

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players

Performers:

Tod Brody, flute
Peter Josheff, clarinet
Jacob Zimmerman, saxophone
David Tanenbaum, guitar
Michael Seth Orland, piano
Dominique Leone, keyboard
Regina Schaffer, keyboard
Loren Mach, percussion (Combiar)
William Winant, percussion (Cage, Glass)
Susan Freier, violin
Nanci Severance, viola
Stephen Harrison, cello



Robert Shumaker, *Recording Engineer*



Tonight's performance is supported in part by
the National Endowment for the Arts and the Wells Fargo Foundation.

Tonight's performances of *Heurter la lumière encore* and *Essere pietra* are supported in part by The French-American Fund for Contemporary Music, a program of FACE with support from Cultural Services of the French Embassy, CulturesFrance, SACEM and the Florence Gould Foundation.

Tonight's performance of music by Gabriele Vanoni is made possible in part by the generous support of the Istituto Italiano de Cultura.

Points in Recent History

Monday, November 8, 2010, 8 pm
Herbst Theatre

JÉRÔME COMBIER

Essere pietra (To Be Stone) (2004)
(Approximate duration: 6 minutes)

Heurter la lumière encore (To Hit the Light Again) (2005)

United States premiere
(Approximate duration: 5 minutes)

JOHN CAGE

Seven (1988)

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players Co-Commission
This project has been made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts
as part of American Masterpieces: Three Centuries of Artistic Genius.
(Approximate duration: 20 minutes)

Intermission

GABRIELE VANONI

Space Oddities (2008)

West Coast premiere
(Approximate duration: 8 minutes)

Tod Brody, flute

PHILIP GLASS

Music in Similar Motion (1969)

(Approximate duration: 15 minutes)



Program Notes

JÉRÔME COMBIER (b. 1971)

Tonight we hear two scores by French composer Jérôme Combier, *Essere pietra* (To Be Stone) and *Heurter de la lumière encore* (To Hit the Light Again). As members of his seven-piece cycle *Vies Silencieuses* (Silent Lives), they show the composer's deep understanding of the affinities between music, poetry, and painting. Individually, their titles also hint at some of the traits that characterize Combier's oeuvre: a firm belief in the materiality of music and a concern for the creative play between fixed elements (like stone) and directed motion that can lead to surprising collisions.

Combier was educated in France, first studying with Hacène Larbi and later, at the Paris Conservatory, with Emmanuel Nunes, Michaël Levinas, and Antoine Bonnet, under whose supervision he produced a master's thesis on the music of Anton Webern. Yet he is widely traveled—in some unexpected ways. In 1995, he was a finalist in Oslo's Griegselskalpet competition, and in 1998 he held a two-month residency in Japan. After two years at the French computer music studio IRCAM [Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/ Musique], he spent significant time in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan between 2002 and 2004, dispatched there by the Paris Conservatory as a liaison to music schools in Tashkent and Almaty. Some of Combier's short pieces serve as postcards of places he has visited—either in reality or in imagination. For example, his *Pays de vent*, an orchestral showpiece in five short movements, won a prize from UNESCO for its vivid evocation of the windswept islands off the Scottish Coast.

It was travel to Italy that helped inspire the *Vies Silencieuses* cycle, written for the Cairn Ensemble, which Combier co-founded in 1997. The composer writes, "*Vies Silencieuses* is closely linked to the Villa Medici in Rome for which I conceived this project in 2003 and where I gave it its definitive form between 2004 and 2006. These 'lives' were inspired above all by the pictorial universes of several very different artists. Yet I believe I recognized in each of them something which spoke to me directly and echoed my preoccupations as a composer—what I might term patience, 'the making use of the world,' appearance and effacement." Two artists in particular captured Combier's imagination while he was in Italy: Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964), a renowned twentieth-century still-life and landscape painter, and Giuseppe Penone

(b. 1947) best known for his nature-inspired sculptures and mixed-media work. Two other artists of Combier's own generation also had their impact on these scores. Some of the cycle's movements were featured at a Penone exposition in Rome's Sabine villages, paired with paintings by French-Belgian Xavier Noiret-Thome. Finally, visual and performance artist Raphaël Thierry, whom Combier met at the Villa Medici, created a performance-installation to go along with movements in *Vies Silencieuses* when they were performed at the Why Note Festival in Dijon and the Royaumont Festival.

