

Performers:

Tod Brody, bass flute (Bianchi)
Stacey Pelinka, flute (Ferneyhough)
Carey Bell, clarinet (Ferneyhough)
Peter Josheff, clarinet (Jarrell)
David Henderson, baritone saxophone
Adam Luftman, trumpet
Kevin Rivard, horn
Brendan Lai-Tong, trombone
David Tanenbaum, guitar
Ann Yi, piano (Ferneyhough)
Michael Seth Orland, piano (Jarrell)
Christopher Froh, percussion (Pintscher)
William Winant, percussion (Lachenmann)
Graeme Jennings, violin/viola (Ferneyhough/Lachenmann)
Nanci Severance, viola (Jarrell)
Leighton Fong, cello
Richard Worn, contrabass

Robert Shumaker, *Recording Engineer*
Gregory T. Kuhn, *Head Sound Engineer*
John MacCallum, *Sound Engineer*

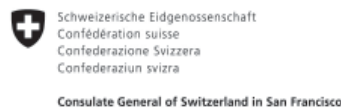


Tonight's performances of . . . *more leaves* . . . and *Zaffiro* are supported in part by Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council; and by the Consulate General of Switzerland in San Francisco.

Tonight's performance of *Flurries* is supported in part by the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Wattis Foundation.



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Natural Phenomena

Monday, January 25, 2010, 8:00 p.m.
Herbst Theatre

Brad Lubman, Conductor

Michael Jarrell, . . . *more leaves* . . . (2000)

Nanci Severance, viola
(Approximate duration: 12 minutes)

Oscar Bianchi, *Zaffiro* (2005)

(Approximate duration: 12 minutes)

Helmut Lachenmann, *Trio fluido* (1966)

(Approximate duration: 18 minutes)

↻ *Intermission* ↻

Matthias Pintscher, *nemeton* (2007)

Christopher Froh, percussion
(Approximate duration: 15 minutes)

Brian Ferneyhough, *Flurries* (1997)

(Approximate duration: 10 minutes)

Program Notes

Michael Jarrell [b.1958]

“When I compose,” writes Michael Jarrell, “I am confronted with a number of choices which will affect the immediate chain of events or force the eventual tailing-off of the form, and once the choice has been made, there is no turning back. In this respect composition can be said to resemble a tree, for a motif, a ‘Gestalt’ can develop in one of many ways....” Indeed Jarrell’s oeuvre illustrates this principle on many levels. First and foremost, many of the composer’s scores evolve organically through the gradual transformation of a single, aurally identifiable idea. Second, many of his scores are interrelated, either by being part of a cycle of works linked by title and theme or through a more intimate process of extraction and development. Taken together, these two traits suggest a deeply interwoven, reflexive aesthetic. In the words of music critic Philippe Albèra, Jarrell “early on constituted a universe that he continues to reorganize, aiming less for the seeming originality of each piece than for a constant displacement of perspectives in which the same ideas can in themselves be discerned. ‘Craft a hundred times over...’ this is what could be his motto.”

Most famous among Jarrell’s compositional cycles are his *Assonances*, works for solo instrument or small group that are often compared to the *Sequenzas* by Italian composer Luciano Berio. Contemporary music critic Danielle Cohen-Lévinas describes the first installment in Jarrell’s series, *Assonance* for solo clarinet (1983), noting that in it he “describes the ‘states’ of the instrument, so that the single clarinet appears in fact to be many different clarinets.... Taking, as he often does, a serial-sounding theme as his starting point, Jarrell then turns it round like an architectural design or a painter’s sketch. This idea lies at the root of all the *Assonances* pieces, and gives rise to situations which begin but do not end, where a vision of the sound transmitted through the virtuosity of the instrumentalist alternates with the sophisticated musical style which is closer to an exaltation of ornamentation rather than any musical grammar.”

In addition, Jarrell has created clusters of closely related works, many of which (including the one we will hear tonight) center on one of his concertos. For example, the harp solo *Offrande* (2001) is drawn from a concerted work for harp and strings called *Conversions* (1988). Here, the

cadenza of the original is preserved in its entirety while the surrounding material is freely re-composed. A similar connection exists between the violin concerto . . . *prismes / incidences* . . . (1998) and the violin solo *Prisme* (2001) in which, according to critic Pierre Michel, the violin is “unceremoniously reduced to its own sound matter” in such a way that “colors, dynamics, registers and playing techniques... create an entirely imaginary perspective where the instrument simply opens up new paths.” The work on our program, . . . *more leaves* . . . , is a chamber paraphrase of another concerto, not a mere extraction, inviting contemplation of the manifold relationships between wholes and parts.

