

'I was startled to find this curious phrase in [George] Santayana concerning music: 'The most abstract of arts,' he remarks, 'serves the dumbest emotions.' Yes, I like this idea that we respond to music from a primal and almost brutish level—dumbly, as it were, for on that level we are firmly grounded."

Aaron Copland
Music and Imagination

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players
Tuesday, January 18, 2000 • 8 pm
Center for the Arts Forum

New World Quilt
Aaron Copland Centennial

RONALD CALTABIANO
Quilt Panels (1990/92)

AARON COPLAND
Piano Quartet (1950)

- I. Adagio serio
- II. Allegro giusto
- III. Non troppo lento

— INTERMISSION —

MARIO DAVIDOVSKY
Quartetto (1987)

MELINDA WAGNER
Sextet (1990)

- I. mm=92
- II. In the spirit of a waltz
- III. Languid (interlude)
- IV. With panache!

Barbara Chaffe, flute; William Wohlmacher, clarinet;
Lawrence Ragent, French horn; Marja Mutru, piano;
Roy Malan, violin; Nancy Ellis (Copland, Davidovsky),
Ellen Rose (Caltabiano, Wagner), violas; Stephen Harrison, cello

George Thomson, Guest Conductor

Program Notes

RONALD CALTABIANO (B. 1959)

His music embodying “a remarkable synthesis of modernism and romanticism, of violence and lyricism, of integrity and accessibility” (*Music and Musicians*, Great Britain), Ronald Caltabiano has established himself since the early 1980s as one of the leading composers of his generation. Already highly musical as a youth (he had studied fifteen instruments by the end of high school), Caltabiano in 1978 entered the Juilliard School. Over the next ten years, he would study composition with such distinguished composers as Elliott Carter and Vincent Persichetti, as well as conducting and composition with Gennadi Rozdesvensky and Peter Maxwell Davies in Great Britain. A special fascination with the voice characterized his early student years, as he penned such works as *First Dream of Honeysuckle Petals Falling Alone* (1978), a setting of four haiku, and *Medea* (1980), a dramatic cantata on a text (based on Euripides) that he wrote himself.

Wider recognition of Caltabiano’s talents was quick to arrive, first in the form of several student composition awards from BMI and ASCAP as well as two Bearn’s Prizes (1981, 1983), and then in prominent performances of his *String Quartet #1* by the Juilliard and Arditti Quartet, the latter (in England) bringing him his first taste of

international acclaim. A series of works for solo instruments helped him to master a virtuosic palette of contemporary techniques, which served him well when, in 1984, he received his first orchestral commission as a winner of the New York Youth Symphony’s *First Music* competition. A Rockefeller Foundation grant enabled him to work on this commission in Bellagio, Italy, and the resulting piece, *Poplars* (1985), was a critical and popular success, praised in the New York Daily News for its “infectious imagery and energy.” In 1985, as part of the celebrations marking its fortieth session, the United Nations hosted a complete concert of Caltabiano’s works—an extraordinary honor for a young composer still in the early stages of pursuing his doctoral degree.

That same year, Caltabiano became secretary to the eminent American composer Aaron Copland in Peekskill, New York. Though Copland’s musical pen had been silent now for over a decade, and Caltabiano’s core responsibilities were mostly administrative, still this position afforded him a golden opportunity to befriend the famous composer in his twilight years. Perhaps his most gratifying memories of this time are of picking out recordings from the library for Copland to listen to, and discussing the works with him afterwards.

Amid his duties, Caltabiano never let up from composing. He completed in 1986 his second dramatic cantata, *Torched Liberty*, based on a broad mixture of texts by Gertrude Stein, Langston Hughes and others. In 1987, a commission from the Emerson

Quartet and Chamber Music America brought forth his *String Quartet #2*, and Fires of London commissioned *Concerto for Six Players* as part of its farewell concert. In 1988, he received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Juilliard and saw his *Northwest!* premiered by the Cincinnati Symphony. This piece was clearly an homage to his eminent employer in Peekskill, with its “outdoorsy sound . . . its expansive strings and pungent clashes of brass and percussion” (*Cincinnati Post*). By 1989, Aaron Copland’s health problems and mental decline had progressed to the point where meaningful interaction was all but impossible. Having done all he could, Caltabiano passed on his administrative duties to the young Christopher Culpo, who watched over the dying composer through his final days.

