



Performers

Tod Brody, flute
Emma Moon, flute
William Wohlmacher, clarinet
Carey Bell, clarinet
David Schrader, soprano saxophone
Roy Malan, violin
Stephen Harrison, cello
Julie Steinberg, piano
Daniel Kennedy, percussion

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Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University.*

*We thank the Ross McKee Foundation for helping to underwrite tonight's
performances of piano trios by Mason Bates and Stephen Hartke.*

SAN FRANCISCO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC PLAYERS

David Milnes, Music Director

Monday, 25 April 2005 8 pm
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts - Forum

A MUSICAL MENAGERIE

MASON BATES

String Band (2002)

Robin Sharp, violin Stephen Harrison, cello Julie Steinberg, piano

BRIAN FERNEYHOUGH

Bone Alphabet (1992)

Christopher Froh, percussion

STEPHEN HARTKE

The Horse with the Lavender Eye (1997)

- I. Music of the Left
- II. The Servant of Two Masters
- III. Waltzing at the Abyss
- IV. Cancel My Rumba Lesson

Carey Bell, clarinet Roy Malan, violin Karen Rosenak, piano

~ INTERMISSION ~

GEORGIA SPIROPOULOS

Music for 2? (2000)

United States Premiere

Tod Brody, flute Teresa McCollough, piano

SHULAMIT RAN

Under the Sun's Gaze (2004)

World Premiere, Commission

MASON BATES (B. 1977)

In a 2004 interview for the Los Angeles Times, Mason Bates states, “Music, for me, is not a mental exercise, not an abstract construction. It’s intuitional. It needs to have the power to viscerally move people and to communicate strongly, across a broad reach.” Indeed the communicative crossing of boundaries is a hallmark for Bates, who pursues a dual career: composer by day, electronica artist by night, under the stage name “Masonic.” Together these roles have given his music a strength and dynamism that is rapidly bringing him to the attention of audiences in California and around the world.

After studying piano with Hope Armstrong Erb and composition with musicologist and punk rocker Dika Newlin, Bates moved from Virginia to New York City and began a rigorous educational program. Not content merely to major in composition at Juilliard (where his teachers included John Corigliano, David Del Tredici, and Samuel Adler), he also earned a degree for his work in American and medieval English literature. In his copious spare time, he was also discovering the city’s ‘underground’ music scene, where he found “a highly informed audience listening to richly textured electronic music,” according to a 2003 interview with Mark Gresham. Although the electronic avant-garde may seem far removed from the classical, Bates notes: “I find this side of my musical life merging rather startlingly with my activities in the concert music world. The possibility of an unlimited sound palette, comprised almost entirely of homemade sounds fashioned in my studio, fascinates me as a composer—as well as the possibility of interacting with different kinds of spaces.”

Even Bates's purely ‘classical’ works have tended to mix genres or build bridges between diverse styles. For example, his *Icarian Rhapsody* for string orchestra, which was premiered by the Oakland Symphony under Michael Morgan in 2003, seems to combine modernism and minimalism in a melange that San Francisco Chronicle critic Joshua Kosman has called “lovely to hear and ingeniously constructed.” Still

more striking is his idiosyncratic duo for accordion and electronics, *Rodeopteryx* (1998). Bates links the work’s title to “the element of country and bluegrass that mischievously plays under the work’s surface (hence ‘rodeo’); and...to the lopsided, hybrid nature of the work as something between...concert music and electronica: *Archaeopteryx* is the first known hybrid of birds and dinosaurs.”

Given Bates’s multi-faceted musicality, it is not surprising that two of his most successful works also feature him as a performer. Commissioned and premiered by the New Juilliard Ensemble, *Sounds for His Animation* (2003) involves an orchestral ensemble enlivened by Bates himself as soloist on the synthesizer, an instrument that Bates describes as “blessed with a wonderful identity crisis [that] shatters the conventional relationship between orchestra and soloist.” Complete with such movement titles as “Whalesong of the Microjungle” and “Ecstasy of the Machine,” *Sounds for His Animation* showcases the “chameleon-like” possibilities of this “schizophrenic” instrument. Bates was in the percussion section performing on drum machine when his *Omnivorous Furniture*, for “sinfonietta and electronica,” was premiered in 2004 as part of the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s Green Umbrella Series at Walt Disney Hall. Here, Bates explores the idea of what he calls “‘omnivorous moments,’ when material previously perceived as background—the wallpaper or ‘furniture’ surrounding the foreground material ultimately consumes the entire texture.”