As the process of paraphrase suggests, Jarrell has an affinity for language, even for word-play, as apparent in his palindromic title *Trace-ecart* (Trace-gap; 1984), based on two poems by Joel Pasquier, and in the chamber ballet *Essaims-cribles* (Swarms-sieves; 1986-88). Along with its visual, kinetic impulse, *Essaims-cribles* takes its title from a poem by Jarrell’s friend Patrick Weidmann—other lines in the poem appear in the score but remain unspoken in performance. Most striking of all is the treatment of text in the composer’s spoken opera, *Cassandre* (1993-94; for actress, ensemble and electronics), which has more recently been translated into German, English, Spanish, Finnish, and Russian.

It is no accident that so many of Jarrell’s titles involve dashes and ellipses, for each of his scores may be considered part of a much longer process of musical development, only some of which is allowed to sound in any given work. As he describes it, “[my] work is not so much a compositional exercise as part of a psychoacoustic phenomenon, of a search for a musical language that aims for ideas that the listener can grasp, as well as a satisfactory balance between language and the perception based on the use of identifiable elements such as motifs, fixed pitches and musical gestures. I have no intention of wiping the board clean of the past, of building every piece up from nothing. On the contrary, what is important is to work with elements over which I feel I have an increasing mastery in order to attain an easy flow, a continuous thread of meaning running through the works.... I thus come to see my own development as a sort of self-analysis.”

Jarrell has won an international array of prizes, including the Prix Acanthes, a Beethoven Prize from the city of Bonn, the Marescotti and Henriette Renié Prizes, awards from Gaudeamus and the Siemens Foundation, and recognition as a Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from the French Ministry of Culture in 2001. He has served as compos-

er-in-residence at the Cité des Arts in Paris, at the Villa Medici and the Istituto Svizzero in Rome, with the Lyon Orchestra, and at the Lucerne Festival. In 2000, Musica Nova Helsinki was dedicated to his works and the following year the Salzburg Festival commissioned his piano concerto *Abschied*. In 1993, Jarrell became part of the composition faculty at the University of Music and the Performing Arts in Vienna and in 2004 he was named professor of composition at the Higher Academy of Geneva. His opera *Cassandre* was performed at the Ojai Festival in June 2008, and he is presently completing a musical theater piece called *Le père* (The father).

Jarrell, . . . *more leaves* . . . (2000)

for viola, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, piano, contrabass, and live electronics

Jarrell's . . . *more leaves* . . . takes its place within a cluster of works closely related to his viola concerto, *From the Leaves of Shadow* (1991). Here, instead of the original, rather massive orchestral accompaniment, the viola soloist has as its counterpart and sometime adversary a chamber ensemble of five instruments enhanced by live electronics. According to the composer "the electronics are not a substitute for the original orchestral parts but, like a sonic shadow, enrich the solo instrument with deep and matte colors."

Critic Pierre Michel has observed that Jarrell's oeuvre is peppered with "shadowy" titles ("Shadow, this band which ties us to the Earth," 1989; *Of faraway shadows*, 1989-90), and the composer himself has explained his attraction to low registers and deep sonorities, calling attention to Franz Schubert's "Song of the Spirits on the Water" for male chorus and low strings: "through it I discovered an extremely somber world and some extraordinary deep registers with a great number of resulting harmonies, offering a listening experience enriched by the friction between sonorities and absolutely fascinating timbres. As in . . . *some leaves II* . . . (1998), a work for solo viola derived from the same concerto, . . . *more leaves* . . . is sometimes an exact copy of the original concerto, with its opposition of extremely high (brilliant) and extremely low (more or less matte) registers. However, it distinguishes itself through a nostalgic distance, characterized by a new and much more intimate language."

***Oscar Bianchi* [b. 1975]**

"How is my music made?" Composer Oscar Bianchi asks and answers: "I would say from degrees of intensity: for example, from ecstasy to exaltation. The basic elements of my music are the same as those for many other works: gestures, forms and colors. Gestures to me are the intuitive, the primordial idea, objects whose being and becoming are projected on the essence of sound. The gesture is the cornerstone of rites, of movement and dance. Form, in my opinion, is the mother of time, it becomes the mirror of existence, it embodies the forces and confusion of everyday life.... I dream of a music that speaks in a contemporary way to all the body's centers, and through which human beings can understand their existence." Though only in his mid-thirties, Bianchi has already won acclaim for his captivating treatment of musical texture. In the words of Jean Luc Pluvier, director of Ensemble ICTUS (with whom Bianchi enjoyed a very fruitful fellowship period from 2005-07), "His journey renews itself with each new score. Starting with a very fine harmonic ear, Bianchi has that very modern capacity to dramatize musical forms through mastery of sound texture, in its thousands of details."

