

SAN FRANCISCO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC PLAYERS

David Milnes, Music Director

Monday, September 29, 2003 at 8 pm
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Forum

DOUBLE TROUBLE

P.Q. PHAN

Beyond the Mountains (1995)

KURT ROHDE

Double Trouble (2002)

- I. Obsessive Compulsive
- II. Double
- III. Spazoid

Ellen Ruth Rose, viola
Kurt Rohde, viola

~ INTERMISSION ~

EARL KIM

Illuminations

(1998, edited 2003 by Anthony Brandt, World Premiere)

After the Deluge
Childhood
Lives
Mystic
City

Karen Slack, soprano
Karen Rosenak, piano

DAVID B. SOLEY

“...”

(2003, World Premiere)

Tonight's premiere performances of Earl Kim's Illuminations and David B. Soley's "...” are sponsored in part through the Cultural Equity Grants Program of the San Francisco Arts Commission.

Illuminations was commissioned by The Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress.

“...” was commissioned by the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University, which has helped to support tonight's performance.

The participation of David B. Soley and Kurt Rohde is made possible in part by a grant from Meet the Composer, Inc. with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, ASCAP, and the Virgil Thomson Foundation.

Performers

Tod Brody, flute
William Wohlmacher, clarinet (Soley)
Carey Bell, clarinet (Phan)
Roy Malan, violin (Soley)
Terrie Baune, violin (Rohde)
Stephen Harrison, cello
Karen Rosenak, piano (Soley)
Julie Steinberg, piano (Rohde, Phan)
Christopher Froh, percussion

P.Q. PHAN (B. 1962)

In a recent interview for the Meet-the-Composer Newsletter, P. Q. Phan declared, “The very first day I arrived [in America], I decided to be a composer. . . . I recognized that I loved to create things.” This realization was hard won, as Phan faced initial hardships that would have daunted most aspiring artists. Born in Da Nang, South Vietnam in 1962, he grew up amid the turmoil of war in a family opposed to the communism of the North. His family made several attempts to flee the country after the fall of Saigon; when he was fourteen, a failed attempt to escape by boat landed them in prison for six months. Following their release, Phan began his formal training in architecture. In music, he was almost entirely self-taught, experimenting at the piano, listening to the radio, and copying out borrowed scores to add to his repertoire.



Phan’s gradual reorientation from architecture to music had advantages in Vietnam’s political climate. Music gave him greater opportunities for creative expression than the primarily practical work of communist city building. Equally important, as Phan revealed in an interview for the American Composers Orchestra, was the powerful freedom that accompanied instrumental music’s inherent ambiguity: “There is no free speech in a Communist country. So music makes perfect sense—you can use it to express things in a very abstract way so that nobody can punish you. It’s a very effective way to communicate without telling people what you really are thinking.” Since his family’s legal immigration to the United States in 1982, however, Phan has found ways to let his music speak more openly—about personal politics and the complexities of cultural exchange.

Phan did undergraduate work in music at the University of Southern California before earning his doctorate in composition at the

University of Michigan. “At the very beginning,” he recalls, “I concentrated mainly on creating pure Eurocentric music. But the longer I stayed in this country the further I recognized the value of my original culture.” Studying philosophy and doing graduate research in ethnomusicology helped give him spiritual and global contexts for his own experiences. And he found models among twentieth-century composers for the kinds of musical mixing he had in mind. At times these models came from surprising places—like New England. Phan observes, “Somehow I find Ives close to me. Ives’s music consists of several layers which reflect many ideas, which is very close to what I want to do. Many layers of different cultural reflections.”

Most of Phan’s recent music attempts to integrate the sound worlds of Southeast Asian and Euro-American contemporary music. Sometimes his syntheses involve direct reference to Vietnamese contexts or musical elements: quick, half-step alternations approximate the “neutral third” degree of many Vietnamese scales [resulting in ambiguity between major and minor]; microtonal nuances remind us that Vietnamese is a tonally inflected language; percussion and reed instruments recreate tone colors typical of the country’s traditional music. The organ solo *Banana Trumpet Games* (1993) takes its title from the toy instruments made by Vietnamese children from banana or coconut leaves. His *Memoirs of a Lost Soul* includes a movement called “Tragedy at the Opera” (1995, commissioned by the Kronos Quartet) based on his childhood recollection of visiting a Vietnamese court opera with his parents.