The 1990s proved an equally fruitful period for Caltabiano. A number of large-scale commissions came his way, including *Concertini* for the San Francisco Symphony in 1992 and *Preludes, Fanfares & Toccatas* for the Dallas Symphony in 1995. Both of the latter works were strongly received, one Dallas critic writing that the *Preludes* “cross-cuts snarling cacophony, rhythmic athleticism and a lyricism rare in contemporary music.” Performances of Caltabiano’s orchestral music by the BBC Philharmonic, Hong Kong Sinfonietta and Royal Scottish National Orchestra helped keep his name current on the international scene. In 1994, the Baltimore Sun termed the 35-year-old composer “one of this country’s best.” Other distinguished awards, commissions from notable ensembles in this country and

abroad, multi-media collaborations with visual artists and, most recently, the appearance of his first chamber opera, *Marrying the Hangman*, at the Cheltenham International Festival of Music in Great Britain have all contributed to keep Caltabiano’s musical creativity flowing.

Caltabiano has served as a professor at the Manhattan School of Music, the Peabody Conservatory, and San Francisco State University, where he has been on the faculty since 1996. He has also appeared as a guest lecturer at the Juilliard School, the University of California at Berkeley, Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, Shanghai Conservatory, and the Royal Northern College of Music in England.

Quilt Panels (1990, rev. 1992)

for clarinet, horn, violin, viola, cello and piano

The composer writes, “The initial inspiration for *Quilt Panels* came in the early morning hours of a cool October day in 1987, at the first full showing of the AIDS Quilt in Washington, D.C. The enormous range of emotions I felt included shock, grief, joyful memories, anger, and an overwhelming sense of loss. The six ‘panels’ of this 20-minute sextet (played without break) are an attempt to make explicit these emotions, which words can only imply. Perhaps because of these personal associations, my usual compositional procedures were often put aside in favor of a more instinctive stream of musical consciousness.”

Commissioned by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, *Quilt Panels* received its premiere performance in October, 1990. The work is dedicated to those who fight the war against AIDS.

AARON COPLAND (1900-1990)

“In my own mind there never was so sharp a dichotomy between the various works I have written. Different purposes produce different kinds of work, that is all.” This statement, made by American composer Aaron Copland in 1952 (*Music and Imagination*), must have seemed almost incredible to many of his devotees who, for twenty-five years, had been bucked left and right by some of the most dramatic stylistic shifts of any major twentieth-century composer. Yet the more one examines the claim, the more it acquires the ring of truth—for, everything Copland touched he made his own. From thorny complexity to childlike excitement to timeless serenity, his distinctive and profoundly original voice shines through in every measure. Pursuing a boldly affirmative “American” music, he emblazoned his personal genius on the soundscape of a nation.

The youngest of five children born to a Russian Jewish immigrant couple, Copland led an uneventful early life, helping his family to run their modestly prosperous department store in Brooklyn. Though all of his siblings took piano lessons, he alone developed a serious interest in music. Studies in harmony and counterpoint with Rubin Goldmark

ultimately led to frustrations, as the teacher's discouragement of “commerce with the moderns” began to conflict with the young artist's growing fascination with such composers as Debussy and Ravel. In the spring of 1921, in need of a change, Copland read of a new summer music school for Americans being organized in Fontainebleau, France, and soon set sail.

There, Copland discovered his true mentor in Nadia Boulanger, who not only provided him with a solid technical foundation in composition and orchestration, but also instilled in him the necessary confidence to express his originality. What began as a single summer stretched into three years. Settling in bustling Paris, Copland soaked up the music of Debussy and Ravel, of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, of the progressive composer group Les Six, and countless others. Even more significantly, he began to listen with fresh ears and mounting enthusiasm to much of the music he had unthinkingly grown up with: American popular tunes, folk songs and, above all, jazz. The French public heartily applauded his first public concerts in 1922-23. Debussy's publisher, Jacques Durand, hearing Copland perform his piano scherzo *The Cat and the Mouse* at a salon concert, offered to publish it on the spot. (The composer accepted, selling the complete rights for \$25.)

