

*Percussion music is a contemporary transition
from keyboard-influenced music to the all-sound
music of the future.*

—John Cage
The Future of Music: Credo (1937)

*The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players'
presentation of 'PERCUSSIONS is sponsored in part
by a generous grant from the Cultural Equity Grants
Program of the San Francisco Arts Commission.*

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*Tonight's performance of Lou Harrison's
SIMFONY 13 is made possible by a contribution
in memory of Elizabeth A. Baker.*

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*The ensemble is grateful to the Barlow
Endowment for Music Composition at Brigham Young University for
underwriting the commissioning
of Richard Festinger's CROSSFIRE.*

ΣΣΣ

PERCUSSIONISTS

**Scott Bleaken
David Carlisle
Timothy Dent
Russell Greenberg
Daniel Kennedy
Michael McCurdy
Mark Veregge
William Winant**

GUEST CONDUCTOR

Donald Palma

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players
Monday, December 4, 2000 • 8 pm
Center for the Arts Forum

'PERCUSSIONS

LOU HARRISON
Simfony 13 (1941)

RICHARD FESTINGER
Crossfire (2000) – World premiere

I. Allegro molto II. Andante III. Alla breve; Allegro
Daniel Kennedy, William Winant

CHOU WEN-CHUNG
Echoes from the Gorge (1989)

Prelude—Raindrops on Bamboo Leaves—Echoes from the Gorge
Autumn Pond—Clear Moon—Shadows in the Ravine
Old Tree by the Cold Spring—Sonorous Stones
Droplets down the Rocks—Drifting Clouds—Rolling Pearls
Peaks and Cascades—Falling Rocks and Flying Spray

— INTERMISSION —

KAREN TANAKA
Polarization (1994) – US premiere
Daniel Kennedy, Michael McCurdy

IRWIN BAZELON
Propulsions (1974)

'PERCUSSIONS

Edgard Varèse took a bold aesthetic stand in the early 1930s when he wrote *Ionisation*, one of the first Western compositions for percussion alone. What did it mean to create music that moved beyond conventional preoccupations with melody and harmony to emphasize other musical parameters such as rhythm, texture, and timbre? Tonight's program represents diverse ways of answering this question. It places on display the enormous variety of percussive objects, the creative ingenuity that can conjure previously unimaginable sounds from such objects, and the performance dexterity that allows these sounds to become music.

Program Notes

LOU HARRISON (B. 1917)

Composer, poet, critic, dancer, inventor, playwright—the term “Renaissance man” seems an understatement when describing Lou Harrison, whose life work has 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 '40s. Here, the contemporary music activities of Cowell and others mingled with sounds from around the world, including Indonesian gamelan, Chinese opera, and the musics of Latin America. 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 from the very start of his career. This was a driving force behind his early percussion ensemble music, including tonight’s work, *Simfony 13*. As early as 1939, Cage and Harrison organized concerts of percussion music together 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 further westward, toward the musical cultures of East Asia. During several trips on the Pacific Rim in the early 1960s, he studied Korean court music and Chinese classical music. This firsthand experience led to numerous

experiments in “transethnic” sound and scoring, as he incorporated an ever greater variety of instruments into increasingly hybrid East-West ensembles. In the 1970s, Harrison focused his attention on the Asian music with which he has since become most closely associated: the gamelan, or percussion orchestra, of Java and Bali. In his many scores for Javanese and Sundanese gamelan and in works like *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.

Even with this odyssey into the non-Western musical world, Harrison was not completely satisfied with the palette of sounds opened up to him: “I have heard timbres in my head that could not come from traditional instruments. When this happens my only option is to hunt around until I find a way to produce it. I remember once wanting the sound of stars coming out.” Delighting in “serendipitous instrumental acquisition,” Harrison soon 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 later constructed ran the gamut from jade flutes to washtubs and from flower pots to oxygen tanks.

Implicit in the expansion of Harrison’s instrumental resources was a particular philosophy of music and performance. Rather than calling on performers to master increasingly esoteric techniques, Harrison chose to construct 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. I don’t make any fuss with them. I just play them. The same is true when I use an instrument from another culture. I make every effort to learn how to play it as the musician from that culture plays it, because that’s what

attracted me in the first place.” In art as in life, this spirit of curiosity, generosity, and acceptance is just one of the qualities that have won Harrison so many admirers. Composer John Adams has 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’s experience. In addition to his substantial contribution as editor and conductor of Ives’s Pulitzer-Prize-winning Symphony no. 3, Harrison has won awards that include a grant from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, two Guggenheim fellowships, two Rockefeller grants, a Fromm Award, a Koussevitzky Music Foundation commission, a Fulbright fellowship, and two honorary doctorates. He became a senior scholar at the East-West Center of the University of Hawaii in 1963, and has since been involved with a number of projects emphasizing cultural exchange. In 1973, he was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and in 1997 received the American Humanist Award. His music has been commissioned and performed by important musical organizations worldwide, and has appeared frequently on the programs of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, who recorded his *The Perilous Chapel* for New Albion Records in 1993.