At other times, Phan’s mixing of Asian and Western idioms is more intricate and more ambiguous, mirroring his position as a cultural intermediary. The trio *Unexpected Desire* (1997) is a meditation on mutual attraction between opposites, making a provocative analogy that compares the position of traditional Vietnamese courtesans and his own status as an immigrant negotiating with dominant but foreign social norms. *When Worlds Mixed and Times Merged* (written for the American Composers Orchestra Millennium Series at Carnegie Hall) was initially rooted in traditional Vietnamese court music but underwent a radical change after two series of racially-motivated killings in the summer of 1999—one by a student at Indiana University, where Phan would begin teaching in the fall. Suddenly somber about the

freedoms of his new home, he interrupted the work's stately evocation of a royal procession, inserting sounds of struggle that convey the disillusionment he felt in the wake of prejudice and violence. In a more abstract vein, Phan's duo for clarinet and piano, *My Language* (rev. 1999) explores the utterances that constitute communication—whether between whole cultures or between individuals.

Phan's music has been performed on four continents by such groups as the BBC Scottish Symphony, Radio France, the Cincinnati Orchestra, the Charleston Symphony, the St. Louis Orchestra Chamber Group, and Sinfonia da Camera. He has received multiple commissions from the Kronos Quartet, and has written works for the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, the Greater East Lansing Symphony, the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, and the Samaris Piano Trio, among others. His honors include the Prix de Rome and a Rockefeller Foundation Grant, fellowships from the Ohio Arts Council and the Charles Ives Center for American Music, and residencies at the MacDowell Colony and with the American Composers Orchestra in New York, where he coordinated a concert of new Asian-American music called "Pacifica Mix" that included the world premiere of *Beyond the Mountains*. In addition to serving as guest composer at U. C. Santa Cruz's 1994 New Music Festival and the 1995 Asian Composers Forum in Sendai, Japan, Phan taught at Cleveland State University and the University of Illinois, before joining the faculty of Indiana University, where he is currently Associate Professor of Composition.

Beyond the Mountains (1995)
for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano

As the title for his quartet, Phan has chosen to translate a Vietnamese figure of speech suggesting "the expectation of the unexpected," a physical or mental journey that aims to transcend everyday life. According to composer and critic Robert Carl (director of Boston's new music ensemble Extension Work), "it makes reference to a place toward which the imagination aspires, a realm beyond ordinary experience, simultaneously alluring and intimidating in its difference. . . ." The thunderous opening moments conjure up jagged landscapes and intimations of the sublime. Angular instrumental lines sketch out both

the contours of mountain ranges and the effort required to ascend their slopes.

The middle of the piece is a quiet drama of motion dissolving into stillness—sometimes through a simple cessation of activity, sometimes with an actual harmonic resting point. Carl observes, "for a while it appears that the entire piece will be a sort of 'meta-wind-chime,' slowly dispersing into ever more lyrical and languid realms." The declamatory rhythms of string "duets" resemble utterances that exist beyond the threshold of intelligible speech. *Glissandi* (slides), harmonics, and other special effects suggest the supernatural. On the far side of this quietude, however, is renewed energy. With the performance indication "like a crazy horse," string figuration that had hovered just outside of easy comprehension now coalesces into an unmistakable, but unrelenting tumult.

Phan emphasizes the social subtext of his quartet, explaining that it deals with "how I understand people and how people understand me": "The first half of the piece is finding my way to understand the new culture and a way to express my culture to society. And the last part is frustration"—frustration with those who stereotype and refuse to accept an individual's potential to change. Perhaps listening to his music can remind us that although mountains (like the oceans Phan himself crossed) have the power to divide, traveling over them has the greater power to transform.

KURT ROHDE (B. 1968)



Photo credit: Frank Döring

“One of the things I want to do,” Kurt Rohde remarks, “is build the audience for music without diluting the music or playing only our old favorites.” He has approached this goal from two angles: as a professional violist, and as one of the most celebrated figures on the Bay Area’s contemporary music scene. Since arriving in California in 1992, he has become a member of the Berkeley Symphony and the New Century Chamber Orchestra, and he has undertaken commissions for these and other local performing groups, including the Emyrean Ensemble, EARPLAY, the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, and the Pacific Chamber Symphony. Among his upcoming premieres are two new works for the Pacific Chamber Symphony and San Francisco Chamber Orchestra’s 2005-06 season, and an oratorio, *Bitter Harvest* (libretto by Amanda Moody) for tenor John Duykers and the Berkeley Symphony, scheduled for performance in 2004-05.

