

# San Francisco Contemporary Music Players

David Milnes, Music Director

## American Mosaic

Monday, 3 November 2008, 8 pm  
Herbst Theatre

**Performers:**  
Tod Brody, flute  
Jeff Anderle, clarinet (Diaz de León)  
Peter Josheff, bass clarinet (Tymoczko)

Jeff Biancalana, trumpet

Hall Goff, trombone

Karen Gottlieb, harp

Paul Binkley, mandolin

David Tanenbaum, guitar

Ann Yi, piano (Diaz de León, Tymoczko, Liang)

Christopher Froh, percussion (Liang)

Loren Mach, percussion (Tymoczko)

William Winant, percussion (Diaz de León, Carter)

Roy Malan, violin

Stephen Harrison, cello

**Sound Engineer:** Gregory Kuhn

**Assistant Sound Engineer:** John MacCallum



*The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players extends its special thanks to U. C. Berkeley's Center for New Music and Audio Technology for its continued assistance.*

**Mario Diaz de León**, *Gated Eclipse* (2006)

(Approximate duration: 13 minutes)

**Reynold Tharp**, *Littoral* (2006)

(Approximate duration: 9 minutes)

Julie Steinberg, piano

**Mario Davidovsky**, *Synchronisms no. 12* (2006)

(Approximate duration: 6 minutes)

Carey Bell, clarinet

↻ *Intermission* ↻

**Dmitri Tymoczko**, *Four Dreams* (2006)

(Approximate duration: 12 minutes)

**Lei Liang**, *Trio* (2006)

(Approximate duration: 8 minutes)

**Elliott Carter** *Luimen* (1997)

(Approximate duration: 10 minutes)



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Ross McKee Foundation (Tharp).*

## Program Notes

### *Mario Diaz De León* [b. 1979]

Composer Mario Diaz de León has a deft touch with the brightness and shadow of sound that belies his youth. The fascination with noise surely springs in part from his seminal experiences playing guitar in punk and heavy metal bands in St. Paul, Minnesota. The technical and technological tools might be traced to his years at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, where he studied composition and electronics. No doubt since arriving in New York City in 2004 and enrolling in the doctoral program at Columbia University, where his teachers include George Lewis and Fabien Lévy, he has refined his understanding of the internal structure of sounds and has deepened his commitment to music as the product of live interaction. Whatever their relative importance, these experiences have given Diaz de León fluency with a huge spectrum of musical effects, ranging from the most delicate chiaroscuro to the blinding intensity of the supernova, the black hole, and the eclipse.

Diaz de León did not begin to write notated music until 2001, and since 2002 he has focused his attention on what he calls “acoustic + electronic hybrids... expressed as hypnotic walls and gestures of shimmering sound.” In his *Trembling Time* (2006), for example, two violins, three violas, and flute are enveloped in pools of electronic sound that seem to vary in depth, sometimes presenting a reflective surface, sometimes drawing the ensemble’s sounds into moments of profound stillness. The composer explains: “My works for acoustic instruments and electronics fuse the two elements into unified ‘meta-instruments,’ and often use recordings of our group improvisations as electronic source material.” Similarly, in *2.23* (2002, for viola solo and stereo sound) or *2.20* (2003, for string trio and stereo sound) Diaz de León creates a fluid continuum between live and recorded sound that eschews dialogue or opposition in favor of sonic metamorphosis. The string quartet *Psalterion* (2006-07), probably the composer’s most extensive work without electronics, nonetheless exhibits many of the same preoccupations: halos of sound, tremolo and sliding gestures, lucid harmonics, sustained chords of shifting intensity, and a whole catalog of ways in which to attack a pitch and allow it to decay. “My overall language,” he observes, “is based on open strings, harmonics, and noise derived from extended instrumental techniques.... These are used to create gestures and spaces that are both intimate and immersive.” In his scores, form is best described as a “movement between vision states.”

In addition to sound installation composer Maryanne Amacher and his other teachers, Diaz de León counts among his influences composers like Giacinto Scelsi and György Ligeti, Iancu Dumitrescu and Horatiu Radulescu, as well as a wide range of electronic music, free improvisation, black/drone/doom metal, such American noise bands as Metalux and Sejayno, and the multimedia

artists with whom he collaborates in an improvisation group called Symbol. In fact, much of Diaz de León’s creative work has flowed out of collaborations with other artists in other media, particularly with the video and visual artist Jay King, the composer-artist Severiano Martinez, and other members of the art collective Shinkoyo.