Bates is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in composition with Edmund Campion at the University of California, Berkeley, where he has also worked with Jorge Liderman. At age twenty-eight, he has already composed numerous commissioned works and (as Masonic) has appeared at venues ranging from 111 Minna in San Francisco to Metaverso in Rome (where he spent 2003-04 sponsored by the American Academy in Rome) and Berlin’s Kinzo Club and Zu Mir. Bates has won fellowships from Tanglewood and the American Academy of Arts and Letters, has been a Composer in Residence for Young Concert Artists, and has won the Aspen Festival’s Jacob Druckman Memorial Prize. His *From Amber Frozen* (2004) was commissioned by the Naumberg Foundation for the Biava Quartet and premiered at Alice Tully Hall; and his orchestral *Ode*, written for the Phoenix Symphony was later performed at the Spoleto Festival USA

and honored with the ASCAP Morton Gould Award. Bates is currently completing a work for organ and electronica (commissioned in celebration of Juilliard's centennial) while living in Germany as recipient of the 2004-05 Berlin Prize from the American Academy in Berlin.

String Band (2002)

for violin, cello, and prepared piano

Describing the origin of his *String Band*, Bates writes, “Sandwiched between my burgeoning shelf of electronica vinyl and an admittedly more modest stack of bargain-bin classical LPs, I have in my record collection a few dozen albums of old-time string-band music. The covers show ecstatically happy groups of country musicians crowded together and clutching the tools of their trade: fiddles, guitars, mandolins, banjos, a string bass. The breakneck, instrumental picking on the records is even more lively than the looks on their faces, and somewhere in that soulful, earthy music I found a space to begin *String Band*.”

“Those who are aware of old-time string-band music might hear a twangy resemblance to the work’s opening material, but the work rapidly evolves away from this music and into other spaces. A unison that slowly bleeds lower, made more effective by the use of pencil erasers and small screws inserted in the piano, grows into bluesy, sliding half-steps. This ultimately flowers, in the middle of the work, into a long melody framed by bent notes—but at that moment the piece begins to disintegrate. With the pitch world fractured and the grooves of the beginning now fading into the chemical sunset, the last half of the piece shows the ensemble as a very different kind of string band. It is a unified band of resonating strings, with the melody regressing back to its original space of a bleeding unison.”

String Band is dedicated to Edmund Campion, whose *Outside Music* the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players premiered last month.

BRIAN FERNEYHOUGH (B. 1943)

At the close of a lengthy 1996 interview, Joshua Cody, director of Ensemble Sospeso, posed a surprising question to Brian Ferneyhough, British composer and long-time California resident best known as a godfather of the so-called “New Complexity” movement. When asked about his definition of beauty, Ferneyhough responded, revealing both his problematic relationship to conventional aesthetic categories and his deeply felt, almost religious approach to music-making. “No unified answer, I’m afraid,” the composer replied, “I suppose ultimately, I find beautiful whatever stimulates, brings forth positive inner turmoil, makes me feel momentarily more intelligent, spiritual, etc., than I otherwise am: transmits a breath of Luft vom anderen Planeten (air from other planets).” This fragment of Stefan George’s is best known to musicians as part of the text for Arnold Schoenberg’s Second String Quartet (with soprano, 1908), but it also resonates within Ferneyhough’s own oeuvre—not just because of the Schoenbergian overtones, but also because so many of his pieces seem ‘otherworldly’ in their extraordinary structural intricacy and in the demands that they make upon performers.

Ferneyhough forged his reputation rapidly. After studying with Lennox Berkeley at the Royal Academy of Music, he received a Mendelssohn scholarship that enabled him to travel to Amsterdam (where he worked briefly with Ton de Leeuw) and funding from the City of Basel for a somewhat longer period of study with Klaus Huber. By the time he joined Huber at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg in 1971, he had already won three Gaudeamus Music Week Prizes, in three consecutive years, for his Sonatas for String Quartet (1968), his orchestral *Epicycle* (1968), and the *Missa Brevis* (1969). Fortunately, he was also winning the support of some of Europe’s finest instrumentalists; without their expertise, the sheer difficulty of Ferneyhough’s music might have become a significant obstacle to its dissemination. According to musicologist Richard Toop (an authority on the postwar European avant-garde), “there are no easy Ferneyhough pieces, nor even moderately difficult ones.”