Born in New York City, Rohde got an early start in music. By the time he took up the viola at age eleven, he had already been composing for three years, inspired to creative pursuits after discovering Beethoven’s “Eroica” in his mother’s record collection. Hearing Geraldine Walther play Bartók’s Viola Concerto influenced his choice of instrument, but Rohde recalls, “I hated practicing, and didn’t enjoy the viola at all until I showed my teacher my own music. Suddenly, she was interested in me because I was interested in playing the music I wrote, and I in turn became interested in her and the viola. . . . I immersed myself in practicing and composing.” He attended the Peabody Conservatory as double major before further studies in both viola and composition at the Curtis Institute (studying viola with Karen Tuttle and composition with Ned Rorem). He later attended graduate school in viola performance at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, where his principal viola teacher was Caroline

Levine. He has also studied viola with John Graham, and composition with Donald Erb and Andrew Imbrie.

Even the briefest glance at Rohde’s oeuvre reveals his fondness for chamber music. He says, “I play in orchestras, but chamber music—because of the interaction and emotional availability—means the most to me.” Rohde is a founding member the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble (known for its innovative programming of classic and contemporary chamber works), and also serves as its Artistic Director. Naturally the viola has played an especially important role in his chamber works, which include *Three Fantasy Pieces* (written in 1999-2000 for the rare combination of viola, cello, and double bass) and *Six Character Pieces* for viola and piano, premiered at the Kennedy Center in 2000 by violist Nokuthula Ngwenyama. One can also sense Rohde’s enjoyment of chamber music’s conversational possibilities in his recent quintet *Under the Influence* (2003), for bass clarinet and strings. In this piece, the strings echo and elaborate on what he calls the “fragmented, stilted. . . wild jazz riff” of the bass clarinet to produce a mercurial dialogue, “active and rugged at one moment, floating and distant at another.”

Rohde’s orchestral music tends to impress listeners with its changing textures and rhythmic momentum. Reviewers have called it “dynamic,” “engaging,” and “explosive.” The intensity of Rohde’s writing has found favor with Kent Nagano, conductor of the Berkeley Symphony, who commissioned his *Five Pieces for Orchestra* (2001) after the orchestra’s successful reading of his *Concerto for Violin, Viola and Orchestra* (1998).

Having observed firsthand Rohde’s work both as composer and performer, Nagano calls him “extraordinary”: “He is among the finest of our young generation of composers, even from an international viewpoint. . . . His way of expressing himself is emotional and dramatic without being melodramatic or sentimental. . . .” Rohde is currently working on a Viola Concerto that Nagano will present with soloist Igor Budenstein and the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester in 2004-05.

Rohde has received fellowships from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Guggenheim Foundation, the 2002 Berlin Prize

from the American Academy in Berlin, and prizes from the Lydian String Quartet and Michigan Music Teachers Association competitions; residencies at the Yaddo, MacDowell, and Djerassi colonies; and invitations to attend the Wellesley Composers Conference, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and Tanglewood. His music has been commissioned by the Barlow Endowment, the Hanson Institute for American Music, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Koussevitzky and Fromm Foundations, the SUNY Stony Brook Chamber Players, and Sequitur. Rohde continues to play for the Berkeley Symphony, the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, and the New Century Chamber Orchestra.

Double Trouble (2002)

*for two solo violas, flute/piccolo, clarinet/bass clarinet,
piano, violin, and cello*

Written for the Empyrean Ensemble and dedicated to violist Ellen Ruth Rose, Rohde's *Double Trouble* resembles a Baroque concerto grosso in its three movement structure (fast slow fast) and its exuberant interplay between soloists and chamber group. Though his demands on the ensemble players require some fascinating and virtuosic teamwork, the concerto naturally highlights its two viola soloists, allowing unusual expressive freedom to an often underestimated instrument.