Combier has composed two scores inspired by Shakespeare's *King Lear*: the flute solo *Cordelia des nuées* (Cordelia of the Clouds) and a piece for guitar and electronics called *Kogarashi, le premier soupir des fantômes* (2002) whose title means "Winter wind [in Japanese], the first sigh of ghosts." One of the composer's more recent poetic fascinations involves the elliptical texts of Samuel Beckett, which have inspired *Noir azur* (Blue Black) and *Noir gris (Impromptu d'Ohio)* (Grey Black) (both of 2006), and *Hors crâne* of 2008 (loosely translated by the writer himself as "Something There"). In relation to the orchestral score *Gris Cendre* (based on Beckett's text "Lessness"), Combier writes: "After reading and rereading this brief text, I realized that the words were in a particular order, that the phrases formed a structure—a perceptible structure—that I was happy to grasp onto as a manner of listening. I dared to believe that this thought process would enable me to hear an unusual form which might be baffling, even to me."

In addition to his many fellowships, Combier has received the Pierre Cardin Prize and the "Vocation" prize from the Bleustein-Blanchet Foundation. He has been guest composer at the Why Note Festival in Dijon, Tage für Neue Musik in Zurich, and the festivals of Aix-en-Provence, Aldeburgh, and Witten. In 2005, Ensemble Recherche played his *Estran, poussière grise sans nuage* (Shore, Grey Dust without Cloud) at the Opéra Bastille. In 2007, Combier's *Stèles d'air* (Pillars of Air), for ensemble and electronics, was performed by Ensemble Intercontemporain, and *Noir Gris*, with images by Pierre Nouvel, was included in an important exposition devoted to Samuel Beckett—both at the Georges Pompidou Centre. He is currently working on a musical theater project related to W. G. Sebald's novel *Austerlitz*, to be presented by Ensemble Ictus at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in July 2011 (<http://www.ictus.be/home2.html>).

Combiere, *Essere pietra* (To Be Stone) (2004)

for guitar, percussion, piano, viola, and cello

To be stone is no simple matter. This would appear to be one of the messages of Combiere's *Essere pietra*. It is a richly textured score, by turns solid and ghostly, impassive and impulsive. Writing in relation to a later ensemble score, *Rust* (2008), Combiere reveals the concrete detail that informs his understanding of the physical world (and his continuing inspiration from the visual arts). "Rust is mineral, but develops from a mineral that has deteriorated over time and due to successive layers, rust ends up resembling an almost vegetal incrustation. In my mind, Rust cannot be distinguished from grasses, lichens or flowers. I am reminded of the beautiful painting by Anselm Kiefer that I saw at the Museo delle Scuderie del Quirinale in Rome several years ago, made from leaves of lead, with dense blue colors, rust and dried flowers." In comparison to *Rust*, *Essere pietra* has sharper edges—its unfolding is perhaps less obviously "organic." Yet its beautifully varied surface and its careful instrumental etching are quintessential Combiere.

Combiere, *Heurter la lumière encore* (To Hit the Light Again) (2005)

for guitar, percussion, and piano

Entering the sound world of Combiere's *Heurter la lumière encore* (To Hit the Light Again) is a little bit like happening upon a ritual-in-progress—a ritual in which three very different types of instruments become a single, composite ensemble. Despite its frequently changing meters, the piece unfolds for the most part in a measured, even stately procession. The constituent sounds emerge as if from a distance in time or space, "defamiliarized" by methods prescribed in the score. The selection of percussion (Japanese drum, cowbells, tam-tam) emphasizes instruments of uncertain pitch. In order to match the variety of percussion sounds, pianist and guitarist are called upon to use quarter tones, eerie glissandi, idiosyncratic varieties of pizzicato, and harmonics. As is also the case in *Essere pietra* and other members of the *Vies Silencieuses* cycle, *Heurter la lumière encore* calls for the guitar to be de-tuned in a technique called "scordatura." In similar fashion, the piano is prepared through the insertion of objects into the piano strings—not for the purposes of altering pitch but rather to enhance the colors available at the keyboardist's fingertips, bringing the piano into closer union with string techniques of the guitarist and the elemental sounds of percussion.