However "modern" Bianchi's rippling musical textures may be, he has also taken pains to ground his aesthetic in traditional, even ancient, wisdom. He himself describes his writing as "a process of synthesizing the unconscious-Dionysian with the spiritual-Apollonian," and he sees his creation of all-encompassing worlds of instrumental timbre (tone color) as a personal channel for the creative power of the Hindu god Brahma: "Colors, the orchestration, are the most apparent dimensions of sound. As the ruler of sound, orchestration controls and determines the dramatic aspect of form—it's an alchemist of spaces, the Brahma of sound."

Indeed some of his recent scores pay tribute to the meditation practices outlined in the Vijnana-Bhairava Tantra, and to the concepts of karma and chakra. In his *Anahata Concerto* (2008), he reflects his belief that "music and all intellectual activities are closely related to life forces," through evocative musical symbols, "rising glissandi (potential metaphors for challenges to gravity) and rhythmic ostinati (the perpetual advance of life)." In a companion piece, the *Vishuddha Concerto* (2008-09), Bianchi analogizes the "sense of direction" inherent in the moral concept of Vishuddha ("the capacity of choosing between what is right and what is wrong") by sustaining and departing from a sustained tone. As a result of his fellowship with ICTUS, he composed a cantata called *Matra* (2007) that takes part of its text and some aspects of its structure from a

dialogue with the deity Shiva. As Shiva's sutras or meditation techniques represent a pathway from the human to the divine, so Bianchi features a trio of unusual wind instruments (bass flute, bass recorder, and bass saxophone) that mediate between vocal and instrumental sound, highlighting the breath as common element.

In *Matra*, Bianchi interweaves Hindu sacred texts with the words attributed to Mary Magdalen and extracts from Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*, which he has incorporated into two of his other scores, *Primordia Rerum* (2003), and his own *De Rerum Natura*, premiered in Bianchi's native Milan in 2002. Lucretius's early and highly poetic natural history appealed strongly to the composer because of its vision of a universe shaped by movement and stasis, by the combination and dissolution of atoms. In the composer's words, Lucretius was "the poet of the atomic consciousness; he was the poet of the awareness of the universal belonging." With their own play of musical density, fragmentation, and coalescence, Bianchi's scores aspire to a similar, fluctuating awareness.

At this early stage in his career, Bianchi won a Gaudeamus Prize (2005), and his music has already been featured by the Klangforum Ensemble, Ensemble l'Itineraire, Ensemble Modern, ICE Ensemble, ICTUS, Nieuw Ensemble, Neuevocalsoloisten Stuttgart, Les Percussions des Strasbourg, and Alarm Will Sound in such venues as Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, IRCAM Centre-Pompidou, Abbaye de Royaumont, ArsMusica Brussels, MUSICA Strasbourg, the Muziekgebouw Amsterdam, and the Venice Biennale, in addition to being broadcast on numerous European radio stations. After completing studies in composition, choral music, conducting, and electronic music at the G. Verdi Conservatory in Milan, he participated in a year-long composition course at IRCAM [Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique-Musique] before attending Columbia University, where he is presently a Faculty Fellow, working toward his Ph.D. in composition. Among his current projects are works for the French Philharmonic Radio Orchestra, a new opera for Aix-en-Provence, and a Violin Concerto for the New York Philharmonic.

Bianchi, *Zaffiro* (2005)

for bass flute, baritone saxophone, guitar, and viola

The composer describes his quartet *Zaffiro*: "This unique combination [of instruments] inspired me to create an image of a solid and metamorphic object like sapphire. All four instruments are voices that alternate

between fast, rhythmical connections and voluptuous, relatively static harmonic cohabitation.

"In this first case, the sense of motion and the excitation of activity are expressed by the interaction between gestures and lyrics tension. The rhythm, which functions as a sort of inner pulsation, a body structure, is responsible for most of the dialectic structures. Throughout the piece we can sense that the rhythm has a polar attraction towards motion. All the lines and gestures submit to a sort of rhythmic law. In the second case (at the beginning of the piece, for example) different identities join together in a quest for harmonic cohabitation. Sometimes just one of the four expresses what the whole ensemble has agreed to express, like the struggling viola line (that appears towards the end), which is supported by the complicity of the other three instruments."

