

**SAN FRANCISCO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC PLAYERS**

David Milnes, Music Director

Monday, March 24, 2003 at 8 pm  
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Forum

***VORTEX TEMPORUM***

**Witold Lutoslawski**

*Partita* (1984)

I. Allegro giusto

II. Ad libitum

III. Largo

IV. Ad libitum

V. Presto

David Abel, violin

Julie Steinberg, piano

**John Musto**

*Piano Trio* (1998)

I. Moderato

II. Slowly

Roy Malan, violin

Gianna Abondolo, cello

Karen Rosenak, piano

~ INTERMISSION ~

**Gérard Grisey**

*Vortex Temporum* (1994-96)

I. à Gérard Zinsstag

II. à Salvatore Sciarrino

III. à Helmut Lachenmann

Julie Steinberg, piano

*Tonight's performance of John Musto's Piano Trio is sponsored in part by Donald Blais  
with additional support from Victor and Lorraine Honig.*

*Tonight's performance of Gérard Grisey's Vortex Temporum is funded  
in part by the Ross McKee Foundation.*



**Performers**

Tod Brody, flute

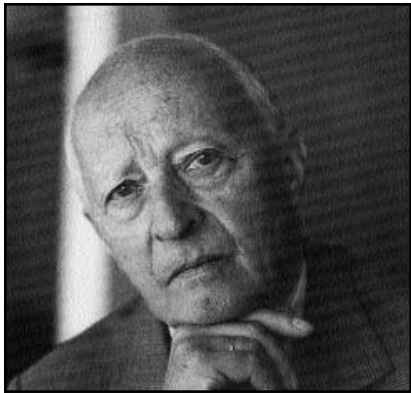
William Wohlmacher, clarinet

Roy Malan, violin

Nancy Ellis, viola

Leighton Fong, cello

WITOLD LUTOSLAWSKI (B. 1913-1994)



The long and productive career of Witold Lutoslawski revealed a highly inventive musical mind capable of engaging many of the diverse trends of twentieth-century music while forging a distinctively personal sound. Sadly his life was also frequently marked by the troubled history of his homeland during the last century. Born in 1913 in

Warsaw (then part of Russia) into a cultured family of Poland's landed gentry, Lutoslawski began his musical studies at the age of six. Among his earliest memories, he later recalled, was visiting his father in Moscow's infamous Butyrki prison in 1918, shortly before his father and uncle were executed by the Bolsheviks for supporting an independent Poland. After his education at the Warsaw Conservatory, Lutoslawski seemed poised to become a major figure in Polish musical life, but with the outbreak of war in 1939, he was mobilized as a radio officer. Captured by the Nazis in the first weeks of hostilities, he escaped and led a precarious existence working as a pianist in the occupied Polish capital. During the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Lutoslawski and his mother narrowly escaped, but most of his early music was lost in the conflagration that devastated the city.

Following the war, Lutoslawski ran afoul of the socialist-realist dictates of the newly installed Communist regime in Poland with his *First Symphony* (1948), which was condemned for its "formalism." He confronted the chilly artistic climate of the 1950s in two ways: while producing acceptable concert works based on Polish folk melodies, most notably in the *Concerto for Orchestra* (1954), one of his most performed works, he also wrote a great deal of functional music, such as film scores, folksong arrangements, and, under a pseudonym, cabaret

songs and popular dances. "I could not compose as I wished," remarked the composer later, "so I composed as I was able."

With the thaw following Stalin's death, Lutoslawski and his fellow Polish composers began to establish contact with the avant-garde on the other side of the Iron Curtain through the Warsaw Autumn Festival, first held in 1956. The early 1960s saw a striking change in Lutoslawski's music as he assimilated recent trends in European and American music into a highly personal style. Chief among these were a harmonic language informed by, but not beholden to, serialism, and an interest in chance procedures inspired by hearing the music of John Cage. Lutoslawski developed this into his hallmark "controlled aleatoricism," or *ad libitum* technique, in which musicians play specific pitches and rhythms at individual speeds to create complex textures. Based on his keen understanding of psychology and drama, Lutoslawski was also innovative in his handling of large-scale forms. It was this sudden change by a composer already in his early fifties that led Xenakis to remark that Lutoslawski was perhaps the only composer who grew more radical as he aged.