Among those who have programmed Diaz de León’s music are the Allsar Quartet, the International Contemporary Ensemble, Romania’s Hyperion Ensemble (Romania), the iO Quartet, and the Spectrum XXI Festival. He has performed and exhibited his work internationally, at locations such as Roulette, The Stone, Paris London West Nile, Rose Studio at Lincoln Center, Merkin Concert Hall, PS1 Contemporary Arts (NYC), Franklin Art Works (Minneapolis), Museo Reina Sofia (Madrid), Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles (Paris), Pavillion XXI (Romania), and Espace Demeer (Brussels). As a performer on guitar, zither, voice, and electronics, he has toured the United States several times, and in March he curated a concert for the new music festival MATA. Diaz de León has received a 2005 Meet the Composer/Van Lier Fellowship, Columbia University’s Faculty Fellowship, and an award from the International Contemporary Ensemble’s 21st Century Young Composers Project. A CD of his music is forthcoming on John Zorn’s Tzadik label.

### **Diaz de León, *Gated Eclipse* (2006)**

*for amplified flute, clarinet, violin, cello, percussion, piano, and electronics*

As an outgrowth of Diaz de León’s work in the Shinkoyo collective, *Gated Eclipse* transfers to an amplified chamber ensemble a style fused from new age, ambient and noise music. In this spirit, the composer offers three poetic epigraphs for listeners to contemplate:

*“Clouds change color, form and sky position most imperceptibly. Gaining and losing stars in the late evening and before dawn, we cannot determine a precise instant for it, and we enjoy a ‘trembling time’ feeling.”*

(Horatiu Radulescu, 1975)

*“...the Egyptians struck together a bridge, across which they paraded into the supernatural; the magic portals receiving them as on the other side of a drawbridge, shaking in its thunders in its raising (or lowering), as out of flesh.”*

(Hargrave Jennings, 1887)

*“Hall of hearts, talk with your eyes, a sudden glance, there’s your fate. I tremble slightly, motion sensors see me, Time and time again. Pleasing place, the stillest point, hold me in your grasp. So frail, hold me in your grasp.”*

(Severiano Martinez, 2006)

As for the construction of *Gated Eclipse*, the composer writes: “*Gated Eclipse* was composed during summer 2006 in Oberlin, Ohio. Shortly before writing the piece, I began experimenting with time, stretching various pop songs (slowing them down without changing the pitch). I was drawn to the effect this technique had on the song ‘Mr. Brightside,’ by the pop group the Killers. At six times the length of the original, it became a kind of majestic, glacially unfolding, melancholic music. I used this electronic sound in the middle of the piece, and freely composed the rest of the sound around it. I often layered other material on top of the stretched pop song to create a dense, web-like sound. The two strings, flute, clarinet, and percussion alternate between sustained and percussive gestures, while the piano at times creates a more lyrical counterpoint to the electronic sound.”

### ***Reynold Tharp* [b. 1973]**

Composer Reynold Tharp’s ties to the Bay Area are both practical and artistic. Born in Indiana, he came of age in Southern California and did his undergraduate work at Oberlin College/Conservatory of Music before attending U. C. Berkeley, where he studied with Cindy Cox, Richard Felciano, and Jorge Liderman. Though no longer a California resident, he has retained a strong affection for San Francisco, and many of the city’s distinguishing features find parallels in his oeuvre as a whole: cosmopolitan refinement, vibrant colors often muted by mist, and the intersection of varied architectural forms. Serene surfaces above barely mask the strong fault lines and elemental energy below.

While working on his doctorate, Tharp traveled to Paris, where he spent two years studying with Philippe Leroux (composition) and Marc-André Dalbavie (orchestration). In 2000, he was selected to participate in an intensive program for computer music studies, the Stage d’Automne at IRCAM [Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique], and he has also participated in workshops with composers Ivan Fedele, Brian Ferneyhough, and Jonathan Harvey. From his work both in Berkeley and in France, Tharp developed an interest in what he calls the “transitory physical aspects of sound, such as resonance and decay.” This interest is perhaps most obvious in works like *Cold* (2002) and *Mountains and Seas* (2005). Conceived without electronics, both works explore the properties of the entire sound continuum between piano and (usually pitched) percussion, paying particular attention to moments of attack (the thump of a piano hammer), the minute changes that happen as a pitch is sustained, the messy process by which a sound disappears into silence. Despite their similar preoccupations, the two works conjure up rather different worlds. *Cold*, written under the influence of a Parisian winter, offers up “hesitant, distant, and shimmering” textures; *Mountains and Seas*, written shortly after Tharp moved to Illinois, involves a “kinetic, flam-

boyant and occasionally violent” atmosphere which the composer describes as “the music of a recently transplanted Californian.”

In addition to the material matters of attack and decay, Tharp has also developed a keen interest in the broader properties of sound. “Much of my music,” he writes, “[is] concerned with resonance, a fundamental sonic phenomenon, as a model or metaphor for developing musical gestures and forms. Often resonance is used to create a sense of perspective, to make manifest that music takes place not only in time but also in space. Musical lines slightly out of alignment seem to shadow each other as they echo in space. Similarly, rhythmic processes create the illusion of musical gestures that approach or recede. Harmonically this is paralleled by the filtering of complex, dense chords into simple intervals, floating points of temporary stability that form a thread of consonance woven across the span of each piece.”

