

Música para charlar

Música para charlar is the title of a piece by Silvestre Revueltas, and can be translated as “chit-chat” or “background music.” Hopefully, the music on this concert will mark the beginning of a fruitful dialogue between those who make music on both sides of the border: some small talk over the picket fence that separates our neighboring backyards or, as Revueltas would have liked it, a frank exchange of ideas over, let’s say, a few glasses of tequila.

—Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez

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Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez's Clyde Beatty is Dead was commissioned with a grant from the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University, which has also helped to underwrite this premiere performance.

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Performers

Tod Brody, flute
William Wohlmacher, clarinet
Blair Tindall, oboe
Rufus Olivier, bassoon
Lawrence Ragent, horn
Charles Metzger, trumpet I
Ralph Wagner, trumpet II
Hall Goff, trombone
Peter Wahrhaftig, tuba
Roy Malan, violin I
Heidi Ann Wilcox, violin II
Nancy Ellis, viola
Nina Flyer, cello
Steven D'Amico, contrabass
Julie Steinberg, piano (Trigos, Revueltas)
Karen Rosenak, piano (Maldonado, Sanchez-Gutierrez)
Timothy Dent, percussion (Trigos, Revueltas)
Russell Greenberg, percussion (Trigos)
Christopher Froh, percussion (Maldonado, Trigos, Sanchez-Gutierrez)

Crystal Glass Players

Alexander Bendahan Sean Ogilvie
Christopher Dulgerian Karen Sunabacka
Carolyn O'Brien Lis Testa

Juan Trigos, Guest Conductor
Jean-Louis LeRoux, Interim Music Director

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players

Monday, May 13, 2002 at 8 pm
Center for the Arts Theater

Música para charlar

JAVIER TORRES MALDONADO

Figuralmusik II (1996) U.S. Premiere

RICARDO ZOHM-MULDOON

Danza Nocturna (1986, rev. 1989)

Gianna Abondolo, cello
Julie Steinberg, piano
William Winant, percussion

JUAN TRIGOS

Ricercare II (1993, rev. 1998) U.S. Premiere

~ INTERMISSION ~

CARLOS SANCHEZ-GUTIERREZ

Clyde Beatty is Dead (2002) World Premiere

MARIO LAVISTA

Marsias (1982)
Blair Tindall, oboe

SILVESTRE REVUELTAS

Homenaje a Federico García Lorca (1936)

I. Baile (Dance)
II. Duelo (Mourning)
III. Son

JAVIER TORRES MALDONADO (B. 1968)

In a recent interview, Javier Torres Maldonado observed, “No artist exists locked up in a crystal sphere, and this is a constant for the great artistic works of all periods. The content of a work, if it is profound, is the product of a consciousness that is always bound to philosophical ideas, social events, and traditions.” Like the other composers on tonight’s program, Torres Maldonado unites an engagement with Mexican and Latin American culture with an openness to international influences and a commitment to seeking out new sounds.

Torres Maldonado was born in Chetumal and began studying composition at Mexico’s National Conservatory before moving to Milan, where he studied with Franco Donatoni. In 1996, he completed a degree at the Conservatory Giuseppe Verdi under Sandro Gorli and Alessandro Solbiati, and he has since lived in Italy, working with Azio Corghi in Rome, and participating in composition courses and master classes with György Ligeti, George Benjamin, Ivan Fedele, and others. Much of Torres Maldonado’s music, including the piece we will hear tonight, explores innovative ways of organizing time and space. For example, in his brief duo for flute and percussion, *Reflejo Espiral* (2000) he uses layered pulsation patterns and “metric modulation” (in which subdivisions of a steady pulse are regrouped to suggest a new meter) to create a sonic analog to the distorting process of reflection. At times, the composer harnesses these abstract compositional concerns in the service of an overtly political or social message. One of his best known pieces, *Exabrupto* (1998), uses complicated polymeters and superimpositions in a tribute to the native Mexican victims of a massacre in Acteal, Chiapas. Commissioned by the University of Montreal and Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, it won the Musicians’ Prize after its premiere during their International Forum for Young Composers.