Zaffiro was commissioned with generous support from the Swiss Foundation Aargauer Kuratorium and is dedicated to the performers of Catral Ensemble, who gave the premiere in 2005 at Zurich's Theater Rigiblick.

***Helmut Lachenmann* [b. 1935]**

"Expressing oneself means entering into relationship with one's surroundings; it means confronting, as who one is and who one would like to be, the questions posed by society and the existing categories of communication, and coming to grips with the social value-concepts contained therein. It means, above all, offering as much resistance to the inherited categories of communication as is demanded by the contradictions and unfreedoms embodied in them. It is this resistance which reminds Man of his capacity, and his duty, to determine himself and become conscious of his unfreedom. Expressing oneself therefore means eliciting a sense of social contradictions by rendering them transparent—in other words by reaffirming the human demand for freedom, the 'human potential'. A demand for beauty which avoids these consequences means only flight, resignation, betrayal."

Students of contemporary music will not be surprised to learn that the passage above comes from an essay by German composer Helmut Lachenmann, one of the most distinguished figures of his generation. In its earnest philosophy, its acknowledgment of high stakes, its careful craft—even in its willingness to create new words and trace a path through

complex grammatical constructions—Lachenmann’s text bears many of the same features as his finely chiseled scores, each of which has left an imprint on new music.

Trained initially in Stuttgart, Lachenmann broadened his horizons in 1957 by attending the famous Summer Courses in New Music at Darmstadt. There he encountered Italian composer Luigi Nono, whose *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura* will be featured by Graeme Jennings and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in March. Lachenmann became Nono’s first private pupil (1958–60), and he remains an articulate proponent of some of his late mentor’s most important stances: a mistrust of theoretical “system” building, an impulse to engage philosophically with the concert hall canon, and a strong belief in the moral force of composition. “What composers cannot speak of they should work on,” he writes: “Composing means: reflecting on music. Composing means: building an instrument. Composing does not mean ‘letting oneself go,’ but rather ‘letting oneself come.’”

Beginning in the mid-sixties, Lachenmann articulated a compositional ideal he called “musique concrète instrumentale.” Playing on the notion of “musique concrète” (a subgenre of electronic music usually associated with recording and manipulating everyday sounds), he shows his familiarity with the new technology of his youth. With a few early exceptions, however, Lachenmann has eschewed electronics. In his own words, “musique concrète instrumentale” is music “in which the sound events are chosen and organized so that the manner in which they are generated is at least as important as the resultant acoustic qualities themselves. Consequently those qualities, such as timbre, volume, etc., do not produce sounds for their own sake, but describe or denote the concrete situation: listening, you hear the conditions under which a sound- or noise-action is carried out, you hear what materials and energies are involved and what resistance is encountered.” Indeed, as Lachenmann himself has pointed out, the titles of his compositions often refer to physical means of sound production—*Air* (1969), *Ausklang* (Conclusion, Out-Sound; 1984–85), *Klangschatten—mein Saitenspiel* (Soundshadows—My Stringplay; 1972), *Pression* (Pressure; 1969)—and his preoccupation with the “physicality of sound entities” may be considered a unifying factor in his oeuvre: “From the beginning I have been concerned not just with ‘noisiness’ and alienation but with transformation and revelation, with real ‘consonance’ in the widest sense, so that rhythm, gesture, melody, intervals, harmony—every sound and everything sounding—is illuminated by its changed context.”

Unabashedly modernist, Lachenmann is known for scores that create their own contentious relationships with tradition—like *Accanto* (1974–75) which takes for its own background a tape recording of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto, or *Staub* (Dust; 1985–87), which manipulates material from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and which was meant to share a program with it. By confusing our perceptions of “the masterpiece” and the ephemeral Lachenmann has a point to make: “It is high time the concept of beauty be rescued from the speculations of corrupt spirits, and the cheap pretensions of avant-garde hedonists, sonority-chefs, exotic-meditationists and nostalgia-merchants. Once integrated into an overall theory of aesthetics and composition, the concept is no longer suitable for the prophets of popularity, the apostles of nature and tonality, and the fetishists of academicism and tradition.” In a manner that is both personal and (albeit abstractly) political, Lachenmann has shown that this vision of beauty is worth fighting for.

Lachenmann’s influence spread rapidly after 1978, when he began his own long and fruitful association with Darmstadt. The publication of his collected essays, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung* (Music as Existential Experience; 1996) brought his ideas to wide readership. He also taught for many years at the Stuttgart Musikhochschule, and in 2008 he was a Fromm Visiting Professor in Music at Harvard University. Among his many notable awards are the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize (1997) and the Bach Prize of Hamburg (1972).

