

From the Artistic Director



The creation of a new piece of music implicates us all in what often seems to be an unhealthy amount of wishful thinking.

A composer wishes that her efforts might be rewarded by a decent performance and maybe a certain contribution to musical posterity. A performer wishes that a new piece might bring a fresh and invigorating set of musical problems, ones that will force him to flex some technical muscles without straining anything too severely. A listener enjoys a broad spectrum of wishful

thinking from simply hoping that the new piece will not be a waste of time to, perhaps, the thought that this first performance might be an important event, maybe even a landmark occasion. And what about the poor new piece – what hopes are buoyed by its amniotic dreams? Perhaps simply surviving a rehearsal process where composer, conductor, and players comprise an awkward tag-team of midwives is hope enough!

Friedrich Hommel, the long-time director of the Darmstadt Summer course once told me that the premiere of a new piece is very much like the neighbors coming by to visit a newborn baby. Everyone crowds over the bassinet gazing down at a red, squalling infant while cooing, “Oh, how beautiful!” I am as smitten by the comeliness of little babies as anyone, but I think that Herr Hommel has a point. The beautiful thing is the promise of human life and not necessarily the baby itself. It’s also what’s special about the premiere of a piece of music. Even if a first performance is green or misunderstood by the critics, the great promise it holds for the continuation of our art is beautiful.

Indeed one of the most optimistic things a culture can do is to commission new music since a new piece pre-supposes an intelligent and reflective audience that seeks to understand its world through art. Any society that can imagine an interesting and interested future generation is a culture of optimism. Yet as noble as that sounds the real miracle is that any new music is created at all. After all money is tight. Why play a piece that no one knows – one that might fail, one that might *lose money* – when there are so many sure-fire hits to choose from?

The answer to that question lies in the rewards of an interesting conversation. With every new piece comes a new plan, and with every new plan comes the possibility for confusion. But what a grand kind of confusion it is! The only way to deal with that confusion, to create from

it a fertile ground for creation, is to talk. Our commissioned work tonight is by the extraordinary composer Edmund Campion. I talked with Ed about instrumentation, special techniques, tempo, the distribution of players on the stage, the use of electronics, the utility of a click-track for the conductor, and the need for the players to have monitor speakers. And that was just in the first hour! This week we talked about the effect of bow speed on a certain kind of reverb setting. We batted around ideas for marimba mallets and clarinet articulations. Come to a rehearsal and behold *homo loquens!*

The desirability of commissioning a new piece is directly tied to your interest in those kinds of conversations. If you like them there's nothing more rewarding than working on new music. And the wonderful thing about an experience like the one we are having with Ed is that it reminds us of the many ways we can talk to composers even if they can't talk back.

When you hear the way David Tanenbaum and William Winant engage Lou Harrison's score for guitar and percussion it will certainly seem like a fantastic discussion among the three of them. Both performers knew Harrison well and worked with him often during his lifetime, and that certainly gives them a privileged perspective. But once you have the habit of talking to composers you can engage them in absentia whether you knew them or not. Nanci Severance may not have known Brett Dean before she learned his piece, but having worked with many living composers she undoubtedly knew how to "speak" to him through the medium of his score. (Plus there's the additional advantage of being able to skype him in Australia!)

We are fortunate to have two extremely talented young composers with us tonight, Aaron Gervais, a visible and active member of our community, and Nathan Davis from New York. Both have written fascinating pieces using music technology – another kind of conversation here – and both took part in rehearsals and discussions leading to tonight's performance. We also look ahead to next season and a major commission to Mark Applebaum. Given that we are already deep in conversation with Mark about his new piece, we couldn't resist programming his *Pre-Composition*, a piece about making a piece. It makes me look forward with enthusiasm to our ongoing conversations. You'll see.

Imagine all of the conversations, the ones that went into making the music on tonight's program. Real live human contact: not 140-character tweets or the annoying monologue of political invective, but human beings talking to each other about something they are building together. As I said, commissioning a new work is one of the most optimistic things a culture can do.