Reinvigorated, Copland returned to American shores in 1924, where his first task was to fulfill a major commission from Boulanger herself. The resulting *Symphony for Organ and Orchestra* (1925)

revealed a bold declamatory sweep, as well as an abundance of jazz-inspired gestures. At its premiere in New York, conductor Walter Damrosch remarked to his audience that anyone who could write such a work at twenty-five would be “capable of murder” by the age of thirty. When the incorporation of jazz elements increased in his next two works, *Music for the Theatre* (1925) and the fiery *Piano Concerto* (1926), the New York press began to link his name with that of another emerging *enfant terrible*, George Gershwin.

But the *Piano Concerto* embodied certain complexities of rhythm and harmony that already pointed in quite a different direction—one more personal, more aggressively modern, centered on hard-edged sonorities and compact formal design. Over the course of a few transitional works, Copland arrived at a full-blown manifestation of this style in his *Piano Variations* (1930), a work remarkable for its lean texture, expressive stringency and sharply percussive use of the instrument. In addition, *Variations* emanates from the rigorous manipulation of a small non-tonal set of pitches, calling to mind both Schoenberg’s twelve-tone technique and much later developments, particularly by Stravinsky, in the 1950s and ’60s. Some listeners were repelled by the severity of Copland’s dissonances. Others were intrigued; Martha Graham choreographed the *Variations* for her solo dance, *Dithyrambic*, in 1931.

The composer continued to pursue this path through the *Short Symphony* of 1933, best known to chamber music lovers in its

sumptuous *Sextet* version. And then, suddenly (or so it seemed), Copland made another startling shift. Perhaps caught up in the newly emerging climate of social consciousness, he experienced a powerful reaction against what he saw as an unnecessarily wide gap between creative artists and the broader public. Firmly rejecting the prospect of “working in a vacuum,” he made a conscious resolution to “see if I couldn’t say what I had to say in the simplest possible terms.”

Starting with *El Salón México* (1936)—a major success at its premiere in Mexico City—Copland worked energetically and brilliantly over the next decade and a half to translate this credo into sound. Embracing radio and other mass media to carry his message far and wide, he placed his music in the ears and hearts of millions. The resulting style, quickly dubbed “Americana,” achieved a remarkable sensation of transparency through wide spacings of simple diatonic triads, open fifths and octaves, light instrumentation, and as little chromaticism as possible. Further emphasizing the apparent directness and simplicity of the style, he began quoting fragments of actual folk songs, and also began to draw upon the nation’s rich treasury of folk legends, as in his ballets, *Billy the Kid* (1938) and *Rodeo* (1942). His continuing incorporation of jazz and Latin American dance rhythms further established this music as belonging distinctively to the Western Hemisphere, un beholden to European influence. During World War II, Copland’s music seemed, for many, to embody all that was admirable and good in our country.

Hollywood claimed him to score several prominent films, including *Of Mice and Men* (1939), *Our Town* (1940), and later *The Red Pony* (1948) and *The Heiress* (1948); the latter film brought him an Academy Award. The pinnacle of his Americana style is surely the ballet, *Appalachian Spring*, written in 1944 for choreographer Martha Graham. Critical and popular reception of this work was phenomenal, not only in the United States but worldwide. The ballet received the 1944 Pulitzer Prize, cementing Copland's status as America's premiere living composer.

With the attainment of eminence came important new responsibilities, which Copland assumed with boundless stamina and charm. In books, articles, lectures, broadcasts and interviews, Copland became a central spokesman for American contemporary music, on one hand defending the virtues of musical simplicity, and on the other hand reaching out to general listeners in an effort to help them better comprehend and appreciate some of the more complex and radical currents of the day. He helped to found the American Music Center and the American Composers Alliance, and was an early and prominent member of ASCAP and other organizations that supported new American music.