Lachenmann, *Trio fluido* (1966) *for clarinet, viola, and percussion*

Given that it was composed more than fifty years ago, Lachenmann’s *Trio fluido* has a surprisingly “contemporary” sound. This is not because of any newfangled technology and certainly not because of any self-conscious attempt to write a “music of the future.” Instead, Lachenmann’s concern with sound and gesture in this score seems remarkably prescient of many later works, not just from Germany, but also from France and the United States. Written in the same year as his first major essay on “musique concrète instrumentale,” the trio rigorously calls attention to the clarinetist’s breath, the viola’s bow, and the varied instrumental bodies of the percussion family.

Keeping in mind the composer’s title, one might consider *Trio fluido* a study in wave forms. For example, the piece seems intent on showing just how many ways there are to accomplish a convincing oscillation in

pitch from low to high and back again (or vice versa). Should it be a glissando (slide) through all available pitches? Or should the contour be filled in with imaginative figuration? Perhaps the bending of a single pitch will be enough to suggest the requisite fluidity. Or maybe the entire ensemble will create collective waves of intensity that build, crash, and appear to settle into stillness while they are gathering new momentum. The answer, of course, is all of the above—and much more. For Lachenmann's quietude offers and opportunity not just for repose but for reflection. As he puts it, "In almost all of my compositions there is a moment of repose—in the manner of a fermata—in which the music glances around like a mountain-climber who only becomes aware of his surroundings upon standing still, and only now experiences the characteristic stillness of the plateau he has reached.... Where the path is the goal, I would rather not be brought to the summit of a mountain by helicopter; such quick service should be reserved for Sunday walkers."

Matthias Pintscher [b. 1971]

According to no less an authority than Helmut Lachenmann, Matthias Pintscher is "a composer full of creative energy—with an unerring instinct for formal and expressive effects—with a virtuoso sense of sound—most of all, capable of surprises. One who knows, and yet wants to know." Coming as they do from one of the foremost German composers of the previous generation, Lachenmann's words signal the status that Pintscher has achieved among his peers. According to Andrew Clements, of *The Guardian*, "In the generations of German composers younger than Wolfgang Rihm, Pintscher is the one with the most impressive track record. He is still in his...30s, yet has been attracting international attention for a decade."

Indeed Pintscher got an early start not just in composition, but also in conducting; he produced three symphonies and conducted his first ballet, *Gesprungene Glocken* (Cracked Clocks) while still in his early twenties, and his first opera was premiered in Dresden in 1998. While his first opera told the story of English poet Thomas Chatterton, his second, *L'Espace dernier*, was based on the French symbolist Arthur Rimbaud and was premiered at the Opéra Bastille in 2004. Pintscher's interest in opera was bolstered by his contact with another luminary of contemporary German music, Hans Werner Henze, who invited the young composer to participate in his summer school in Tuscany in 1991 and 1992.

As his operatic subjects suggest, Pintscher's music often makes reference to literature. In the composer's words, his music "places its trust in the power of the poetic." This is apparent not just in his stage works but also in such compositions as "A Twilight's Song" (based on e. e. cummings) and in his *Herodiade-Fragment* (1999), which is based on a text by Stephane Mallarmé and was premiered by the Berlin Philharmonic under Claudio Abbado. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Pintscher has also found inspiration in the visual arts. His recent orchestral score *Osiris* (a co-commission from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, and the London Symphony Orchestra) took its title from Joseph Beuys's multimedia work of the same name. From 1997-2000 he composed a five-part cycle called *Figura* for string quartet and accordion that draws upon the sculptures of Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti. In 2005, he began a series of pieces dedicated to the elusive works of American sculptor Cy Twombly (*Studies for Treatise on the Veil*) and finished *On a Clear Day* (premiered by pianist Mitsuko Uchida) in reaction to the delicate geometric patterning in the minimalist artwork of the late Agnes Martin.

A sense of drama also infiltrates Pintscher's more extroverted instrumental scores, in which musical forces interact or collide and instruments themselves are often treated as characters in a play. (One of Pintscher's favorites is the viola, which is featured in his solo score *In nomine* of 1999, which is based on a medieval plainchant, and in the concerted work *Tenebrae*, in which the viola's strings are mis-tuned to create "an overshadowed and gray sonority" against a background of low-register instruments.) Most dramatic of all his orchestra scores of the late 1990s including his *Five Orchestral Pieces* (1997), premiered at the Salzburg Festival under Kent Nagano, and the impressive orchestral essay *Choc* (Clash). A line from Rimbaud also gave birth to *Choc*, which Pintscher calls an "antiphon" because of the dialogue it creates between instrumental groupings. As we will hear tonight, Pintscher has lately moved toward a more compressed, some might say introverted, musical surface, relying more on nuance than on broadly dramatic gestures. Nevertheless, critic Thomas Schäfer's description of *Choc* still applies to the composer's more intimate scores: "Musical worlds clash here, attract each other, and repel each other. The contrast between subtle introspection and massive outburst is the principle: plastic inventions, ever changing acoustically."