Steven Schick

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players
Steven Schick, Artistic Director

Zone 5: in which discussing a plan leads to some confusion

Monday, April 30, 2012 • 8:00 pm • Herbst Theatre

AARON GERVAIS
Culture No. 1 (2005)

Karen Gottlieb, harp and Karen Rosenak, piano/laptop
Approximate duration: 9 minutes

BRETT DEAN
Intimate Decisions (1996)

Nanci Severance, viola
Approximate duration: 10 minutes

MARK APPLEBAUM
Pre-Composition (2002)

Eight-channel playback
Approximate duration: 8 minutes

NATHAN DAVIS
The Bright and Hollow Sky (2008)

Nathan Davis, electronics
Approximate duration: 20 minutes

Intermission

LOU HARRISON
Serenade (1978)

I. Round • II. Air
III. Infinite Canon • IV. Usul • V. Sonata

David Tanenbaum, guitar and William Winant, percussion
Approximate duration: 12 minutes

EDMUND CAMPION

Small Wonder (The Butterfly Effect) (2012)

World premiere • Commissioned by the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players with the support of the Serge Koussevitsky Music Foundation
Approximate duration: 15 minutes

The Performers

Steven Schick, conductor
Tod Brody, flute
Jeffrey Anderle, clarinet (Davis, Campion)
Peter Josheff, clarinet (Campion)
Scott Macomber, trumpet
David Tanenbaum, guitar
Karen Rosenak, piano
Daniel Kennedy, percussion (Davis, Campion)
William Winant, percussion (Harrison)
Loren Mach, percussion (Campion)
Roy Malan, violin I
Kevin Rogers, violin II
Nanci Severance, viola
Richard Worn, bass

Greg Kuhn, audio engineer
Yotam Mann, audio assistant
Robert Shumaker, recording engineer



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Tonight's performance of music by Aaron Gervais is sponsored in part by a grant from The Ross McKee Foundation.



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

AARON GERVAIS (b. 1980)

Composer Aaron Gervais describes one portion of his youthful artistic trajectory when he writes: "Over time, my music has gradually taken on more and more aspects of my particular musical background. I grew up playing jazz and rock drums in addition to classical percussion, and this influence has become increasingly clear in my pieces, although not always in terms of direct appropriation. What is more common is an interest in the cultural elements of hearing: why we hear things in certain ways, what it is we listen for in particular genres, and so forth." Indeed almost every piece in his growing catalog invites, or even requires us to think about listening in new ways: listening for relationships between classical and popular, between old and new, between the spoken word and the so-called language of music.

Born in Edmonton, Canada, Gervais received his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Toronto, before attending the University of California at San Diego and the Koninklijk Conservatorium in The Hague. In addition to participating in international masterclasses, he can count among his teachers Chan Ka Nin, Chinary Ung, Philippe Manoury, and Martijn Padding, not to mention the percussionists who taught him jazz and Cuban drumming. Yet his aesthetic decisions come much more from an eclectic and autobiographical attention to the listening process as they do from any particular "school." Thus one can hear in many of his scores a jostling of genres and styles—sometimes drawn from popular music, as in the hit-tune mash-up *Recycled 80s Live* (2008); sometimes in a freewheeling mélange, as in the paean *Love in the Time of Connectivity* (2009); and sometimes through the carefully controlled treatment of favorite specimens from more canonic repertoires.

In *Flüsse-Einflüsse* (Streams-Influences) (2005) he reworks two of his favorite jazz tunes in classical fashion. Perhaps most interesting is *Elegy of Others* (2009), which aims at (mostly) respectful homage to Schubert, Vivaldi, Led Zeppelin, R. E. M., and "The Girl from Ipanema." Gervais explains the challenge he found in making a collage that was also an elegy: "I have found collage better suited to fast, upbeat music than it is to the slow and somber; quotations tend to lose their character when the tempo is slow, and phrases made up of long quotes do not cohere very well. For this reason, I had to approach this piece differently than in my previous work, transforming the material in more extreme ways for the sake of musical expression."

The freshness of Gervais's attitudes toward the sampling and collage is matched by his omnivorous selection of texts, on display in *Hockey Story* (2009), for example, which shouts out words from the argot of the sport. In *Sensational Revolution in Medicine and Culture no. 2 (or, Shoot Like a Film Star)*, the second in the series of pieces initiated by the work we will hear tonight, Gervais extracted texts from junk email, which he calls

“certainly among the more recent of literary genres.” The more serious side of his linguistic interests can be heard in *Kiss Around the World* (2009), an evocative setting of the word “kiss” in multiple languages, and in his works on the poetry of Sarah Lang, including *Five Reflective Fragments* (2006), which combines speech and song.

In just the last decade, Gervais’s music has been featured in performances by the Nieuw Ensemble, the Ensemble Contemporain de Montreal, the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, Continuum, the London Sinfonietta, and the Arditti Quartet, and at festivals including Amsterdam’s Gaudeamus Music Week, New York’s MATA Festival, and Toronto’s New Wave, soundaXis, and SHIFT festivals. In 2009, he was selected as the winner of the orkest de ereprijs’s International Young Composers Competition in the Netherlands in 2009, and he has also received an ASCAP Gould Award (2010), and numerous prizes and grants from the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada (SOCAN).