In 1950, at the height of his creative powers and popularity, Copland stunned his listening public with an abrupt return, in the *Piano Quartet*, to the more overtly modernistic path that he had so decisively put aside in the early 1930s. Utilizing twelve-tone and other serialist

techniques, here and in later works such as the *Piano Fantasy* (1957) and the orchestral *Connotations* (1962) and *Inscape* (1967), Copland said that he had gone as far as he could with the Americana style, and pointed to twelve-tone writing as "especially liberating" in forcing him to unconventionalize his chordal, melodic and figurational imagination. While critical estimation of these works has risen steadily in recent years, initial audiences were less forgiving, indeed at times frankly hostile. What seemed largely unnoticed in all the hubbub was the extent to which so many salient elements of Copland's voice persisted in this music.

A further loss of public favor came in 1953, when the removal of Copland's *Lincoln Portrait* (1942) from President Eisenhower's inauguration focussed negative public attention on a number of personal matters that had hitherto seemed incidental: his leftist political leanings, his Jewish heritage, his homosexuality. The next two decades saw a sharp decline not only in Copland's public standing but also his creative output. Notably, he did return occasionally to his more tonal, lyrical style, as in the *Nonet for Strings* (1960) and the *Duo for Flute and Piano* (1971).

From 1973 until his death in 1990, Copland put down his pen and wrote no more music. Some theorized that he was depressed by the poor reception accorded his later works, or by the greatly changed creative atmosphere of the times. The truth of the matter is probably less clear cut, for Copland had never shied away from going against the

times. He himself commented that it was simply more difficult for him to come up with good ideas at his age, and that he preferred not writing at all to struggling with something that had once come so easily (in the final years, his sharp mental decline precluded any such activity). At any rate, he apparently did not miss composing, and seemed content to sit back and ponder his existing body of work. At one point he reflected, "I must have expressed myself sufficiently."

Copland's first biographer, Arthur Berger, suggested that one of the basic ingredients of Copland's personality was his ability "to reconcile opposites," to "shift gracefully between extremes." The legacy he left us is rich both in musical treasures and in paradoxes. His impact upon the classical composers of this nation, however, is unquestioned. Composer Lukas Foss put it succinctly: "There is only one Aaron Copland: no one has done more for American music than Aaron."

Piano Quartet (1950)

for violin, viola, cello and piano

"To the composer's fund of materials that already contained the residue of jazz, abstract, folk, hymnody, and exotic materials, the *Piano Quartet* adds the twelve-tone technique, into which larger reservoir he may continue to reach, at will, for the musical function at hand." So wrote Julia Smith in her 1955 book, *Aaron Copland*. Indeed, while the

Quartet may have signaled an alteration of Copland's musical surface, much of the underlying essence remained intact.

In the first movement, for example, with its clearly emphasized serial tone row, musicologist Lawrence Morton perceives the most audible change from Copland's previous music as being primarily one of texture—a significant increase in polyphonic (multi-voiced) motion. Though harmonic centers are likewise elusive in the second movement, Morton hears it as "full of the rhythmic drive and off-beat accents that bespeak Copland's nervous energy, muscularity, and humor . . . [T]he manner throughout is familiar Copland. Only the sounds are different." Even more recognizable is the third movement, which "carries a key signature of five flats and sounds like it. Episodic in structure, it dwells in regions of immobility, impassivity, and quietude, except for a few impassioned outbursts. From these regions has come some of Copland's most characteristic and beautiful music."

Commissioned by the great American patron, Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, the *Piano Quartet* received its premiere performance in October 1950 by the New York Quartet in the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

MARIO DAVIDOVSKY (B. 1934)

In the small town of Medanos on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, Argentina, Mario Davidovsky grew up surrounded by music. Both of

his parents (Russian-Polish immigrants) and all of his ten siblings were active participants in the musical or theatrical life of the town, and the surrounding community was one in which art and culture, both traditional and modern, were highly valued. Davidovsky began playing violin at seven, and by nine was performing duets with his father. Discovering a penchant for composing at thirteen, he soon undertook studies in composition, theory and music history, his chief teacher being Guillermo Graetzer, a formal pupil of Paul Hindemith. At twenty, when an attempted study of law proved unpalatable, the young artist decided to devote himself fully to composition.