Because of this emphasis on large forms and complex harmonies and textures, Lutoslawski mostly produced orchestral works in this middle period of his career, including *Jeux vénitiens* (1961), *Livre pour orchestre* (1968), and *Mi-Parti* (1976). He was an accomplished conductor of his own scores and frequently led orchestras around the world, including several concerts with the San Francisco Symphony, which commissioned *Chain 3* in 1986.

During the final fifteen years of his life, Lutoslawski's music changed yet again. Characteristic of this "late style" are a simpler harmonic language with more overt references to tonality, allusions to traditional forms, less use of controlled aleatoricism, and a renewed emphasis on melody. These developments were closely linked with a turn to concerto-like pieces as well as chamber music (such as tonight's *Partita*), which, except for the important *String Quartet* (1964), had been absent from his output of the 1960s and 70s. At his death in February 1994, he was among the world's most esteemed and honored composers.

## **Partita (1984)**

*for violin and piano*

The composer writes, “I composed *Partita* for Violin and Piano in the Autumn of 1984 at the request of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra for Pinchas Zuckerman and Marc Neikrug.

“The work consists of five movements. Of these the main movements are the first (Allegro giusto), the third (Largo), and the fifth (Presto). The second and fourth are but short interludes to be played ad libitum. A short ad libitum section also appears before the end of the last movement.

“The three major movements follow, rhythmically at least, the tradition of pre-classical (18th century) keyboard music. This, however, is no more than an allusion. Harmonically and melodically, *Partita* clearly belongs to the same group of recent compositions as *Symphony No. 3* and *Chain 1*.”

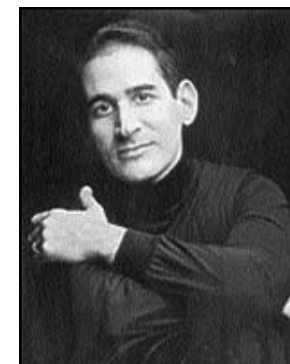
It is interesting to note that many pieces from Lutoslawski’s last decade feature the violin or piano, as these were the two instruments he had studied as a child. As the English musicologist Charles Bodman Rae has suggested, *Partita* was “a compositional breakthrough” for the composer. The lyrical violin writing is typical of the “late style” and foreshadows *Chain 2* for violin and orchestra, the short *Subito* for violin and piano (performed by the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 1995), and the unfinished violin concerto he was sketching at his death. Yet the importance of the other partner in this duo should not be overlooked, as here Lutoslawski found a personal approach to writing for the piano in which he noted the influence of his great Polish forebear Chopin. Four years later, this would be even more evident in the *Piano Concerto*. That same year Lutoslawski produced an orchestrated version of *Partita* which he linked to *Chain 2* to form one of his largest works.

As the composer noted, the five movements of *Partita* are not of equal weight. The short ad libitum movements (II and IV) use his technique of controlled aleatoricism, as the pianist and violinist play their mostly fragmentary material at their own speeds. The floating

textures this creates provide a respite between the strongly goal-oriented main movements. Two main ideas dominate the first movement: the opening toccata-like, motoric music, characterized by repeated notes, is contrasted with moments of lyrical melody in the violin over sustained harmonies in the piano. In fact, these two types of music will be developed separately in the subsequent movements. While the elegiac third movement builds long arcs of melody towards an impassioned climax, the virtuosic fifth movement returns to the skittering repeated-note figuration of the opening and ends with a brilliant coda. The musical material of *Partita* deftly combines Lutoslawski’s more dissonant harmonic language of his middle period with tonal references often reminiscent of Bartók, a composer whose music had served Lutoslawski throughout his career as a model and inspiration.

## **JOHN MUSTO (B. 1954)**

Composer and pianist John Musto was born in Brooklyn in 1954 and received his first musical training with his father, a jazz guitarist. After pursuing his musical education as a pianist at the Manhattan School of Music with Seymour Lipkin, he continued his studies with Paul Jacobs.