Gervais, *Culture No. 1* (2005)

for harp, piano, and audio samples

The composer writes: “*Culture no. 1* is the first in a series of three pieces that deal with the changing role of music in culture.... The impetus for the piece was a series of four unrelated samples (and one derivative sample) that I found on my hard drive, left over from other projects. The samples play at various points in the music, and in one way or another, the instrumental parts derive their material from them.

“In *Culture no. 1*, I wanted to focus on several issues that I saw as particularly relevant to our rapidly changing culture milieu. These include an immediate and simple presentation of material, clarity of purpose, the highest possible degree of simplicity in the organization of material, and musical ideas that can live ‘in the moment,’ without the need to reference large sections of the piece on multiple levels. These are themes that have remained important to me since and have also figured prominently in the subsequent two pieces in the *Culture* series. When I first wrote *Culture no. 1*, I thought of it in terms of a dichotomy between popular music and the Western classical tradition. However, in the subsequent years I’ve tempered my interpretation. I no longer see a conflict between traditions, only a reflection on the rituals of music-making....”

BRETT DEAN (b. 1961)

Most composers get their start as performers, building up basic skills before gradually finding their own creative voices. Brett Dean, however, represents something of an extreme case. Trained as a professional violist, he left his native Australia in 1984 and became a member of the Berlin Philharmonic from 1985-2000, having completed only the routine composition exercises required in most theory classes. At first his approach was ad hoc and collaborative, largely in association with fellow Australian Simon Hunt. Dean recalls recording some viola tracks “in Simon’s primitive studio near Checkpoint Charlie” and becoming “quite fascinated with what he was doing, recording, improvising, building certain motives and playing around with them.” Dean thus set out on his own path of study, heavily influenced both by the orchestral repertory but also by live improvisation, tape music, and an entirely different ethos of performance. “On certain nights,” he points out, “I would play, say, a Bruckner symphony and then rip off my tails, put on a black leather jacket and be off to Kreuzberg to play in some sort of ‘alternative’ club. That was quite inspiring for me.”

Many critics have remarked that Dean favors poetic or pictorial titles. His *Beggars and Angels* (1999), for example, was his musical response to an art installation that juxtaposed large wooden sculptures of beggars against the paintings of his wife, Heather Betts. In fact, the composer credits his wife with shaping many aspects of his creativity. As he told music critic Carlos María Solare in 2000, “My style of composing is not really different from the way she layers things and starts by putting on some ‘subliminal’ colors and then builds on top of that, with figures often creeping through from previous layers of the painting. At the beginning I used the possibilities of the [electronic music] studio principally for layering the sound (as I also do in my concert pieces).” Several of Dean’s earliest finished scores feature this type of layering, whether of violas in the multi-track piece *Wendezeit* (Turning Points) (1988) or in the more theatrical *Twelve Angry Men* (1996), in which the cello section of the Berlin Philharmonic takes on the dynamic interpersonal relationships of the jury members in the famous Henry Fonda film.

Despite his love of literature, Dean wrote no vocal music until the year 2000, when his *Winter Songs* explored that most musical of poets, e. e. cummings. This recent turn to text setting makes all the more remarkable the tremendous success of his first opera, *Bliss*. Based on the novel by Peter Carey, it received its premiere at the Sydney Opera House in 2010 and has seen subsequent performances in Melbourne, Edinburgh and Hamburg. Nearly ten years in gestation, *Bliss* has also led to an orchestral suite (*Moments of Bliss*, 2004) and a cycle of arias (*Songs of Joy*, 2008). The immediate appeal of *Bliss* may spring from the composer’s generally lyrical

aesthetic. “I like voices to sing,” he writes: “I like long lines and melodic motivic materials, which have the capacity to include really important DNA information about a piece. It does help the understanding of a piece for an audience confronting it for the first time, without making it necessarily ‘easy.’... I want rather to invite listeners into the world of each piece.”

Dean’s concertos have won special acclaim, including his early Clarinet Concerto, *Ariel’s Music* (1995), which won an award from the UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers; his Violin Concerto, *The Lost Art of Letter Writing*, which won a Grawemeyer Award in 2009; and his Viola Concerto, which has earned performances around the world, often with Dean himself as soloist. In recent years, he has composed a Violin Sonata for Midori and a Sextet co-commissioned by the Nash Ensemble, Australia Ensemble, and Eighth Blackbird. Dean has also made a name for himself as a conductor, and he was the 2011 Featured Composer with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra.

Dean, *Intimate Decisions* (1996)

for solo viola

There is a special intimacy to Dean’s writing for viola—never more so than in his solo score *Intimate Decisions*. Although the score was commissioned by a colleague, Walter Küssner, Dean himself gave the premiere and the title comes from one of his wife’s paintings.

