

SAN FRANCISCO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC PLAYERS

David Milnes, Music Director

Monday, 6 November 2006, 8 pm
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Forum

Performers

Tod Brody, flute
Carey Bell, clarinet
William Wohlmacher, bass clarinet
Julie Steinberg, keyboard
Karen Rosenak, piano
Graeme Jennings, violin
Darcy Rindt, viola
Stephen Harrison, cello
Christopher Froh, percussion

This concert is made possible in part by the generous support of the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation.

Mr. Gottlieb's piano recital is made possible by a generous grant from the Ross McKee Foundation.

The performance of music by Donatoni, Francesconi, and Scelsi is underwritten in part by the Istituto Italiano di Cultura..



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NEW PIANO NOW

LUCA FRANCESCONI *Encore/Da capo* (1985/1995)

BRUNO MANTOVANI *Jazz Connotation* (1998)

OSCAR STRASNOY *Exercices de Latinité* (2002)

I. Cha-cha-cha

II. Tango

III. Tarantella

MAGNUS LINDBERG *Etude* (2001)

POUL RUDERS, *Event Horizon* (2001)

Jay Gottlieb, piano

~ INTERMISSION ~

MAURICE OHANA *Free Counterpoints* (1985)

KAREN TANAKA *Techno Etude no. 2* (2000)

GIACINTO SCELSI *Four Illustrations* (1953)

I. Vishnu sleeps; Saraszati plays the zither

II. Vishnu as wild boar

III. Rama

IV. Krishna

FRANCO DONATONI excerpts from *Françoise - Variationen*
(1983-96)

Jay Gottlieb, piano

LUCA FRANCESCONI *Encore/Da capo* (1985/1995)

A new venture by the

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players

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 Julie Steinberg, piano; Roy Malan, violin; Leighton Fong, cello

Sunday, April 29, 2007 Karlheinz Stockhausen's Vibra-Elufa
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LUCA FRANCESCONI (B. 1956)

During a recent visit to California, in preparation for the premiere of a piece commissioned by Oliver Knussen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Luca Francesconi was heard to say: "It is very important to find clear ideas, after all the complexity of the avant-garde, without giving up the fantastic power of everything in this century that just passed. It is important now, more and more, to use simple elements." Few would describe Francesconi's music as simple: on the contrary, it is highly refined in gesture. Musicologist Susanna Pasticci has pointed out that many of Francesconi's works "follow labyrinthine routes in developing material on multiple levels," yet his "clearly delineated textures. . . give the listener unmistakable points of reference." As we shall hear tonight, this is music that both deserves and rewards repeated listening.

Francesconi's ideas about "simple elements" carry extra weight because the techniques and values of the European avant-garde were part of his training and remain part of his aesthetic. After studying composition from Azio Corghi at the Milan Conservatory, he worked with both Karlheinz Stockhausen and Luciano Berio, and was thus exposed to the most prestigious postwar voices of German and Italian composition. The fact that he studied with Stockhausen in Rome and with Berio at Tanglewood suggests the internationalism that Francesconi has subsequently embraced. His career as composer and conductor has taken him around the world and his music makes its own global journey, incorporating in works like his *1984 Suite* (for orchestra, jazz quartet and percussion ensemble from Guinea) what Pasticci calls "a polyphony of mixed idioms, ranging from Machaut to Stravinsky, orchestral writing to jazz or Italian folklore to African percussion." As this *Suite* suggests, Francesconi is known for his playful relationship with things past: he has written an opera about the colorful renaissance madrigalist Carlo Gesualdo and has made a suite for wind band out of Claudio Monteverdi's Orfeo. His more abstract ruminations on remembered sounds can be heard in the cycle *Quattro Studi sulla memoria* (*Memoria, Richiami II, Riti neurali, A fuoco*), and this

year he was the featured composer at the Ultima Festival in Oslo, which took as its theme “Music and Memory.”