Simfony 13 (1941)
for percussion quartet

A delightful memento from Harrison’s San Francisco period (late 1930s and early ’40s), the *Simfony 13* was long believed to have been lost after its initial performance. It only re-entered the percussion repertory in the late 1990s when its score was

rediscovered by Leta Miller and Frederic Lieberman during their research for the biography, *Lou Harrison: Composing a World*. Dedicated to John and Xenia Cage, the piece was first heard at one of the now legendary John Cage-Lou Harrison concerts held in a rented space at San Francisco’s California Club. (The program also included Cage’s *Third Construction*, as well as *Double Music*, for which Harrison and Cage each composed two of the four parts independently and according to only minimal guidelines about length and compositional procedure.)

Of all the works on tonight’s program, *Simfony 13* has perhaps the closest ties to melody and to dance, dating as it does from the time of Harrison’s association with such dancer/choreographers as Carol Beals, Bonnie Bird, Bella Lewitzky, and Lester Horton. Surface rhythms vary as the parts move in delightful disjunction with one another, but the underlying pulse remains relatively constant—it invites bodily motion. Along with familiar instruments like wood blocks, tom toms, and suspended cymbal, the piece calls for such exotic sounds as “large ranch triangle,” “water buffalo bells” and “suspended brake drums.” The latter must be substituted for in most modern performances, as the sonic qualities of this common auto part have changed greatly since 1941! Though not without clear structural signposts (including a fully contrapuntal episode), the work unfolds as a leisurely and layered jangling, reminiscent of Harrison’s improvisatory dance accompaniments.

At its premiere, *Simfony 13* was selected in an audience vote as the finest piece on the program. *San Francisco Chronicle* critic Alfred Frankenstein agreed: “Harrison shows remarkable ingenuity in developing the melodic, coloristic and rhythmic potentialities of this ensemble. There is nothing freakish or strange about the work; it is, rather, an exhilarating lyrical study and quite appealing. It is almost impressionistic compared to the annihilating roar and rage of the only

other recorded piece of this type, the notorious 'lonization' of Edgar Varèse." Of course, many listeners and critics have long since learned to appreciate Varèse's intricacies as well as Harrison's exuberance.

RICHARD FESTINGER (B. 1948)

Richard Festinger has been a respected figure in the Bay Area new music scene for over twenty-five years. A former composition student of Andrew Imbrie and Richard Felciano at the University of California, Berkeley, where he received his Ph.D. in 1983, Festinger continues to be influenced by earlier studies in jazz performing and arranging at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, by his participation in San Francisco's flourishing free improvisation movement of the 1970s, and by studies in Paris from 1978-80 as a recipient of the George Ladd Prize. Making California his permanent home in 1980, Festinger became a founding member and director of the contemporary chamber music ensemble Earplay in 1985. Also the founder and director of the Composition Workshop at California State University's Summer Arts Festival in Long Beach, he has taught at the University of California and at Dartmouth College, and is currently director of the theory, composition, and electronic music programs at San Francisco State University, as well as a research affiliate at Stanford University's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics.

Festinger's works have been praised for their combination of classical eloquence and vividly colorful musical surface. His recently published *Serenade for Six* received enthusiastic reviews for its "complicated, yet decorative" textures and its "dancing, rhythmic juice" (*Los Angeles Times*). Whether these features spring more from his background in classical composition or from his years in jazz performance, they reflect Festinger's ability both to engage and to entertain—a powerful

and delightful combination that is characteristic of his oeuvre. Considering the composer's lasting involvement with Earplay, it is only natural that many of his most successful pieces are scored for various chamber ensembles. Often, he pushes the textural possibilities of a small group to nearly orchestral extremes, as in his Septet, written for Earplay in 1987. In other cases, he enjoys relying on more intimate instrumental exchanges, as in his work for violin and piano, *Twinning*. In pieces like his String Quartet (written for the Alexander Quartet) and the trios *Tapestries* and *Trionometry*, he has demonstrated both a keen ear for diverse timbres, and a growing interest in the accumulated performance traditions of certain instrumental combinations. These traits also shape his newest work, *Crossfire*.

Festinger's many honors include awards from the Jerome Foundation, the Fromm Foundation, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, and a 1993 Walter Hinrichsen Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Among the organizations that have commissioned his works are Parnassus, the New York Music Ensemble, the Music Teachers' National Association, the Left Coast Ensemble, the City Winds, Alter-Ego and, with tonight's work, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. The Players also premiered his *Smokin' with Cocuswood* in 1993.