Torres Maldonado has received awards from the International Competitions “Città di Barletta” and “Guido d’Arezzo” (Italy), the Concours International “Ad Referendum II” (Canada), and the International Composition Competition Mozart Salzburg, as well as the Mozart Medal awarded by the Austrian Embassy in Mexico. In 2000, he won first prize in the Composition Competition “Reine Maria Jose” of Geneva, and in December 2001 he was selected as one of three finalists in the Alfredo Casella International Competition, earning him concert performances in Florence and Siena this November by the Orchestra Regionale Toscana. This spring, at Milan’s Teatro dei Filodrammatici, he will conduct the Dynamis Ensemble in a program (including *Figuralmusik I*) dedicated to the memory of his teacher, Donatoni. Other works including *Ecos* and *Claroscuros* will be heard in Turin and Mexico, and *Hemisferios Arificiales* will be performed at the Strasbourg Contemporary Music Festival “Musica.” His music is published by Universal Edition (Vienna) and Suvini Zerboni (Milan). Torres Maldonado is currently working on a string quartet for the Quartetto Prometeo and a piece for bass flute and electronics commissioned by the Associazione Arcimboldo of Brescia. He has also received a commission for a violin solo to be played at the Austrian Tiroler Festspiele Erl 2002 on a concert exploring the links between his works and the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.

***Figuralmusik II* (1996)**

for flute/piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, percussion, piano, violin, viola, cello, and bass

Torres Maldonado’s *Figuralmusik II* is the central panel in a triptych of works for increasing numbers of instruments: the first *Figuralmusik* is a quintet, the second requires ten players, and the last is for three soloists and string orchestra. According to the composer, “The three-piece cycle *Figuralmusik* (1996-1998) originates from the fascination that I have always felt for perceptive illusions, translated into impossible objects in physical reality, and, above all, for the results of the interlacing planes and perspectives used by Piranesi and Escher.”

In all three pieces, the composer seeks “the maximum reduction of elements” that can constitute a given object, comparing his own paring down process to that used in Escher’s monofigural lithographs, which create entire pictures from a single “figure” or shape. For *Figuralmusik II*, which also exists in two versions that combine acoustic instruments and electronics, Torres Maldonado draws his basic figural unit from the end of *Figuralmusik I*. “It is formed by three simple elements,” he writes, “grace notes, chords, resonance or absolute silence.” By expanding, contracting, and transforming these basic materials, he alters the way we perceive the musical events as they unfold. The rapid juxtaposition and superimposition of different temporal schemes—fluctuations in tempo and meter, but also changes in the relative density or scarcity of sounds—allow Torres Maldonado to achieve aural effects akin to those of an optical illusion.

RICARDO ZOHN-MULDOON (B. 1962)

Born in Guadalajara in 1962, Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon did his undergraduate work in composition at the University of California, San Diego, before receiving his Ph. D. from the University of Pennsylvania, where his principal teacher was George Crumb. Other teachers have included Franco Donatoni, Jean Charles Francois, Keith Humble, and Will Ogdon. Apart from several years of teaching at Mexico’s University of Guanajuato, Zohn-Muldoon has spent most of his career in the United States.



Nonetheless, his engagement with his heritage remains strong. “Although I have spent many years away from Mexico,” he remarks, “I feel that my music is strongly connected to Mexican culture. This Mexican ethos in my work originates specifically from literary sources. The atmosphere, imagery, colors, and structure of the text [imbue] all levels of my creative process, and have an enormous influence in the shaping of my musical language.”

Zohn-Muldoon has devoted much scholarly attention to Mexico’s classical music, including in a substantial article on Silvestre Revueltas’s *Sensemaya* that displays his literary interests and knowledge of Revueltas’s cinematic compositional techniques. In his creative work, he has also taken Mexican literature as a point of departure. His *Flores del Viento* is based on the pre-Hispanic myth of Quetzalcóatl. More recently, Zohn-Muldoon has completed a cycle of chamber works based on the highly acclaimed episodic novel *Pedro Páramo*, by the Mexican writer Juan Rulfo. In the first of these works, *Páramo*, he builds upon the novel’s unusual treatment of time and narration. He observes: “The sound world of the piece is closely inspired by the peculiar unfolding of the novel, in which the orderly flux of time has been derailed, and where the borders between past and present, life and afterlife, have become porous. The piece frenziedly ticks, tolls, and cuckoos, like a deranged musical clock.”

In addition to the traditional and classical music of his homeland, Zohn-Muldoon cites musical influences as diverse as Bach, Chopin, Bartók, flamenco, and Cuban sones. This gives his music an appeal that has been recognized internationally at festivals such as the Gaudeamus International Music Week (Holland), Festival A*DEvantgarde (Germany), ISCM World Music Days (Romania; Mexico), Foro de Música Nueva and Festival Internacional Cervantino (Mexico), among others. His honors include a commission from the Stony Brook Contemporary Chamber Players, Mexico’s Mozart Medal, and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Tanglewood Music Center (Omar del Carlo Fellowship), Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (Mexico), the Camargo Foundation (France), Indiana University, Composers Conference, and the Bowdoin Music Festival.