Like many who came under the influence of Stockhausen, Francesconi has sought out or created institutions that foster research in new music technologies. He founded the Agon center for electronic music in Milan, and taught at IRCAM (Paris’s Institute de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musicale) in 1995. He has shown a particular interest in composing for radio, which seems to appeal to his desire for music that is “multimedia” in conception, yet purely sonic in realization. He often speaks of a “theater of the imagination,” and his many operatic works bear out his preoccupation with the dramatic. In addition to four radio theater pieces for RAI (Radiotelevisione Italiana), his secular oratorio *Sirene/Gespenster* (Sirens/Ghosts) of 1996-97 counts among its co-commissioners, the West German, South German, and Dutch state radios, as well as the ASKO ensemble and IRCAM. Of course, Francesconi has also written operatic works that include important visual elements. Chief among these are the video-opera *Striaξ* (with images created by Milan’s Studio Azurro) and his more recent *Ballata*, based on Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (2002), with libretto by Umberto Fiori, the Milanese poet and rock songwriter who has furnished texts for a number of Francesconi’s works. Commissioned and successfully premiered by the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, *Ballata* plays with both time and space, involving flashbacks and the juxtaposition of eighteenth- and twenty-first century references, and using electronics (and an off-stage “gypsy”-style band) to locate sounds in different parts of the auditorium.

Though many of his works include electronics, the physicality of performance remains at the heart of Francesconi’s oeuvre. Perhaps this can be traced to his experiences as a pianist and conductor, or to his teacher Berio’s tendency to push solo performers into uncharted waters. In 2004, Francesconi completed a concerto for Anssi Karttunen that was inspired by his love of the cello, an instrument that he calls “bellissimo e crudele” (most beautiful and cruel). *In Riti Neurali* (1991), written for violinist Irvine Arditti, the composer pits the soloist’s rhapsodic and sometimes violent lines against a chamber ensemble, and in the more recent *Body Electric*, he augments Arditti’s

already considerable powers through the use of an electric violin. While he describes his solo *Respiro* (1987) as “a ‘breathless’ struggle between two instruments: a trombone and a human body,” his later *Animus* (1995-96, realized at IRCAM for Benny Sluchin) complements the trombone with live electronics in a meditation on the dual meanings of its title, spirit and breath: “this animus, this essence, both physical and elusive, constitutes the material of dreams, and at the same time the material of the body: the breath.”

Francesconi has won many international prizes including awards from Gaudeamus, Martin Codax, and the New Music Composers’ Competition, as well as the Guido d’Arezzo Prize and Darmstadt’s Kranichsteiner Musikpreis. In 1994 he was awarded the Siemens Prize and the Prix Italia for his *Ballata del rovescio del mondo* (1994), a radio opera with text by Fiori. His works have been commissioned by Ensemble InterContemporain, the ASKO ensemble, the Nieuw Ensemble, Contrechamps, and the London Sinfonietta, among others. In addition to his year at IRCAM, Francesconi has taught at the Rotterdam and Strasbourg Conservatories and has been a guest composer at the Akiyoshidai Festival in Japan, the Young Nordic Music festival, Madrid’s Centro Reina Sofia, the University of Montreal, and San Francisco State University. He is currently an active conductor of contemporary music and a Professor of composition at Milan Conservatory.

Encore/Da capo (1985/1995)

for flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, vibraphone/marimba/glockenspiel, acoustic piano, Fender Rhodes piano, violin, viola, and cello

At first glance, the title of Francesconi’s ensemble work might seem redundant: *encore* (“again” or “once more”) and *da capo* (literally “from the top”). In fact, the apparent duplication is meaningful in more than one way. First, *Encore/Da capo* constitutes a revisiting of the older *Da capo* (1985-86), also for nine instruments. Second, and perhaps more intriguing, the dual title plays on the meanings and motivations for musical repetition. The concert-goers’ enthusiastic “encore!” invites the exact repetition of something already perfected. The older instruction “*da capo*” suggests a more creative reprise,

either in rehearsal (“take it from the top”) or in the moment of performance, as in the baroque “da capo aria,” whose return to the opening stanza both allowed and required the decoration and embellishment of material already heard. In Francesconi’s hands, repetition involves reveling in the familiar and hearing things anew. Tonight’s performance amplifies this productive ambiguity by bringing *Encore/Da capo* back at the end of the program.

Encore/Da capo is not a palindrome piece, but its motifs do seem to circle back on one another. Written for and dedicated to Ensemble Ictus, it is by turns playful and serious, propulsive and static. Among its richly varied textures, perhaps the most prominent is a homophonic shimmer—one voice may offer a flourish of sound in the foreground, but the others weave themselves into a background fabric that flutters, folding in on itself at moments of change or stretching to accommodate more gradual transitions. Like any good tapestry, *Encore/Da capo* invites perception on micro- and macro- levels: to understand the composite “picture,” one must also listen for individual strands of activity: the clarinet, the cello, the vibraphone. Intertwined, yet distinguished by tone color and subtle rhythmic alterations, each of these threads rolls its own way through Francesconi’s labyrinth, reminding us that repetition is both “rehearsal” (in the literal sense of “re-hearing”) and celebration.