Vocal music has played a large role in Musto’s musical career. In his dual role of performer and composer, he has shown a particular interest in the American art song repertoire. He has collaborated with distinguished singers such as Paul Sperry and William Sharp in recitals around the country, including performances at the Bard Festival and the Norfolk and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festivals. As a pianist, he has also recorded songs of Ernst Bacon. From 1992 to 1994, he served as New Music Coordinator for the New York Festival of Song. Often setting texts by American writers such as Edna St. Vincent Millay,

Eugene O'Neill, and e.e. cummings, he has produced a large body of songs for voice and piano that has drawn critical acclaim, including *Quiet Songs* (1990) written for his wife, the soprano Amy Burton. In 2001, Chanticleer premiered his *Five Motets*.

Among the many honors Musto's music has received have been a Rockefeller Fellowship and two Emmys from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for his documentary film scores. For the orchestral song cycle *Dove Sta Amore*, he was a finalist for the 1997 Pulitzer Prize. Recent projects include the *Passacaglia*, premiered by the Dallas Symphony in January of this year, and the opera *Volpone*, which will be presented by the Wolftrap Opera Company in the spring of 2004.

### ***Piano Trio* (1998)**

*for violin, cello, and piano*

The composer writes, "The *Piano Trio* was commissioned by George Steel of the Miller Theater at Columbia University for the Ahn Trio, and was premiered there in October of 1997. The tunes in the piece grew out of improvisations at the keyboard. It is cast in two movements: moderate, and slow/fast. In the first movement, a songful beginning gives way to a more vigorous contrapuntal exchange, and a final burst of energy in the coda. The second movement alternates a slow, nighttime-in-the-city blues with a frenetic bop section. The lyrical strains of the first movement briefly try to re-emerge, but are swept aside by a violent coda."

Even though much of the material has an immediacy that comes from its improvisatory origins, the structure of the piece is very clear and its dramatic progression direct. Musto's lyrical inspiration, influenced by his deep involvement with vocal writing, is evident from the very beginning. The opening melody, though played by the strings, breathes naturally as it seems to float over the shimmering piano texture. Episodes of light-hearted, dancing music leaven the more rigorous contrapuntal material that follows.

The second movement, which combines a slow movement and a

scherzo, particularly shows Musto's engagement with vernacular music. Between the evocations of jazz mentioned by the composer, there is a hint of tango as well. In hearing this blend of poignant lyricism and jazz-influenced rhythmic vitality, one is perhaps reminded of George Gershwin, a composer Musto has championed as a pianist.

### **GÉRARD GRISEY (B. 1946-1998)**

"Cut to pieces by the media, drowned in over-information, measured in this age of zapping and clips..., the time of Art, Love, and Creativity, the instant when something unprecedented happens, can only be preserved by the artist if he completely resists this late 20th-century environment. Paradoxically, however, these are precisely the rhythms which feed and inspire him.... And so the response to this discontinuous flood of information will be a music finding its unity and continuity. Its wintry slowness will be the reversed echo of a stress-ridden world rushing towards its end."

—Gérard Grisey, 1993

During his tragically shortened career, French composer Gérard Grisey was one of the 20th century's most innovative composers in his approach to the fundamental aspect of music's existence: the nature of sound in time.



Born in Belfort, near the French border with Switzerland, in 1946, Grisey began his musical studies as an accordion player and as a child of nine produced his first pieces for that instrument. From 1968 to 1972 he was a student of Olivier Messiaen at the Paris Conservatory and had significant encounters with composers such as Dutilleux, Ligeti, Stockhausen, and Xenakis. Another formative experience was his study of acoustics at the

University of Paris in 1974 and 1975. On completing his education, Grisey was awarded the Prix de Rome and it was while at the Villa Medici in the early 1970s that he produced his first mature pieces.