At the heart of Ferneyhough's complexity is an intense exploration of time, the limits of human perception and physical ability, and the superimposition of musical processes. As Toop points out, "the typically dense and intricate textures of his music . . . do not arise from a fascination with virtuosity per se, but reflect the transcendentalist concerns which have always been a central factor in his work." Some of these concerns can be seen in his *Time and Motion Study* pieces: for bass clarinet (1971-77), for cello and live electronics (1973-76), and for sixteen solo voices, percussion, and live electronics (1974). In the second piece in this trilogy, as Toop notes, "the soloist not only executes a very demanding solo part calling for unusual independence of left and right hand, but also operates two foot-pedals and, at times, vocalizes" while "the electronic equipment offers both the enlargement and the enslavement of human capacities."

Ferneyhough's tendency to group his pieces into cycles also reflects a long-standing interest in the manifold relationships between parts and wholes. His early Sonatas for String Quartet show the composer attempting to unite twenty aphoristic movements into a single journey, and the orchestral landscape *La terre est un homme* (1976-79) based in part on a painting by Roberto Matta, is woven together from 101 individual parts rather than using the conventional sections of the orchestra. Over the course of the 1980s, he completed the seven major components of his cycle *Carceri d'invenzione* (Imaginary Dungeons/Dungeons of Invention) which takes its title from the etchings of Piranesi and whose longest member is itself a song cycle: the *Etudes transcendentales* for soprano, flute, oboe, cello, and harpsichord (1982-85). In late 1980s and 1990s, Ferneyhough took up a multi-part investigation of different solo-ensemble interactions (in such works as *Terrain* of 1992 and *Incipits* of 1996), and even his recent opera *Shadontime* (1999-2004), commissioned by the Munich Biennale and based on the life and writings of German cultural philosopher Walter Benjamin, involves seven, potentially self-sufficient scenes. Perhaps this preoccupation reflects another of Ferneyhough's metaphysical meditations on music, which he believes has the power to knit together even the diverse aspects of the human spirit. "What is music and what is it for?" the composer asks and answers: "Art in general seems to be a basic quality of being human. One might as well ask, 'Why breathe?' As to what it's for: off the

cuff I can only suggest that it serves to keep the tenuous lines of communication open between different areas of ourselves."

Ferneyhough's impressive list of honors begins during his fifteen-year tenure in Freiburg with a Heinrich Strobel Foundation award from the South West German Radio, a German Academic Exchange Award, and a Koussevitzky Award. A formidable presence at the University of California, San Diego from 1987 until 1999, Ferneyhough has also been a frequent lecturer at Darmstadt's Summer Music Courses and at IRCAM, and elsewhere. In 1984, he was named a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres and in 1997 he was elected to Berlin's Akademie der Künste. He is currently on the faculty at Stanford University.

***Bone Alphabet* (1992)**

for solo percussion

The composer writes, "*Bone Alphabet* came about as the result of a request by Steven Schick for a solo work for a group of instruments small enough to be transportable as part of the performer's personal luggage when traveling by air. I responded by leaving the precise instruments to be utilized unspecified, other than by requiring each of the seven sound sources selected to be capable of supporting an extremely wide range of dynamics and of having closely similar attack and decay characteristics to the other instruments. An additional constraint was that no two adjacent instruments making up the gamut of possibilities were to be constructed of the same material (so that, for instance, a Chinese gong could not be located next to a cowbell)."

The gestures that we hear, then, might be considered the 'letters' of Ferneyhough's alphabet. Sometimes they coalesce into 'words' or even poetic 'phrases.' More often, they claim our attention in and of themselves for their distinctive articulation of musical time and space. Like much of Ferneyhough's output, *Bone Alphabet* is a study in the unequal or "irrational" division of the rhythmic pulse. For example, the second measure of the score superimposes the following durations: two-thirds of a beat lasting one eighth note; one-fourth of a beat lasting three thirty-second notes; and one-sixth of a beat contains seven thirty-second notes. A moment later, the required ratios

are 17:16, 6:7 and 11:12 in quick succession. As important as these temporal relationships are to Ferneyhough's aesthetic, the most potent 'ratio' in *Bone Alphabet* is surely the 1:7 inherent in the solo percussionist's fearsomely balletic encounter with seven different instruments in an inevitably incredible choreography.

