

## From the Artistic Director

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I can now happily announce that the culture wars between European and American music are officially over. You knew that we were at war with Europe, right?

Alas, it's true. And I am sorry to say that too many of my forty years of active engagement with contemporary music have been devoted to identifying

and then defending what it meant to be an American musician. The most difficult years for me personally were the 1980's, strangely paralleling the real cold war. I finished my degree in Freiburg in 1982 and immediately began teaching at the Darmstadt Summer Course. In Germany it seemed like every musical encounter was a test of authority: my European colleagues doubted that I really understood how to play Stockhausen, and as a riposte, I questioned their Ives and Cage. Every claim was answered by a counter claim: they had their spectralists; we had Partch; they had Nono and we had Feldman. Both sides claimed Varèse. A propos Varèse: in my five-year stint as director of the Centre International de Percussion de Genève the only time voices were ever raised above a well-modulated Calvinist murmur was when I claimed that Varèse was American. The gloves – in that particular case, expensive silk ones – came off.

Then in a small tipping point there was a revelatory moment on tour with the Bang on a Can All-Stars. We were playing in Lithuania and were in the midst of the obligatory press conference when one played in Eastern Europe. One journalist repeatedly tried to bait us with questions about the great European/American divide. As a group who flew under the colorful flag of downtown New York City, we got that kind of

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thing a lot. At that moment Evan Ziporyn, whose piece *Hive* you are about to hear, and who was sitting on the dais with me that day, noted that a third of the group was born neither in the United States nor in Europe. Furthermore, he continued, he had had his most formative training in Indonesia. Maybe, he posited, the new musical reality was neither European nor American. Maybe we could begin to leave the world of Henry James and Edith Wharton, of Nadia Boulanger and *Speculum Musicae*, behind. Our cultural cringe could finally be put to rest – after all, why cringe any more? Houston has great opera, Salt Lake City has a first-rate contemporary music series, and Minneapolis probably has more interesting theater and musical events per capita than Paris. But also, just maybe, we could temper our jingoistic defense of the American Experimentalist tradition (as though we invented the idea of experiment).

The reason I am mentioning this topic at all is that it was only a few weeks ago that it occurred to me that the current San Francisco Contemporary Music Players season – of which we have plentiful reason to be proud for its diversity and aesthetic range – consists exclusively of American music except for one piece, the brief violin solo by Liza Lim that you will hear tonight.

What a wonderful surprise!

**How wonderful  
that there is  
such diversity  
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of a single  
country!**

How wonderful that there is such diversity of style, musical aesthetic and personal history within the music of a single country! How wonderful it is that Lewis Nielson sounds unlike Evan Ziporyn, and even that John Cage in 1938 sounds very little like John Cage in 1958. And how equally wonderful is the inclusivity of American music such that a composer like

Chaya Czernowin, born in Israel, educated in the United States, Germany and Japan, for a while a Professor in Vienna, and now at Harvard, is fully an American composer in our view. And most of all how wonderful that a (very nearly) full season of American music was created, not as a political statement or a box to be ticked on a grant application, but simply by accident – based on the criterion of musical excellence rather than national origin. And finally, how wonderful, for those of us who suffered through the grim culture wars on both sides of the ocean, that we simply do not have to care anymore.

There are still valuable and important centers for the advancement of American music. My pronouncement here is no judgment that they are irrelevant. But they are out-of-date and badly in need of a make-over so that they become less concerned with promoting American music and more concerned with bettering the experience of American audiences. And for organizations, even our own from time to time, who profess to being the voice of the European avant-garde – that battle is over. It's time to move on to more important fights. After all, we created a season of American music and I didn't even notice!

Isn't it wonderful!

– Steven Schick



**San Francisco Contemporary Music Players**  
**Steven Schick, Artistic Director**

**Hive**

Monday, April 1, 2013 • 8:00 pm

Herbst Theatre

**Lewis Nielson**

*on regression, accumulation, and the persistence of ghosts* (2013)

World Premiere

Tod Brody, flute

Kyle Bruckmann, oboe

Dana Jessen, bassoon

Chris Froh, percussion

Graeme Jennings, violin

Ellen Ruth Rose, viola

Hanna Addario-Berry, cello

Steven Schick, conductor

**Evan Ziporyn**

*Hive* (2007)

Bill Kalinkos and Steve Sanchez, clarinets

Jeff Anderle and Peter Josheff, bass clarinets

Intermission

**Liza Lim**

*Philtre* (1997)

Graeme Jennings, violin

**Chaya Czernowin**

*Streams (Slow Summer Stay I)* (2013)\*

World Premiere

Jeff Anderle and Peter Josheff, clarinets/bass clarinets

Dana Jessen, bassoon

David Tanenbaum, guitar

Eric Zivian, piano

Chris Froh, percussion

Graeme Jennings, viola

Hannah Addario-Berry, cello

Steven Schick, conductor

Please join us in thanking and congratulating **Robert Shumaker**, who celebrates the end of his 25th year as SFCMP's concert recording engineer! Thanks for helping capture some extraordinarily memorable musical experiences, Bob!