Pintscher has won numerous honors, including the Hans Werner Henze Prize and residencies with festivals and orchestras from around the world. From 2000-02, he served as composer-in-residence with the Cleveland Orchestra, which premiered his *with lilies white* under Christoph von

Dohnányi, and in 2006 he wrote *Towards Osiris*, commissioned by the Berlin Philharmonic as one of the four “asteroid pieces” meant to be pendants to Gustav Holst’s orchestral cycle *The Planets*. In 2003, Pintscher’s violin concerto *en sourdine* was performed by Frank Peter Zimmermann with Peter Eotvos conducting the Berlin Philharmonic, and it has subsequently been heard in Paris, London, Dublin, Tokyo, Cleveland, Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Antwerp. Since 2006, he has been professor of composition at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Munich, but he has also maintained a very active conducting schedule. This season alone he makes his debut appearances with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra in Lucern in addition to conducting the Frankfurt Radio Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, and BBC Scottish Symphony. Pintscher also works regularly with such new music groups as Ensemble Modern, Klangforum Wien, Ensemble Contrechamps, Ensemble Intercontemporain, and the Berlin Philharmonic’s Scharaun Ensemble, with whom he served as artist-in-residence for a 2009 Festival in Zermatt, Switzerland.

Pintscher, *nemeton* (2007)

for solo percussion

According to Andrew Clements: “Anyone coming to Pintscher’s music for the first time, especially to his orchestral works, will be struck by the beguiling soundworld, by the microscopic detail of every texture and by the imagination with which every color is used.” Though Clements speaks here of the composer’s expert orchestral writing, it is a tribute to Pintscher’s creativity that the same thing can be said of his solo percussion score *nemeton*, whose title suggests a sacred space in ancient Celtic mythology, usually a grove of trees.

Like the druid among his trees, the soloist finds himself in a forest of instruments. These he must master, treating each, by and large, with surprising delicacy. The marimba takes center stage, but it is in reality the first among equals, enveloped by otherworldly sounds: crotales (or antique cymbals), Chinese cymbal, tubular bells, sandpaper blocks, a spring coil (“very large and heavy, rich sound”), suspended cymbals, and tam-tam, in addition to an array of metal blocks, woodblocks, and bongos. Although the score is replete with expressive marking, the soloist must also develop individual preferences about how the score should be executed. Pintscher specifies that within the metal block, woodblock, and bongo families, “the choice of suitable instruments is left expressively to the creativity of the individual player. This applies equally to

the choice of the mallets....” In the world of *nemeton*, these are not idle choices, for emerging from its fleeting gestures is a magical play of echoes marked by subtle alterations in sounding body (instrument) and method of articulation (mallets and brushes; hands, fingertips, fingernails).

***Brian Ferneyhough* [b. 1943]**

At the close of a lengthy 1996 interview, Joshua Cody, director of Ensemble Sospeso, posed a surprising question to Brian Ferneyhough, British composer and long-time California resident best known as a godfather of the so-called “New Complexity” movement. When asked about his definition of beauty, Ferneyhough responded, “I suppose ultimately, I find beautiful whatever stimulates, brings forth positive inner turmoil, makes me feel momentarily more intelligent, spiritual, etc., than I otherwise am: transmits a breath of *Luft vom anderen Planeten* (air from another planet).” This fragment of Stefan George’s is best known to musicians as part of the text for Arnold Schoenberg’s Second String Quartet (with soprano, 1908), but it also resonates within Ferneyhough’s own oeuvre—not just because of the Schoenbergian overtones, but also because so many of his pieces seem ‘otherworldly’ in their extraordinary structural intricacy and in the demands that they make upon performers.

