYC Ballet, New Jersey Symphony, Santa Fe Opera, Richmond Symphony, and New World Symphony; and has been an Aspen Music Festival and School Fellow for four summers. Lucian also trained as a figure skater, becoming a USFS Moves Gold Medalist in 2013.

## **Minyoung Kwon** (MM '21), harp

A versatile and captivating harpist with a passion for orchestral, chamber, and solo performances, Minyoung Kwon has graced international stages including the Musikverein in Vienna, Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall in New York, and Seoul Arts Center in Seoul. Based in New York City, Minyoung is also dedicated to music as a force for social change.

In addition to performing, Minyoung has worked with organizations such as the Millennium Villages Project, CNN International, Asan Institute for Policy Studies, and World Childhood Foundation USA. In 2011, she founded the Andover Charity Music Ensemble (ACME), an ensemble dedicated to raising awareness about pressing social issues through music. She oversaw the production of two benefit concerts in 2011 and 2014, with proceeds donated to North Korean Human Rights in 2011 and to the Harriet & Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Research Center in 2014. Recently, Minyoung was featured in the animation on Adult Swim by artist NaYon Cho. She is excited to continue

exploring the boundless possibilities of interdisciplinary collaborations and investigating the role of music as social demands evolve.

Minyoung holds a BA in government and economics from Smith College and is currently a DMA candidate at MSM under the tutelage of Ms. Mariko Anraku. She has been fortunate to have studied with renowned harpists and educators such as Ms. Isabelle Perrin and Dr. June Han. A member of the Precollege faculty at MSM, Minyoung is a devoted educator herself, passionate about sharing her knowledge and experience with others.

## **Bixby Kennedy**, clarinet

Admired for his “marvelous ringing tone” (*Albany Times Union*), Bixby Kennedy is one of the most versatile clarinetists of his generation. He has performed concerti with orchestras including the Minnesota Orchestra, Houston Symphony, and New Haven Symphony Orchestra. As a chamber musician, Bixby has performed throughout the U.S. and Europe in venues including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the Kennedy Center, and Marlboro Music Festival and is the clarinetist for Frisson, the “explosive” New York City based chamber ensemble. He has appeared as a guest artist with Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the Knights. As an orchestral musician, Bixby has performed with the MET Opera and NY Philharmonic in addition to regular engagements with the Albany and New Haven Symphony Orchestras. On period instruments, Bixby has performed classical repertoire on original and replica instruments throughout the U.S. with Grand Harmonie Orchestra. He is a former member of Ensemble Connect and works as a teaching artist throughout the U.S. Works he has arranged have been performed by Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Ensemble Schumann, Frisson, Ensemble Connect, and Symphony in C. Bixby performs exclusively on Backun instruments.

[www.bixbykennedy.com](http://www.bixbykennedy.com)

## **Fei-Fei**, piano

Praised for her “bountiful gifts and passionate immersion into the music she touches” (*The Plain Dealer*), pianist Fei-Fei is a winner of the Concert Artists Guild Competition and a top finalist at the 14th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. She continues to earn recognition for her poetic interpretations, charming audiences with her “passion, piquancy, and tenderness” and “winning stage presence” (*Dallas Morning News*), both in the U.S. and internationally, including her native China.

Fei-Fei's concert tours have taken her across the globe in concerto performances, recitals, and chamber music collaborations alike. Highlights of her 2022–23 season include solo and chamber recitals in 11 states across the United States, Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 at Lincoln Center with the Pegasus Symphony, a special Chinese New Year concert with California's Pacific Symphony, and appearances with the Syracuse Symphony and Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic, as well as performances of lesser-represented concerto repertoire by Leroy Anderson, Florence Price, Clara Schumann, and Xiaogang Ye, with the Amarillo Symphony, Bakersfield Symphony, Boise Philharmonic, Flint Symphony, and Shenzhen Symphony orchestras.