The thread and the line, the horizon and the shore—these are the images favored by Tharp’s titles. Take, for example, his 1997 quartet *Etching*, which draws on the delicate artworks of Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, or his series of pieces for solo strings (commissioned by the Irving M. Klein International String Competition in 2006): *Vertiginous Lines*, *Fog Lines*, *Wavering Lines*. More complicated still is *Cold Horizon* (2003-05, for chamber orchestra), based loosely on the earlier duo *Cold* and recently heard as part of the Minnesota Orchestra Reading Sessions. The harmonies and timbres of *Cold Horizon* may be “frigid” or even “glacial,” but if so they suggest not the majestic glacier as viewed from a distance, but the up-close and turbulent borderline where ice and rock disrupt one another. In similar fashion, his chamber ensemble score *San Francisco Night* (2007) takes its inspiration from the atmospheric workings of the city’s famous fog, which rolls, descends, and spreads to create “intricately detailed, floating textures.” Like *Mountains and Sea*, and like the piano solo we will hear on this concert, these works explore the meeting of entities—sea and sand, earth and sky—as sites of both beauty and action.

Tharp has received the George Ladd and Nicola de Lorenzo Prizes from U. C. Berkeley, the Joseph Beards Prize from Columbia University for his orchestral score *Drift*, and BMI’s William Schuman Prize. His music has been broadcast over French and Dutch national radio, featured at Centre Acanthes, and performed by such ensembles as the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players, Ensemble Diffraction of Paris, the Cal State Long Beach New Music Ensemble, the Orchestre Lyrique de Région Avignon-Provence, and Amsterdam’s Nieuw Ensemble, which commissioned and premiered his chamber score *A Backward Glance* in 2000. Tharp is Assistant Professor of Composition and Theory at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and he has also held teaching positions at Northwestern University, U. C. Berkeley, and San Francisco State University. The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players

gave the world premiere of Tharp's *San Francisco Night* last May. Among the composer's other new projects are a chamber orchestra piece called *wide sea, changeful heaven* and the piano score *Chaparral (In memoriam John Thow)*.

### **Tharp, *Littoral* (2006)**

*for solo piano*

Like his recent *San Francisco Night*, Tharp's *Littoral* takes the California coast as a point of departure. The composer writes: "*Littoral* draws its title from the constantly shifting zone of waves, rocks, and wind where water meets land. Across the span of the piece, melodic fragments and larger contours rise, float, and fall, recalling vistas, both sunlit and shrouded in fog, of the Pacific coastline and the ocean beyond as seen from the steeply falling hills below Mount Tamalpais north of San Francisco—a vertiginous sensation of standing high above the edge of the world." As a piano solo, however, *Littoral* creates its sense of "vertigo" not through orchestral swells or the juxtaposition of starkly contrasting tone colors, but rather through a gestural play of lines and spirals, sometimes ringing out as if from a great distance, sometimes fading into a more intimate silence.

### ***Mario Davidovsky* [b. 1934]**

When Frank J. Oteri interviewed Argentinian-born composer Mario Davidovsky in November 2006 for the American Music Center's *NewMusicBox*, he chose to title their conversation "A Long Way from Home." Together the two men sketched Davidovsky's youth as a period of multiple idioms: family conversations peppered with Yiddish, Spanish, Russian, Polish, and German; a home of amateur music making ("the shorter, smaller popular pieces of Schubert, Beethoven, Mozart, so on and so forth"); and radio broadcasts of folk and popular music, BBC broadcasts in Spanish, tango, milonga, and the improvised poetry of gaucho (cowboy) troubadors. How is it that Davidovsky has molded such diverse influences into an individual voice recognized the world over? In part, he has resisted the entrenched styles of the twentieth century, preferring to chart his own course. In addition, using both electronic tools and innate human capacities, he has chosen to explore the most fundamental elements of sound, synthesizing and re-synthesizing them into the artifacts of a unique imagination.

Davidovsky came to the United States in the late 1950s, invited by Aaron Copland to be a guest at the Berkshire Music Center, now better known as Tanglewood. Having studied with the Austrian Guillermo [Wilhelm] Graetzer in Buenos Aires, Davidovsky came to the U. S. trained in serial or

twelve-tone composition. Encouraged by American composer Milton Babbitt to continue along these lines, Davidovsky settled down to work at the new Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center and as his work here continued, he departed from the more strictly mathematical principles of twelve-tone composing to explore what he has called "a kind of hybrid system borrowing from just about everywhere I could."