NEW PIANO NOW

Bruno Mantovani, *Jazz Connotation* (1998)

Born near Paris in 1974, Bruno Mantovani studied piano, percussion, composition and jazz at the Perpignan Conservatory before enrolling at the Paris Conservatory (where he won first prizes in analysis, aesthetics, orchestration, composition, and music history) and at the University of Rouen, where he received a Master’s Degree in musicology. He worked with Brian Ferneyhough at the Royaumont Academy, and has spent time at IRCAM. His music has been commissioned by

the French government, Radio France, the Orchestre de Paris, Ensemble InterContemporain, Cologne Radio, and others, winning him prizes at the Stuttgart and Gaudeamus Competitions, an award from the UNESCO International Composers’ Tribune, scholarships from the Academie des Beaux-Arts and the Nadia and Lili Boulanger Foundation, the Grand Prix from the French Recording Academy, and the prestigious Prix de Rome.

The youngest composer on tonight’s program, Mantovani understands his aesthetic as a reflection of his generation’s place in music history. In a recent interview, he observed: “We no longer live in an epoch of radical invention of material, an epoch worked through by Boulez, Stockhausen, Lachenmann, and Grisey among others. . . There is no reason to ignore the lessons of the past. . . nor is it necessary to consider the works of yesterday as museum pieces. The compositions of today open new perspectives yet they do not rest on fundamentally new and revolutionary bases.” This view may explain Mantovani’s fascination with the question of “style” and his willingness to try on different musical idioms, whether funk and techno—in portions of his *Grand Jeu* (1999) for percussion and live electronics—or free jazz in the work we hear tonight.

The composer writes: “The title *Jazz Connotation* is a reference to a jazz standard by Ornette Coleman, *Blues Connotation*. At the time he was writing this work, the famous saxophonist had already freed himself from the system of ‘grids’ which up until then were the starting point for improvisation, seeking to create a freer musical discourse (‘free jazz’). In my own compositional work, the jazz references should not dominate my own language. That said, several musical ideas stem directly from the American repertory. Jazz has always occupied an important place in my life as a musician, both as listener as well as practitioner. Moreover, the notion of improvisation is primordial for me. Indeed, despite the complexity of processes that I might use in my music, I try constantly to preserve a certain spontaneity in my work. Improvisation is one of the means I use in order to achieve this. To refer to jazz is for me a totally natural act.”

Oscar Strasnoy, *Exercices de Latinité* (2002)

“I admire Stockhausen, Boulez, Berio and Nono, composers of the postwar years, when you had to change the world. . . . [Today’s] sonic discoveries may be more or less attractive, more or less beautiful, more or less interesting, but they do not have the power to introduce the true essence of modernity. . . . Purity is an ideal that has nothing to do with our world, and as for me, I have a horror for every form of academicism.” So speaks Oscar Strasnoy, in an interview with Dino Villatico about his *Opérette* (written in 2002-03 for Paris’s Atelier de Recherche et de Création).

Born in 1970 in Buenos Aires, Strasnoy brings a distinctly Latin heritage into contact with European currents and countercurrents. He studied piano, composition, and conducting at the Buenos Aires, Paris, and Frankfurt conservatories. He has since held residencies in Stuttgart, Germany and in Kyoto, Japan, and his works have been played in the Philharmonie in Berlin, at IRCAM, at Radio France, and throughout France, Hungary, Rumania, South America, Australia, and Japan. Last season, Strasnoy was honored in a series of seven concerts by the Ensemble 2e2m, and this year he is away from his home in Paris to be artist in residence at the Civitella Ranieri Foundation in Umbria.

Strasnoy has recently shown a particular affinity for vocal and multimedia works. In 2000 Luciano Berio presented him with the Orpheus Prize for his opera *Midea*, which was produced at the Teatro Caio Melisso in Spoleto and the Teatro dell’Opera in Rome. In 2004 alone, Strasnoy saw the premieres of his opera *Histoire*, with a libretto by Witold Gombrowicz, produced at the Chamber Opera Hall of the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires; *Six Songs for the Unquiet Traveller*, written for singer Anne Murray on texts by Alberto Manguel and premiered at London’s Wigmore Hall; and a new score of live music for the Louvre Auditorium’s screening of the 1928 film *Underground*. Other commissioners include the French and Argentine governments, the Mozarteum Argentino, the Nadia and Lili Boulanger Foundation and the Fromm Foundation.