***Crossfire* (2000) for percussion duo**

Festinger writes: "*Crossfire* was commissioned by the Barlow Foundation for the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, who first proposed the idea of a percussion duo. The title reflects the work's instrumentation, each performer having similar, though not identical resources. For example, one player has a vibraphone, the other a marimba; one has temple blocks, the other wood blocks; one

has cowbells, the other tin cans; etc. This parallel instrumentation informs the musical dialogue throughout, with similar instruments always paired off.

“The dialogue itself is a rapid banter of give and take. One important implication of this pairing of instruments is that the instruments’ timbral characteristics become form-generating elements in a progressive unfolding of sonic resources. The opening of the first movement features wood blocks and temple blocks in combination with vibraphone and marimba. A more quiescent middle section features metallic instruments (crotales, glockenspiel, cymbals, and triangles), and the movement ends with vibraphone and marimba, this time in combination with cowbells and tin cans. The second movement introduces drums as a new sonorous element, exploring their potential for a quiet lyricism. The final movement combines together all the instruments in a musical kaleidoscope.

“An underlying process in *Crossfire* concerns the relationship between the pitched and non-pitched instruments. At the outset, the pitched instruments (vibraphone, marimba, glockenspiel, crotales) predominate, the non-pitched instruments coalescing around their interplay. Over the course of the piece, the non-pitched instruments develop an independence that at times subsumes the pitched instruments in a reversal of their initial roles.

“*Crossfire* is dedicated to tonight’s performers, Daniel Kennedy and William Winant.”

CHOU WEN-CHUNG (B. 1923)

“I am influenced by the philosophy that governs every Chinese artist, whether he be poet or painter: namely, affinity to nature in conception, allusiveness in expression, terseness in realization.” In countless interviews and essays throughout his distinguished career, Chou Wen-chung has articulated this artistic credo alongside his firmly held belief that one of the most important challenges for twentieth-century composition is to achieve a synthesis, or “confluence,” of musical languages from the Eastern and Western hemispheres.

Arriving in the United States from Shanghai in 1946 with the intention of studying architecture at Yale, Chou soon found his attention drawn to composition. Early teachers included such prominent figures as Nicolas Slonimsky, Bohuslav Martinu, and Otto Luening, but it was Edgard Varèse who proved the most lasting inspiration. To this day, Chou has been a prominent advocate for Varèse’s music, writing articles about him, completing his *Nocturnal* from the sketches, and producing new editions of *Amériques*, *Octandre*, and *Intégrales*. It was in part from Varèse that Chou inherited a powerful commitment to expanding the timbral resources of modern music and a related interest in percussion instruments.

What makes Chou’s music unique, however, is his explicit, deep engagement with traditional Chinese music. Over the years, this has taken a variety of musical guises, ranging from early pieces such as *Landscapes* (1949) or *Yü Ko* (1965), which draw directly upon Chinese modes, instruments, or performance techniques, to later works that rely on subtler distillations of aesthetic principles from Chinese music. These principles go well beyond using devices such as the *I Ching* (Book of Changes). They require acute attention to timbre and articulation, an economy of gesture, and an intimate connection to the natural world.

Drawing an analogy between his music and the Chinese language, Chou observes: “each word—each character—is capable of being a poetic, graphic, and sonic entity in itself . . . Similarly a musical tone, recognized by the Chinese as an acoustic phenomenon involving both pitch and timbre, is again capable of being a musical event by itself, with its own expressive qualities. In other words, the production and control of a single tone may create enough musical dimensions, such as modifications in pitch, timbre and loudness, to evoke poetry or sonic beauty all by itself.” Extending this analogy still further, Chou has commented on the similarities between his compositional practice and the traditions of Chinese calligraphy in which, Chou notes, “the controlled flow of ink—through the interaction of movement and energy, the modulation of line and texture—creates a continuum of motion and tension in a spatial equilibrium.” *Cursive* (1963) for flute and piano is probably Chou’s most direct realization of the affinities between composition and calligraphy, but many of the connotations of calligraphy also apply to his other works, including *Echoes from the Gorge*.

Chou has received many prestigious honors including the 1984 China Institute Qingyun Award, a Rockefeller Foundation grant, two Guggenheim Fellowships, and a National Institute of Arts and Letters award, as well as commissions from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players co-commissioned his *Windswept Peaks* in 1990. Chou’s works have been performed extensively around the world, and many of his activities reflect his status as a cultural ambassador between East and West. He is an honorary member of the Asian Composers’ League, a founding member of the American Society of University Composers, and a past president of CRI (Composers’ Recording Inc.). A profoundly influential teacher, especially in the formation of a

clearer Asian American compositional identity—formal pupils include Chen Yi, Chinariy Ung, Tan Dun, Zhou Long, and Bright Sheng—Chou has held academic positions at the University of Illinois, Brooklyn College, and Hunter College, as well as Columbia University, where he began teaching in 1972 and was Fritz Reiner Professor. Since 1978, he has served as Director of the Center for U.S.-China Arts Exchange in New York City.