Zohn-Muldoon is currently a fellow of Mexico’s Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Arte and Assistant Professor of Composition at the College-Conservatory of Music of the University of Cincinnati. In the fall of 2002 he will join the composition faculty at the Eastman School of Music.

***Danza Nocturna* (1986, rev. 1989)**

for cello, piano, and percussion

Zohn-Muldoon's *Danza Nocturna* is a brief trio—in fact, the composer has spoken of the reductive “cosmetic surgery” it underwent as he worked on the piece: “While severely reducing its original size, this surgery had the lucky effect of both thwarting any aspirations to pomposity, and of sharpening the Mexican accent of the ‘patient’.” In the version we will hear tonight, cello, piano, and marimba engage in a three-way dialogue in which different parts come to prominence at different times. The outer sections of the *Danza Nocturna* seem to recall the famous “night music” of another composer, Béla Bartók, who used this term to describe passages known for their sparse textures, pointillistic utterances, and sometimes eerie timbres. In Zohn-Muldoon's piece, however, these intimate nocturnal whisperings are balanced by much more forceful and rhythmically propulsive music that is rhapsodic and occasionally dance-like. Together with the use of maracas in the quieter sections, this rhythmic drive gives the trio its “Mexican accent.”

JUAN TRIGOS (B. 1965)



Juan Trigos's skills as composer and conductor have made him a major figure in Mexico's contemporary music scene. Equally comfortable writing loosely pictorial and rigorously technical music, he counts among his recent works the chamber opera *De Cachetito Raspado* and the more abstract pieces of his *Ricercare* and *Pulsata* series. Of this latter category of composition, Trigos

writes: “My work does not use extra-musical effects. It is sustained exclusively through a process of internal hearing. Pitches are organized with technical rigor, but they are also handled in abstract ways, always emerging from the actual auditory experience.” Despite the potential complexity of his creative processes, however, Trigos's musical language is energetic and appealing, often uniting

diverse styles within a framework of motoric rhythms.

Born in Mexico City, Trigos studied at the National Conservatory of Music and the Instituto de Liturgia, Música y Arte Cardenal Miranda. Like Torres Maldonado, he moved to Italy to work at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Milan, working with Nicolo Castiglioni (composition) and Gianpiero Taverna (conducting), and later becoming a pupil of Donatoni. He also spent time at Rome's Pontificio Instituto de Música Sacra. An active conductor of contemporary music, he has founded several ensembles and orchestras devoted to new music, including Sones Contemporáneos in Milan and the Sinfonietta de las Américas in Mexico, with which he has released numerous recordings. He currently serves as Music Director of the Orquesta de Cámara de Bellas Artes. Trigos has worked closely with the Mexican ensemble La Camerata de las Américas on recording projects and major music festivals such as Mexico's Festival del Centro Histórico and the Foro Internacional de Música Nueva, where his *Magnificat Guadalupano* was premiered this spring. From 1993 to 1998 he also co-directed the international composition courses given in Mexico City by Donatoni.

Among the many honors Trigos has received are National Council on the Arts Fellowships, the Mozart Medal, and membership in Mexico's prestigious Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Arte. He was a finalist at Holland's Gaudeamus Composition Competitions, and has won prizes at Mexico's National Symphonic Musical, the Concurso Nove Sincronie in Italy, the Osterfestspiel in Salzburg, and the Rodrigo Riera Guitar Composition Competition in Indiana. His works have been performed at numerous festivals throughout Europe and the Americas. Trigos is currently working on two, concerto grosso style pieces for soloists and orchestra: *Pulsata III* (for percussion, piano and chamber orchestra) and *Pulsata IV* (for flute, bass clarinet, piano, and full orchestra).

***Ricercare II* (1993, rev. 1998)**

for trumpet, trombone, piano, percussion, and chamber ensemble

According to the composer, *Ricercare II* springs from “very simple material”: two closely related chords, and a rhythmic structure with fixed accents. These basic elements are “manipulated constantly by rotations, polarizations, reiterations of some of the elements and proliferations that expand the original structure of pitches and durations.” Despite the intricacy of its construction, Trigos’s *Ricercare* displays a timbral and rhythmic inventiveness that enlivens its abstract title. Trumpet, trombone, piano, and percussion function as a solo quartet in a concertante style that is typical in the composer’s oeuvre. In this case, the instrumentation makes the quartet sound like a small jazz combo, set in relief by a larger orchestral “backup” band. As the piece progresses, the virtuosic instrumental writing for brass and percussion give the impression of rapid-fire improvisation even though the score is fully notated. Most striking of all is the ensemble’s rhythmic activity. Trigos has described the rhythms he chooses as related to the concept of “clave,” the rhythmic groove characteristic of Afro-Cuban music and the many forms of jazz influenced by its repeated accent patterns. Layered textures, timbral experimentation, and continuously varied harmonic and metric schemes make the *Ricercare* both a technical tour-de-force and an explosive “homage” to the rhythmic vitality born of cultural exchange.