The composer writes: "*Obsessive Compulsive* opens the concerto. As is characteristic of my recent music, the movement is thrust along, propulsive and compulsive in nature. The two instruments play a single melodic line that is divided between the two solo players, adding a rhythmic component that would not be possible using only a single player. As for the title, it reflects one of the few obsessive rituals that I practice: composition. The fact that the four minutes of music which are in this movement took over thirteen weeks to write gives an idea of the type of 'running in circles' I tend to do when I compose.

"*Double* is a more exotic movement, languorous at times. Loosely based on the Baroque concept, the double is a separate movement or section which is based harmonically on the previous section or movement. . . . In the case of this movement, the soloists weave a melody

which is derived from the rapid repeating patterns that they played in the first movement.

"The work closes with a fast and furious finale called *Spazoid*. The movement is rhythmic and harmonic in nature, rather than melodic. It features a number of gestures and technical displays which pay homage to the age old myth that the violist is a 'lesser' string player. In this instance, however, the spastic and nearly 'out of control' character of the music requires extreme virtuosity, tremendous finesse and technical control. It also requires a little humor."

EARL KIM (1920-98)



With the death of Earl Kim in 1998, contemporary music lost a strikingly original voice. His colleagues at Harvard University, where he taught for twenty-three years, offered a eulogy to his creative oeuvre, dubbing it "unique": "It inhabits a sound-world which indeed is sparse but never desolate; elegant though tough; refined yet bold; elusive but precise; beautiful in its complexity; profound in its simplicity. Stripped of conventional musical rhetoric, the melodic, harmonic, timbral and rhythmic dimensions of Kim's music cohere with an uncanny visionary rightness."

As a student and a teacher, Kim had ample opportunity to explore and evaluate the musical rhetoric that dominated American universities at mid-century. Born in California to Korean parents, he could claim an impressive compositional lineage. At UCLA, he studied with Arnold Schoenberg; his teachers at UC Berkeley included Roger Sessions and Ernest Bloch. In an interview conducted in 1986, Kim acknowledged the impact that these figures had on his musical thinking, despite the fact that his music bears little surface similarity to

theirs: “Their attitude toward music. . . is a way of life. It represents a form of truth that is conveyed though devoting oneself to trying to create something.” The diverse styles that this “truth” could encompass are well reflected in the careers of his own students, who have included Peter Maxwell Davies and Harrison Birtwistle during his early years at Princeton, David del Tredici and John Harbison during his tenure at Harvard.

In Kim’s works, one finds a great respect for the power and flexibility of the human voice and the narrative or evocative potential of language. He is best known for his vocal writing, including *Exercises en Route* (1963-70), *Earthlight* (1973), *Footfalls* (1981), *Where Grief Slumbers* (1982), and *Three Poems in French* (1989)—which have been premiered by such singers as Bethany Beardslee, Benita Valente, and Dawn Upshaw. Even his purely instrumental Violin Concerto (1979)—a work which is more extroverted than most of his oeuvre—is intimately connected to the texts of modernist writers James Joyce and especially Samuel Beckett, who was one of Kim’s most significant sources of inspiration.

Underlying these compositional preferences is an exquisite attention to the nuances of sound and silence. Kim often described how he came to appreciate these nuances while contemplating a Japanese rock garden: “It summed up my theory of composing: discrete images not taken in by the eye or ear at once, but seen or heard consecutively. At the end there is a whole that is somehow synthesized from all these separate pieces. Multiplicity becomes unity. . . transitions take place by means of silences. Statements are being made when nothing is being said.” Kim made an enormous investment both in the individual sounds that live within his pieces and in the character of the silences that separate these sounds. As Itzhak Perlman—the inspiration for Kim’s Violin Concerto and the *Caprices for Solo Violin* (1980)—once observed, “Earl brought to music colors we only dreamed existed but had never before heard.”

During the nearly five decades of his compositional career, Kim received considerable recognition, including commissions from the Fromm, Guggenheim, Koussevitzky, and Naumburg foundations; fellowship grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the

Massachusetts Council for the Arts; and awards including the Prix de Paris, National Institute of Arts and Letters Award, the Brandeis Creative Arts Award, and the Boston Symphony’s Mark Horblit Award. In addition, Kim was composer in residence at the Marlboro, Dartmouth, Tanglewood, Cape and Islands, and Aspen Music Festivals. Ensembles that have performed his works include the Lydian String Quartet, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the American Composer’s Orchestra, to name only a few. Kim was also a respected political voice, taking public stances against nuclear proliferation and all forms of artistic censorship.