Along with several composers with similar interests, including Tristan Murail, Grisey founded the group L'Itinéraire in 1973, which marked the beginning of the most important development in French music since the works of Pierre Boulez in the early 1950s. Like many of their colleagues in Europe and the United States, what these composers were looking for was a way out of what they saw as the impasse of serialism. Their particular solution was to explore the physical nature of sound itself as a model, or metaphor, for music. "Spectralism," a word coined by composer and philosopher Hugues Dufourt in 1979 to characterize the shared approaches to composition of L'Itinéraire's members, is commonly used today as a label for their music and that of their followers. Yet this term is somewhat misleading, as it suggests only their approach to harmony, which involves re-creating or composing out the spectrum of frequencies above a fundamental pitch that determines the timbre of a sound. In fact, the more representative general aspects of this music are an interest in the development of a sound over time (for example, using the attacks and decays of a sound as models for shaping musical material), gradual continuous transformations from one type of music to another, and the various processes based on both natural and electronic models used to transform these ideas into music.

For Grisey, composing from these minute details of sound meant slowing down the sound to make every event perceptible, which coincided with his interest in time. In his later works, he proposed three basic models of time: human (the time of our respiration), whale (time slowed down and stretched out), and bird (time accelerated and compressed). To enhance the audibility of his musical processes, Grisey often worked with clearly identifiable materials, such as obvious contrasts of extremes (regular, periodic rhythms vs. irregular, aperiodic ones, "harmonic" sounds vs. distorted, noise-based sounds, or high vs. low registers). Many of his gestures and formal shapes have clear, recognizable trajectories, such as ascents or descents. These ideas were developed during the central part of Grisey's career in what is probably his most famous work, *Les Espaces Aconstiques* (1974-

1985), a ninety-minute cycle of six related pieces for increasingly larger forces that moves from a solo viola prologue to a piece for large orchestra.

With *Talea* (1986), Grisey began to move away from a musical model based on slow transformations and linear continuity by introducing stronger contrasts, interruptions, rapidity, and recollections of previous material. Building on his interest in our perception of time, his concern here was to involve the listener's memory as a piece progresses. In many ways, tonight's piece, *Vortex Temporum* (1994-1996), was the culmination of these developments.

From 1982 to 1986, Grisey was a professor of music at UC Berkeley. During this time, several of his works were performed by the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, including *Talea* and parts of *Les Espaces Aconstiques*. Until his death in 1998, he taught composition at the Paris Conservatory and at international workshops, mentoring and inspiring many younger composers. *Quatre chants pour franchir le seuil* ("Four Songs for Crossing the Threshold"), his final piece, was written in memory of his mother and pointed to potential new lyrical and dramatic directions in his music.

## ***Vortex Temporum* (1994-96)**

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

"The title *Vortex Temporum* ("Vortex of Time") defines the birth of a system of swirling, repeated arpeggios and its metamorphosis in different time fields," noted the composer. The arpeggio whose journey we will follow for forty minutes is actually little more than a simple undulating contour borrowed from Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, although we never hear it as a literal citation. This gesture functions on several levels, some audible, such as the opening, and others inaudible but perhaps still felt, such as the slowly moving waves of sound in the second movement. While the piece is one of Grisey's longest, his skill in guiding the ear through his gradual transformations of sound over long spans of time and his dramatic instinct in introducing sudden and striking contrasts are evidence of his concern for making the structure and narrative progression of his music clearly audible.

Realizing Grisey's score makes many unusual technical demands on the performers. The microtonal harmony involves quarter- and eighth-tones, subtle inflections of pitch which require different fingerings and highly attuned ears from the string and wind players. For the clarinetist, this is facilitated by using a second instrument tuned a quarter-tone lower. Integrating the piano, the equal-tempered instrument par excellence, requires tuning four notes down a quarter-tone as well. The use of noise-based sounds also requires non-standard playing techniques, such as extremes of bow pressure in the strings and multiphonics (complex combinations of sounds rather than single pitches) and breathy sounds in the winds.