This decision soon proved to be well founded. Davidovsky's first major work, *String Quartet #1*, received a prominent performance and was awarded First Prize in a competition hosted by the Association Wagneriana. An award from the Society of Friends of Music for his *Concerto for Strings and Percussion* soon followed, and before long the composer was caught up in numerous projects, including not only concert music but also music for art and educational films, and for experimental theater productions. By the time Aaron Copland invited him to come to study in America at the Tanglewood Music Festival in 1958, the twenty-four-year-old Argentine had already established a solid reputation in his own country.

Davidovsky's work with Copland that summer proceeded smoothly, but even more significant was the young man's introduction, through Copland, to composer Milton Babbitt, who told him of the

upcoming Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. Much intrigued by the prospect of working in the electronic medium, Davidovsky applied for and received a Koussevitzky Foundation fellowship, allowing him to settle in New York in 1960. A steady series of Guggenheim and Rockefeller Foundation fellowships enabled him to work intensively at the Center over the next five years.

Davidovsky found the bustling activity and wide diversity of interests at the fledgling Center immensely inspiring, and soon discovered a focal point for his own creative energies: the combination of electronic sounds with live instrumental performance. 1962 saw the appearance of his first major work in this genre, *Synchronisms #1* for flute and tape. Not the first to attempt such juxtapositions, nonetheless he clearly had a special talent and imagination for them. Whereas countless attempts by others had failed to bridge—or had simply ignored—the vast sonic dissimilarities between the two media, in Davidovsky's works the tape parts almost created the illusion, many said, of “breathing with and waiting for” the performers. He aimed continually for a state in which the electronic and the acoustic formed a single sonic entity, a seamless partnership. In doing so, he extended traditional instrumental techniques to new extremes of range, timbre and rhythmic finesse. Further *Synchronisms* works explored the merging of electronics with other instrumental and vocal combinations.

Numerous awards and honors greeted his work, an outpouring of recognition that reached a culmination in 1971 when *Synchronisms #6* for piano and tape was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music. In retrospect, Davidovsky's Pulitzer might be viewed as a diploma of sorts, celebrating the completion of an apprenticeship. A year later, he won the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation Award for the purely instrumental *Inflexions* (written much earlier, in 1965), and at the same time he began to turn increasingly away from the electronic medium and toward chamber, orchestral and vocal writing. The music that has since emerged is seasoned both by a remarkable understanding and ear for the full sonic capabilities of each instrument and by a superb grounding in the aesthetics and sensibilities of the Western concert tradition. For all the revolutionary novelty in his electronic music, Davidovsky clearly seeks not to overthrow but to extend and enhance classical traditions. His concerns have never been with "sound effects," but with continuity and expression. His genius often shows itself most clearly in the fine brushstrokes, the *pianissimo* passages, and his methods can be surprisingly intuitive. In terms of pitch, for example, he works with no prepared charts or diagrams, but rather seeks out pitch collections which strike him as sufficiently rich in their internal relationships to sustain extensive organic growth. He once remarked that the drama in a piece of music "might be nothing more than the struggle for primacy between C sharp and C natural."

Davidovsky's works have been widely performed, and he has received commissions from such institutions as the Pan American Union, the Fromm and Koussevitzky Foundations, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony, the Juilliard and the Emerson String Quartets, Speculum Musicae, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Highly respected as a teacher, he has taught at numerous institutions, including the University of Michigan, the Di Tella Institute of Buenos Aires, the Manhattan School, and Yale University. In 1981, he became a professor at Columbia University where, for the next fourteen years, he directed the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center that he had so significantly helped to inaugurate in the early 1960s. Since 1994, he has been a professor of composition at Harvard University.