JOHN CAGE (1912-1992)

"Wherever we are," John Cage observed, "what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating." In the process of calling our attention to the sounds around us, Cage also transformed the very actions, ethics and aesthetics of contemporary music performance.

Born in Los Angeles, Cage counted among his early mentors Henry Cowell, whose sound experiments and interest in music from around the world were to have far-reaching consequences. Cowell also encouraged Cage to make his first trips to New York City, where he would prepare himself to study with the magisterial Arnold Schoenberg back in Los Angeles. Their unlikely relationship is most often remembered by way of Schoenberg's declaration that Cage was "not a composer, but... an inventor—of genius." In fact, Cage absorbed from the Viennese emigre certain ideas about musical structuring and the transformative power of art.

Beginning in 1937, Cage took a job as a dance accompanist, first at UCLA, and then in the interactive environment of Seattle's Cornish School. Here he met dancer-choreographer Merce Cunningham, found support for his first forays into musical electronics (using radio), and conceived his most famous musical "invention": the prepared piano, an outgrowth of his fascination with percussion music. In his famous essay "The Future of Music: Credo," Cage considered percussion music "a contemporary transition from keyboard influenced music to the all-sound music of the future." Although it required only a single performer, Cage's music for prepared piano—most especially his famous *Sonatas and Interludes* of 1946-48—transformed the concert piano into a one-player percussion orchestra by inserting into the piano strings metal screws, pieces of wood, rubber erasers and the like.

In the mid-forties, having moved to New York's Lower East Side, Cage underwent a number of spiritual and personal crises coinciding with his separation from his wife Xenia in 1945 and his increasing closeness to Cunningham. After considerable distress about his marriage and his sexuality and a very brief attempt at psychoanalysis, Cage discovered new sources of strength in his study of philosophy—first in Indian aesthetics, then in the Zen Buddhism of Daisetz Suzuki and the medieval mysticism of Meister Eckhart, all of which suggested to him an aesthetic of renunciation that would grow more pronounced as the composer grew older.

Crucial elements of this new aesthetic involved the celebration of silence and acceptance that the goal of music is “to quiet and sober the mind, thus making it susceptible to divine influences.” Cage’s exploration of silence culminated in his famous “Lecture on Nothing” and his infamous “silent” piece, initially titled “Silent Prayer,” but eventually published with the impersonal designation *4’33*—the combined length of its three movements at the premiere given by pianist David Tudor in 1952. Similar in many ways to the “white” paintings of Robert Rauschenberg (whom Cage had met while teaching at North Carolina’s Black Mountain College in 1948), *4’33* provides an empty frame for the sounds that come from the listener’s own physical environment. Creating a formidable controversy even within the avant-garde, the piece affirmed that silence was not the absence of sound but the purposeful negation of authorial intent.

Getting rid of authorial intent is easier said than done. The music that Cage wrote during his last four decades serves as an idiosyncratic and thought-provoking manual for achieving sounds that could appear independent of composerly volition. His experiments flourished in the New York apartment that served as studio and meeting place for Morton Feldman, David Tudor, Christian Wolff, and later Earle Brown, who gathered to share their ideas about improvisation, indeterminacy, and chance operations. In the early 1950s, Cage began to use the ancient Chinese “Book of Changes,” or *I Ching*, and as his fame grew through the fifties and sixties, so did the variety of his “chance operations”—seeking out imperfections in staff paper, tracing the outlines of rocks in the Zen garden *Ryoanji*, selecting sounds and symbols from the writings of Joyce or Thoreau, or using star charts.

Cage will always be remembered for expanding the horizons of what we consider musical sounds and musical actions—for granting the status of art to the rumble of a truck or the sound of one’s own heartbeat and for transforming the composer’s “choices” into “questions” that could be answered (though not framed) independently of volition: “...if I have the opportunity to keep working,” he said, “I think the work will resemble more and more, not the work of a person, but something that might have happened even if the person weren’t there.” It was this mixture of individuality and self-renunciation that allowed Cage to embrace the ephemeral, to blur the boundaries between choice and chance, to divide his time between mushroom hunting and music making, and to copyright certain periods of silence.