CARLOS SANCHEZ-GUTIERREZ (B. 1961)



In an interview celebrating his recent Meet the Composer grant, Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez observed, “My upbringing was as Mexican as it was international.... I feel as close to the Beatles as I do to Mexican folklore.” Born in Mexico City, he grew up in the cosmopolitan city of Guadalajara, where he studied piano. After turning to composition, he moved to the United States, attending Peabody Conservatory and Yale University

before receiving his Ph. D. from Princeton. His American teachers have included Jean E. Ivey, Jacob Druckman, and Martin Bresnick; he also studied with Henri Dutilleux at Tanglewood.

Sanchez-Gutierrez has composed works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, theater, dance, and film. Many of his compositions employ percussive sonorities and driving rhythms. For example, his *Calacas y Palomas* (Skulls and Doves), written in 1990 shortly after the birth of his daughter, takes its title from a phrase chanted by Mexican children while playing marbles. In this piano duo, he mimics the sound of glass hitting on glass, experimenting with resonance and the natural decay of percussive timbres. Other pieces in his oeuvre have been directly inspired by political or historical events, though these are always imaginative responses rather than literal depictions. In *Luciérnagas* (*Fireflies*, 1998), a quintet commissioned for a Carnegie Hall premiere by the ensemble eighth blackbird, he drew upon his reactions to a massacre that took place at El Mozote during the Civil War in El Salvador. More recently, in *Of Gold*, written for Chanticleer, he took his inspiration from the experiences of Gold Rush participants and abstract poetry that he commissioned from American poet Lia Purpura.

Sanchez-Gutierrez has received awards and commissions from the Guggenheim, Rockefeller, and Camargo Foundations, as well as the Fulbright Commission, the Tanglewood Music Center, the US-Mexico Fund for Culture, BMI, the Barlow Endowment, and UNESCO. Last year, he won the Lee Ettelson Composition Award, a Charles Ives Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and first prize at Mexico’s Sinfonica Orchestral Competition. Sanchez-Gutierrez is currently Assistant Professor of Composition at San Francisco State University and Visiting Professor at the Yale University School of Music, where he is working on a piece for flute and piano (commissioned by Asako Arai) and two string quartets: one for the Elements Quartet, and one for Cuarteto Latinoamericano with support from the National Fine Arts Institute of Mexico.

***Clyde Beatty Is Dead* (2002)**

for clarinet, horn, piano, percussion, viola, and bass

The composer writes: “As is often the case, I did not come up with a title for my work until I had already finished it. I had a working title, though, and it was ‘The Way Things Go,’ which alluded to the wonderful installation/video by Peter Fischli and David Weiss that shows an inanimate circus act involving a chain-reaction of water, air, and fire that is as precarious as it is imaginative, unpredictable, poetic and, ultimately, human.

“I realized that my piece indeed had a lot to do with erratic processes (imperfect—or, as Klee would call them, ‘twittering’ machines) that are set into motion and allowed to continue their course entirely by themselves. I thought then of another film: Errol Morris’s *Fast, Cheap and Out of Control*, where four unusual individuals describe their passion for various facets of human creativity, from topiary gardens to robot making.

“I would definitely like to see my piece as ‘fast, cheap, and out of control.’ I trigger a process that for a moment seems to have a clear goal, only to stray away from it. The piece stumbles its way through various musical areas, always in an idiosyncratic manner, yet never quite falling over. It has a life of its own, one over which the composer has no real control.

“Rodney Brooks—one of the characters interviewed by Morris—describes one of his insect-robots in a way that may very well apply to my own composition:

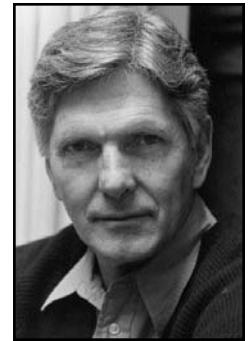
One of the critical things about [the robot] Genghis was: You switched it on, and it walked. The walking isn’t programmed in: ‘I think, therefore I walk, and how I walk is: I do this, I do that.’ Instead, it’s all these little feedback loops, and when you put them all together, the robot walks. A well respected professor from Germany said: ‘But how do you tell the robot what to do?’, and my only answer was: ‘I don’t tell the robot what to do...I switch it on, and it does what is in its nature.’