Many of the things that Davidovsky taught himself (and has since taught to countless others) involve the relationships between pre-recorded electronic sounds and live performance. As he told interviewer Bob Gluck of the Electronic Music Foundation it did not take him many hours in the studio to realize that "sounds in electronic music must behave in a completely new way. There is no physical constraint, no bow, no air to blow. I learned that the dynamic of the sound was really fantastically new, with a whole new idea of space and time. I immediately thought that those behaviors of sound were so good that I wanted to make them a part of instrumental music. I wanted to translate those aspects of musical behaviors into the scores." As his words suggest, at this early date in the history of electronic music, excitement about electronics sprang first from the new sounds made available by technology and, second, from the invitation to coax some of these same sounds out of traditional instruments.

In 1962, Davidovsky began his ground-breaking series of *Synchronisms*, each featuring electronics and an acoustic instrument or, more rarely, chamber ensemble. From this first installment (for flute) until the mid-1970s, he compiled a catalog of potent virtuoso pieces that have remained in the repertoire not just as period pieces in early "electronica," but as visceral and expressive scores that still have the power to surprise. Perhaps the most famous of the *Synchronisms* is no. 6, for piano and electronics (1970), which won the composer a Pulitzer Prize in part because of memorable effects like the one described by composer Eric Chasalow: "The piece opens with a single G in the piano, which as it naturally dies away is picked up in the tape—the tape makes this G crescendo and leads to two short punctuations—G in the tape, E in the piano. This compelling gesture seems to emanate entirely from the piano, using only two pitches, but with timbres and dynamics that no piano can produce. The most striking immediate illusion is that the piano is making a crescendo. The net effect is the magical transformation of an instrument we think we know into something surprising and malleable."

Beginning in the mid-1970s, Davidovsky turned his attention to purely acoustic works, departing from this trend only twice to complete the ninth and tenth of his *Synchronisms*, featuring violin (1988) and guitar (1992), respectively. A "rediscovery" of the human voice marks the composer's beautiful song cycle *Romancero* and his settings of Biblical texts—*Shulamit's Dream*, *Scenes from Shir ha-Shirim*, and the *Biblical Songs*. Also noteworthy

are works like the String Trio of 1982, *Flashbacks* (1995) or the six *Simple Dances* (1991, 1995) in which one can hear a new allusive freedom, activating but never resting on older genres. (The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players co-commissioned *Biblical Songs*, *Flashbacks*, and *Romancero*, giving the world premiere of the latter.) In composer Martin Brody's words, this later Davidovsky writes with "a trickster's traditionalism...enacting a primordial, slapstick argument between ancestor worship and irreverence."

From his first visit to Tanglewood on a Koussevitzky Fellowship, Davidovsky has been honored with two Guggenheim Fellowships, two Rockefeller Fellowships, an Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Naumburg Award, and the SEAMUS Lifetime Achievement Award in 1989, to name just a few. After directing the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center for years while serving as Professor of Composition at Columbia, he joined the faculty at Harvard University in 1994 and has only recently retired from active teaching. One might consider the careers of his diverse and successful students as one of the strongest tributes to a composer still brimming with enthusiasm for new sounds.

### **Davidovsky, *Synchronisms no. 12* (2006)**

*for clarinet and electronic sounds*

Fittingly, Davidovsky's two latest *Synchronisms*, one for double bass and this one for clarinet, owe their existence to the composer's long-standing involvement with individual performers. He describes the interrupted genesis of these scores: "During the sixties I mentioned to Allen Blustine and Donald Palma, good friends of mine, my desire to write for them two new *Synchronisms*. When I recently retired from Harvard, the composer Eric Chasalow took upon himself the task of getting other ex-students of mine to commission the pieces, which were by then almost forty years overdue." Eventually commissioned by SEAMUS [the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States], and completed at Rice University with the assistance of Kurt Stallman, the Director of the Computer Music Studio, *Synchronism no. 12* is dedicated to clarinetist Allen Blustine.

Given the number of years that have elapsed since Davidovsky began his *Synchronisms*, it is not surprising that the idea of "synchrony" between the instrumental and the electronic has changed in some respects. In the composer's words, "The difference between [my] last two *Synchronisms* and the previous ones is that all the 'electronic' sounds were originated by sampling different sounds of each of the instruments and subjecting them to processes of additive synthesis and editing via the dazzling technology available today." Although in a literal sense the performer must still coordinate his or her movements with a pre-recorded CD, to the imaginative listener, the live per-

former seems to lead the way, with gestures that echo throughout the concert hall—magnified, amplified, and joyously transformed.

### ***Dmitri Tymoczko* [b. 1969]**

To call Dmitri Tymoczko a multi-dimensional composer would be both an irony and an understatement. For one thing, he has made a name for himself both as a composer and as a theorist. Second, he prides himself on being conversant with all available genres of new music and on understanding each from a multiplicity of viewpoints: "...musicians tend to make too much out of genres," he writes. "I like to think of myself as participating in a culture that includes not just contemporary music, but also popular music, jazz, folk music, classical music, and pretty much everything else. I hope to make a concerted effort to try to think about what I am doing, not just from the vantage of contemporary academic art, but from a more general perspective that (hopefully) encompasses fundamental human values." And finally, he has gained international recognition for his innovative ideas about the non-Euclidean "geometry" of harmony: by mapping the notes of chords within a space of three or more dimensions, he has made it possible to visualize and to understand some of the most elusive harmonic progressions and the hidden connections that unite disparate genres or styles of music production.