In 1988, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players first programmed Kim’s song cycle, *Exercises en Route* with soprano Susan Narucki. In 1992, they gave a performance of *Dear Linda*, based on poet Anne Sexton’s moving letter to her daughter on themes of motherhood, love, and loss. Three years later, the ensemble again performed *Exercises en Route* and commissioned a new work from the composer, which he struggled to complete after being diagnosed with cancer. In the year 2000, the Contemporary Music Players marked Kim’s passing with a performance (featuring soprano Lucy Shelton) of the 1981 song cycle *Now and Then*, but without the long-awaited commission. Tonight, at last, we hear Kim’s final composition, the world premiere of his *Illuminations*.

Illuminations (1998, edited 2003 by Anthony Brandt)

for soprano and piano

In 1995, the Contemporary Music Players and the Koussevitzky Foundation commissioned what would become Earl Kim’s last work, a song cycle based on the fragmentary and allusive verse of Arthur Rimbaud, in a new translation by Louise Varèse (wife of the composer Edgard Varèse). At the time of his death, Kim had completed the cycle in his mind. He left behind a collection of loose manuscript pages and his own sound recording of all but four of the fifteen songs, which are performed without pause. The composer’s widow, Martha Potter Kim, entrusted these primary sources to composer Anthony Brandt, a former pupil of Kim and a professor at Rice

University, whose insights helped him translate Kim's ideas into a performance-ready score.

Brandt recalls the challenges of his editing project: "The notation is at times clear, at other times difficult to decipher. At certain points, Earl seems to be making notes to someone who might put his work in order; at other times, his remarks are hurriedly personal." Given the possible ambiguities of the manuscript notation, Brandt found Kim's recording especially compelling: "For Earl, everything began and ended with the sound of his work. Earl's singing, his 'touch,' spoke to me with great conviction and presence."

When a version of the cycle for voice and string orchestra was posthumously premiered by soprano Karol Bennett and the *Metamorphosen* Chamber Ensemble, Richard Dyer (critic for *The Boston Globe*) praised both Brandt's contributions and Kim's "generosity and warmth of feeling," observing, "at 78, [Kim] was writing the freshest, youngest music of his life." As these words suggest, the cycle projects a mingling of youthful wonder and world-wise recollection in its alternation of recitative-like and lyrical moments. Children and birdsong enliven its reminiscences. Frequent unisons between voice and piano make the speaker seem at once supported and yet alone—a poignant reminder that this work, while conceived in one mind, was brought to completion by another. "In working on *Illuminations*," Brandt writes, "I have come to grasp how determined Earl was, in spite of his illness, to communicate his final musical thoughts. . . he transcends his suffering and is completely himself—tender, firm, passionate, magically musical."

Text from "Illuminations" by Arthur Rimbaud

translated by Louise Varèse

After the Deluge

1. As soon as the Deluge had subsided,
A hare stopped in the clover and swaying flower-bells, and
said a prayer to the rainbow, through the spider's web.
2. Oh! the precious stones that began to hide, —and the flowers
that already looked around.

3. In the big glass house, still dripping with rain, children in
mourning looked at the marvelous pictures.
4. A door banged; and in the village square the little boy waved
his arms, understood by weather vanes and cocks on steeples
everywhere, in the bursting shower.
5. Madame *** installed a piano in the Alps. Mass and first
communion were celebrated at the hundred thousand altars
of the cathedral.
Caravans set out. And Hotel Splendid was built in the chaos
of ice and of the polar night.
Ever after the moon heard jackals howling across the deserts
of thyme, and eclogues in wooden shoes growling in the
orchard. Then in the violet and budding forest, Eucharis told
me it was spring.
6. Gush, pond, —Foam, roll on the bridge and over the woods;
—black palls and organs, lightning and thunder, rise and roll;
—water and sorrows rise and launch the Floods again.

Childhood

II

7. Magic flowers droned. The slopes cradled him. Beasts of a
fabulous elegance moved about. The clouds gathered over
the high sea, formed of an eternity of hot tears.

III

8. In the woods there is a bird; his song stops you and makes
you blush.

There is a clock that never strikes.

There is a hollow with a nest of white beasts.

There is a cathedral that goes down and a lake that goes up.