***Seven* (1988)**

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

Between 1987 and his death, Cage wrote a series of forty-three pieces whose titles designate only the number of performers required (with superscripts used to distinguish between different pieces that happen to employ the same number of musicians). One of these, *Seven* (1988) was co-commissioned by the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in cooperation with Boston Musica Viva and the Dallas-based ensemble Voices of Change. It represents a living instance of the composer’s “late style,” and an interesting middle ground between works like *One* (for solo piano, 1987) or *Two*⁴ (for violin and Japanese mouth organ, 1991) and “number” pieces for larger ensembles, including *Fourteen* (for piano and chamber ensemble, 1990) and even *101* (for orchestra, 1988).

Seven shares with the other “number” pieces a compositional technique that brings together Cage’s interest in silence, his commitment to letting sounds “be themselves,” and his preoccupation with indeterminacy that is bounded by carefully controlled parameters. In this case, each part is organized into a series of twenty-nine “time brackets,” most of which are flexible in duration. Within this loose durational framework, *Seven* also sums up (or mixes up) some of the composer’s earlier preoccupations, including a delight in the noisiness of sound production—most obvious in the panoply of percussion instruments and in the instruction that string players should use the wood of their bows (*col legno*) instead of the hair. A love for Asian art is present in *Seven* as well, in Cage’s instruction to the woodwind players: “Rather than being switched on or off, let the tones be ‘brushed’ into existence as in oriental calligraphy where the ink (‘the sound’) is not always seen or, if so, with changes of intensity.”

GABRIELE VANONI (b. 1980)

Though barely in his thirties, composer Gabriele Vanoni is already developing an enviably international reputation. Even as a youngster, his musical training spanned continents, including an appearance at the Tokyo Yamaha School's "Junior Original Concert" in 1993 before he undertook formal training at the G. Verdi Conservatory in his native Milan, where he studied piano with Maria Isabella de Carli and composition with Giuseppe Giuliano. In his recent scores, Vanoni aims to uncover new sounds, not for the sake of newness but as a process of uncovering new angles on basic musical materials—sometimes as simple as a chord, a rhythm, a melodic fragment, a gesture. As he puts it, "What I'm aiming for is not 'I've never heard *that* before,' but 'I've never heard it *that way* before."

Vanoni is earning his Ph.D. at Harvard University while also taking advantage of studies at Columbia University, and the two institutions have brought him into compositional contact with Helmut Lachenmann, Julian Anderson, Brian Ferneyhough, and Tristan Murail, among others. At a variety of festivals, he has also participated in masterclasses in composition and electronic music with Salvatore Sciarrino, Alessandro Solbiati, Luca Francesconi, Denys Bouliane, and Michele Tadini. Vanoni describes his first years in the United States as a period of discovery, a moving away from rigorous formal construction to embrace the richness of sounds themselves. Now, he explains, the challenge is to synthesize these two key components (sound and structure), and the piece we will hear tonight, *Space Oddities*, represents an important milestone in that ongoing quest.

Three electroacoustic pieces, all composed after his arrival in the United States, reflect one key phase in Vanoni's compositional development. *Fadin' Over* (for saxophone quartet and electronics, 2007) was premiered at a new music festival in Milan; the purely electronic *Winds* (2008) and *Sguardo alla Notte* (2009, for violin and electronics) were both programmed by the Harvard University Studio for Electroacoustic Composition, featuring an "orchestra" called Hydra, comprising thirty-two loudspeakers (with thirty-two different faders) installed at different horizontal and vertical coordinates for different pieces. Written for and dedicated to violinist Gabriela Diaz, *Sguardo alla Notte* (Gazing at the Night) plays on the contrast and interaction between an electronic stream of "static" sounds (literally: white noise) and the intensely dynamic gestures incorporated into the violin part.