Premiered at the Chatelet Theatre in Paris, the *Exercices de Latinité* rep-

resent but one of Strasnoy’s creative interactions with Jay Gottlieb, who also gave the 2006 premiere of his work for piano and percussion ensemble, *Toy*. Despite their title, the *Exercices* are hardly etudes in any traditional way. Instead they exercise the composer’s rhythmic ingenuity and the listener’s sense of humor.

Magnus Lindberg, *Etude* (2001)

Since his years at the Sibelius Academy in his native Finland, Magnus Lindberg (b. 1958) has been a devoted activist for contemporary music in Scandinavia and around the world. As a pianist, he premiered many new Finnish piano works, and in 1977 and 1982, he founded two new music groups whose names suggest his attitude toward composition: Korvat auki “Ears open” and Toimii (“It works”), formed in cooperation with composers Jouni Kaipainen and Kaija Saariaho, and composer/conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen.

A student of Vinko Globokar and Gerard Grisey in Paris, Franco Donatoni in Siena, and Brian Ferneyhough in Darmstadt, Lindberg began his career devoted to the complex structures of serialism, but his creative horizons have steadily broadened to include more disparate sources: free jazz, minimalism, Indonesian gamelan, and punk rock, among others. Uniting all his post-serial efforts are an interest in the subtle similarities between different sounds and what Gottlieb calls the “triumph of immediacy, perception theory (foreground and background), powerful dramaturgical frameworks, joyous incursions into pure sound, with no fear of employing recognizable harmonic centers of gravity.”

Beginning with his 1985 *Kraft*, a concerto for members of the Toimii ensemble and an orchestra asked to produce sounds from household objects, stones, and drinking straws, Lindberg’s catalog of works has drawn expert performances from Salonen, Boulez, the Ensemble InterContemporain, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and many others. From the late 1980s and early 1990s, with his orchestral trilogy *Kinetics*, *Marea*, and *Joy* (1988-90) and his highly acclaimed orchestral score *Aura* (*in memoriam Witold Lutoslawski*),

Lindberg makes allusions—sometimes veiled and sometimes exuberant—to older music, without ever losing a contemporary edge.

Lindberg is a freelance composer (supported by the Finnish government), but he has been invited to teach at IRCAM, Darmstadt, Stockholm's Royal College of Music, and U. C. Berkeley. His honors and awards include the Prix Italia, the UNESCO Rostrum, the Nordic Music Prize, the Koussevitzky International Critics Award and the Wihuri Sibelius Prize. In 2003, he was asked to write a piece to celebrate the opening of Los Angeles's Walt Disney Concert Hall, resulting in *Sculpture-The LA Project*, and in 2001-02, he was the featured composer at a festival in London, Paris, and Brussels that took its name from his 1997 score *Related Rocks*, which the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players performed in its 2003-04 season.

Lindberg's Study for Piano was written in 2001, and premiered by Gottlieb in the Octobre en Normandie Festival. In this brief vignette one can hear the conjunction of early and late twentieth-century sounds from both sides of the Atlantic. As Gottlieb himself observes: its "impressionistic Debussy palette [combined] with brash jazz licks makes it clear that the work was written for an American living in Paris!"

Poul Ruders, *Event Horizon* (2001)

Born in 1949 near Copenhagen, Poul Ruders represents one of the leading voices in Danish music today. He was a member of the Copenhagen Boys' Choir, and having studied piano and organ as a child, he graduated from the Royal Danish Conservatory as an organist. Apart from some orchestration lessons at the Conservatory, he is essentially self-taught in composition, yet his scores have won performances from the New York Philharmonic, Ensemble InterContemporain, Speculum Musicae, the Royal Philharmonic, and others. In 1990, the BBC Proms gave the premiere of his *Symphony no. 1*, bringing him widespread international attention and displaying, as BBC music critic Anthony Burton notes, several of Ruders' characteristic concerns: "quotation, of Bach and an old German Christmas carol; minimalism. . . ; [and] strong contrasts of tempo, dynamics, register, and density of sound."