IV

9. I am the saint at prayer on the terrace like the peaceful beasts that graze down to the sea of Palestine.
10. I am the pedestrian of the highroad by way of the dwarf woods; the roar of the sluices drowns my steps. I can see for a long time the melancholy wash of the setting sun.
11. The air is motionless. How far away are the birds and the springs!
- Vöglein schweigen, schweigen im Walde*—
12. Let them rent me this whitewashed tomb, at last, with cement lines in relief, —far down under ground.

Lives

I

13. I remember silver hours and sunlight by the rivers, the hand of the country on my shoulder and our caresses standing on the spicy plains. —A flight of scarlet pigeons thunders round my thoughts.

Mystic

14. The flowering sweetness of the stars and of the night and all the rest descends.

City

15. —our woodland shade, our summer night!

DAVID B. SOLEY (1962)

A native of Panama, David B. Soley studied music with Edwin Cobham before moving to the United States in 1979. He quickly took up piano lessons with Dale Brooks in Bakersfield, and after high school he joined the Army, serving three years as saxophonist with the 3d Armored Division Band in Frankfurt, Germany. This extended sojourn abroad gave him an unusually early exposure to trends in European avant-garde composition. Contemporary music was a “new world” for Soley, and he recalls meeting its sounds with great fascination and relatively untrained ears. He had to rely on his own instincts to determine what gave this music its power, trusting the intuition of the moment rather than what he describes as the “memory of past possibilities.”

Upon returning to the States, Soley attended California State University, Northridge (B.M. 1987), where he composed *Tres Poemas de Pablo Neruda* (1983-84; for baritone, narrator, six percussionists, and piano) and began a series of pieces for solo instruments (or duo, with piano) titled *Laberinto*. While still an undergraduate, he won two BMI Student Composer Awards, held a fellowship at the Boulez Festival in Los Angeles (1984), and won Columbia University’s Bearn’s Prize. He also began exploring music technology, resulting in such pieces as *Línea* (1986-87, rev. 1994-95). Soley continued his education at Stanford. He worked with Lukas Foss and Oliver Knussen at Tanglewood (1990) and with Franco Donatoni at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana (1991), before gaining a D.M.A. in 1993. He taught at Stanford from 1995-99 and at Rice University from 1999-2001.

As early as his years at Cal State Northridge, Soley wanted to experiment with the projection of sound from carefully separated locations. Although this project was initially facilitated by electronic music techniques, he has continued to explore it with ever-greater scope and intensity through acoustic media. In his chamber work *Grisaille*, written for EARPLAY in 1994-95, the instrumentalists perform the kind of sound-shifting one might hear when listening to stereo speakers, with similar material emerging from different points on stage. Soley’s *Camaïeu* (1996-97), commissioned by IRCAM/Ensemble

Intercontemporain, takes a similar approach on a larger scale, as alto saxophone solo, chamber ensemble, and computer-generated sounds echo each other in dynamic dialogue. During these years, Soley was also at work on a large orchestral piece commissioned by the Chicago Symphony, *tondo (. . . unreceding on.)* (1996-2002). Here, he transforms the concert stage into the setting for a drama of interaction between clearly separated sub-ensembles. In this piece—and in the new work we will hear tonight—Soley makes imaginative use of space to clarify layers of musical activity, to achieve unusual aural perspectives, and to create what he calls “instrumental theater.”

Soley describes his rhythmic and melodic choices as “flexible”; irregular or idiosyncratic variants lend immediacy to recognizable motifs. Fragments, ornaments, and asymmetries allow us to ascribe a distinct character to each gesture. His treatment of time and pacing owes something to Stravinsky’s layered textures and block-like structures, as he aims to create compositions in which juxtaposition is always an option. Such music invites acute listening and—as he puts it—a continuous openness to surprise. Perhaps Soley’s fondness for ellipses in his titles suggests this as well, reminding us that we are always in the middle of an ongoing drama.

Soley has received commissions from the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, Meet the Composer, the Stony Brook Contemporary Chamber Players, the New York Youth Symphony, EARPLAY, and Ensemble Intercontemporain, in addition to the Chicago Symphony. His works have also been performed by Alea III: Ensemble for New Music, the American Composers Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony, and the Cleveland Orchestra. He has won a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation as well as an ASCAP Foundation Grant, and he has been an artist-in-residence at the Djerassi Program. Soley lives in New York City, where he is currently at work on a brass quintet.