The composer describes the trajectory of the piece: “As the title implies, this is music of a private nature, and I must say I found the task of writing a work for a single string instrument strangely akin to writing a personal letter or having an intense discussion with a close friend. The piece opens with a short series of single motives... followed later by a chain of oscillating harmonics skating across the lower strings. Slowly these separate elements start reacting to one another, and the mood changes, developing from the distant nature of the opening to something more freely rhapsodic **yet** determined, then evolving further through moments of sudden drama, anger, flighty virtuosity or even calm and tenderness.”

“After exploring the implications of this ‘conversation’ and sinking to an uneasy quietness, the viola’s ensuing whisperings gather momentum, leading to an impassioned climax. The aftermath of this peak leaves an unresolved, gently rocking echo of what has been ‘discussed’ in the guise of the harmonics from the opening.”

MARK APPLEBAUM (b. 1967)

Seldom does one find a composerly imagination as fertile as Mark Applebaum’s. What’s more, this imagination is undergirded by an embrace of artistic complexity worthy of some of his key mentors (among them Brian Ferneyhough), a penchant for instrumental tinkering that links him to some of the great names in the ranks of American experimental music; and a sense of humor that is all his own. Connecting these strands is an over-arching interest in “idiom,” or the particularity of distinct languages, styles, instruments or genres. He speaks of “trans-idiomatic improvisation” as a way of moving beyond the narrow confines of received styles; of new instruments—especially those that draw upon everyday objects—as a way of creating new musical vernaculars; and of acoustic music that plays with questions of language and translation.

In subtle ways, the eleven works of Applebaum’s “Janus cycle” juxtapose two different communication styles—one marked by rapid frenzy, the other by glacial stasis. Take, for example, the uneasy combination of shimmering activity and near-total immobility in the marimba solo *Narcissus: Stratal Panacea*, which received its premiere at the Darmstadt Summer Music Courses in 1994. Other scores direct the performers in ways that suggest an ironic stance toward communication itself. In *Tlön*, for three conductors (and no one else), he stages a devolution (or evolution?) from empty gestures aimed at non-existent orchestras to a perfectly legible body language signaling these conductors’ extreme frustration. The solo work *Aphasia* is still more direct in its interface with the linguistic, pitting a two-channel tape part made up of “warped and mangled... vocal samples” against the “assiduously choreographed sign language” of a live performer.

If Applebaum’s writing for conventional performance forces seems especially attuned to their individual, idiomatic gestures, then his new instruments seem designed to call those gestures into question, or just to make them temporarily superfluous. Seeing the composer at the controls of one of his self-made instruments is a memorable experience—he calls them “sound-sculptures” for a reason. The most recent instrument “family” centers on the so-called *Mouseketier*, an “electro-acoustic percussion contraption” that the composer describes as follows: “a musical Frankenstein consisting of threaded rods, nails, combs, doorstops, springs, squeaky wheels, ratchets, a toilet tank flotation bulb, and other unlikely objects which are plucked, scratched, bowed, and modified by a battery of live electronics.” Some incarnations feature Astroturf, gears from a Volvo gearbox, a Schwinn bicycle logo, and, yes, at least one mousetrap. Why the proliferation of sound sources? As he explained to reporter Brett Campbell, it has something to do with inveterate curiosity, even with wonder—with an interest in “playing music the way kids think of playing.”

A fan and frequent performer at the jazz keyboard, Applebaum

nonetheless brings a committed variety to his improvisations, both in style and in form. Sometimes his scores invite creative spontaneity by replacing conventional notation with artful graphics and symbols of his own devising. At other times, a visual or mental map serves as a guide—most famously in his *S-tog* pieces, which take their players on a tour loosely structured by the Copenhagen subway system, but with subway stops replaced by abstract instructions (“high, slow, more, don’t listen, etc.”). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the link to things visual also finds expression in many of Applebaum’s published scores. The last movement of the piano suite *Disciplines*, for example, uses the mathematics of chess to create a unique formal architecture. “The musical form suggests the unmalleable rigor of a system,” he notes, “but at all levels...the composition is subject to how I intuitively play within the rules. Style is not determined by formal precepts but by predilection. An expressive aesthetic emerges not out of the creation of rules, but as the reaction to the rules.”

Applebaum has received commissions from Betty Freeman, the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, the Fromm Foundation, the Paul Dresner Ensemble, the Vienna Modern Festival, Tokyo’s Manufacture, the Jerome Foundation, and the American Composers Forum, among others. His works are frequently recorded, and he has been the featured artist at numerous festivals, including the 2004 University of Michigan *Electronica Microfestival* and the 61st Festival of Contemporary Music at Louisiana State University. Applebaum is currently Associate Professor at Stanford University, where he also serves as founding director of the Stanford Improvisation Collective, otherwise known as “[sic].”