STEPHEN HARTKE (B. 1952)

Critics are fond of considering Stephen Hartke a "bi-coastal" composer, and it is true that he grew up in Manhattan, received his Ph. D. from the University of Pennsylvania, and now lives in Los Angeles. Nonetheless, a quick tour through his catalog reveals far more imaginative explorations of geography and history than these biographical facts would suggest. Hartke might be considered unusual in his active, even scholarly, exploration of things past—he recalls reading a 700-page book on the Franco-Prussian War in order to capture the right atmosphere for his opera *Boule de Suif* (based on a short story by Guy de Maupassant). But despite this love for 'research,' Hartke's music is typically playful, and never pedantic.

Trained as a chorister, Hartke was exposed to Bach and Handel, Thomas Tallis and William Byrd, as well as twentieth-century choral music while singing with such groups as the New York Pro Musica and the New York Philharmonic. In a 2003 interview for *iclassics*, he observes that this early schooling represents "a similar musical environment to that which produced nearly all composers prior to the 19th century, the only part missing being not having to pump the organ bellows by hand." Hartke continues, "My approach to melody, for example, is very much grounded in singing . . . My harmonic language is very much informed by both early medieval and Tudor church music." Yet the twentieth century is audible, too, in the active rhythms and layered textures characteristic of both Stravinsky and more recent 'minimalists.'

Ruminations on memory run like a red thread through Hartke's oeuvre, whether in direct homage, or in the creative transformation of

musical traditions (after the manner of his teacher George Rochberg). One of Hartke's most frequently performed works, the piano quartet *The King of the Sun* (1988), borrows a melody from the late 14th/early 15th-century, while taking its movement titles from paintings by Joan Miró, whose "Dutch Interior" provides an analogous 'misreading' of older artwork. *Wulfstan at the Millennium* (1995) aims more explicitly to rewrite music history as if the monks and masters of the Middle Ages "had been the direct antecedents of late 20th-century music—as if the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical and Romantic periods had never happened."

Not surprisingly, the voice takes center stage in some of Hartke's music, especially when he turns to philosophical or spiritual themes, as in his quasi-Biblical parable, *The Sons of Noah* (1996), based on a short story by Brazilian writer Machado de Assis. Hartke has written three works for the distinctive male voices of Hilliard Ensemble: *Tituli* (1999), involving the recitation of inscriptions from pre-Imperial Rome; *Cathedral in the Thrashing Rain* (2000), based on an early 20th-century Japanese poem about Notre Dame Cathedral; and the Symphony no. 3 (2003), which complements the usual orchestral forces with countertenor, tenors, and baritone singing a setting of an Old English poem, "The Ruin." The text's emphasis on decay and the transience of power, together with the fact that the Symphony was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic and premiered in September, has given it the status of a memorial to the events of September 11, 2001.

Even Hartke's instrumental music often responds to a verbal impetus. His 1991 homage to Mozart, for example, takes as its point of departure not just Mozart's style, but also his words; Hartke's title *Wir Küssen Ihnen tausendmal die Hände* (We kiss your hands a thousand times) was Wolfgang's favorite closing salutation in letters to his father, Leopold. And his unique violin duo, *Oh Them Rats Is Mean in My Kitchen* (1985), builds upon the rhythm of the first line in Blind Lemon Jefferson's *Maltese Cat Blues* as recorded by Tennessee blues singer Sleepy John Estes. While other pieces evoke other parts of the globe—his Violin Concerto "Auld Swaara" incorporates a Shetland fiddle tune, and his orchestral essay *Pacific Rim* conveys the mingling of Asian and Latin-American elements in California—the blues has

remained important for Hartke, especially in his Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, “Landscape with Blues” (2001), which traces the geographical dissemination of blues elements from their African roots (in the first movement “Senegambia”) to New Orleans (in “Delta Nights”) to North American urban centers (in the finale “Philamayork”).