[www.feifeipiano.com](http://www.feifeipiano.com)

## **Christa Dalmazio** (BM '16, MM '18), soprano

Soprano Christa Dalmazio's performance credits include the roles of Gilda (*Rigoletto*) with Footlight Players, Oscar (*Un Ballo in Maschera*), Shepherd (*Dinorah*), and Celeste (*Scrooge and Gillbert & Sullivan*) with Amore Opera, Flora (*The Turn of the Screw*), Papagena (*The Magic Flute*), and Philomèle (Delibes's *Le roi l'a dit*) at Manhattan School of Music, Maria (*West Side Story*) with Phoenix Productions, Emmie (*Albert Herring*) with Opera in the Ozarks, and Amor (*Orpheus and Euridice*) with the Concordia Vocal Academy's Opera Lab. Her opera scenes credits include Blonde (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*), Norina (*Don Pasquale*), Joanna (*Sweeney Todd*), and Adele (*Die Fledermaus*). She was a member of the Baroque Aria Ensemble at MSM for three years. Christa received Encouragement Awards from the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 2018, 2019, and 2020. She also plays and teaches the piano, viola, violin, cello, and harp; music directs with Pivot Theatre Company; and is the Director of Music at Holy Innocents Church in Neptune, New Jersey. Currently pursuing a Doctorate of Musical Arts at MSM, studying with Catherine Malfitano, Christa graduated from MSM with Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees in vocal performance.

[www.christadalmazio.wixsite.com/soprano](http://www.christadalmazio.wixsite.com/soprano)

## **Shawn Chang**, piano

Taiwanese-Canadian pianist and composer Shawn Chang has created a career of distinction.

As a pianist, Chang was featured in the Merola Opera Program in 2022 and a winner of its Schwabacher Recital audition. A 2020 Schwab Rising Star of the

Caramoor Music Festival in Katonah, New York, Chang appeared frequently with pianist Steve Blier in concerts presented by the New York Festival of Song at the Kaufman Center. Chang was the pianist for the winner of the Young Concert Artists Competition, tenor Daniel McGrew, and the winner of the Naumburg Vocal Competition, mezzo soprano Erin Wagner. Following a debut recital with Erin at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, the duo will appear in the War Memorial and Performing Arts Center for a San Francisco debut.

Chang's compositions have been premiered by the Chromatic Voice Exchange, Schola Sine Nomine, and aTonal Hits Duo, to name a few. His song cycle, *Portraits of Unrelated Colors*, won Sparks & Wiry Cries' 2022 commission prize. The commissioned work, the song cycle *Us Now*, will be premiered in the January SongSlam festival.

[www.shawnchangcomposer.com](http://www.shawnchangcomposer.com)

## **SoYoung Choi** (PS '21), violin

An active performer in both the United States and Korea, SoYoung Choi was born in Daejeon, Korea and started playing the violin at the age of 4. Since her debut with Sangrok Chamber Orchestra at the age of 7, she has appeared as a soloist with major Korean orchestras such as Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Bucheon Philharmonic Orchestra, Daejeon Philharmonic Orchestra, and Seoul Youth Philharmonic Orchestra. SoYoung won major awards at competitions in Korea including the Busan Music Competition, Strad Competition, Ewha-Kyunghyang Competition, Catholic Music Competition, Han-guk Newspaper Youth Competition, Kook-Min Newspaper Music Competition, and Se-gye Newspaper Music Competition. She appeared in the Kumho Prodigy Concert series in 2004 and was selected as a Summer New Artist at Daejeon Art Center in 2018.

A deeply passionate chamber musician, she has performed at music festivals including Kneisel Hall, Taos School of Music, Heifetz Music Festival, Great Mountain Music Festival, Summit Music Festival, and Yellow Barn. In addition, SoYoung is a leader and director of Ahava Ensemble in Korea, which raises funds to help patients and children with cancer through benefit concerts.

After studying with Kwoon Yang and Ju-Young in Korea, SoYoung studied with Miriam Fried and Donald Weilerstein at New England Conservatory, where she received her BM and MM degrees. She received a Professional Studies Certificate at MSM in 2021 and is currently pursuing a Doctoral of Musical Arts degree with violinist Mark Steinberg.