Echoes from the Gorge (1989)
for percussion quartet

Chou’s percussion quartet, *Echoes from the Gorge*, is a fitting tribute both to his Chinese heritage and to the influence of his famous mentor, Varèse. In scoring, the piece clearly draws on the history of percussion music as incarnated by Cage, Harrison, and others. Yet fully a third of the percussion instruments Chou calls for are Chinese in origin, and he stresses the importance of using “authentic” instruments whenever possible. Even more striking are the remarkably detailed instructions to the performers, which fill the first half dozen pages of the score. Here, Chou seems to have drawn on the model of *ch’in* (Chinese zither) music, where more than a hundred symbols exist to specify performance indications, enabling enormous subtlety of inflection and control. Just as *ch’in* tablature specifies not only the pitch but also the mood and manner in which the string is to be approached, so Chou offers abbreviations for more than twenty-five types of sticks or mallets and for nearly as many specific contact locations on the various instruments.

The result of these highly refined performance directions is an exquisite interplay of timbres and a delicate gestural poetry that matches the evocative titles of the twelve movements, which follow one another without pause. Like Varèse’s pioneering *Ionisation* (for which Chou has published a detailed analysis), *Echoes from the*

Gorge explores the potential of using non-melodic musical elements like rhythm, timbre, or articulation to shape the structure of the work, much as melody and harmony do in so much traditional concert music. In its codification of rhythmic patterns derived from the *I Ching* and in its loosely palindromic structures reminiscent both of Weberian serialism and of the ancient Chinese perspective on the “water image” or reflection in nature, Chou’s work expresses the complementary forces—the *yin* and *yang*—of Occident and Orient, beautifully captured in sound.

KAREN TANAKA (B. 1961)

Combining strong Asian ties and a lifelong fascination with European culture, Karen Tanaka has emerged as one of Japan’s leading contemporary composers and as a significant voice on the international scene. Born in Tokyo in 1961, she began lessons in piano and composition at an early age. After studying French literature at Aoyama Gakuen University, she attended the Toho Gakuen School of Music from 1982-86, where her primary composition teacher was Akira Miyoshi. In 1986, supported by a French Government Scholarship, she moved to Paris where she studied with Tristan Murail and worked as an intern at the computer music center IRCAM. During 1990-91, she studied with Luciano Berio in Florence (assisted by funds both from the Japanese government and the Nadia and Lili Boulanger Foundation) before returning to IRCAM from 1991 to 1993.

The works of these early years—including her first major success, *Prismes* (1984), the prize-winning piano concerto *Anamorphose* (1986), and *Homage en cristal* (1991)—were followed by a series of important Japanese commissions: *Initium* (1992), *Wave Mechanics* (1994), and *Echo Canyon* (1995). As the titles of these pieces

suggest, Tanaka has long been fascinated by scientific processes and their translation into musical sounds. The instrumental coloring of *Prismes* is based on Tanaka’s conception of light as refracted through a prism into the rainbow spectrum. The optical term “anamorphose” inspired her to explore sonic and temporal distortions. Her more recent music also reveals a growing fascination with the natural world and a concern for environmental issues. *Echo Canyon* was suggested by the striking geological formations of Bryce Canyon in Utah—an interesting parallel to *Des Canyon aux Etoiles* of Olivier Messiaen, a composer to whom Tanaka is often compared. Other new works include *Frozen Horizon* (written in response to the winter landscape of Norway), *Water and Stone*, and the purely electronic *Questions of Nature*.

Tanaka has garnered important international honors, such as prizes at the Viotti and Trieste competitions, the Japan Symphony Foundation Award, a Gaudeamus Prize from the International Music Week in Amsterdam (1987), and the Muramatsu Prize (1988). Though she lives and works in Paris, she has retained many important connections to Japan, including the post of co-artistic director of the Yatsugatake Kogen Music Festival, formerly led by Toru Takemitsu.

Her busy schedule for the current year includes the first performances of two piano works—*Techno Etudes* (written for Tomko Mukaiyama and inspired by the sounds of the techno music popular in dance clubs) and *Crystalline III* (composed for Eve Egoyan)—as well as some impressive orchestral achievements: the Radio France premiere of *Water and Stone*; the first performance of *Departure*, written for the BBC Symphony Orchestra; and the premiere of her orchestral *My Guardian Angel*, commissioned by New York’s Music From Japan for its 25th Anniversary Gala at Carnegie Hall this past November.