Hartke has won prizes from the American Academy in Rome, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, ASCAP, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, as well as the Fulbright and Guggenheim Foundations, and the Kennedy Center’s Friedheim Award. His works have been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Koussevitzky and Fromm Foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. *Boule de Suif* (with a libretto by Philip Littell) will fulfill an opera commission from the American Music Institute at the Eastman School of Music for the Glimmerglass Opera in the summer of 2006. Hartke joined the faculty in composition at the University of Southern California in 1987, and he is currently supported by the prestigious, three-year Charles Ives Living fellowship.

The Horse with the Lavender Eye (1997)

for violin, clarinet, and piano

The composer writes, “I’ve always been fascinated by non-sequiturs, and the way that sense can suddenly appear out of nonsense. I also find imagery derived from words and pictures to be a great stimulus to my musical thinking, even if the relationships between the images I seize upon are not necessarily obvious or logical. The sources for the titles of this trio are quite disparate, ranging from Carlo Goldoni to Japanese court music to the cartoonist R. Crumb, as well as 19th-century Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis and *Looney Tunes*. A bewildering array of references, to be sure, but one that somehow whets my musical appetite. Here are examples of just how: the ancient Japanese court, borrowing from the Chinese, was divided into left and right sides with ministries and music specific to each. The image of this official Music of the Left, suggested, first, the rather ceremonial character of my trio’s first movement, and also its technical quirk: all

three instruments are to be played by the left hand alone. In the second movement, the title of Carlo Goldoni’s play *The Servant of Two Masters* seemed to me an apt description of the performance dynamic involved in this particular combination of instruments, where the piano, in somewhat of a frenzy, serves alternately as the accompaniment to the clarinet while the violin clamors for attention, and vice versa. The third movement was suggested by a very short chapter in Machado de Assis’s novel *Dome Casmurro* wherein the narrator, observing that his story seems to be waltzing at the abyss of final catastrophe, seeks to reassure his reader (falsely, as it turns out) by saying: ‘Don’t worry, dear, I’ll wheel about.’ For the finale, I had in mind a panel from one of R. Crumb’s underground comics of the late 60s showing a character dashing about in an apocalyptic frenzy, shouting, among other things, ‘Cancel my rumba lesson!’ The connective thread of all these images began to dawn on me only in the midst of composing the work: all the movements have to do in one way or another with a sense of being off-balance—playing music with only one side of the body; being caught between insistent and conflicting demands; dancing dangerously close to a precipice, and only narrowly avoiding tumbling in; and, finally, not really being able to dance the rumba at all. Nonetheless, in the very end (the rumba lesson having been canceled, I suppose), a sense of calm and equilibrium comes to prevail.”

GEORGIA SPIROPOULOS (B. 1965)

Georgia Spiropoulos brings an international background to her career as composer, performer, arranger of music. A native of Greece, she has established herself particularly in France, where she has been closely associated with the French computer music institute IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique). Beginning in 2003-04, when she worked in New York, Boston, and Cambridge, audiences in New England have had the chance to hear her works. This program carries Spiropoulos’s music to the West Coast with the United States premiere of her *Music for 2?*

Originally trained as a pianist, Spiropoulos studied piano, harmony, counterpoint, and fugue at the National Conservatory in Agrinion and the Orpheion Conservatory in Athens. She complemented these subjects with training in jazz piano, the hands-on experience of arranging and transcribing Hellenic folk music, and courses in twentieth-century composition and analysis with Günter Kahowez of Vienna's Hochschule für Musik. She moved to Paris in 1996 and began extensive work in composition and electro-acoustic music with Philippe Leroux, in composition with Jacques Charpentier, and in analysis with Michael Lévinas.

In addition to participating in master classes with such figures as George Crumb, Spiropoulos quickly became familiar with the resources of IRCAM, and in 2000-01 she was invited to participate in the Institute's Annual Composition and Musical Computing Course where she worked with Jonathan Harvey, Tristan Murail, Brian Ferneyhough, Marco Stroppa, Philippe Hurel, Ivan Fedele and Alejandro Vinao. One outcome of this fruitful period was Spiropoulos's work for saxophone and live electronics, *Saksti* (2001). Here, the composer began with the broadest spectrum of sounds a saxophone can produce, including breath-noises, singing on the instrument, and fragments of speech or whispering. Thanks to such computer programs as AudioSculpt, Max/MSP and OpenMusic, these live sounds can be captured and adapted or elaborated in real time, giving audiences an ever-changing tapestry of saxophone and 'almost-saxophone' sounds.