Quartetto (1987)

for flute, violin, viola and cello

The composer writes, "I recall that Harvey [Sollberger] told me I was popular among flutists because so many had performed my first *Synchronisms*. So I had a lot of fun with the *Quartetto*. I wanted to use the strings as a quasi 'tape part' with the flute embedded into the strings, and the strings into the flute, while at the same time they are independent of each other. In a way it is a big piece with an ambitious formal design." A study in motion and lightness, the *Quartetto* draws upon many brief passages of unison playing (striking even between the

string instruments, with their distinctive differences of range and tone color) as a frame of reference for a series of contrapuntal excursions—from a gently angular *pas de deux* between flute and violin to a frenetic scurrying of the entire ensemble towards the end.

The *Quartetto* was written for the National Flute Association and is dedicated to Harvey Sollberger. It was premiered with Rachel Rudich in San Diego in 1988.

MELINDA WAGNER (B. 1957)

Delighting in music from a very early age, 1999 Pulitzer Prize winner Melinda Wagner began taking piano lessons at six and started composing not long after that. “I can’t say that they were *pieces*, but I was always interested in making my own tunes.” Her roots grew in 20th-century classical music. “When I was a kid, I loved Aaron Copland”—a composer she still much admires, above all for his distinctive voice and masterful clarity. It was not until high school and lessons with Richard Wernick, though, that she first realized that one could take composition seriously and pursue it to greater lengths.

Going on to study with Jay Reise at Hamilton College, Ralph Shapey at the University of Chicago, and (again) Richard Wernick and George Crumb at the University of Pennsylvania, Wagner immersed herself in compositional aesthetics and techniques. From her studies with Shapey, she especially remembers his counterpoint

exercises utilizing atonal *cantus firmus* melodies (fixed melodic lines upon which to add other voices): “There was something very rigorous and ‘old school’ about that, which I appreciate more and more as I get older!” Of Crumb, she recalls being the only student in one of his seminars, and that the two of them ended up spending most of class time playing string quartets four-hand at the piano: “It was great . . . I would take some home, analyze them, and we would talk about them and play them.” She cites Crumb as a lasting influence, not only on herself, but “on every American composer. He invented so many of the great sounds that we use every day.”

Wagner received her Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1986. Of her doctoral piece, an orchestral work, she remarks, “I think it’s like many student works. It sounds like everybody I was studying with and listening to at that time”—in her own case, Berg and Debussy in particular. Wagner applies this rather sharp critical eye not only to her early works, but to everything she writes; in fact, she currently withholds about half of her existing works from performance. The piece she points to as representing the first emergence of her true creative voice (and therefore the earliest piece presently in circulation) is tonight’s *Sextet*, written in 1989 for the Syracuse Society for New Music. Wagner senses in this piece certain affinities with the music of Arnold Schoenberg, though she admits to mixed feelings about the works of that Viennese master, finding some of them a bit stiff and “bloodless” for her taste. She does clearly share Schoenberg’s passion for intricate motivic development, as well as a

love (perhaps fostered by her former mentor, Shapey) of elaborate contrapuntal textures.

Wagner's next major work was the large orchestral *Falling Angels* (1992), commissioned by the Chicago Symphony. In 1995, flutist Paul Dunkel conducted *Falling Angels* with the American Composers Orchestra, and was so taken with the piece that he commissioned a flute concerto from Wagner, with one curious stipulation: no woodwinds and no brass. Initially, Wagner found this "altered" orchestration a bit difficult to work with, but she soon began to appreciate its distinctive acoustical qualities: "The flute does not have a heavy bass voice. It's mainly a soprano instrument. So if you want to write soulful, dark music, you have to be very careful to let the flute have a lot of space." Clearly the assignment tapped a strong vein of inspiration, for the resulting *Concerto for Flute, Percussion and Strings* is one of her finest works, and was suitably recognized by being awarded the 1999 Pulitzer Prize in Music. (The work will be presented by the Oakland-East Bay Symphony on March 24, 2000.)

Eschewing computer software, Wagner still composes using only pencil and paper, and always cherishes the experience of hearing each piece live for the first time: "You're always surprised and your collaborators, the musicians, always bring something of themselves to your piece." Indeed, she likens composing to "writing a kind of love letter to performers. They will be interpreting something that is incredibly personal to me, so it feels like a love affair."