As one might expect, Tymoczko's educational background was demanding and multi-faceted. He recalls his "primitive" high school compositions and years of "playing in rock bands and pretending to study classical piano." But these experiences quickly coalesced into something more serious. He studied both composition and philosophy at Harvard University (working with Milton Babbitt, Leon Kirchner, Bernard Rands, Stanley Cavell, and Hilary Putnam, among others). He was so drawn to philosophy that he went to Oxford in 1992 on a Rhodes Scholarship to do graduate work in this field before returning to earn his Ph. D. at U. C. Berkeley, where his composition teachers included Jorge Liderman, Olly Wilson, and Ed Campion. "I'm really inspired by music that combines intellectual rigor with genuine expressiveness," he confided to an interviewer for *Composition Today*. "Bach, Debussy, Charlie Parker... All of these guys were incredible intellectuals, with an almost unfathomable understanding of musical possibilities, who also managed to create music that is really, really fun to listen to. Music like this provides a kind of rigorous pleasure that I can't get anywhere else. So I guess I'm naturally interested in seeing whether I can create some myself."

The impulse to write "music that is really, really fun to listen to" seems right on the surface of many of Tymoczko's scores, including the one on this program. A spirit of rhythmic play and stylistic allusion is naturally at the heart

of *Piano Games* (2000), commissioned by American-born Parisian pianist Ivan Il'ic, and *Echo Code* (2003, for the Brentano Quartet); the same spirit finds its way into the *Eggman Variations* of 2005, a piano quintet premiered by Ursula Oppens with the Pacifica Quartet). One can hear the conflation of genres in Tymoczko's *Power Chords* (for orchestra and string quartet) and an artful, if parodic, reflection on the music of the mid-twentieth century in a choral work called *The Agony of Modern Music* (after the famous title of a 1967 book by critic Henry Pleasants). A more complicated textual web shapes the vocal quartet *Fools and Angels* (2004), complemented by an electronic collage of tremendous variety and subtle groove.

Tymoczko has been honored with a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, two Hugh F. MacColl Prizes from Harvard University and the Eisner and DeLorenzo Prizes from U. C. Berkeley, in addition to fellowships from the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, the Mannes Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory, Tanglewood, and the Ernest Bloch Festival. His music has been performed by the Brentano Quartet, the Yesaroun Duo, the Network for New Music, the Synergy Vocal Ensemble, the Gregg Smith Singers, and the Cleveland Contemporary Youth Orchestra, among others. He is presently working on commissions for Newspeak, Orchestre 2021, and the Third Coast Percussion Ensemble.

Tymoczko's articles on music and math have appeared in such journals as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Boston Review*, *Civilization*, *Integral*, *Lingua Franca*, *Music Theory Online*, *Music Theory Spectrum*, and *Transition*. In 2006, his article "The Geometry of Musical Chords" became the first by a music theorist to grace the pages of *Science* magazine, and discussion of its contents rippled out into *Time*, *Nature*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, National Public Radio, and *Physics Today*. A related book called *The Geometry of Consonance* is forthcoming from Oxford University Press. In July, Tymoczko will become Associate Professor of Composition at Princeton University.

### **Tymoczko, *Four Dreams* (2006)**

*for bass clarinet, percussion, piano, and electronics*

The composer writes: "*Four Dreams* attempts to capture the texture of the dreamworld—a place of bizarre occurrences, incoherent thoughts, and unacknowledged anxieties. In my attempt to portray this world realistically, I have narrated, more or less without editing, the content of several dreams. It should be emphasized that these dreams do not reflect my waking beliefs, feelings, or vocabulary. In fact, I have often been surprised by the content of my sleeping thoughts.

"The first dream is completely and solely a dream. The second dream is a

dream that is also a memory. The fourth dream was once a prediction. The third dream is an imagination, a dream of unmediated meaning, the science of the future or maybe a philosophical fantasy. The text here is written and performed by my friend Christian Bök (pronounced 'book'), language poet extraordinaire, vowel virtuoso, rhapsode, and author of 'Eunoia'.... The electronics are controlled by a footpedal connected to a synthesizer, which is in turn connected to a computer. The text is part of the electronics part. Except for the third dream, it is my voice that is narrating."

### ***Lei Liang* [b. 1972]**

Writing for the journal *Contemporary Music Review* in 2007, composer and critic Edward Green observed: "Not only is Lei Liang one of the important Chinese [American] composers of the new generation, he is also a fine example of something [American composer and educator] Chou Wen-Chung calls for: the rebirth of the venerable *wenren* tradition—the tradition of the artist/scholar." Having emigrated to the United States at age 17, in the wake of the protests in Tiananmen Square, Liang is familiar with pathways of art and intellect from both sides of the Pacific. His parents are Chinese musicologists, and he has made a name for himself not just in the realm of creative composition, but also through his writings about Asian contemporary and folk music.