Together with a timely commission from Radio France for the Habanera Saxophone Quartet, Spiropoulos's special fondness for the timbre (tone color) of the saxophone also shaped one of her most frequently performed works, *Praxis 4 Saxes* (2004). A cycle of potentially independent pieces, the quartet exhibits the composer's diverse acoustic interests. The first piece, for example, builds on the Greek song "Neratzoula," and its title, "Dialog," is meant to reflect both the structure of the song and the "true relationship" between an oral tradition and those "agents of memory" who preserve and adapt it. "Breath 'n' Beat," capitalizes on the composer's interest in the percussive rhythms of rock and the soulful vocalizations of the blues.

Other pieces in this cycle, including "100 Phonemes," "Lib," and "Singing Tubes," reveal the composer's more abstract interest in the continuum between instrumental sound, voice, and noise, as well as the gestures of controlled improvisation, and the rapidly expanding lexicon of performance techniques. The exploration and combination of new sounds can also be heard in her computer piece *N. Y. Meditations* (in progress), which superimposes noises from the city's urban environment and fragments of New York's well known popular songs, ranging from 1930 to the present.

In 2002, Spiropoulos received the Villa Medici Hors-les-Murs Award (from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs) that enabled her to spend time in the United States and to complete research on capturing and digitally processing the gestures of orchestra conductors; this innovative exploration will bear fruit in her forthcoming work *Conductor's Lied*. In addition to this research and her continuing creative work, she has produced radio and television programs and has published writings on Berio and music technology. Spiropoulos has received commissions from IRCAM, the French Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Culture of Baden-Württemberg & GegenWelten Festival of Heidelberg, Sacem, Ensemble InterContemporain, the Accentus choir, the ensembles L'Itinéraire and Diffraction, saxophonist Claude Delangle, and harpist Frédérique Cambreling. Earlier this month her new Psalm settings were performed at the Louvre and at Notre Dame des Blancs-Manteaux by Le Jeune Choeur de Paris under the direction of Laurence Equilbey and Geoffrey Jourdain. She currently serves as a member of the reading panel for the Cursus of Composition & Computer Music at IRCAM, where she is working on a new work for mixed choir and live electronics, which will be premiered at the Opera de Bastille in December 2005.

Music for 2? (2000)

for flute/ bass flute, prepared piano, and tape

A duo, or not a duo? That is the question posed by Spiropoulos's *Music for 2?* The visible participants (flute and piano) are joined and enhanced by tape-recorded sounds: whispers, flourishes, quiet clusters, and changing colors. Already the two on stage have become three—or more, for the composer has found ways of refracting each sound source into magically multiple personalities.

The sonic variety of *Music for 2?* is achieved through a panoply of 'extended techniques,' that push the performers to use their instruments (and even

their bodies) in new ways. In fact, the first three pages of the score are devoted to a chart of detailed instructions for each player about how to bring each sound to life. In addition to switching between concert and bass flute, the flautist must execute such mouth-gymnastics as the so-called “tongue ram,” unpitched “air tones,” pitched sounds produced while inhaling, triple tonguing, and a fluttering of air created by the throat. The pianist counters with his or her own repertoire of techniques ranging from muting the strings with rubber, to striking a mallet handle on the metal plate of the piano, to scraping between the strings with a guitar pick. And even this does not exhaust the catalog of demands, for both players must also use their voices and an assortment of percussion instruments. Unfolding against the variegated and elusive tape background, this is a piece for adventurous performers and curious ears.

SHULAMIT RAN (B. 1949)

Shortly after winning the 1991 Pulitzer Prize for her Symphony, Shulamit Ran remarked on her creative engagement with musical tradition: “I am grateful that I got to know great composers at an early age through playing them myself on piano. Their music went through me, a physical presence in my body. I think that’s crucial to how you perceive and hear music the rest of your life. You can’t just study music. You have to exist in it.” Existing in music has seemed to come naturally to Ran. Born in Tel Aviv to parents who emigrated from Germany and Russia, she was already an accomplished composer and musician before leaving Israel. Her first stop in the United States was New York, where she studied piano with Nadia Reisenberg and composition with Norman Dello Joio at the Mannes College of Music, supported in part by a scholarship from the America Israel Cultural Foundation.