“. . .” (2003)

for piccolo/ alto flute, E-flat clarinet/ bass clarinet, percussion, piano, violin, and cello

The composer writes, “ “. . .” continues my interest in defined instrumental roles, and general musical identities that are recognizable even when presented as fragments, or varied using ornamentation, with the combination of ornamentation and fragmentation leading to ensemble and solo instrumental virtuosity. The ‘relentlessly cascading’ figures of the piccolo and E-flat clarinet that signal the end of the introduction represent one such recurring ‘identity.’ These identities are composite in nature (that is, created by combining several ideas/parts). Some are presented by an ensemble (vertically), such as the sustained chords of the string instruments. Others are presented by a solo instrument (horizontally); for example, the piano often marks the beginning of a new section by playing an accented chord cluster or a brief arpeggio.

“Approaching the passage of time as a framework or skeleton for musical events, I combine the possibilities offered by narrative (developmental) and non-narrative (static) ideas, as well as ideas based on repetition. In “. . .” this results in a formal shape based on the ‘relentlessly cascading’ descending figures of the opening. My interpretation of poetic forms also influences the form and rhythm of “. . .”, which is built up of long lines of fragments that echo the patterns of poetic verse. On a larger scale, these lines are grouped together according to poetic forms. I chose recognizable gestures—a flutter-tongued note, a particular trill, and so forth—to create a musical ‘rhyme scheme.’

“Clarifying the roles of the instruments through their spatial disposition also forms part of my musical ideas. Sometimes, as in this piece, I vary the location of certain instruments, creating different aural perspectives.

“ “. . .” was commissioned by the Fromm Music Foundation in 1998 and was funded in part by the Copying Assistance Program of the American Music Center. “. . .” is dedicated to the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players.”

—Program notes by Beth Levy

Featured Performers

Karen Rosenak is an almost native of the Bay Area. She was founding member/pianist of the Bay Area new music groups *YEARPLAY* and the *Empyrean Ensemble*; she became a member of the *San Francisco Contemporary Music Players* in the spring of 2003. When she's not playing new music, she enjoys playing fortepiano. She will be featured on the *Noe Valley Chamber Music* series with *Katie Kyme* in a violin/fortepiano recital in January 2004. She studied modern piano with *Carlo Bussotti* and *Nathan Schwartz*, and fortepiano with *Margaret Fabrizio*. She has been on the faculty at *University of California, Berkeley* since 1990, where she teaches musicianship and contemporary chamber music.

Karen Slack, soprano, is a 2003 Adler Fellow with the *San Francisco Opera*, where her roles include *Henrietta Moore* in *Virgil Thomson's Mother of Us All* and *Fauna Bo Pibulum* in *Lewis Spratlan's Earthrise*. She will also appear as *Madame Arkadina* in the *San Francisco Opera Center's* upcoming performances of *Pasatieri's The Seagull*. Slack has been an apprentice artist with the *Santa Fe Opera*, playing the *Confidante* in *Strauss's Elektra*, and has sung the role of *Mimi* in the *Western Opera Theater* production of *Puccini's La Bohème*. She has given concert performances in *Moscow*, *St. Petersburg*, *Prague*, and *Vienna*, and she made her *Carnegie Hall* debut as *Mimi* in an unstaged *La Bohème*. She has also appeared as a soloist in *Wynton Marsalis's All Rise* with the *San Francisco Symphony* and *Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra*; as *Mrs. Segstrom* in *Sondheim's A Little Night Music* with the *Philadelphia Orchestra*; and in concert performances of *Weill's Street Scene* and *Porgy and Bess* with the *Phoenix Symphony*. Slack studied at the *Curtis Institute* in her native *Philadelphia*, where she sang in productions of *Monteverdi's L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (*Poppea*), *Mozart's Don Giovanni* (*Donna Anna*) and *Nozze di Figaro* (*Countess*), *Gershwin's Porgy and Bess* (*Lily*), *Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin* (*Tatiana*), and *Strauss's Ariadne auf Naxos* (*Echo*), and *Offenbach's La Périchole* (*Guadalena*). She has won prizes at the *National Arts Club*, *Rosa Ponselle*, *National Association of Negro Musicians*, *Leontyne Price*, and *Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation* Competitions; a *George London Foundation Award*, the *Mellini Excellence in Music Award*, and a *Liederkrantz Foundation Award*.