The story of Ruders' development, Gottlieb observes, is largely the history of his gradual adaptation and assimilation of the idea of stylistic pluralism. Ancient or Baroque music can be a starting point for him as much as Latin-American dance music. Titles such as *Medieval Variations* (1974) or *Break-Dance* (1984) are clear evidence of this. The United States has also been a potent source of inspiration. His *Manhattan Abstraction* mirrors the New York skyline and is scored for very large orchestra, full of glittering colors, driving rhythms, and exhilaration. But there is also a complementary dark side, and near the end a suggestion of dwarfed, imperilled humanity; impressed as he is by New York, Ruders is no wide-eyed innocent abroad. Using techniques of juxtaposition and superimposition similar to those of film and video editing, he has called himself "a film composer with no film."

According to the composer, "The name *Event Horizon* was coined by the brilliant physicist Stephen Hawking to describe the circumference of a so-called 'black hole,' the remains of a collapsed star with a gravity-pull so powerful that not even light can escape from it. This five-minute study for piano has—needless to say—nothing to do with black holes, but the term 'event horizon' fascinates me and strikes me as a near-perfect description of virtually any stretch of organized sound evolving in time, e.g. a musical composition with a strong linear focus. So, *Event Horizon* it is, a seamless composition of high density, evolving in three parts: swinging-ricocheting-sweeping, a musical journey of speed, from fast to furiously fast, a study based on a parallel, separating, meeting again."

Maurice Ohana, *Free Counterpoints* (1985)

Maurice Ohana (1913-92) was born in Morocco of Andalusian-Jewish ancestry, inherited British citizenship from his Gibraltar father, and was educated in Africa, Spain, Paris (at the Schola Cantorum with Daniel-Lesur), and in Rome (with Alfredo Casella). His complex and cosmopolitan background prompted André Gide to describe him as a "French Joseph Conrad." After moving to Paris in 1932, Ohana studied architecture, but quickly devoted himself to the piano, giving major recitals all over Europe. His reputation as a pianist established,

in 1937 he made the decision to concentrate on composition.

Ohana's career as a composer was both interrupted and shaped by World War II. As pianist and musicologist Caroline Rae has pointed out, Ohana's first major work, a setting of Federico Garcia Lorca's *Llanto por Ignacio Sanchez Majias* (Lament for the death of a bullfighter) (1950) shows the influence of Manuel de Falla, one of three composers whose scores Ohana took with him when he fled France in the 1940s and joined the British army.

During every period of Ohana's creative life, the influences of Andalusian flamenco, Hebraic and Islamic cantillation, Afro-Cuban ritual music and its modern offshoots, American jazz and blues, joined those of Debussy, Ravel, Falla, Bartók, and Stravinsky in the composer's colorful palette. He had a particular interest in improvised idioms, traveling to the Atlas mountains, for example, to learn about berber music. In fact, the spontaneity of improvised music can often be heard in Ohana's scores (even when they are written out). His flexible phrasing is a particular advantage in his incidental music and film scores, but Ohana is also well known for his concert works, which include *La Celestina*, premiered at the Paris Opéra in 1988 and a cello concerto written for Mstislav Rostropovich, as well as numerous large-scale works for orchestra and significant contributions to the instrumental, chamber music, and vocal repertoires.

Gottlieb calls Ohana a true iconoclast and independent, who rejected most pre-compositional systems, considering himself a free spirit acting against all musical "tyranny." Indeed Ohana preferred to distance himself from the key figures of new music. "The great lessons of music," he wrote, "these were not taught to me by musicians. I actually received them from the sea, from the wind, from the rain on the trees, and from the light, or yet from the contemplation of certain landscapes that I sought out because they had an air of belonging to the creation of the world rather than to our civilized realms."

The improvisatory freedom that Ohana embraced has left its traces on *Free Counterpoints*, which forms part of Book II of the composer's *Piano Etudes* (1982-85) and is dedicated to Gottlieb. Invoking the "strictness" of counterpoint only to supplant it, *Free Counterpoints* at times involves the layering of four independent parts, each with its

own tempo, and each metrically free. The chorale that concludes the etude has just enough of a jazzy edge to suggest the American for whom it was written.

Karen Tanaka, *Techno Etude no. 2* (2000)

Combining strong Asian ties and a lifelong engagement with European culture, Karen Tanaka is one of Japan's leading composers and a significant voice on the American and international scenes. Born in Tokyo in 1961, she studied French literature and composition there before moving to Paris in 1986. With the support of the French and Japanese governments, she studied first at IRCAM (with Tristan Murail) and then in Florence (with Luciano Berio) before returning to work at IRCAM from 1991-93.