Applebaum, *Pre-Composition* (2002)

for eight-channel tape

Right from the outset, Applebaum’s *Pre-Composition* announces itself: first, as an eight-channel tape piece; and, second, as a window into the composer’s creative process. A monaural or monophonic approach is explicitly rejected for being easy or boring, but the composer’s (multiple) voices make plain that such an approach would also obscure the inventive tension and fractured attention involved in art-making. One might observe that teasing out the strands of compositional consciousness is an exercise in both humor and psychology. One can hardly help marveling at the sheer verbal and vocal dexterity of the speaker(s), capable of calling into being a whole world of words and music. One could comment on the play of mind and body, the integration and disintegration of an audible artistic vision from the composer’s invisible mouth(s). One might remark upon all these things—but in reality this is a piece that speaks for itself.

NATHAN DAVIS (b. 1973)

Nathan Davis has a knack for shaping sounds in new and fantastic ways. Composer and percussionist, he has written scores that activate not just the usual instrumental suspects but also the children and stepchildren of the percussion family: snare drum, triangle, toy piano, mbira or thumb piano, river rocks, hammered dulcimer and, perhaps most famously, the cellphones of his audience members, which formed part of the fabric of *Bells* at the 2011 opening of the Tully Scope Festival at Lincoln Center. Whether portable or site-specific, Davis’s pieces have color and direction. As he told Pierre Ruhe of *Musical America*, “Thanks to John Cage, the idea of noise as music is mainstream. My generation has absorbed the electronics of [Karlheinz] Stockhausen and Alvin Lucier. Sounds that were weird a few decades ago are now commonplace.... I don’t have to be dogmatic and austere. The noise becomes part of the narrative.”

Many of Davis’s scores, including the one we will hear tonight, enhance a solo instrument or chamber group through electronic processing. The technological tools can be complex, but are often as simple as an amplifier or a “ring modulator,” which alters an incoming sound by multiplying its frequency with those of another sound or “wave form.” Davis’s *Douser* (2007) explores the overtone series and multiphonics (playing two or more sounds at once) using both the bass clarinet’s own multiphonic capacity and software that delays and extends the live sounds. *Crawlspace* (2002), featured on the National Public Radio series “Art of the States,” operates in a more self-reflexive vein. Davis explains: “*Crawlspace* is computer music in the most literal sense. I have a noisy laptop, and after months of frustration at hearing its various whirrs in the background of quiet recordings I was making, I decided to embrace the natural voice of this instrument.”

The composer’s background as a percussionist has also influenced both the instruments and sounds he chooses and the agility his pieces sometimes require. *Talking to Vasuveda* (2002) involves river rocks from Vermont, which are struck or scraped together, and set against a background created through live sound-processing and field recordings of the river where the stones were harvested. In *Diving Bell*, which won the ISCM Composers Competition in 2003, Davis himself creates what he calls a “structured improvisation” using two triangles and tape delay modeling software. He notes: “By striking the triangles at different points and with different materials, and by using a handheld microphone, I extract and re-sculpt single overtones that are present in the overall sound of the instruments, hidden sounds that are normally only apparent when one holds the triangle up to their ear, like a tuning fork.”

Diving Bell aside, quite a number of Davis’s scores explore the noisy, resonant sound of bells in different contexts. His tape piece *Rehearsing the Present* (2005) is based on the bell tones and atmospheric sounds of

Moscow's Red Square and was commissioned for a concert to be performed aboard the trans-Siberian railroad. In addition, Davis has also created a series of pieces he calls his "bell cycle," including the landmark *Bells* that filled the outer lobby of Alice Tully Hall (Lincoln Center) in 2011. From door bells to the familiar "ping" of an arriving email, the composer notes, "Bells have historically been a means of communication over distance—to mark time, signal alarm, announce celebration, call to prayer, etc." In the "bell cycle," cellphones receive broadcasts of the live performance, and each crackles and distorts at different frequencies, creating a mobile texture for a mobile audience.

Born in Alabama, Davis studied at Rice University, the Rotterdam Conservatory (on a Fulbright Fellowship), and Yale University. He has received commissions from the International Contemporary Ensemble, the Calder String Quartet, Yarn/Wire, TimeTable Percussion, and the Ojai Festival (for Eighth Blackbird and an installation by sound-sculptor Trimpin). Davis is co-founder of the duo Odd Appetite (with cellist Ha-Yang Kim) and the sextet Non Sequitur, in addition to being a core player in the International Contemporary Ensemble and making appearances as teacher and performer around the world.