“The title *Clyde Beatty is Dead* comes from the most moving scene in the film, where Dave Hoover, a lion tamer, laments the death of his all-time hero, and with it, the death of the world as we know it.”

Clyde Beatty is Dead was written for the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players with generous support from the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University.

MARIO LAVISTA (B. 1943)

One of Mexico’s most respected composers, Mario Lavista has made significant contributions to almost every aspect of that country’s musical life and to the international new music scene. Born in Mexico City, he studied piano and later composition with the most prestigious teachers at home and abroad. After receiving his initial training from Carlos Chávez, Rodolfo Halffter, and Héctor Quintanar at the National Conservatory, he won a scholarship to work with Nadia Boulanger, Henri Pousseur, and Jean-Etienne Marie in Paris. He supplemented this by attending seminars and lectures in Germany with such figures as Karlheinz Stockhausen, Iannis Xenakis, and György Ligeti, thus gaining a remarkable breadth of exposure to the major trends of twentieth-century composition.



Upon his return to Mexico, Lavista took up a faculty position at the National Conservatory, and in 1970 he founded the influential improvisation group Quanta, which combined electronic and traditional instruments. During this period, he was particularly interested in electroacoustic interaction and in pieces written for tape or synthesizer such as *Espaces trop habités* (1969), *Alme* (1971), and *Contrapunto* (1972), written after an invitation to work at the electronic music studio of Japanese radio and television in Tokyo. Lavista’s early works also show him experimenting with unusual sound sources, such as those found in *Kronos* (1969) for fifteen alarm clocks and *Talea* (1976) for music box, and contributing to

many collaborative endeavors with other Mexican artists, especially film director Nicolás Echevarría.

Lavista's activity in multimedia projects and film music has continued, but his more recent works eschew electronics in favor of the intense exploration of acoustic sonorities. For example, in the quartet *Reflejos de la Noche* (1984) he uses only string harmonics to create a particularly luminous reflection of night noises. Many of Lavista's works for winds, including *Madrigal* (1985) for solo clarinet and the piece we will hear tonight, continue his sonorous experiments by employing an extremely wide range of timbres, pitches, and special effects such as overblowing and multiphonics. This fascination with tone color has led to close collaborations with specific performers, including the Cuarteto Latinoamericano, Kronos Quartet, bassist Bertram Turetzky, cellists David Tomatzand and Carlos Prieto, the Western Arts Trio, flutist Marielena Arizpe, recorder player Horacio Franco, and the Contemporary Vocal Ensemble at Indiana University.

Despite his obvious and audible commitment to new sounds, Lavista also allows himself to be influenced by the music and literature of the past. This is perhaps clearest in his *Missa Brevis ad Consolationis Dominam Nostram* (1995), which pays tribute to the stylistic vocabulary of medieval and Renaissance composers like Josquin des Prez and Guillaume de Machaut. Even among his earlier, more experimental works one can sometimes find a preoccupation with older music. His 1976 duo *Quotations* includes an epigraph from Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* ("His heart is a suspended lute that resounds the moment it is touched") and involves fleeting allusions to Debussy, Brahms, Webern, Bartók, Crumb, and others. In this regard, Lavista has spoken eloquently about his commitment to finding the new in the old and admitting the old in the new: "After a while I realized that what was essential was not to forget, but to remember; to recover the memory. I learned then to look inside of myself, knowing that I owed much to the music of the past, and that I was living part of this inexhaustible flow that is the history of music."

Numerous honors and awards attest to Lavista's place in the history

of music. He has recently won Mexico's National Prize in Sciences and Arts, the Mozart Medal, and membership in the prestigious Colegio Nacional de Mexico. In 1987, he was named a member of the Mexican Academy of Arts and received a Guggenheim fellowship to compose an opera called *Aura* based on Carlos Fuentes' short story. Other recent commissions include works for the Kronos Quartet (*five studies on open strings*), the San Antonio Symphony (*Clepsidra*, commemorating the tricentennial of the discovery of the San Antonio River), the University of Mexico Philharmonic Orchestra, the percussion group Tambuco, the guitarist David Starobin, and the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. After serving as guest composer at institutions throughout the Americas, he currently teaches at the National Conservatory in Mexico City and serves as director of *Pauta*, a leading Latin American music journal.