After winning prizes for composition and piano performance in China, and continuing his studies in Austin, Texas, Liang arrived in Boston, where he earned degrees first at the New England Conservatory of Music and later at Harvard University studying under such teachers as Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Robert Cogan, Chaya Czernowin, Mario Davidovsky, and Joshua Fineberg, among others. In this stimulating environment, he discovered many new worlds of music, including the traditional music of his native country. In a 2007 interview, he described the eclectic fare of Cogan's analysis classes at the New England Conservatory: "Tibetan chanting, shakukachi music, blues, Medieval and contemporary Western music." More surprisingly, Liang credits Harvard University ethnomusicologist Rulan Chao Pian and her husband with deepening his understanding of Asian music and Chinese culture. "During the past century," he explains, "the Chinese built a 'Great Wall' separating us from our own history and culture. . . . The knowledge and experience I acquired while living with Rulan and Theodore Pian enabled me to reach across the 'Great Wall,' and to re-connect with my own cultural roots. This experience had an important impact on my life."

The impulse to connect and re-connect has touched virtually all of Liang's pieces, whether they exhibit overtly "Asian" elements (like many of his com-

positions) or not (like the work featured on this program). In two of his best recent known works, the string quartets *Serashi Fragments* (2005) and *Gobi Gloria* (2006), he pays tribute to legendary Mongolian fiddler Serashi (1887-1968). In the former, recorded by the Arditti Quartet, fragmentary gestures work their way into an idiosyncratic collage: florid, declamatory, occasionally noisy, and replete with unusual performance techniques. With the latter, available on a recording by the Grammy-winning Ying Quartet, Liang evokes the “solitude,” “timelessness,” and “vastness of space” of the Gobi Desert through relatively static harmonies and drones that some have compared to the sounds of “throat singing and shaman rituals.”

In other instances, Liang has allowed himself to be haunted by the sounds and circumstances of more recent Chinese history. Beginning in 1994, he began to memorialize one of the tragic stories of the Cultural Revolution as it visited the region of Xiaoxiang, where the Xiao and the Xiang rivers meet: a woman, bereft by the unjust killing of her husband, seeks revenge on the murderous communist official by “wailing like a ghost” outside his home each night until both are finally pushed into madness. Liang’s first portrait of the widow’s grief took shape in his *Peking Opera Soliloquy* for alto saxophone, well received both in the United States and in China, where critics praised its “ghostly weepings and pronounced silences.” More recently, he has reworked this theme in *Memories of XiaoXiang* (2003) for saxophone and tape and the saxophone quartet *YUAN*, both of which allude to the folk songs of the Yao people and the “exclamatory” vocal style of Peking Opera.

Though he cautions against viewing Asian music as a singular “style,” Liang does note certain Asian features that are both evocative and capable of transcending narrowly regional or national boundaries: “the elasticity of time, propensity to complex colors, and the close connection between music and other forms of art.” In his chamber orchestra score *Brush Stroke* (2004), for example, Liang translates certain traditional Chinese calligraphic styles into sound. And in his duo *Parts for a Floating Space* (2002), he links music and architecture, creating a tribute to the sacred space of Temple Ohabei Shalom in Massachusetts. Liang has also written a wide range of multi-media works, including music for two films (*The Giver* and *Shall We Sing?*) and incidental music for Bertolt Brecht’s play *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* (The good person of Szechwan).

Liang has received a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship, an award from the Southwest German Radio’s Experimental Studio, an Aaron Copland Award, and a variety of prizes at international festivals and competitions. His works have been commissioned by such groups as the Fromm Foundation, Harvard University Asia Center, the Heidelberg Philharmonic Orchestra, the Manhattan Sinfonietta, the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, the Meridian Arts Ensemble, the Ying Quartet, and many others; this September, the Callithumpian Consort devoted an entire concert to his scores. Among his new-

est works are *Ascension* (for brass quintet and percussion), which was recently premiered at the Manhattan School of Music, and the saxophone quartet *YUAN*, which (as part of the World-Wide Concurrent Premieres program) is scheduled to receive its first performance(s) this December in a truly global manner, with thirty quartets performing in different locations. After teaching in China and at Middlebury College, Liang is now Assistant Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego.

### **Liang, *Trio* (2003)**

*for piano, cello, and percussion*

In more ways than one, Liang’s *Trio* reflects the years he spent living in and around Boston. Commissioned by the Core Ensemble, it was brought to life by the distinctively named Callithumpian Consort of Boston in a performance at Harvard University. Moreover, Liang found musical and philosophical impetus for the *Trio* at a local reservoir only a mile or two west of the campus gates. He recalls: “The idea of this piece came to me when I was taking a walk around Fresh Pond in Cambridge, MA during a snowstorm. I can never forget the scintillating sound of thousands of snowflakes quietly and violently hitting the dry leaves and pine needles. This moment inspired me to write the opening of the work.