Vanoni's work with electronics continues to filter in and out of his acoustic scores in interesting ways. His percussion piece, *Skin* (2009) was initially written for electronics and percussion and premiered at the Biennale Music Festival in Venice. "Afterwards," he writes, "I realized that the gestures needed more breath and more time, and in particular they needed the listener to be more focused on the 'skin,' i.e. the stretched skin of the timpani drumhead." He therefore created a version for percussion alone. As the title *Skin* suggests, Vanoni's works have often reflected an interest in sonic surfaces and a related interplay of light and shadow. This is especially apparent in his large ensemble pieces: *Chiaroscuro* (2007, revised 2010), which was premiered by the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne at Canada's Rencontres de Musique Nouvelle at the Domaine Forget Festival; and *Blurry Landscapes* (2010), which was written in and around the Wellesley College Composers Conference, and recently reached the final round of a competition at the Milan Conservatory.

In addition to composing, Vanoni was curator for a symposium called Suggestioni (meaning either "suggestions" or "fascinations"), sponsored in March 2010 by Harvard, Columbia, the New York Italian Institute of Culture, and the General Consulate of Italy in Boston. Devoted to relationships between music and poetry, Suggestioni brought together Italian composers and poets active in many countries for three days of concerts and readings. Slated to continue in subsequent years, the symposium has already born creative fruit in Vanoni's own *Appunti per un'asparizione* (2010), premiered by soprano Jo Ellen Miller and the Talea Ensemble. The score takes its texts from the ludic *Quattro Appunti* (Four Notes), aphoristic poetry from the later works of Giorgio Caproni. Vanoni's score replicates Caproni's preoccupation with language in its title (which conflates Italian words for appearing and disappearing) and in its tendency to stay with a single moment or image and to uncover, in Vanoni's words, its "hidden truths."

Vanoni's music has been performed at Carnegie Hall, the Biennale music festival in Venice, the Moscow Conservatory, New York University, BIT Teatergarasjen in Bergen, the Accademia Chigiana di Siena, and the Acanthes Center (associated with IRCAM). In addition to earning performances from Talea Ensemble, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, the Lost Cloud saxophone quartet, Ensemble Fa, and the Moscow Studio for New Music Ensemble, he has been honored by the Jurgenson Competition, Concorso Filarmonica, Previsioni Musica 2009, and the IBLA Foundation of New York. Last summer, a revised version

of *Chiaroscuro* was featured at the festival June in Buffalo. Vanoni currently holds a fellowship from Harvard University, where he is completing an orchestral score and a string quartet, scheduled for premiere by the Diotima Quartet in January 2011.

Vanoni, *Space Oddities* (2008)

for solo flute

The two title words of Vanoni's flute solo *Space Oddities* hint at its content: the piece opens up an enormous range of sonic possibilities, taking the soloist from the lowest to highest extremes of register and incorporating any number of idiosyncratic sounds along the way. This fluency of expression was inspired by the work's dedicatee, Mario Caroli (a renowned champion of new music), and it must be rediscovered by every subsequent performer. Despite the score's striking technical demands, however, its motivations are musical. As Vanoni puts it, "I don't write difficult music because I want to write difficult music, but because I want to try different lines, different chromatics, different contextualizations of the material."

As the composer suggests, *Space Oddities* takes flight from a single idea: an arpeggio that is developed, fragmented and re-imagined, as though the performer him- or herself were analyzing that basic figure in the moment of performance. From its humble, earth-bound origins, the arpeggio in *Space Oddities* is transformed beyond all recognition; in fact, the music seems to circle around the idea of the arpeggio in all manner of eccentric orbits. At times, its pitches are altered through multiphonics, harmonic trills, unusual fingerings, and breath sounds. More often, the gesture itself is stretched or compressed, resulting in a musical surface that is always rhapsodic, never formulaic: in a word, atmospheric.

For more information on Space Oddities, read the composer's entry on our blog: www.sfcmp.blogspot.com.