Music Director

David Milnes is a conductor of extraordinary breadth and long-standing commitment to contemporary music. In his early years, he studied not only piano and organ, but also clarinet, cello, and voice. Milnes received his undergraduate education in music at *SUNY Stony Brook*. In 1984, at age 27, he won the prestigious *Exxon Conductor* position with the *San Francisco Symphony*. He remained as the *Symphony's Assistant Conductor* and *Music Director* of the *San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra* until 1986, working closely with *Edo de Waart* and *Herbert Blomstedt*. Following study and collaboration with such renowned conductors as *Leonard Bernstein*, *Erich Leinsdorf*, *Otto-Werner Müller*, and *Michael Tilson Thomas*, he earned his doctorate in conducting from *Yale University* in 1989.

From 1994-2002, Milnes was *Principal Guest Conductor* of the *Latvian National Symphony Orchestra* and also guest conducted numerous orchestras across the *United States*. He has conducted at the *Tanglewood*, *Aspen*, and *Monadnock Music Festivals*, and has led operatic repertoire ranging from *Mozart* to *Weill*. He maintains a keen interest in jazz, which has led to appearances on jazz saxophone with *Gene Krupa*, *Chuck Mangione*, *John Pizzarelli*, and *Billy Taylor*. Milnes's recording of *John Anthony Lennon's Zingari* for *Bridge Records* was nominated for a *Grammy Award* in 1994.

In 1996, Milnes joined the music faculty at the *University of California, Berkeley*, where he directs its *symphony orchestra* and the *Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players*. He first conducted the *San Francisco Contemporary Music Players* in 1997, and joined the ensemble as *Music Director* in June, 2002.

The **San Francisco Contemporary Music Players** (SFCMP), now in its 33rd year, is a leader among America's most distinguished and successful chamber music organizations, championing, commissioning, and presenting the music of today's composers. The group presents works written for both large and small chamber ensembles. SFCMP is an eight-time winner of the prestigious national ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music, having commissioned 62 pieces and performed over 1,000 new works, including 45 U.S. and 119 world premieres.

Each season the ensemble performs a six-concert series at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. It 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, the Ojai Festival, and the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento. SFCMP made its European debut at the Cheltenham Festival of Music in 1986 and its East Coast debut at the Library of Congress in 2001. The ensemble has recorded eight albums of its own and contributed to eight others. Its musical outreach programs have involved masterclasses, performance demonstrations, and an evening course for adults.

Executive Director **Adam Frey** obtained his B.A. in Music from Harvard University, and his M.B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, with emphasis on marketing and planning. He joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 1991 after six years with Sherman, Clay Co., then the nation's largest keyboard instrument retailer, where he was Vice President in charge of Merchandising. He serves on the Board of Governors of the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. Mr. Frey is also a writer; his work has been published in *The Mississippi Review*.

Artistic Administrator **Elaine Ng** received her B.A. in Music from the University of California, Davis and her M.B.A. and M.A. in Arts Administration from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. Along the way, she has worked with the Empyrean Ensemble, the Dallas Opera, the Dallas Symphony, and, most recently, the Studio Arts Centers International in Florence, Italy.

SAN FRANCISCO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC PLAYERS

44 Page St., Suite 604A, San Francisco, CA 94102-5972

Phone: 415/252-6235 Fax: 415/621-2533 Email: info@sfcmp.org

Website: www.sfcmp.org

THE PLAYERS

Roy Malan (1976), violin I
Susan Freier (1993), violin II
Nancy Ellis (1975), viola
Stephen Harrison (1982), cello
Steven D'Amico (1979), contrabass
Tod Brody (2001), flute
William Wohlmacher (1995), clarinet
Rufus Olivier (1991), bassoon
Lawrence Ragent (1981), French horn

Charles Metzger (1976), trumpet
Hall Goff (1979), trombone
Peter Wahrhaftig (1989), tuba
Karen Gottlieb (1990), harp
Paul Binkley (1981), guitar
Julie Steinberg (1989), piano
Karen Rosenak (2002), piano
William Winant (1988), percussion
Daniel Kennedy (1993), percussion
Christopher Froh (2003), percussion

**Dates indicate year of joining*

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