At the age of fourteen, Ran appeared on one of Leonard Bernstein’s nationally televised Young People’s Concerts, as the featured soloist with the New York Philharmonic in the world premiere of her own *Capriccio* (1963). Her keyboard skills remained in high demand around the world until, shortly before she turned twenty-four, she decided to devote herself to composition and teaching at the University of Chicago. Ran has made her home in or near the “Windy City” ever since, serving from 1990-97 as Composer-in-

Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (at the invitation of Daniel Barenboim), and from 1994-97 as Composer-in-Residence with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, which gave the much-acclaimed world premiere of her opera *Between Two Worlds* (*The Dybbuk*) in June 1997.

Ran’s music has earned special praise for its dramatic qualities. As musicologist Anne M. Guzzo has observed, the performance instructions in Ran’s scores can resemble “stage directions”: “sneaking,” “scream,” “brooding,” “like a stuck record-needle,” or “get wilder.” Sometimes Ran invents her own musical forms and vocabulary—for example in her solo piano works *Verticals* (1982), with its harmonic density and angular melodic fragments, and *Hyperbolae* (1976), with its organic, yet “fancifully extravagant” unfolding. At other times she relies on the careful deployment of traditionally expressive gestures to move her audiences. Many of her works bearing ‘classical’ genre names show her taking on the kinds of challenges that have occupied composers since the late eighteenth century: crafting an intense but equal communication among the players in her first String Quartet (1984), or exploring the continuum between competition and cooperation in her series of *Concerti da Camera* (1985, 1987, 2004). Other pieces breathe new life into romantic ideas—from the idiomatic writing of the *Fantasy Variations* for cello (1979, revised 1984), which were meant to “get into the depth of the instrument’s soul,” to the more recent *Inscriptions* (1991), which plays on the legendary associations between virtuosic violin technique and either madness or devilry. No matter what the point of departure, Ran has made it clear that she wants her music “to challenge both the mind and the heart.”

Beginning in the 1990s, Ran has turned more frequently toward Middle Eastern or Jewish themes, reflected in the use of drones, declamatory rhythms, and melodic cells that might be drawn from regional modes such as the ones used in her 1990 quintet *Mirage*, which the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players performed in 1993. This trend reached its culmination in *Between Two Worlds*, based on S. Ansky’s well known play *The Dybbuk*, which retells the Hasidic folktale about the supernatural and transformative power of love. Acclaimed by The Chicago Tribune, USA Today, and newspapers in England and Germany, it is a fitting symbol for a composer who has herself negotiated multiple worlds with such success.

Ran has received most of the major honors available for composers in the United States, including two fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, grants and commissions from the Koussevitzky Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Fromm Music Foundation, Chamber Music

America, the American Academy and Institute for Arts and Letters, first prize in the Kennedy Center-Friedheim Awards competition for orchestral music, and no less than five honorary doctorates. An elected member of both the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Science, her music has been played by leading orchestras and ensembles including the Chicago Symphony, the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras, the Israel and New York Philharmonics, the American Composers Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Jerusalem Orchestra, and the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago. A member of the faculty since 1973, she is currently the William H. Colvin Professor in the Department of Music at the University of Chicago.

Under the Sun's Gaze, Concerto da Camera III (2004)

for flute/alto flute, flute/piccolo, soprano saxophone, 2 clarinets/bass clarinets, violin, cello, percussion, and piano

The composer writes, “*Under the Sun’s Gaze* as a title for a musical composition conjures up many possibilities. It is, in fact, an imagined line from an unwritten poem, invented with the idea of capturing something of the visual aura that the sounds and energy of this work invoke in its composer’s mind. An omnipotent presence in all of nature, a source of life yet also capable of its destruction, the sun affects the light and dark in our physical existence as it defines the daily and seasonal life. The music of this work, in three interlocking parts, takes turns being exuberant, caressing, scorching, receding, hazy, lazy, blazing, dissolving into darkness, blinding in its intensity.