PHILIP GLASS (b. 1937)

Composer and contemporary music critic William Duckworth wrote in 1995: "While John Cage may be the first *name* in new music that most people know, the music of Philip Glass is more likely to be the first *sound* of it they actually hear. Glass's music can be found not only at the opera, where he reigns supreme as America's most successful living composer, but at the ballet, on television, in symphony halls, films, jazz clubs, and even the occasional sports stadium." As Duckworth suggests, Glass's fame rests chiefly on the broad canvases of his big pieces: film scores for *Notes on a Scandal* (2006), *The Hours* (2002), *The Truman Show* (1998), *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), and *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982), among others; and pathbreaking operas such as *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), *Satyagraha* (1980), *Akhmaten* (1984), and *The Voyage* (1992, a commission from New York's Metropolitan Opera Company). Equally interesting, however, are Glass's more intimate scores—the vibrant string quartets, the *Songs from Liquid Days* (1986), and the early work we will hear tonight, *Music in Similar Motion* (1969).

From the start, Glass had an eclectic and even-handed attitude toward music making. "My father had a record store," he recalled. "I heard everything.... In a funny way, I've been monitoring the history of contemporary pop music since I was twelve." Glass took this openness into the educational institutions of his early years, with mixed results. After an accelerated program at the University of Chicago, during which he took up and then abandoned composing twelve-tone music, he enrolled at the Juilliard School. Yet the five years he spent in New York (studying with William Bergsma and Vincent Persichetti) and his two years on a Ford Foundation fellowship in Pittsburgh now seem like one long preparatory beat to the transformative experiences he would gain in Paris in the mid-1960s.

Like so many American composers before him, Glass went to France to study with Nadia Boulanger: "What I did with her—and it amounted to something close to three years—was spend six hours a day doing counterpoint, solfege, and analysis, all day long." In 1965, he assisted Ravi Shankar in transcribing the film score for *Chappaqua* into western notation. In the process, Glass discovered rhythm—or at least new ways of articulating it. "The thing I learned from Ravi is that the rhythmic structure could become an overall musical structure. In our Western tradition that's simply not the case...." Glass left Paris to spend six months in India and North Africa. He returned to New

York and studied with Shankar's tabla player, Alla Rakha, developing his own insights into additive rhythms, according to which a single, recognizable melodic figure can be expanded or curtailed by the addition, lengthening, subtraction, or shortening of a note within the phrase. This rhythmic unpredictability gives Glass's music a unique and fluid profile, even among the repetitive rhythmic patterns of so-called "minimalism."

As Edward Strickland notes, "Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s Glass developed a wholly distinctive ensemble style of highly amplified, diatonic, harmonically static, additive and subtractive cycles in mechanical rhythms and initially in simple unison—a music much more evocative of rock than any classical Western style, much less the serialism and late modernism of the period." This style came hand in hand with the birth of the Philip Glass Ensemble in 1968. Glass supported the ensemble financially by working day jobs—and it supported him. Initially the Ensemble had exclusive performing rights, in part because its performers were the only ones capable of tackling such music. At its peak, the Ensemble gave nearly 100 concerts per year, and it still remains one of the key vehicles for the composer's music. The Ensemble's characteristic amplified electronic keyboards and woodwind instruments, with occasional voices or strings, expertly mixed by sound engineer Kurt Munkacsi—has left its mark on virtually all of Glass's music, even as this music has ventured out of the "downtown" scenes of its youth to occupy the most established venues of the classical concert world.

Influenced by composers John Cage and Virgil Thomson and especially by his frequent dramatic collaborators Robert Wilson and David Henry Hwang, Glass has participated in the birth of a new type of operatic theater experience. The watershed work was *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), a five-hour sequence of tableaux featuring elements of Einstein iconography: the scientist's violin, and the trains and spaceships so often used to explain his theory of relativity. *Einstein* was the first in a trilogy of "portrait" operas, including *Satyagraha* (dealing with Ghandi's time in Africa) and *Akhmaten* (based on an Egyptian pharaoh believed to be the first monotheist ruler, more than 15,000 years ago). In conversation with Strickland, Glass noted that the three works represent an evolution in his orchestration: from the trademark Ensemble sound in *Einstein* to an orchestration of that sound in *Satyagraha* to "actually addressing for the first time the idea of orchestral identity" in *Akhmaten*—a process whose continuation could also be heard in the San Francisco Opera

premiere of Glass's *Appomattox* in 2007. All of these theater pieces—and many others in Glass's oeuvre—have untraditional narrative structures. The composer observes: "The kinds of theater which spin familiar stories, moralizing, sometimes satirizing, occasionally comforting us about our lives, have never meant much to me.... What has always stirred me is theater that challenges one's ideas of society, one's notions of order." In fact, most of Glass's music raises these sorts of questions.