Davis, *The Bright and Hollow Sky* (2008)

for flute/alto flute/piccolo, clarinet/bass clarinet, trumpet/piccolo trumpet, steel string acoustic guitar, and percussion

The title of Davis's quintet, *The Bright and Hollow Sky* suggests an expanse that is both inviting and somewhat fearsome. The composer himself calls the piece "a ritual, permeated at every level by an unbalanced rhythmic structure and expressed through its processional sequences, periods of repose, and its eventual urgency." Like some of his other scores, this one was written with the particular talents of the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) in mind.

The Bright and Hollow Sky is atmospheric in every sense. Wind players are charged with producing an array of multiphonics; in Davis's words they are also "amplified and at times are ring modulated against each other in pairs creating denser chords of microtonal projections" and acoustic interference. The prepared guitar "serves to mark time cycles, much as gongs do in gamelan music." Against its steady timekeeping a series of episodes emerge—one might consider them changes in weather, ranging from the dissipation and build-up of cloud formations, to a climactic storm in which the trumpet explodes in an ecstasy that is both tonal and textural.

LOU HARRISON (1917-2003)

Composer, poet, critic, dancer, inventor, playwright—the term "Renaissance man" seems an understatement when describing Lou Harrison, whose life work assured him a special place in music history and a spot as one of the Bay Area's best loved creative artists. Californian by inclination, if not by birth, Harrison was shaped in his music and philosophy by his teachers—Henry Cowell and Arnold Schoenberg—and by the vital musical atmospheres of San Francisco and Los Angeles in the 1930s and early 1940s. In the mid-1940s, Harrison headed to New York City, where his musical activities won some recognition; however, he soon found the noise and tension of big city life oppressive. In 1951, he took refuge (supported by a Guggenheim fellowship) at the idealistic, interdisciplinary Black Mountain College in North Carolina, before returning to the West Coast in 1953.

Influenced in part by Cowell's interest in musics of the world, Harrison was fascinated by musical sonority and especially by percussion from the very start of his career. As early as 1939, he and John Cage organized concerts of percussion music that stretched the continuum of musical timbres to what most thought were its limits. But in fact this was only the beginning. After his return to California, Harrison turned his ears to the musical cultures of East Asia. In the early 1960s, he studied Korean court music and Chinese classical music, and he gradually focused his attention on the Asian music with which he became most closely associated: the Indonesian gamelan, or percussion orchestra. In works like *Concerto in Slendro* (1961), *La koro sutro* (1972), and the Suite for Violin and Gamelan (1974), he freely incorporated the kinetic rhythms, complex layers of activity, and colorful melodic interweavings of traditional gamelan.

Delighting in "serendipitous instrumental acquisition," Harrison became almost as famous for creating instruments as for creating music. With his partner, the late Bill Colvig, he built an "American gamelan" that combined Indonesian sounds, junk materials, and pure intonation systems. The instruments they constructed ran the gamut from jade flutes to washtubs and from flower pots to oxygen tanks. Rather than calling on performers to master increasingly esoteric techniques, Harrison created instruments that made the sounds he wanted "naturally." "I don't explore instruments in the modernist way," he opined, "funny sounds on wind instruments and ways of playing. I just take an instrument as it is, including baking tins."

In art as in life, this spirit of curiosity, generosity, and acceptance has earned Harrison many admirers. Composer John Adams once observed: "That dual perspective of the traditional and the contemporary, the indigenous and the planetary, lies at the heart of Lou's gift as a teacher and mentor to many younger composers, especially on the West Coast.

As the quintessential Pacific Rim composer, Lou has given us a deeper sense of the creative fertility of this place in which we ‘look West to the East.’” Harrison’s honors are as varied as his life experience: grants from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Guggenheim, Rockefeller, Fromm, and Koussevitzky Foundations, a Fulbright fellowship, two honorary doctorates, and much acclaim for his contributions as editor and conductor of Charles Ives’s Pulitzer Prize-winning Symphony no. 3. In 1973, he was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and in 1997 he received the American Humanist Award.

Harrison, *Serenade* (1978)

for guitar and percussion

After hearing Harrison’s music in New York, composer and critic Virgil Thomson wrote: “The whole is delicate of sound, thoroughly alive rhythmically and melodically, evocative of some tranquil and vibrant scene. Few composers now alive can fascinate the ear, as Mr. Harrison does, with simple procedures. At once plain and sophisticated, his music reflects a concentration on music’s basic elements that is as expressive, surprisingly, as it is intrinsically interesting.”