***Marsias* (1982)**

for oboe and eight crystal goblets

"Marsias blew and sighed again and again through the bound reeds, obtaining sounds evermore sweet and mysterious like the secret voice of his heart." Taken from a poem by Luis Cernuda, the epigraph for Lavista's *Marsias* hints at many of the distinguishing features of this enchanting and ethereal piece. It is not exactly an oboe solo and not exactly a chamber work, for the principal player's tones are enhanced and enveloped by the resonant vibration of carefully prepared wine glasses. Each is tuned to produce a different harmonic tone when set in motion by running a fingertip around the rim. Against this shimmering texture, or emerging from within it, is the oboe's voice, calling to mind the satyr of Greek mythology, Marsias, who rescued the reed flute after Athena disdained it because it disfigured her face while she played.

Like Lavista's other sonorous experiments, *Marsias* is aphoristic, gestural music. The melancholy "blowing" and "sighing" of the oboe part require many special techniques from the performer: pitch bending, split tones, and muted timbres that blur the boundaries between the vibrations of reeds and glass. The "sweet and mysterious" music that results is both evocatively antique and engagingly contemporary.

SILVESTRE REVUELTAS (1899-1940)



In 1932, Silvestre Revueltas assessed his artistic development with characteristic good humor: “I do not think I was a child prodigy, but I showed some inclination for music quite early, as the result of which I became a professional musician. Contributors to this were some teachers of mine from whom I fortunately did not learn much, due probably to the bad habit of independence. I play the violin, and I have given recitals all over the country, but I found no interest posing as a virtuoso, so I have devoted myself to composition and conducting—perhaps, a better pose. I like all kinds of music. I can even stand some of the classics, and some of my own works, but I prefer the music of the people of ranchos and villages of my country.”

Although he wrote these words at the very outset of his compositional career, they represent one of the few autobiographical utterances allowed by his tragically premature death from alcoholism and exhaustion. As critic and scholar of Latin American music Nicolas Slonimsky put it, “[he] lived his forty years of life like a character in a Parisian novel, dividing his time between composition, leftist politics, and the drinking of Mexican tequila...” During the single decade when he was actively composing, Revueltas produced more than three dozen works including ballets, orchestral music, and numerous film scores. Most of his music displays the combination of Mexican nationalism and contemporary musical language that has made him so influential on later generations of composers.

Revueltas was born in Durango and trained in Mexico City before moving to the United States in 1916, where he lived for many years, studying in Austin and Chicago and working with theater orchestras in Texas and Alabama. In 1929, he accepted an invitation from his countryman Carlos Chávez to return to Mexico and become assistant conductor of the new Orquesta Sinfónica de México. Active at this time as a teacher and conductor, Revueltas found time to write

many influential pieces including *Sensemayá* (1938), a vocal and instrumental setting of verse by the revolutionary poet Nicolás Guillén, whom the composer helped convert to communism after they shared a trip to war-torn Spain. Extraordinary for the faithfulness with which it paraphrases Guillén’s original text, *Sensemayá* is thematically, onomatopoeically, and structurally a realization of the text, as in the ostinato “Mayombe, Yombe, Mayombé” that runs throughout both the poem and the music.

Revueltas was sometimes capable of projecting an incredible artistic indifference—he once wrote “Music that makes one think is intolerable, excruciating. I adore music that puts me to sleep.” As critic John Duarte points out, however, Revueltas’s nonchalance is contradicted by the intensity and intricacy of both his music and his political commitments. Unlike many musical nationalists, Revueltas preferred not to quote popular tunes verbatim, but rather to recreate a folk-like atmosphere by using original melodic and rhythmic gestures. This gives his music a power to synthesize old and new influences. As composer and scholar Peter Garland has observed: “Like the best work of the muralist painters, this art is intensely modern and traditional—but of a different tradition than the European. Like the dissonances in Revueltas’s melodic and harmonic structure, these elements co-exist in place and time.... The popular culture does not walk a humble distance behind the classical and appear only as quotation. They dance and clash with each other in complete simultaneity in Revueltas’s music. For that reason it still continues to sound fresh and modern today.”

Homenaje a Federico García Lorca (1936)

*for piccolo, clarinet, trumpets, trombone, tuba, percussion,
piano, violins, and bass*

In a memorial article for the periodical *Modern Music* (1940), composer and critic Paul Bowles described his initial encounter with Revueltas: “The first time I met Silvestre Revueltas was in Mexico City, during the invasion of Spain; he was leaving shortly for Valencia at the behest of the Loyalist Government. He asked me eagerly if I had read Lorca and Guillen. Then he bade me go with him to the Conservatorio where he conjured up an impromptu

orchestra in less than an hour, and conducted a magnificent performance of *Homenaje a García Lorca*. While the music in no way suggested anything popular, the listening experience for me was violently moving as it can be only in the case of folk music.”