Polarization (1994)

for percussion duo

Given Tanaka's experience in the technologically rich environment of IRCAM, it is not surprising that she has chosen scientific analogies to explain her title: "Polarization has several meanings: in magnetics, it is the distinction between the north and south seeking poles of a magnet; in electronics, it is the distinction between the positive and negative parameters in an electrical circuit or device; in optics, it is the orientation of light beams." Tanaka's juxtaposition of hard-edged metallic sounds (anvils, tam-tams, steel sheets, chimes, suspended cymbals, gongs, steel drum) with the curiously non-blending dryness of bass drums underscores the title's connotations of oppositional and possibly irreconcilable difference.

As the piece illustrates, however, polarization can also be a powerful metaphor for human communication or exchange. In this work, the two performers are confined to opposite corners of the stage. Their carefully choreographed gestures are intricate and intensely interactive. She notes, "The energy created by two performers is transferred slowly in the soundspace as if they are tracing flexible curves and creating polarized lights, however, the energy sometimes collides, creating conflict and explosion. The sounds are spatialized in the soundspace." Indeed, the diverse sounds that emerge from each performer's stage "territory" create a dialogue that unfolds not only in time, but also (as Tanaka suggests) in space.

Polarization was commissioned by Radio France and given its first performance in 1995 by Gaston Sylvestre and Willy Coquillat.

IRWIN BAZELON (1922-95)

"I believe that a composer cannot escape his roots," Irwin Bazon wrote, "and those origins come to flower in his creative imagination and musical fantasy." In Bazon's case, imagination and fantasy have come to fruition in a stunning array of scores, each with its own forceful personality. "In my music there is a relentless surge of super-charged city life that reflects the fact that I have lived all of my years in the city. The pulse of its rebellious mutterings has directly influenced my world of 'violent silence.' The alternations of mood, color, and dramatic flair are a direct expression of the constant changes of pace, the rhythmic beat of life in the big metropolis."

Bazon had ample opportunity to appreciate the facets of urban life during his childhood in Chicago (where he began his musical career as a jazz pianist and songwriter), while studying with Milhaud at Mills College in Oakland, and after his permanent move to New York City in 1948. During the 1950s and '60s, Bazon made a solid living in the realm of commercial music, scoring documentaries, movies and cartoons, and also writing incidental music for the theater, including two American Shakespeare Festival productions. The experiences of these years—touched upon in his 1975 book, *Knowing the Score: Notes on Film Music*—helped to shape his attitudes in a variety of ways. Unlike many twentieth-century composers, Bazon never accepted the stability of a university teaching position. He once quipped that the money he made from the eight seconds of music he composed for NBC News in the 1960s was "enough to subsidize three symphonies." The challenges of writing for film and other media may also be partly responsible for the composer's prolific output and the dramatic power of even his most abstract compositions.

Bazon's works—including nine symphonies and more than forty major orchestral scores—show a marked preference for brass and

percussion instruments, and an often astonishing rhythmic vitality. Aggressive rhythms and brilliant instrumental coloring seem to lie at the heart of his musical cityscapes. According to his friend and colleague Richard Rodney Bennett, “[Bazelon’s] propulsion of rhythm is almost never motoric; it depends rather on violent dislocations and cross accents set over an implied pulse. A typical fast movement suggests a piece of atonal modern jazz without the rhythm section . . . There is always the electric vitality and energy, the obsessive rhythmic conflicts, the jazzy riffs. There are extraordinary contrasts between a ferocious toughness and complexity and the most extreme delicacy, fragility, and refinement.” Though Bazelon was not afraid to include serial techniques or even lyrical melodies in his compositional idiom, far stronger are the resonances of jazz in such works as *Triple Play* (1977) and *Cross Currents* (1980). His “Churchill Downs” Concerto (1970) combines these resonances with the instrumental resources of rock music in a tribute to the composer’s favorite extramusical hobby: horse racing.

Bazelon won many honors and awards including commissions from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, the Kansas City and New Orleans Philharmonics, the American Brass Quintet, the Boehm Quintette, and the Royal Northern College in England, where he served as guest composer. In 1982, he received a grant from the Serge Koussevitzky Foundation for his work, *Fusions*. A career in conducting began in 1962 when he led the Washington National Symphony in the premiere of his *Short Symphony*. He later conducted original works with the Detroit Symphony, the Kansas City Philharmonic, and the Orchestre National de Lille.

***Propulsions* (1974)**
for seven percussionists

It is no accident that Bazelon labeled his *Propulsions* a “concerto.” The piece is a *tour de force*, requiring dazzling instrumental (and vocal!) dexterity from every performer and offering audiences a physical display that is nothing short of spectacular. The instrumentation is generous and geographically diverse, including Indian tabla drums, conga drums, bongos, log drums, “cuica” (friction drums), African “talking” drums, “thumb” piano, Japanese cup and bowl gongs, Javanese “hat” gong, ship’s bells, shell and wood chimes, anvils, scratchers, bass slide whistle, “cricket-clickers” . . . and the list goes on and on.