Ferneyhough forged his reputation rapidly and today he is one of the best known composition teachers, mentoring an international array of students that includes Magnus Lindberg and Kaija Saariaho (Finland), Joel-Francois Durand and Bruno Mantovani (France), Klaus K. Hübler and Klaus-Steffen Mahnkopf (Germany), Chaya Czernowin (Israel), Toshio Hosokawa (Japan), Anders Hillborg (Sweden) and Arturo Fuentes (Mexico), to name just a few. His Californian students are legion, and Roger Redgate, one of his most famous British students, has devoted an entire article to the composer’s wide-ranging pedagogy, which Ferneyhough describes as a reciprocal process of discovery. “If a student comes to you and wants to learn to compose, you’ve got two ways of going,” he told Molly Sheridan in a 2005 interview for *New Musicbox*: “One is to teach him what composers have done before and why they’ve done it. And the other is simply to sit them down at a table and invent some sort of situation they must react to.” Ferneyhough emphatically prefers the latter strategy.

Ferneyhough himself is sometimes considered self-taught, though he did work with Lennox Berkeley at the Royal Academy of Music, before

traveling to Amsterdam (where he was a pupil of Ton de Leeuw) and receiving funding from the City of Basel for a somewhat longer period of study with Klaus Huber. By the time he joined Huber at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg in 1973, he had already won three Gaudeamus Music Week Prizes, in three consecutive years, for his *Sonatas for String Quartet* (1968), his orchestral *Epicycle* (1968), and the *Missa Brevis* (1969). Fortunately, he was also winning the support of some of Europe's finest instrumentalists; without their expertise, the sheer difficulty of Ferneyhough's music might have become a significant obstacle to its dissemination. San Francisco Contemporary Music Players' audiences may remember Christopher Froh's virtuosic performance in 2005 of the demanding score *Bone Alphabet* (1991-92). According to musicologist Richard Toop (an authority on the postwar European avant-garde), "there are no easy Ferneyhough pieces, nor even moderately difficult ones."

As *Bone Alphabet* suggests, Ferneyhough's complexity involves an intense exploration of time, the limits of human perception and physical ability, and the superimposition of musical processes. As Toop points out, "the typically dense and intricate textures of his music...do not arise from a fascination with virtuosity *per se*, but reflect the transcendentalist concerns which have always been a central factor in his work." Ferneyhough's tendency to group his pieces into cycles also reflects a long-standing interest in the manifold relationships between parts and wholes. His early *Sonatas for String Quartet* attempt to unite twenty-four aphoristic movements into a single journey, and the orchestral landscape *La terre est un homme* (1976-79) based on a painting by Roberto Matta, is woven together from 101 individual parts rather than using the conventional sections of the orchestra. Continuing along this path, Ferneyhough took up a multi-part investigation of different solo-ensemble interactions in such works as *Incipits* of 1996. Perhaps this preoccupation reflects another of Ferneyhough's metaphysical meditations on music, which he believes has the power to knit together even the diverse aspects of the human spirit or, as he puts it, "to keep the tenuous lines of communication open between different areas of our selves."

Ferneyhough's impressive list of honors begins during his fifteen-year tenure in Freiburg with a Heinrich Strobel Foundation award from the Southwest German Radio, a German Academic Exchange Award, and a Koussevitzky Award. A formidable presence at the University of California, San Diego from 1987 until 1999, Ferneyhough has also been a frequent lecturer at Darmstadt's Summer Music Courses, at IRCAM, and elsewhere. In 1984, he was named a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et

des Lettres and in 1997 he was elected to Berlin's Akademie der Künste. Since its premiere at the 2004 Munich Biennale, his opera *Shadowtime* (based on the life and writings of German cultural philosopher Walter Benjamin) has been heard in Paris, New York, Bochum, London, and Stockholm, and his orchestral score *Plötzlichkeit* (Suddenness) recently received its premiere at the Donaueschingen Festival. Ferneyhough is currently on the faculty at Stanford University and in 2007 he was awarded the prestigious International Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, sometimes referred to as the "Nobel Prize of Music" for his "consistently deep" explorations of the musical avant-garde.

Ferneyhough, *Flurries* (1997)

for piccolo, clarinet, French horn, piano, violin, and cello

Like the virtuosic *Terrain* (1992), which Graeme Jennings performed with the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 2007, Ferneyhough's chamber work *Flurries* makes reference to one of the composer's favorite poets, Archie Randolph Ammons (1926-2001). Winner of two National Book Awards and numerous other prizes, Ammons was known for his innovative use of punctuation (and other types of articulations) and his attention to the inner workings of nature. In an obituary article, one of his colleagues at Cornell University, poet and novelist Robert Morgan, stated: "Though he was famous for the fine abstraction of his poetry, he was also capable of vivid and significant detail. The high abstraction of his thought was wedded to an immediate idiom, a living voice." The same could, of course, be said of Ferneyhough, who took the epigraph for *Flurries* from the title of a poem published in the collection *Brink Road* (1996): "...but motion undermines meaning with meaning."