Tanaka's first major successes, including *Prismes* (1984) and the piano concerto *Anamorphose* (1986)—were followed by a series of important Japanese commissions: *Initium* (1992), *Wave Mechanics* (1994), and *Echo Canyon*, whose luminous colors, drawn from Bryce Canyon in Utah, have evoked comparisons with the music of Olivier Messiaen. As reflected in her choice of titles, Tanaka is fascinated by natural and scientific processes and their translation into sound.

Her percussion duo *Polarization* (1994) was performed by the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 2000, and audience members may remember its juxtaposition of clangorous, metallic sounds with the dry thump of the bass drum—underscoring the title's suggestion of irreconcilable differences. "Polarization" also describes the relationship between the two performers; confined to opposite corners of the stage, their carefully choreographed gestures are nonetheless intensely interactive, as Tanaka notes: "They are tracing flexible curves and creating polarized lights, however, [their] energy sometimes collides, creating conflict and explosion."

Dancing is also at the heart of Tanaka's *Techno Etudes*, the second and calmest of which will be heard tonight. In January 1999, the composer recalls, pianist Tomoko Mukaiyama asked her to write a piece that would "synchronize with techno music chosen by her which would be

pre-recorded on a tape. As we discussed the piece over the following months, we realized that a solo piano work without a tape part would be more substantial. However, the idea of techno remained constantly between us. Finally I wrote a set of three pieces, entitled *Techno Etudes*. The idea of the whole piece can be summarized with the three key words; techno, rhythm, and speed.”

Tanaka has won the Muramatsu Prize, and her works have been performed by the Kronos Quartet, the New Arts Quartet, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, and the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, among others. Currently a Professor of composition at U. C. Santa Barbara, she is also an artistic director of the Yatsugatake Kogen Music Festival in Japan, previously directed by Toru Takemitsu.

Giacinto Scelsi, *Four Illustrations* (1953)

American composer Morton Feldman called Giacinto Scelsi (1905-88) “the Charles Ives of Italy.” The fact that he has also been compared to John Cage, Edgard Varèse, and Claude Debussy begins to suggest what an important, yet perplexing, figure Scelsi remains: a composer who claimed not to “compose,” an Italian who saw himself poised between East and West, a man whose music would wait decades before finding sympathetic ears around the globe.

Born into the Italian aristocracy (and part of the British royal family by marriage), he traveled widely as a young man, fostering friendships with such literary and artistic figures as Salvador Dalí and Henri Michaux. He studied privately with Ottorino Respighi in Rome, with a pupil of Arnold Schoenberg in Vienna, and with a student of Alexander Skryabin in Geneva. He experimented with noisy, machine-inspired futurism in works like *Rotative* (1930), and in the mid-thirties he became perhaps the first Italian to adopt (and reject) twelve-tone composition. But more than any particular technique, it was the conception of music as a spiritual force that would shape Scelsi’s future.

During the late 1940s, Scelsi suffered a tremendous mental break-

down. He produced no works between 1948-52, and he only began composing again after devising a unique form of “therapy” which involved playing a single note over and over again on the piano. This meditative practice carried within it two important aspects of Scelsi’s later aesthetic: first, a belief that single tones can sustain infinite exploration; and second, a commitment to spiritual insights from theosophy, Zen Buddhism, and other Eastern religions. As Scelsi often stated, “You hear the heartbeat of the sound, an entire universe, it engulfs you, you plunge inside the sound. That is when you are a real musician. Before that, you are only someone who makes music as an apprentice, which is quite different.”

In his landmark orchestral work *Four Pieces (on a single note)* (1959), each movement demonstrates the “dissection” of one pitch, coloring it with different instrumental timbres and articulations, and breaking it up into micro-tonal components. This was one of Scelsi’s only works to win immediate success. Reticent, even reclusive, he avoided concerts where his works were to be performed, he refused to be photographed, and he preferred not to speak about his biography—a great loss since many of his later works involved a pattern of collaboration with individual performers which may never be fully understood. Nonetheless, during the decade before Scelsi’s death, composers of diverse orientations discovered his music and many previously unheard works received belated premieres at Europe’s finest contemporary music festivals.