While one would expect a wide variety of sounds to emanate from such a heterogeneous assemblage, Bazelon surpasses all expectations. Incredibly precise performance indications ensure that the piece explores every corner of the vast sonic realm Bazelon had in mind: “It was my intention to interrelate the sounds of membrane, steel, wood, glass . . . and silence; to explore their color ranges both singly and in combination. And, in so doing, to bring into play various performance techniques that would contrast: sharp blows, gentle strokes and friction.” Along with the usual mallets and sticks, players tap their hands and fingernails on instruments, pull bass bows and wire brushes across metal bars, explore unconventional mallet methods, and even use a toy “super ball” to draw distinctive effects from tam-tam and bass drum. Bazelon observes, “These less common methods of coaxing sounds from inanimate objects can set in motion delicate timbres that evoke gossamer webs of sound-color; or, in some cases, increase tension.”

As its title would suggest, *Propulsions* is an impulsive piece, built of lulls and climaxes that are unpredictable in intensity and duration.

The composer explains: "The varying relationships between pitches (high and low), dynamics (loud, soft, and sudden accents) and rhythmic attacks (fast, slow, slow-to-fast, fast-to-slow), often written in spatial notation, trigger a series of emotional rhythmic explosions that propel the music forward." From its mysterious, subtly nuanced opening to its heart-racing, drum-line finish, the piece uses juxtapositions and interruptions, restful interludes and forceful outbursts to build a compelling sense of drama that Bazelon consciously cultivated: "Because the musicians are kept very busy performing, and are occasionally called upon to shout vocal accents that add an extra dimension of stress to the rhythmic bombardment, the music has a theatrical flavor, one that I hope will enhance the listener's involvement."

—Program notes by Beth Levy

Performers

Scott Bleaken received his degrees in percussion from the Juilliard School in 1976 under the tutelage of Saul Goodman and Buster Bailey. After free-lancing in New York for ten years, Bleaken decided to relocate to the Bay Area where he frequently performs with the San Francisco Symphony, Opera and Ballet. Also included in his percussion resume are recurrent performances with the Marin and Oakland Symphonies, Broadway musicals for Shorenstein Nederlander and movie soundtrack scores at Skywalker Ranch.

David Carlisle is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music. He finished a Master's Degree at the University of Toronto, where he studied percussion with Russell Hartenberger of Nexus. Carlisle's wide range of musical abilities includes drum set, orchestral percussion, contemporary music, and steel pans. He also enjoys West African drumming and North Indian tabla drums. He has performed with the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, The Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players, the Chamber Music Society of Sacramento, Earplay, the Empyrean Ensemble, Nexus, Bob Becker, the Toronto production of *Miss Saigon* in addition to participating in several Banff Center Music and Music Theatre residencies in Canada. Carlisle composes and performs with *SqueezPlay*, a group for accordion (Douglas Schmidt), piano (Adrienne Park) and percussion. In addition to the release of their first CD, *rubber horn*, and their first video for *Bravo*, *SqueezPlay* performed at the prestigious Winnipeg New Music Festival in 1998. Carlisle currently teaches percussion at both UC Davis and UC Berkeley.

Timothy Dent graduated from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in 1999 where he was a student of Jack Van Geem. Prior teachers also include Tom Stubbs and Jonathan Haas at the Aspen

Music Festival. Since graduation he has been busy freelancing with many of the ensembles and orchestras in the bay area including the Sprocket Ensemble, the Lamplighters and The California, Berkeley, Oakland-East Bay, Santa Cruz and Marin Symphonies.

Russell Greenberg is a fourth year music major at U.C. Berkeley. Focusing on the performance of modern compositions, he has performed with ensembles including the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players, Ensemble Parallel (Santa Cruz), and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. He is also a member of the University Symphony, directed by David Milnes. Recently, he attended the Acanthes/IRCAM summer workshop in Helsinki, Finland where he studied with Daniel Ciampolini of Ensemble Intercontemporain. He currently studies percussion with William Winant and David Carlisle.

Daniel Kennedy has been performing with the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 1993. He holds a master's degree from the California Institute of the Arts and a doctoral degree from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Focussing on the solo and ensemble music of this century, Kennedy has performed with such groups as the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, the Group for Contemporary Music, the New York New Music Ensemble, the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players, Earplay, the Empyrean Ensemble and Music Now, and at festivals across the country as well as in Europe and Japan. He is the founding member of several contemporary music ensembles, including the California E.A.R. Unit, Tabla Rasa, and the Talujon Percussion Quartet. Extensive recording credits include projects with such renowned artists as Tod Machover, David Starobin, Fred Sherry, Harvey Sollberger, Charles Wuorinen, Paul Hillier and Dennis Russell Davies. Kennedy has also explored the music of a variety of other cultures, including India, the Middle East and Indonesia, and is an active performer of these musical

styles. He is currently on the faculty at California State University, Sacramento, where he is Instructor of Percussion and Artistic Director of the Festival of New American Music.