In *Flurries* the "living voice" of the work must refer not just to Ferneyhough's own intellect but also to the six performers whose collective motion makes the work meaningful. As Alessandro Melchiorre points out, the piece begins with three pairs of voices (violin and cello, clarinet and piano, piccolo and horn), each of which proceeds according to its own formal model: "double cyclic re-readings, variations with *quodlibet*, and march/fantasy." The duets of the first half combine and re-divide in the second half, first featuring the trio of wind players and then dispersing: combining and re-combining like water droplets on uneven glass or dancers in Ferneyhough's own, intricately choreographed ballet.

The Performers

Principally committed to influencing and expanding the repertoire for solo percussion, **Christopher Froh** has premiered works by dozens of composers including John Adams, Chaya Czernowin, Liza Lim, David Lang, Keiko Abe, and François Paris. He is a member of the Empyrean Ensemble and San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, and his festival appearances include the Festival Nuovi Spazi Musicali, Festival of New American Music, Pacific Rim, and Other Minds. Froh's solo performances have taken him from San Francisco to Rome to Tokyo and have been recorded on the Albany, Bridge, Equilibrium, and Innova labels. He is currently on the faculty at the University of California, Davis and he joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 2003.



Nanci Severance, viola, was educated at Oberlin Conservatory, where she studied with Denes Koromzay, and Northern Illinois University, studying with the Vermeer Quartet and Bernard Zaslav. She has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony since 1982. She has performed with many Bay Area ensembles, including the Stanford Quartet, Composers Inc., Chamber Music West, the Midsummer Mozart Chamber Players, and the Parlante Chamber Orchestra, with whom she was principal violist. Her summer engagements have included the Scaneateles Festival, Eastern Music Festival and the Telluride Chamber Music Festival. Severance has performed with the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 1986, and she became a member of the ensemble in 2008.



Brad Lubman, conductor/composer, has played a vital role in contemporary music for more than two decades. A frequent guest conductor of the world's leading ensembles, he has gained widespread recognition for his versatility, commanding technique, and insightful interpretations. Conducting a broad range of repertoire from classical to contemporary works, Lubman has led major orchestras including DSO Berlin, RSO Stuttgart, WDR Symphony Cologne, Dresden Philharmonic, National Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Finnish Radio Symphony, Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic, and National Symphony Orchestra Taiwan. In addition, he has conducted many major ensembles for contemporary music,

including Ensemble Modern, London Sinfonietta, Musik Fabrik, ASKO Ensemble, Ensemble Resonanz, Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, Chicago Symphony MusicNOW, and Steve Reich and Musicians. He has recorded for BMG/RCA, Nonesuch, Koch, and New World, among other labels. His own music has been performed in the USA and Europe, and can be heard on his first portrait CD, *insomniac*, on Tzadik. Lubman is Music Director of the new music ensemble Signal, founded in 2008, and has been hailed by *The New York Times* as "one of the most vital groups of its kind." He is on faculty at the Eastman School of Music and the Bang on a Can Summer Institute.

—Program Notes by Beth E. Levy



Please join us for a **reception**
in the lower lounge after the concert.

Food and drink will be served, and
scores from tonight's program will be on display.

The lower lounge is downstairs from the main lobby.



The Ensemble

The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players (SFCMP), now in its 39th 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 74 pieces and performed over 1,150 new works, including 72 U.S. and 141 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 *Contemporary Insights* series of intimate performances with conversation.

On November 15, 2009, the ensemble performed in Nice, France at the 30th anniversary season of the MANCA new music festival.

The Administrative Staff

Christopher Honett, Executive Director, has served as Director of the Harvard Group for New Music, as North American representative for music publisher Editions Henry Lemoine, and as Executive Director of the Manhattan Sinfonietta. A Ph. D. recipient in Music Composition from Harvard University, Chris's musical mentors have included Julian Anderson, Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Chaya Czernowin, Mario Davidovsky, Joshua Fineberg, Magnus Lindberg, and Bernard Rands. His music has been performed by many professional ensembles, including Ensemble Intercontemporain, the Arditti String Quartet, and the Boston Conservatory Wind Ensemble. Mr. Honett is co-author of *The Listen*, a book for anyone curious about new music regardless of his or her musical education.

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 accomplished singer, Ms. Blanding has performed with the San Francisco Symphony Chorus and was a soloist with the U. C. 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 U. C. 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 U. C. 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.