While Thomson’s words seem apt for many of Harrison’s scores, they are especially apt for his 1978 guitar *Serenade*, in which each of five short movements expands on a particular musical element or principle. The initial “Round” is a dance with a steady but discontinuous pulse; the “Air” shows Harrison’s trademark love of melody; and the “Infinite Canon” is, as its name suggests, an exercise in counterpoint. The fourth movement, “Usul” takes its name from the rhythmic patterning of classical Turkish music. In Harrison’s words, “unlike the Indian [tala] which is varied in such a way to ‘thicken the plot,’ the Turkish *Usul* is an invariant rhythmic pattern which, as it were, sustains the melody as ‘pillars of the piece’.” Bringing the *Serenade* to a close is “Sonata,” which builds not on classical Turkish music but on the gestures of baroque music from the western classical tradition.

Originally planned as part of a larger but never-completed project involving five guitar suites with five different tuning systems, the *Serenade* uses an eight-tone scale with a lowered second degree and a raised fourth. In the late 1980s, Harrison decided to complement four of the existing movements with percussion parts, and it is this version we will hear tonight, performed by David Tanenbaum and William Winant, who have recorded this and other works by Harrison on the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players’ CD, *Lou Harrison: The Perilous Chapel*.

EDMUND CAMPION (b. 1957)

Although Edmund Campion is known among his colleagues for his imaginative approach to music technology, when it comes to the listening experience technology per se must take a back seat. As he put it in an interview with fellow-composer Keeril Makan (*Computer Music Journal*, 2004): “Emerging technologies have been the generative source for most of my musical explorations.” Yet Campion continues, “There is nothing new here. For Chopin, it was the modern piano, and for Schaeffer, it was the tape recorder. Finally, there is no distinction between acoustic sound, natural sound, or electronic sound. Everything is integrated with the full spectrum of all possible sounds. Bach’s *Art of the Fugue* and the noise of Niagara Falls both have a place in my compositional thinking.”

A native of Dallas, Texas, Edmund Campion did his doctoral work at Columbia University with Mario Davidovsky before attending the Paris Conservatory where he studied with composer Gérard Grisey. In the composer’s own words: “I have experience in three distinct musical practices: free improvisation (energy, impulse and the eternal present), the American/Columbia University academic avant-garde of the 1980s (structure, procedural rigor, modernist orthodoxy), and the studio of Gérard Grisey and IRCAM of the 1990s (sound, process, mysticism and science).” In 1993 he was selected to work at the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique [IRCAM] and the following year he produced *Losing Touch*, which has been performed twice by the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Like the percussion sextet *Ondoyant et divers* (featured by the Players in 2007), this earlier duet for tape and vibraphone crosses, in Campion’s words, “the fruits of improvisation and formalized composition,” yielding a kinetic texture of delicate and jazzy rhythmic patterns.

The success of *Losing Touch* brought Campion new IRCAM commissions including his first large-scale piece for live, interactive electronics, *Natural Selection* (premiered in 1996 with the composer at the MIDI grand-piano keyboard), and the evening-long video and dance production *Playback* (1998-99), choreographed by François Raffinot. After his return from Paris, Campion joined the composition faculty at UC Berkeley, where he is also Co-Director of the Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (CNMAT) and where he continues explore radical and beautiful relationships between sound and space. In 2001, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players performed his duo for vibraphone and piano, *Domus Aurea*, a sonic rumination on the “grotesque” inspired by the fantastic, fifteen-hundred-year-old frescoes on the walls of Emperor Nero’s Roman villa. In addition, the Players commissioned and gave the world premiere of *Outside Music* (2005), featuring a new keyboard instrument designed to exhibit pianistic virtuosity and to generate a dazzling array of

computer-based sounds, modified in immediate response to the performer's touch. More recently, in *Auditory Fiction* (2009), Campion calls upon four instrumentalists to play similar material at different speeds, using personal click-track devices to create streams of sound that diverge and unite in planned yet unpredictable ways.

Among Campion's honors are the Rome Prize, the Nadia Boulanger Award, the Paul Fromm Award at Tanglewood, a Charles Ives Award given by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and a Fulbright scholarship for study in France. In June 2001, the TEMPO Festival at U. C. Berkeley devoted an entire concert to his music, including *Sons et Lumières* for video, player piano, and eight channel tape. In addition to the works mentioned above, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players has featured *A Complete Wealth of Time*, and other scores, both live and in a CD devoted to Campion's works, *Outside Music*, for Albany Records.