Michael McCurdy, after receiving his Bachelor's in music education from Texas Christian University in 1997, spent a year as the principal percussionist with the La Jolla Symphony while studying privately with Steven Schick at the University of California at San Diego. Currently, McCurdy is in his final year as a Master's candidate at California State University, Sacramento studying with Dan Kennedy where he directs the community outreach program for the Festival of New American Music. McCurdy teaches privately and performs with various Valley and Bay Area groups such as the Sacramento Philharmonic, Sacramento Opera, Stockton Symphony, Music Now, Earplay and the percussion group REDDRUM -- a featured ensemble at the 2000 Other Minds Festival in San Francisco. Recently, McCurdy has given solo performances at the 1999 Festival of New American Music in Sacramento and the 2000 April in Santa Cruz Contemporary Music Festival.

Mark Veregge, percussionist, is an active performer of both orchestral and chamber music in the Bay Area. He is Principal Timpanist/Percussionist of Opera San Jose, Principal Percussionist of the California Symphony as well as the Mendocino Music Festival. Other orchestral performing credits include San Francisco Opera, San Jose Symphony, San Francisco Ballet, Oakland East Bay Symphony, Monterey Symphony, Western Opera Theater, Marin Symphony, Modesto Symphony, Berkeley Symphony, Oakland Ballet, Masterworks Chorale and the San Jose Chamber Orchestra. Veregge has also served as Principal Timpanist with the Caracas Philharmonic and Mexico City Philharmonic. Chamber music credits include Earplay, Composers Inc., U.C. Davis Contemporary Players, Mendocino Music Festival, New Music Works, and Alea Concerts at

Stanford University. Veregge was a featured soloist with the San Jose Chamber Orchestra in 1998, performing Ney Rosauero's Concerto for Marimba with String Orchestra. He is also a member of Adesso, which features works for percussion and mixed ensemble. He currently teaches at Stanford University where he holds the title of Lecturer in Percussion, as well as in his private studio.

William Winant has collaborated with a diverse range of musicians, including John Cage, Iannis Xenakis, Frederic Rzewski, Anthony Braxton, Alvin Curran, Terry Riley, Cecil Taylor, Steve Reich and Musicians, Yo-Yo Ma, and the Kronos Quartet. Most recently, he has recorded and toured with Mr. Bungle (*Disco Volante* on Warner Bros. Records), as well as with John Zorn, Oingo Boingo, and Thurston Moore (of Sonic Youth). He has made over ninety recordings, covering a wide variety of genres, including his recording of Lou Harrison's *La Koro Sutro* (New Albion), which was the *New York Times* Critics Choice for best contemporary recording of 1988—the same year that he officially joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Mr. Winant has performed as a soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under the direction of Pierre Boulez, the San Francisco Symphony, the Berkeley Symphony, the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, as well as many major festivals and recitals throughout the world. He teaches at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and is Artist-in-Residence at Mills College with the internationally recognized Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio, which has commissioned over twenty-five new works for violin, piano and percussion.

Guest Conductor

Donald Palma, a long-time advocate of the music of our time, is well-known throughout the international new music community for his work as conductor and contrabassist with such celebrated ensembles as Speculum Musicae, the Group for Contemporary Music and

Parnassus. Palma has taken a leading role in the artistic direction and conducting of Speculum Musicae, premiering works by eminent and emerging composers at such distinguished venues as the Geneva Festival, the Warsaw Autumn Festival, the Wigmore Hall in London, the Library of Congress, the Kennedy Center, the New York Philharmonic Horizons Festival and on BBC London and Radio Cologne broadcasts. He has also conducted the Da Camera Society in Houston, the White Mountains Festival Orchestra, the Toho School in Tokyo, and is Music Director of the New England Conservatory Chamber Orchestra. For two years, beginning in 1998, he served as Music Director of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. His programming for the 1998-99 season helped win the ensemble an ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for the Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music.

Palma's vivid and insightful conducting has drawn high praise from the press, including a concert of Ligeti's fiercely challenging *Chamber Concerto*, about which the *New York Times* raved, "a superb performance." He has performed on nearly one hundred recordings, including numerous premiere recordings. His conducting of Elliott Carter's *A Mirror On Which To Dwell* on the Bridge label attracted critical acclaim, and of his recording of Poul Ruders' *Psalmodies*, *Fanfare Magazine* proclaimed, "We aren't likely to hear a better new music disc in 1993."