Gottlieb points out that Scelsi’s *Four Illustrations* is one of the composer’s first works inspired by India, a cycle depicting four different metamorphoses (or avatars) of the god Vishnu. The first represents Vishnu in repose while Sarasvati plays the zither for him. The second represents Vishnu metamorphosed into a wild boar violently charging through the forest. The third represents Vishnu as a charming prince covered with jewels and reigning over ocean currents. The last metamorphosis is as Krishna, the all-powerful god, radiating light in all his glory.

Franco Donatoni, excerpts from *Françoise - Variationen* (1983-96)

Born in Verona in 1927, Franco Donatoni grew up in an Italy torn by fascism. He studied at the Conservatories of Milan and Bologna before finding true mentors in Goffredo Petrassi and especially Bruno Maderna, who introduced him to the complexities of avant-garde composition and brought him to the Darmstadt Summer Courses in composition. Here, he discovered Stockhausen and Boulez and, until the 1960s, he made it his goal to internalize the generative power of their intricate structures in his own works, including his Second Quartet (1958) and *Movimento* (1959) for harpsichord, piano, and chamber ensemble.

Through Luciano Berio, Donatoni met John Cage, and though he was initially skeptical of the American composer's sincerity he eventually adopted a compositional system that many have compared to Cage's because of its ego-effacing aesthetic. Rather than chance or aleatory procedures, Donatoni invented a system of transformational codes that could be applied to pre-existing musical snippets that were sometimes his own, and sometimes drawn from other composers. This apparent about-face—from the self-conscious rigors of his earliest works to his playful deployment of codes in the mid-1970s and beyond—was so striking that Boulez remarked, “Franco Donatoni's long perseverance has carried him towards freedom, and, paradoxically, towards spontaneity!”

Donatoni's work flowered when he was in his fifties as he embraced instrumental virtuosity and won commissions from Europe's finest ensembles. For many listeners, his reputation rests on these later scores—the *Refrain* series (1986-96), *Le souris sans sourire* (1988), and many others. As an obituary in the *Musical Times* puts it, Donatoni was a “composer of singular originality and unimpeachable integrity,” yet “his journey towards maturity was periodically hindered by existential crises and stylistic false starts. Despite a career that spanned nearly fifty years, it is only his compositions of the last two decades or so that sing with his quirky, often radiant voice.”

The scintillating *Françoise - Variationen* fall solidly into this category. Describing their origin, Gottlieb reports that Françoise Peri, wife of a Roman cinema critic who worked with Fellini, one day asked Donatoni for a page of music in manuscript so she could frame it. Thus was born the

material that gave rise to the *Variations*. The work as a whole consists of seven cycles, each containing seven variations, each roughly one minute long. It is a kind of personal diary of the composer, who claimed that he composed the *Variations* in his spare time, mainly in hotel rooms. In the *Françoise - Variationen*, small melodic cells are often expanded or modified, reflected or deflected (producing a “variation on the variation”); the germ that gives birth to the process of modification is never exhausted, a definitive answer or solution is never reached. In fact, the material of these variations engendered eighty-five other works, including *Jay*, a concerto written for Gottlieb and brass septet and premiered at the Pompidou Center in 1992.

—Beth E. Levy and Jay Gottlieb

Featured Performer

A pianist devoted to the twentieth-century repertoire, **Jay Gottlieb** has won praise not only from the international press but also from some of the most prominent figures in the history of contemporary music. The eminent French musician Nadia Boulanger called him “one of the best musicians I know”; Olivier Messiaen praised his “magnificent technique”; and Lukas Foss called him “one of those rare musicians a composer has in mind when he writes his music. . . deeply committed to new music and equally knowledgeable in the field of older music.”

After studying at the Juilliard School and Harvard University, Gottlieb worked closely with Boulanger and with pianists Robert Casadesus, Yvonne Loriod, and Aloys Kontarsky. In addition to Foss and Messiaen, he has collaborated with a veritable pantheon of composers on both sides of the Atlantic: Georges Aperghis, Luciano Berio, Pierre Boulez, John Cage, George Crumb, György Ligeti, Oliver Knussen, Ralph Shapey, Stefan Wolpe, and most of the composers on tonight's program. He has given numerous world premieres, often of works written especially for him. In addition to his ongoing series of “International Etudes” (which includes the works of Lindberg, Ruders, Ohana, Strasnoy, and Gilbert Amy), he has brought to light Sylvano Bussotti's *Gemelli*, Barbara Kolb's *Voyants*, Yan Maresz's *Volubile*, Lukas Ligeti's *Trinity*, Stuart MacRae's *32 for Piano*, and Benoît Delbecq's

Temps posés, temps mêlés, as well as piano concertos by Ivar Frounberg, Antonio Chagas Rosa, Betsy Jolas and Régis Campo. At the Centre Acanthes of the Avignon Festival he gave lectures, master classes, and a recital in which he premiered Alessandro Solbiati's Piano Sonata.