Bowles’s recollection encapsulates both the political context and the musical language of Revueltas’s homage to one of Spain’s most famous literary figures: the poet, playwright, and musician Federico García Lorca. Known for his outspoken leftist politics and modernist literary style, García Lorca was executed by firing squad during the first weeks of the Spanish Civil War, not long before Revueltas finished his homage. Revueltas may have begun composing his piece shortly before García Lorca’s death, or he may have written it in the heat of the moment during the month after the assassination. Though the *Homenaje* was premiered in Mexico City in 1936, a highly charged performance that took place in Madrid in 1937 (while the city was besieged by Franco’s forces) has permanently assured its association with the Spanish resistance.

Among the many pieces dedicated to García Lorca (including works by Nono, Shostakovich, Poulenc, Chávez, Crumb, and others), Revueltas’s *Homenaje* remains uniquely attuned to the aesthetic preferences and political situation of the poet. The middle movement of Revueltas’s homage seems to make its tribute to the fallen poet directly, through gestures appropriate to the title “Duelo” (Mourning). A solo trumpet solo gives voice to grief, answered by rumbling brass, and accompanied by repeated sighing figures in winds and strings. The outer movements pay their respects to the spirit of García Lorca’s work indirectly, through their stylization of Hispanic folk elements and the great value they place on popular culture. In the opening “Baile” (Dance) a somber trumpet recitative frames lively and sometimes strident dance music that evokes the boisterous bustle of urban street celebration. In the final movement, “Son,” Revueltas treats the characteristic rhythmic profile of traditional son music (which alternates between 3/4 and 6/8 meters) with brilliant timbres and folkloric melodic fragments that would be equally at home in the music of Stravinsky or a Mexican village festival.

—Program notes by Beth Levy

Featured Performers

Blair Tindall, oboe, enjoys a career ranging from the classical stage of Carnegie Hall to the smoky late-night ambiance of New York’s famed Blue Note Jazz Club. She presented her critically acclaimed Weill Hall debut recital in 1991 and captured a top prize in the 1988 Lucarelli Competition for Solo Oboists. A busy and versatile artist, Tindall has appeared both at home and abroad with the New York Philharmonic and its fifteen-member chamber ensemble and has played principal oboe with the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, New York City Ballet and Opera Orchestras, San Jose Symphony, Opera San Jose, and New Jersey Symphony. She has also appeared with the Pittsburgh Symphony, New England Bach Festival, Bargemusic, Sacramento Chamber Music Society, the Lark and Colorado String Quartets, and was solo oboist of the Vivaldi Traveling Circus. Principal oboist of the Hudson Valley Philharmonic from 1986 to 1999, Tindall opened the orchestra’s 1998-99 season as soloist in John Corigliano’s Oboe Concerto.

Interim Music Director

Jean-Louis LeRoux, who co-founded the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, is serving as the ensemble’s Interim Music Director this season. LeRoux previously led the ensemble as Music Director from 1975 until 1988. A native of France and a graduate of the Paris Conservatoire, LeRoux joined the San Francisco Symphony as Principal Oboist in 1960. In 1975, he became Conductor of the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, a position he held for seventeen years. LeRoux has been named Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France’s highest cultural honor. In recent years, he has been active as Principal Conductor and Music Director of the Alberta Ballet. This season, in addition to his work with SFCMP, he is Interim Music Director of the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra.

The Ensemble

The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, now in its thirty-second year, is a leader among ensembles in the United States dedicated to contemporary chamber music. A seven-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 40 U.S. and 114 world premieres, and has brought sixty-one new pieces into the repertoire through its active commissioning efforts. The instrumentalists who make up the 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, the Ojai Festival, and the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento. SFCMP made its European debut at the Cheltenham Festival of Music in 1986 and its East Coast debut at the Library of Congress in 2001. The ensemble has recorded eight albums of its own and contributed recordings to eight others. Its innovative education programs for students at San Francisco's School of the Arts and Lowell High School include performance/presentations and master classes.

The Staff

Executive Director **Adam Frey** obtained his B.A. in Music from Harvard University, and his M.B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, with emphasis on marketing and planning. He joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 1991 after six years with Sherman, Clay Co., then the nation's largest keyboard instrument retailer, where he was Vice President in charge of Merchandising. He served on the Board of Governors of the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco from 1991 to 1997, and chaired the Institute's Development Committee. Mr. Frey is also a writer; his work has been published in *The Mississippi Review*.