Campion, *Small Wonder (The Butterfly Effect)* (2012)

for 2 violins, 2 clarinets, percussion, double bass, and electronics

The composer writes: "I decided on the exact instrumentation for *Small Wonder (The Butterfly Effect)*, then I left the piece, allowing it to gestate, a hidden process inside a chrysalis. Two disparate worlds cohabit: one driven by informed intuition, the other by calculation and data. Take a block of wood, then record audio samples of one hundred and one different ways of making the object speak. As in a David Hockney photo collage, the identity of the woodblock becomes revealed—a chaotic granularity of all possible audible views of the object. I created such a repository (a corpus) of sampled percussion sounds with over 1800 samples. I devised a set of descriptors that categorized the corpus and with considerable support from the folks at the Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (David Wessel, Adrian Freed, John MacCallum, Jeff Lubow), I helped write new computer software that could mine the data and generate variable gestures of orderly but unpredictable percussive material.

"All the parts of *Small Wonder* were set into motion toward a goal that was unknowable. It is a small wonder that crafting the pieces of a puzzle that has no picture might produce something of worth. Ilya Prigogine, in his book *The End of Certainty* states, "matter at equilibrium, with no arrow of time, is 'blind,' but with the arrow of time, it begins to 'see'... Classical science emphasized order and stability; now, in contrast, we see fluctuations, instability, multiple choices, and limited predictability at all levels of observation." In the language of the ancient West, the word chaos is to be feared. I was headed for chaos, but recent scientific understanding offered me some relief from the anxiety. I reveled in diving into the rabbit hole formed when future events in a musical unfolding are accepted as

non-decreasable, yet dependent on sensitive attention to initial conditions (an instrumentation, a tempo, an electronic medium, etc.). Changes on the micro event level will reverberate and cause change on the macro form level. In strictly musical terms, the biggest effect on a musical state happens when most things stay relatively stable while other things change by small amounts, as when an acoustic instrument changes frequency by a western half-step.

"At the final moment of finishing the piece, I was happy to discover the order of things. Completely by surprise, I realized that the instruments formed the image of a butterfly on the stage; the bass is the thorax, the violin/clarinets are the wings. I heard the incessant noise and fluttering chaos of the electronics integrate themselves into a heterogeneous space of sources and temporal levels. The music is a mirror of my world, mundane and predictable with micro edges of unpredictability and the infinite. No contradictions here, no angst. *Small Wonder* is a picture that is sometimes silly, sometimes tragic, sometimes both at the same time. The observer is invited to board any number of trains, at last to arrive at a destination personal to that particular observer.

"Chaos used to be something to be avoided, but Prigogine demonstrates that it is the source and progenitor of the ordering principle, something to be learned from, something to celebrate. Joseph Campbell noted at the end of his life that ancient Religion/Myth supplied the human need for a Mysterium (space of the numen, place of beauty). Current knowledge rightly calls these practices into question. Just as we need to be sure that striking a particular block of wood will produce a sound that says 'I am this block of wood,' humans need to continually renew the numinous quality of existence, to find and attempt to understand beauty. The process of exploring, creating and understanding beauty does not require that scientific facts be discarded."

—Program Notes by Beth E. Levy

The Performers

Karen Gottlieb, harpist, works as a freelance performer, teacher, lecturer and harp technician throughout the USA, including international touring on four continents. She regularly performs and tours with the San Francisco Symphony as second harpist, with which she is a recipient of numerous Grammy Awards. She has also worked with many of the most celebrated popular culture artists including Ella Fitzgerald, Tony Bennett, and Michael Feinstein. She is the harpist for the Skywalker Recording Symphony and the California Symphony (serving as principal harpist for twenty years), and for nearly twenty years, she has worked with the San Francisco Symphony's Education Department in their "Adventures In Music" program, giving over a hundred concerts each year in elementary schools in San Francisco. Gottlieb received her Bachelor's Degree at the University of Washington in Seattle and her Masters in Performance from the Cleveland Institute of Music. She is on the faculty of San Francisco State University and Mills College and she has been a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 1990.

Karen Rosenak is an almost native of the Bay Area. She specializes both in music for the fortepiano and in recently composed solo piano and chamber music. She particularly enjoys finding the connections—as well as the disconnects—between the two periods of musical composition. She was pianist with and a founding member of the Bay Area new music groups EARPLAY and the Empyrean Ensemble. She has been on the faculty at UC Berkeley since 1990, where she teaches musicianship. She continues to perform with the Bay Area's leading new music ensembles and has been featured in CD's of music by composers such as Cindy Cox, Richard Festinger, Andrew Imbrie, Jorge Liderman, Pablo Ortiz, John Thow, and Mark Winges.

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.

David Tanenbaum, guitar, has been 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, he participated in the world premiere of Harrison's *Rhymes with Silver*. 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 UC Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz, and has been a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 1988.