A virtuoso contrabassist, Palma is soloist for the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and has performed with other leading ensembles worldwide. Palma is currently on the faculties of the New England Conservatory and Yale University.

The Ensemble

The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, now in its thirtieth year, is a leader among ensembles in the United States dedicated to contemporary chamber music. A six-time winner of the prestigious national ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music, SFCMP has performed over 950 new works, including 130 U.S. and world premieres, and has brought fifty-seven new pieces into the repertoire through its active commissioning efforts.

The instrumentalists who make up the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players are recognized virtuosi in new music performance. Each season the ensemble performs a six-concert series at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. SFCMP 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, and the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento. SFCMP made its European debut at the Cheltenham Festival of Music in 1986 and was featured in 1990 at the Ojai Festival. The ensemble has recorded seven albums of its own and contributed recordings to eight others.

Where To Find It

Lou Harrison's ballet score *The Perilous Chapel* has been recorded by the San Francisco Contemporary Music Payers on a New Albion CD that also features works for guitar, percussion and voice performed by William Winant, David Tanenbaum and John Duykers. For more of Harrison's percussion and gamelan music, I would suggest *La Koro Sutro* (New Albion), *A Homage to Lou Harrison* by the Tammittam Percussion Ensemble (Dynamic), and the recording of *Concerto in Slendro, Three Pieces for Gamelan with Soloists*, and the Suite for Percussion, on CRI.

For further information about Harrison, I recommend the comprehensive and highly acclaimed biography, *Lou Harrison: Composing a World*, by Leta Miller and Frederic Lieberman (Oxford University Press, 1998) or the enormously entertaining *Lou Harrison Reader* of 1987 (Santa Fe: Soundings). *Simfony 13* has been recorded on the compact disc that accompanies Miller's book.

In 1999, a compact disc devoted to **Richard Festinger's** chamber music was released including beautiful renderings of his String Quartet, *Tapestries*, *Trigonometry*, and *Twining* (CRI). His *Serenade for Six* has been recorded for CRI by members of the New Millennium Ensemble, and his Septet has been recorded by Earplay (Centaur).

Echoes from the Gorge has been recorded, along with a number of **Chou Wen-chung's** other works (*Yü Ko*, *Yün*, *Windswept Peaks*, and the Suite for Harp and Wind Quintet) on an Albany/Troy compact disc compiled in honor of the composer's 70th birthday. Another disc devoted to Chou's music has been issued on CRI by members of the Group for Contemporary Music, offering polished performances of *Pien*, *Cursive*, and one of his earliest successes, *Landscapes*.

A number of **Karen Tanaka's** orchestral pieces are available on recordings: *Initium* with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra (Camerata); *Prismes* with the Malmö Symphony Orchestra (BIS); and *Wave Mechanics* with Ensemble Kanazawa (Deutsche Grammophone). Alto saxophonist Claude Delangle has recorded her *Night Bird* (BIS), and the Brodsky Quartet will soon release her most recent string quartet, *At the Grave of Beethoven*, on the Vanguard label.

Irwin Bazelon's impressive discography includes a spirited CRI recording of *Propulsions* and the "Churchill Downs" Concerto (with Bazelon conducting), as well as the Duo for Viola and Piano, and Symphony no. 5 with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. Albany/Troy Records has released four compact discs devoted to Bazelon's music, including fine performances by various artists of such representative works as *Fusions* for chamber ensemble, the lyrical *Alliances* for cello and piano, the jazz-influenced *Cross-Currents* for brass quintet and percussion, and the majestic Symphony no. 9 (entitled "Sunday Silence" after the winner of the 1989 Kentucky Derby) with Dunn Scott as piano soloist. Rich with anecdotes and previously unpublished writings, David Harold Cox's new book, *Irwin Bazelon: A Bio-Bibliography*, is available from Greenwood Publishing.

—Beth Levy

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The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players would also like to recommend the following websites.

www.newmusicbox.org, the Web magazine of the American Music Center, features timely articles, in-depth interviews with leading new

music figures, and superb coverage (with listening excerpts!) of newly released CDs.

www.sfcv.org (San Francisco Classical Voice) is one of the Bay Area's most dedicated watchdogs of the local classical and contemporary music scene, with intelligently written reviews (including of nearly every Players event), as well as a basic but extensive calendar of events.

Don't forget to visit the Players' own website, **www.sfcmp.org**, where you can keep tabs on upcoming concerts, read up on members of the ensemble, order tickets online, or buy any of our currently available CDs. Happy clicking!

SAN FRANCISCO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC PLAYERS

44 Page St., Suite 604A, San Francisco, CA 94102-5972

Phone: 415/252-6235 Fax: 415/621-2533 sfcmp@dnai.com

www.sfcmp.org

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