Business Manager **Elaine Ng** received her B.A. in Music from the University of California, Davis and her M.B.A. and M.A. in Arts Administration from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. Along the way, she has worked with the Empyrean Ensemble, the Dallas Opera, the Dallas Symphony, and, most recently, the Studio Arts Centers International in Florence, Italy.

Michele Fromson, Associate Director, holds a Ph.D. in music history and theory from the University of Pennsylvania and a certificate degree from U.S.F. in non-profit management. As a music historian, she has published many academic articles on Renaissance sacred music and has received four fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities. As a non-profit manager she led the new music ensemble EARPLAY as its executive director for five years and has also done management consulting for the Empyrean Ensemble, Berkeley Opera, and Left Coast Chamber Ensemble.

Additional Listening and Reading

Ensemble Castiglioni's performances of **Javier Torres Maldonado's** *Figuralmusik I* and *Figuralmusik II* can be heard online at www.risognanze.org/ensemble/archivio/audio/audio.html. *Exabrupto*, for three instrumental groups, pianist, and percussion, has been recorded by the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne conducted by Lorraine Vaillancourt (Amberola, UMMUS; FORUM 98). *Orier*, for fortepiano, is represented on a compact disc containing works awarded Mozart Prizes during 1997-99 (Mozarteum in Salzburg, ORF-Radio Salzburg).

Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon's *Páramo* (1999) has been recorded by The Furious Band on the disc Latin America as part of the CRI series *eXchange: music at the crossroads*.

A recording of **Juan Trigos's** *Ricercare de Cámara II* has been issued by the Universidad Autónoma de Mexico; other recorded installments in the *Ricercare* series include *Ricercare de Cámara VI* for guitar and chamber orchestra (Quindecim). Many available or forthcoming discs feature Trigos as a conductor, for example, *Silvestre Revueltas: Música de Excepción* (BMG), *El Conejo y el Coyote: Chamber Opera: Music of Victor Rasgado* (Quindecim), and *Funesta: Music of Marcela Rodriguez* (Urtext).

A compact disc of **Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez, Works for Chamber Ensembles**, has recently been released on the Orchard label. *Calacas y Palomas* (Skulls and Doves) (1990) is performed by Continuum, with Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs, pianos, on the CRI disc *Latin America. M.E. in Memoriam* is performed by the Princeton Ensemble on *Transcendencias* (Capstone). *Son del Corazón*, performed by the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, appears on their album *Forum 93* (UMMUS). Tambuco performs *Danza/Contradanza II* on the disc *Tambuco: World Premiere Recordings* (Quindecim). Other recordings are available through his website: www.carlossg.com.

Mario Lavista's *Quotations* (1979) and *Madrigal* (1985) are recorded by Christopher Adkins, Jo Boatright, and Ross Powell

Additional Listening and Reading

on *Voces Americanas*, part of CRI's *eXchange* series. *Reflejos de la Noche* (1984) is recorded by Cuarteto Latinoamericano for Elan. David Starobin, guitar, has recorded *Nataraya* on the Bridge label. Max Lifchitz, piano, performs *Simurg* on the collection *Mexico: 100 Years of Piano Music* (North/South). *Clepsidra*, performed by the Unam Philharmonic Orchestra under Horacio Franco on the two-disc set *Musica Sinfonica Mexicana* (Urtext). Several other works, including *Cuaderno de Viaje*, *Ficciones*, and *Danzas Breves* can be heard on discs released by Clásicos Mexicanos.

Silvestre Revueltas's *Homenaje a Federico García Lorca* can be heard on the Orchestre Philharmonique de México disc, *Hommage a Silvestre Revueltas*, which also includes *Sensemayá*, *Noche de los Mayas*, and some of the composer's film music (Forlane). Other works by Revueltas appear in the series *Música Mexicana* (ASV); volume 4 includes the *Homenaje* and *Música para charlar* forms part of volume 8 along with *Caminos*, *Ventanas*, and two symphonies by Chávez.

Many of Reveultas's lesser known pieces are included on *Sensemayá: The Unknown Revueltas* (Dorian). Koch has recently released an interesting recording of Revueltas's last work, *La Coronela*, a ballet about the revolt of the working class against the Mexican bourgeois, with Gisele Ben-Dor conducting the Santa Barbara Symphony. Readers may also enjoy Peter Garland's wide-ranging essay collection *In Search of Silvestre Revueltas* (Santa Fe: Soundings Press, 1991).

—Beth Levy

*Selected recordings by tonight's composers are available for purchase in the lobby during intermission.