The first movement, described by Grisey as "jubilatory," and modeled on his idea of "human" time, falls into three distinct sections. Fluid contractions and expansions of the sparkling opening arpeggio lead into the tauter, more jagged rhythms of the middle section. The climax of the movement is a brilliant (and very difficult) cadenza for the pianist, which seems to explode with wild energy out of the tension of the preceding music. An interlude comes between each of the main movements. Its soft noises are intended, the composer wrote, "discretely to color the awkward silence," and to dramatize our perception of time as we wait. The extreme continuity and lower register of the second movement create a clear contrast. This is "whale" time, where the same material from the first movement is stretched out so far that its identity is no longer perceptible to us. The final movement refers back to the opening, but now the material is subjected to a dizzying succession of temporal dilations (where melody, harmony, and rhythm seem to dissolve into washes of sheer sound) and contractions (sudden flashes of very high and noise-based music). The composer commented that, "*Vortex Temporum* is perhaps only the story of an arpeggio in time and space...." It is an unforgettable voyage for the listener as well.

—Program notes by Reynold Tharp

## Featured Performers

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**D**avid Abel's musical activities span a wide range including chamber music, solo recitals, orchestra appearances and teaching violin and chamber music. He made his orchestral debut at the age of fourteen with the San Francisco Symphony, and has appeared with major orchestras throughout the U.S., Canada, Europe and Latin America. A winner of the Leventritt International Violin Competition, Abel toured Europe under the auspices of the Martha Baird Rockefeller Foundation. He was violinist with the Francesco Trio, which won the Naumberg Chamber Music Award, and has appeared at the Carmel Bach, Cabrillo, Library of Congress Summer Music, Berlin Inventionen, and Salzburg festivals, and on the San Francisco Symphony American Mavericks series. Abel is on the faculty at Mills College.

**P**ianist Julie Steinberg performs regularly as a soloist and chamber musician. Since 1980, she has appeared many times with the San Francisco Symphony in such world premiere performances as John Adams' *Grand Pianola Music*, as a soloist in Arvo Part's *Tabula Rasa*, and in Michael Tilson Thomas's Mavericks concerts. Steinberg has appeared at New Music America, the Ravinia Festival, Japan Interlink, and Lincoln Center Outdoors. Other performances include *Le Sacre du printemps* with the Paul Taylor Dance Company in San Francisco, Seattle, and Paris. As an assisting artist, she has performed in master classes with Jean-Pierre Rampal and Mstislav Rostropovich. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts from Stanford University and is on the faculty of Mills College. She has been a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players' ensemble since 1989.

Abel and Steinberg are active proponents of contemporary music. As the **Abel/Steinberg Duo**, they have premiered works at the Library of Congress that were commissioned by the Library's McKim Fund, including music by Paul Dresher, John Harbison, and Steven Mackey. Joined by percussionist William Winant, they established the Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio, a virtuoso ensemble specializing in new music from the Americas and Pacific Rim. The trio has commissioned over twenty-five works and has received critical acclaim in America, Japan, Canada and Europe for their performances and many recordings.

## Pre-concert Speakers

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**C**omposer Richard Felciano is well known to Bay Area audiences. His music has been performed internationally and has brought him a long list of awards and commissions. Many of his works, from a prolific career stretching back more than forty years, draw on his interest in the physical nature of sound and our perception of time. Of particular note is his pioneering work in electronic music and multimedia. Currently he is professor emeritus at UC Berkeley, where he has taught since 1967. In 1987, he established Berkeley's Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (CNMAT), which has become world renowned for enabling inter-disciplinary research and creation linking music, computer science, and cognitive psychology.

**T**he music of Steven Stucky has been played by major orchestras and ensembles around the world, and has been distinguished by many commissions and honors. Current projects include orchestral works for percussionist Evelyn Glennie, the National Symphony, and the LA Philharmonic, and chamber works for Emmanuel Ax and the Arizona Friends of Chamber Music. He is also active as a conductor, lecturer, teacher, and writer, and now serves as Consulting Composer for New Music with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. His 1981 book, *Lutoslawski and his Music*, was awarded the ASCAP Deems Taylor Prize. Professor of Composition at Cornell University since 1980, he is currently visiting Bloch Lecturer at UC Berkeley.