Wagner is optimistic about the future of contemporary music, pointing to proliferating competitions, increased corporate sponsorship for new music events, and the long overdue emergence of female composers in positions of influence. As for her own post-Pulitzer situation, Wagner is understandably "very happy," and relishes the new responsibilities and opportunities that seem to have arrived with this prestigious honor. She hopes the future will always find her creatively busy and that, looking back, "I will feel that I have been an honest person artistically."

Sextet (1990)

for flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello and piano

The composer writes, "The piece consists of four brief movements, each conceived with its own sense of lightness, whimsy, and—occasionally—irony. Indeed, in spite of its brooding moments, the entire work repeatedly attempts and fails (intentionally!) to take itself all too seriously.

"The somewhat ephemeral first movement (an introduction really) begins with high, quiet sustained notes in the strings. Any suggestion of sad introspection, though, is quickly foiled by the lighthearted flourishes which follow; later attempts at 'serious' development in this movement are similarly abbreviated. The music dissolves at the end, but not without a cadence—a kind of good-natured 'wink' for punctuation. With

its mournful cello solo and occasional waltz-like lilt, the more inward-looking second movement is like the memory of a dance; the third movement, a piano interlude which follows without pause, is a kind of afterthought. Movement four begins with a great deal of bravura, but it too pokes fun at itself, eventually turning into an eccentric giocoso march. After a dramatic climax, the piece disappears with a single held pitch in the viola, receding into the distance.”

—*program notes by John McGinn*

Featured Performer

Barbara Chaffe joined the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra as second flutist and piccolo player following her early music training at the Juilliard and Manhattan Schools of Music, and graduation from the Curtis Institute of Music in 1979. She was appointed Principal Flutist in 1985, and in the same year became a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. She has also served as Principal Flutist of the San Francisco Chamber Symphony, and has performed with the San Francisco Symphony and San Francisco Opera orchestras. Ms. Chaffe has been a performer at numerous festivals, including those at Ojai, CA, Telluride, CO and Cheltenham, England.

Guest Conductor

George Thomson is Assistant Conductor of the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra and producer of its “Under Construction” new music reading concerts. He was for many years a member (and also conductor) of the new music ensemble EARPLAY, and has appeared as a guest conductor with the Marin Symphony, the Orchestra of the San Francisco Conservatory, the Empyrean Ensemble, and the normally conductorless New Century Chamber Orchestra. He first conducted the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 1997.

Also a violinist and violist, George is a member of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and American Bach Soloists, and has performed in

many recordings with both ensembles. He was recently appointed Associate Director of the Music Conservatory at San Domenico School in San Anselmo, where he directs the Virtuoso Program, a unique opportunity for high school-aged string players to combine a college preparatory curriculum with intensive orchestral and chamber music training.

The Ensemble

The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, now in its twenty-ninth year, is a leader among ensembles in the United States dedicated to contemporary chamber music. A six-time winner of the prestigious national ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music, SFCMP has performed over 850 new works, including 126 U.S. and world premieres, and has brought 50 new pieces into the repertoire through its active commissioning efforts.

The 1999-2000 season is the ensemble's second under the baton of widely respected Music Director, Donald Palma. The instrumentalists who make up the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players are recognized virtuosos in new music performance. Each season the ensemble performs a six-concert series at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. SFCMP has also toured widely throughout California, with performances on such concert series as San Francisco Performances, Cal Performances, the Stern Grove Festival, the Other

Minds Festival, Los Angeles' Monday Evening Concerts, and the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento. SFCMP made its European debut at the Cheltenham Festival of Music in 1986 and was featured in 1990 at the Ojai Festival. The ensemble has recorded six albums of its own and contributed recordings to eight others.

Since 1993, the ensemble has offered education programs for students of San Francisco's high School of the Arts, teaching string and wind master classes and presenting demonstrations and performances on contemporary music. In 1999, the Players expanded this program to Lowell High School.

SAN FRANCISCO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC PLAYERS

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