A Laureate of the Yehudi Menuhin Foundation, Gottlieb has won the Lili Boulanger Memorial Prize, first prize at the International Improvisation Competition in Lyons, and grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the French government. He has also participated in such festivals as Tanglewood, the Festival Estival de France, the Venice Biennale, Warsaw Autumn, Musica in Strasbourg, October in Normandy, and International Keyboard Festivals in New York, Montreal, and Macao. Gottlieb has been a featured performer with Musique Vivante, Ars Nova, Ensemble Itinéraire, the Group for Contemporary Music in New York, Alternance, 2e2m, and Accentus, and has appeared as soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Pierre Monteux's Domain Orchestra, the National Symphony of China, the London Sinfonietta, the Orchestre de Paris, and other orchestras throughout Europe and the United States.

Gottlieb's playing can be heard on the soundtracks of the films *La Discrète* (by Christian Vincent) and *Sonate* (by George Allez), and his recordings appear on more than a dozen labels. His CDs of piano music by John Adams, Philip Glass, Cage, and Charles Ives received the "Choc" award from *Le monde de la musique* in four consecutive years (1998-2001), and in January 2001, his recording of music by Cage won a Diapason d'Or. Gottlieb is the author of a comprehensive series of articles on twentieth-century piano music for *Piano* magazine, and is co-author of *Ten Years with the Piano of the Twentieth Century*, published in Paris by the Cité de la Musique. He has been selected to represent the U.S. worldwide through the Arts America Program of the USIA (a division of the State Department), and he continues to give lectures, lecture-recitals and master classes on diverse aspects of contemporary music around the world.

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.

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 36th year, is a leader among America's most distinguished and successful chamber music organizations, performing, commissioning, and recording the music of today's composers. The group presents works written for both large and small chamber ensembles. SFCMP is a nine-time winner of the prestigious national ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music, having commissioned 64 pieces and performed over 1,000 new works, including 56 U.S. and 130 world premieres.

Each season the ensemble performs a subscription series in the Bay Area. 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 include presentations in public high schools and its new Contemporary Insights series of intimate performances with conversation.

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., 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*.

Director of Operations and Marketing, **Matthew Schumaker** studied music and philosophy as an undergraduate at Dartmouth College and continued as a graduate student at Princeton University, where he received an MA in music composition. While at Princeton, he took part in coordinating concert production for the university's new music ensemble. He subsequently studied composition in Holland with Louis Andriessen. He joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players staff in September, 2004.

Kate **McLoughlin**, Production Associate, earned her M.M. in Orchestral conducting at McGill University in Montréal, Canada, where she also completed undergraduate work in bassoon performance and music theory. She is currently the assistant conductor of the Oakland Civic Orchestra, and manager of the Berkeley Youth Orchestra. She joined the SF Contemporary Music Players staff in October 2006.

Robert **Shumaker**, Recording Engineer, has been recording the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players' concerts and CD releases for over twenty years. Most recently, he recorded the ensemble's forthcoming album of compositions by Edmund Campion, and the ensemble's Andrew Imbrie album. Starting out as an engineer for rock concerts and recordings in San Francisco in the late 1960s, Shumaker went on to tour the Soviet Union twice with the Rova Saxophone Quartet, as well as making a tour of nine countries with the David Grisman Quartet. He has engineered over five hundred commercial recordings of artists ranging from Judy Collins to Diamanda Galas and from Van Morrison to Henry Brant. During the 1970s and '80s, he recorded the complete works of Conlon Nancarrow for 1750 Arch Records and Wergo. His work has been twice nominated for a Grammy Award.

For online reviews of the
San Francisco Contemporary Music Players'
concerts and other music events around the Bay Area, visit
www.sfcv.org.

For New Music on the radio tune in to FM 91.7, KALW's radio show,
"Then and Now"
(Sundays, 8 - 10 pm), hosted by Sarah Cahill.

Scores of tonight's pieces are on display in the lobby.