## Music Director

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**D**avid Milnes is a conductor of extraordinary breadth and long-standing commitment to contemporary music. In his early years, he studied not only piano and organ, but also clarinet, cello, and voice. Milnes received his undergraduate education in music at SUNY Stony Brook. In 1984, at age 27, he won the prestigious Exxon Conductor position with the San Francisco Symphony. He remained as the Symphony's Assistant Conductor and Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra until 1986, working closely with Edo de Waart and Herbert Blomstedt. Following study and collaboration with such renowned conductors as Leonard Bernstein, Erich Leinsdorf, Otto-Werner Müller, and Michael Tilson Thomas, he earned his doctorate in conducting from Yale University in 1989.

From 1994-2002, Milnes was Principal Guest Conductor of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra and also guest conducted numerous orchestras across the United States. He has conducted at the Tanglewood, Aspen, and Monadnock Music Festivals, and has led operatic repertoire ranging from Mozart to Weill. He maintains a keen interest in jazz, which has led to appearances on jazz saxophone with Gene Krupa, Chuck Mangione, John Pizzarelli, and Billy Taylor. Milnes's recording of John Anthony Lennon's Zingari for Bridge Records was nominated for a Grammy Award in 1994.

In 1996, Milnes joined the music faculty at the University of California, Berkeley, where he directs its symphony orchestra and the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players. He first conducted the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 1997, and joined the ensemble as Music Director in June, 2002.

## The Ensemble

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**T**he San Francisco Contemporary Music Players (SFCMP), now in its 33<sup>rd</sup> year, is a leader among America's most distinguished and successful chamber music organizations, championing, commissioning, and presenting the music of today's composers. The group presents works written for both large and small chamber ensembles. SFCMP is an eight-time winner of the prestigious national ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music, having commissioned 62 pieces and performed over 990 new works, including 44 U.S. and 117 world premieres.

Each season the ensemble performs a six-concert series at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. It has also toured widely throughout California, with performances on such concert series as San Francisco Performances, Cal Performances, the Stern Grove Festival, the Other Minds Festival, Los Angeles' Monday Evening Concerts, the Ojai Festival, and the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento. SFCMP made its European debut at the Cheltenham Festival of Music in 1986 and its East Coast debut at the Library of Congress in 2001. The ensemble has recorded eight albums of its own and contributed to eight others. Its ambitious musical outreach programs involve over 20 educational events, including a new music evening course for adults.



**E**xecutive 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. Mr. Frey is also a writer; his work has been published in *The Mississippi Review*.

**A**rtistic Administrator **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.

**M**ichele **Fromson**, Associate Director, Educational Outreach and Development, holds a Ph.D. in music history and theory from the University of Pennsylvania and a certificate degree in non-profit management from the University of San Francisco. 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 done management consulting for the Empyrean Ensemble, Berkeley Opera, and Left Coast Chamber Ensemble.

**R**eynold **Tharp** began his studies in composition and history at Oberlin College, before entering UC Berkeley's graduate program in composition. He will receive his Ph.D. this spring. As a recipient of Berkeley's George Ladd Fellowship, he spent two years in Paris, studying composition with Philippe Leroux and orchestration with Marc-André Dalbavie. He was selected for the Stage d'Automne at IRCAM in 2000. His music, performed in the U.S. and Europe, has received awards including BMI's William Schuman Prize and the George Beurns Prize of Columbia University, and has been broadcast on French and Dutch radio.

## SAN FRANCISCO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC PLAYERS

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### THE PLAYERS

Roy Malan (1976), violin I  
Susan Freier (1993), violin II  
Nancy Ellis (1975), viola  
Stephen Harrison (1982), cello  
Steven D'Amico (1979), contrabass  
Tod Brody (2001), flute  
William Wohlmacher (1995), clarinet  
Rufus Olivier (1991), bassoon  
Lawrence Ragent (1981), French horn

Charles Metzger (1976), trumpet  
Hall Goff (1979), trombone  
Peter Wahrhaftig (1989), tuba  
Karen Gottlieb (1990), harp  
Paul Binkley (1981), guitar  
Julie Steinberg (1989), piano  
Karen Rosenak (2002), piano  
William Winant (1988), percussion  
Daniel Kennedy (1993), percussion

*\*Dates indicate year of joining*

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