Glass, *Music in Similar Motion* (1969)

for any combination of instruments whose range suits the material

Music in Similar Motion is characteristic of Glass in being poised between rigor and flexibility. Although the premiere was given by three woodwind players and three electric organs, the composer specifically allowed for a variety of recreations, and tonight's performance will feature flute, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, percussion, and keyboards.

No matter what the performing forces, *Music in Similar Motion* unfolds through gradual accumulation in discrete steps or stages. Despite its consistently "forte" dynamic level, the changes in texture give the piece a sense of direction. Comparing it to his other early chamber music (including *Two Pages* (1968), *Contrary Motion* (1974), and *Music in Fifths* (1969), Glass writes: "The real innovation in *Similar Motion* is its sense of drama.... The earlier pieces were meditative, steady-state pieces that established a mood and stayed there. But *Similar Motion* starts with one voice, then adds another playing a fourth above the original line, and then another playing a fourth *below* the original line, and finally a bass line kicks in to complete the sound. As each new voice enters, there is a dramatic change in the music."

In addition to the textural crescendo described above, there is another key component in the "drama" of Glass's score: ensemble interaction. "Each figure," he notes, "should be repeated an indefinite number of times." A designated leader indicates by nodding when the group should move from one figure to the next, resulting in performances that could conceivably vary from six minutes to an entire evening. In addition, the players "must choose what direction to take where the third and fourth voices enter" resulting in different colorations of the basic material from one performance to the next. *Music in Similar Motion* is the earliest of the composer's works still in the active repertory of the Philip Glass Ensemble. Even without that group's trademark synthesizers, it still offers an "electric" concert experience.

The Performers

Tod Brody teaches flute and chamber music at the University of California, Davis, where he also performs with the Empyrean Ensemble. His varied musical life has included playing for symphony, opera and ballet companies, Broadway shows, and traditional chamber ensembles. Brody is the principal flutist for the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, Sacramento Opera, and California Musical Theater; he also appears frequently in such ensembles as the San Francisco Opera and Ballet orchestras. With the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Empyrean Ensemble, and Earplay, Brody has performed numerous world premieres, and has been extensively recorded. In addition to his work as a teacher and performer, Brody serves composers and new music as Executive Director of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of the American Composers Forum. He has been a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 2001.

David Tanenbaum, guitar, has been a soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, and Vienna's ORF orchestra, playing under such eminent conductors as Esa-Pekka Salonen, Kent Nagano, and John Adams. Among the many works written for him are Hans Werner Henze's guitar concerto *An Eine Aolsharfe*, Terry Riley's first guitar piece *Ascension*, four works by Aaron Jay Kernis, and the last completed work by Lou Harrison. He has toured extensively with Steve Reich and Musicians, was invited to Japan in 1991 by Toru Takemitsu, and has had a long association with Ensemble Modern. He joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 2008.

William Winant, percussion, has collaborated with some of the most innovative musicians of our time, including Cage, Reich, Xenakis, Anthony Braxton, Alvin Curran, Danny Elfman, Fred Frith, Keith Jarrett, Gordon Mumma, James Tenney, Christian Wolff, John Zorn, and the Kronos Quartet. In 1984, along with violinist David Abel and pianist Julie Steinberg, he founded the Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio, a virtuoso ensemble specializing in new music from the Americas and the Pacific Rim. The Trio has commissioned dozens of works and has recorded for CRI and New Albion. From 1995 to 2001, he recorded and toured extensively with the avant-rock group Mr. Bungle. In 1997, with cellist Yo-Yo Ma and the Mark Morris Dance Group, Winant participated in the world premiere of Lou Harrison's *Rhymes with Silver* and has since has performed the piece around the world. In 1999 he

worked with Sonic Youth to produce *Goodbye 20th Century*, a highly acclaimed recording of avant-garde composers, and since 2003 he has been percussionist for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Winant teaches at U. C. Berkeley and U. C. Santa Cruz, and has been a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 1988.

—Program Notes by Beth E. Levy