“I was interested in discovering how an abstract idea can manifest itself in different musical appearances, be they rhythmical, harmonic, melodic, or textual. I wished to treat the idea (in this case, a numerical permutation using six numbers) as a living organism, and to see how far it could ‘travel’ during the course of the composition.” Like Liang himself, the basic material of the piece seems to collect new resonances and take on new shapes during the different phases of its journey—from the skittering shirr of the opening, to the measured, even melodic mid-section; from a thunderous rumble, to a delicate close.

### **Elliott Carter [b. 1908]**

In 1976, Elliott Carter published an essay entitled “Music and the Time Screen,” examining certain philosophical theories of time and surveying their influence on his own works. Recalling ideas shared with musicologist Edward Lowinsky, he observed that “time is the canvas on which you consider music to be presented, just as the spatial canvas of a painting furnishes the surface on which a painting is presented.” According to Carter, the passage of time is the fundamental background for the perception of his music—indeed any music—and a profound awareness of subtle temporal relationships has shaped

his compositional process at every turn.

Carter's early interest in musical experimenters—Schoenberg, Scriabin, Varèse, and especially Ives (a mentor)—was effectively balanced by the influence of his two main teachers, Walter Piston at Harvard and Nadia Boulanger in Paris, both of whom espoused a more neoclassical approach. It was not until the mid-1940s that Carter began to pursue many of the innovations that have come to define his music. In works such as the Piano Sonata (1946) and Cello Sonata (1948), he began to manipulate listeners' perception of time not just through written-out ritardandi or accelerandi, but by superimposing lines that seem to actually move at different speeds. Another important invention was the technique of "metric modulation," in which a subdivision of the pulse is reevaluated to produce a smooth but strangely unsettling transition between two tempos. Such subtleties in pulse and meter can be perceived at many levels in the flux, chaos, or coordination of rhythmic gestures. In works such as the Second String Quartet (1959) or the Double Concerto (1961), Carter also became fascinated with the idea of each instrumental voice speaking with its own individual personality, leading to richly layered music of astonishing textural and metrical complexity.

After decades of producing a steady but modest number of masterpieces, Carter has exhibited a remarkable fluency in his later years. Accompanying this burst of creative energy has been a new engagement with vocal music. Although Carter has always been interested in poetry (he penned early settings of Robert Frost, Walt Whitman, and Stephen Crane), during mid-career he eschewed the human voice for more than a quarter of a century, leading some to speculate that perhaps he felt singers couldn't (or wouldn't) tackle music of such technical complexity. Beginning in the mid-1970s, however, he began producing inspired vocal music for a wide variety of ensembles: *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* (1976), *Syringa* (1978), *In Sleep, in Thunder* (1981), *Of Challenge and of Love* (1994), and *Tempo e Tempi* (Time and Times), which the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players featured in 2000, and the chamber opera *What's Next*. Carter's recent music offers greater lyricism, less density, and more transparent textures. Whether this new expressivity represents a change in direction or a deepening of aspects already present in the earlier scores, it has made his later works among his most moving.

Recognized throughout the world as one of the greatest living composers, Carter has been awarded the most prestigious honors a composer can receive, including two Pulitzer Prizes (for his String Quartets Nos. 2 and 3), two Guggenheim fellowships, the Prix de Rome, a Gold Medal for Music from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the National Medal of Arts, membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and national honors from France, Italy, Germany, and Monaco. Carter has served on the faculties of St. John's College, Peabody Conservatory, Columbia, Queens College, Yale, Juilliard, Cornell, and M.I.T. In January 1994, Carter joined the San Francisco

Contemporary Music Players in the Veterans Green Room for a retrospective concert of his chamber music, marking the composer's 85th birthday.

### **Carter, *Luimen* (Moods) (1997)**

*for trumpet, trombone, harp, mandolin, guitar, and vibraphone*

Carter's *Luimen* explores a world of string sounds far removed from the dramatic lines of his early string quartets (1951, 1959) or the passionate lyricism of his recent Cello Concerto (2001). Here, he concerns himself far more with questions of resonance and tone color—almost as if the striking of every separate string awakes its own "sympathetic vibrations" (subtle or clangorous) from the remainder of the idiosyncratic ensemble he has chosen.

The composer writes: "For a number of years I had been thinking of writing a piece based on the sound of plucked instruments like the mandolin, guitar, and harp. So when the Nieuw Ensemble asked me for a piece I realized that this group had excellent players of these three instruments, to which I added trumpet, trombone and vibraphone and composed a one-movement fantasy whose title was chosen by the ensemble (meaning 'moods'). The score opens with a fast movement during which the mandolin picks out a line of short notes. A guitar solo accompanied by the group follows and the work concludes with a coda for the sextet."