“Subtitled *Concerto da Camera III*, this 17-minute work is written for what has become known as the standard Pierrot instrumentation of flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano plus percussion. The difference here is that the winds are doubled—the two flutists alternating with piccolo and alto flute and both clarinetists also doubling on bass clarinets. The ninth member of the ensemble, a soprano saxophone, appears well into the piece, its lyrical, plaintively expressive quality dominating the musical terrain for a while. While occasionally joining the others for some tutti outbursts, it maintains its position as something of a guest throughout.

“Of the various thematic ideas that populate this work, a six-note

descending line played by the clarinet appearing right at the work’s opening then arching back up reveals itself, as the music unfolds, to be the principal melodic building block of *Under the Sun’s Gaze*. Its various transformations include the plaintive soprano saxophone melody appearing in the middle section. The work in its totality can be heard as being in a loose arch form, its ending receding into a distant darkening horizon which carries in it the seed of the new dawn that lies beyond.”

Under the Sun’s Gaze was commissioned by the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress for the San Francisco Contemporary Players.

Tod Brody teaches flute and chamber music at the University of California, Davis, where he also performs with the Emyrean Ensemble. Brody is the principal flutist for the Sacramento Opera and California Musical Theater; he also appears frequently in such ensembles as the San Francisco Opera and Ballet orchestras. With the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Emyrean Ensemble, and Earplay, Brody has performed numerous world premieres, and has been extensively recorded. In addition to his work as a teacher and performer, Brody serves composers and new music as director of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of the American Composers Forum. He has been a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 2001.

Specializing in new music for percussion, **Christopher Froh** is a member of sfSoundGroup, Gamelan Sekar Jaya, and the Emyrean Ensemble. In addition to appearing as soloist with the Berkeley Repertory Theater, he has played with Earplay, Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players, Santa Cruz New Music Works and at the Percussive Arts Society International Conventions and the Other Minds and Pacific Rim Festivals, as well as Festival Nuovi Spazi Musicali in Rome. Froh maintains close ties to Japan, touring annually with marimbist Mayumi Hama and appearing as a soloist with his former teacher Keiko Abe. He is currently on the faculty at the University of California, Davis and joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 2003.

Pianist **Teresa McCollough** has commissioned, premiered, and performed many new compositions by today's emerging and established composers. McCollough has appeared with orchestras across the United States, and in festivals worldwide, including the Aspen Music Festival, Aki Festival of New Music, April in Santa Cruz, Festival Internationale di Cremona, and Spoleto Festival-USA. McCollough is Associate Professor of Music at Santa Clara University and has recently released a CD, *Music for Hammers and Sticks*, featuring new commissions for piano and percussion. In May she will travel to the Beijing Modern Music Festival to premiere a piece written for her by Zhou Long, in which she plays both piano and Chinese opera gongs.

David 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.

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 **San Francisco Contemporary Music Players** (SFCMP), now in its 35th year, is a leader among America's most distinguished and successful chamber music organizations, performing, commissioning, and recording the music of today's composers. The group presents works written for both large and small chamber ensembles. SFCMP is a nine-time winner of the prestigious national ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music, having commissioned 66 pieces and performed over 1,000 new works, including 51 U.S. and 126 world premieres.

Each season the ensemble performs a subscription 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 musical outreach programs have involved masterclasses, performance demonstrations, and an evening course for adults.

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 serves on the Board of Governors of the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. Mr. Frey is also a writer; his work has been published in *The Mississippi Review*.

Director of Operations and Marketing **Matt Schumaker** studied music at Dartmouth and at Princeton, where he received an MA in composition. While at Princeton, he coordinated concert production for the university's new music ensemble. He subsequently studied composition in Holland with Louis Andriessen. He joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players' staff in September, 2004.

Development Associate **Steven Heimerle** grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, and was trained as an architect at Iowa State University. His primary role during tenures with architectural firms in Chicago, Costa Mesa, Palo Alto and San Francisco was in marketing. Since 1995 he has worked for the Oakland and Berkeley symphonies, Shanti, The Friends of the SF Public Library, and the San Francisco Maritime Park Association—in marketing and development roles. Steve is a writer, photographer, collage artist and builder of handmade cards and books. He joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in March, 2004.