—Program Notes by Beth E. Levy



Scores from tonight's performance are on display in the lobby.

## The Performers

An active proponent of new music, pianist **Julie Steinberg** has given critically acclaimed performances of music by John Cage, Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, Olivier Messiaen, Frederic Rzewski, John Zorn, and many others. Joined by violinist David Abel and percussionist William Winant, she was a founding member of the Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio, a virtuoso ensemble specializing in new music from the Americas and Pacific Rim. Since 1980, she has appeared with the San Francisco Symphony in the world premiere of John Adams's *Grand Pianola Music*, as a soloist in Arvo Pärt's *Tabula Rasa*, and in Michael Tilson Thomas's Mavericks concerts. Steinberg has appeared at New Music America, the Ravinia Festival, Japan Interlink, and Lincoln Center Outdoors. Other performances include *Le Sacre du printemps* with the Paul Taylor Dance Company in San Francisco, Seattle, and Paris, and master classes with Jean-Pierre Rampal and Mstislav Rostropovich. Steinberg holds a Doctor of Musical Arts from Stanford University and taught for years at Mills College and U. C. Berkeley. She has been a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 1989.

Recently appointed principal clarinetist of the San Francisco Symphony and a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 2004, **Carey Bell** has been heard in numerous performances with Bay Area chamber ensembles and orchestras. He has held principal positions with the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, and has been acting principal of the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra. His summer engagements have included Music@Menlo, the Oregon Bach Festival, Music in the Vineyards, the Telluride Chamber Music Festival, and the Skaneateles Music Festival. He received degrees in performance and composition from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

## 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.

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 2002.

## The Ensemble

*The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, an ensemble of highly skilled musicians, performs innovative new music of exceptional interest. It attracts and engages audiences through concert events in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond, and nourishes the creation and dissemination of new work through commissioning, recording, and outreach.*

**The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players** (SFCMP), now in its 38th 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. A ten-time winner of the prestigious national ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players has won this award more times than any other ensemble. It has commissioned 68 pieces and performed over 1,000 new works, including 66 U.S. and 136 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 eleven albums of its own and contributed to nine others. Its musical outreach programs include presentations in public high schools and its new *Contemporary Insights* series of intimate performances with conversation.

## Staff

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 has served 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*.

**Carrie Blanding**, Director of Operations and Marketing, joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 2007, after six years as co-owner and Administrative Director of Next Big Thing Children's Theatre, a popular performing arts camp for children in the East Bay. She has also worked at the Mountain Play Association and trained through internships at the San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Performances. An avid singer, Ms. Blanding has performed with the San Francisco Symphony Chorus and was a soloist with the UC Jazz Ensembles. She obtained her B.A. degree in Comparative Literature from the University of California at Berkeley, where her work was honored with the department's academic achievement award.

**William Quillen**, Project Developer, is a Ph.D. candidate in musicology at the University of California, Berkeley, writing a dissertation on contemporary Russian music. He earned a master's degree in musicology at UC Berkeley and a bachelor's degree in history and music at Indiana University, Bloomington. During 2007-08, he was a Fulbright scholar at the Moscow Conservatory, where he spent the year working with contemporary Russian composers. He has been the assistant director of the University Chorus at UC Berkeley, an intern with the San Francisco Symphony, and has co-organized symposia and concerts in California and Moscow. He joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in September 2008.

## Audio Engineers

**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 new album of compositions by Edmund Campion, and the ensemble's Pablo Ortiz album. 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.

**Gregory T. Kuhn** (sound engineering) is a creator and collaborator in the performing and fine arts as sound engineer, designer, composer, visual artist and installation designer. Current projects in the performing arts include a new work by Paul Drescher, Rinde Eckert, and Steven Schick, "Aria" by Joan Jeanrenaud and Alessandro Moruzzi, and ongoing projects with Zakros InterArts. Originally from Philadelphia, he lives in Oakland, CA. (gtjk@earthlink.net)

### **Not the singer, not the song**

Three prints remain for sale out of the series of 32 that the artist, **William T. Wiley**, generously donated to the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players.

Price: \$3,000, not including tax.

100% of the sale's price benefits the ensemble.

We thank the artist and Electric Works  
for their extraordinary support.



For online reviews of the  
San Francisco Contemporary Music Players'  
concerts and other music events around the Bay Area, visit  
**[www.sfcv.org](http://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.



The San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of the  
**American Composers Forum**  
sends email announcements of new music related events  
and opportunities in the Bay Area.  
To join this email list, send a message to  
**[subscribe@sfcomposersforum.org](mailto:subscribe@sfcomposersforum.org)**.



The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players is pleased to announce the recent release of a recording of music by Edmund Campion.

“Outside Music: Music of Edmond Campion” (Albany) is available at major online retailers, and in the lobby at this concert.