\*Chaya Czernowin's commission is made possible by a grant from the Fromm Music Foundation.

## About the Composers

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Born in 1950, **Lewis Nielson** studied music at the Royal Academy of Music in London, England, Clark University in Massachusetts and the University of Iowa, receiving a Ph.D. in Music Theory and Composition in 1977. He has received numerous grants and awards for his works, including from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Delius Foundation, Meet the Composer, The Georgia Council for the Arts, the Groupe de Music Experimentale de Bourges in France, the Ibla Foundation (Sicily) and the International Society of Bassists. He has received commissions from many important chamber ensembles and solo performers, including the Minneapolis Guitar Quartet, the Iowa Center for New Music, the new music group Thamyris, and the Aurora Brass Quintet. His works have been performed throughout the United States and Europe. Among the more notable performances of his large works are those by the Lake Placid Sinfonietta, the American Composer's Orchestra, the Fresno (CA) Philharmonic; and recent CD reading/performance projects with the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra of Bratislava, the Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Tchaikovsky Symphony of Moscow Radio. He was recently honored as the 2007 Cleveland Art Prize Laureate. Nielson served as Professor of Music Theory and Composition at the University of Georgia, where he directed the University of Georgia Contemporary Chamber Ensemble for 21 years. In 2000, he joined the composition faculty of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music where he is currently Professor of Composition and chair of the Composition department.

**Evan Ziporyn** makes music at the crossroads of genre and culture, high and low, west and east. Born in 1959 and raised in a musically ecumenical household in Evanston, Illinois, he grew up listening to his father's violin, his grandmother's Yiddish Socialist chorus, his mother's extensive folk and jazz collection, and the sounds of top 40 and Motown on AM radio. Ziporyn started composing music at age 13 after a visionary high school

music teacher played him – in rapid succession – *Le Sacre*, Charles Ives' *Quarter Tone Studies*, Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting in A Room*, and Steve Reich's *Come Out*. He studied composition at Eastman with Joseph Schwantner and at Yale with Robert Moore, David Lewin, and Martin Bresnick, while studying piano with Christopher Oldfather and clarinet with Keith Wilson. In 1979, working in Festoon's record store, he heard a short recording of traditional Balinese gamelan and had a self-described 'conversion experience.' Evan spent the following summer in Oakland working with Wayan Suweca and Michael Tenzer in the newly formed Gamelan Sekar Jaya, then traveled to Bali on a Yale Murray Fellowship upon graduation in 1981. There he studied gender wayang, the music of the shadow play, with Wayan Suweca, and pelegongan drumming with I Madé Lebah, who had previously been Colin McPhee's driver and chief musical informant in the 1930s. Returning to the US after traveling through Asia and Africa, he received his M.A. and Ph.D. in composition from UC Berkeley, studying with Gerard Grisey and Andrew Imbrie, and continued his involvement with Sekar Jaya, eventually becoming their music director in 1989. In 1992 he became a founding member of the Bang on a Can All-stars, with whom he has recorded for numerous labels including Sony Classical, Nonesuch, Point Music, and Cantaloupe, performed at major venues in several dozen countries (from the 2000 Sidney Olympics and 2009 Beijing Festival to the caves of Lanzarote & non-electrified recital halls in Samarkand & Bukhara). In 1990, Ziporyn joined the MIT faculty, founding Gamelan Galak Tika as a student group there in 1993. He also began composing an ongoing series of groundbreaking cross-cultural works, imbuing his work for western instruments with doses of Balinese sensibility, and in turn combining gamelan with saxophones, guitars, electronics, Chinese and African instruments, and full orchestra.

**Chaya Czernowin** was born 1957 in Haifa, Israel. She commenced studies in composition at the Rubin Academy in Tel

Aviv and from the age of 25 has lived in Germany, Japan, the USA and Austria. Thanks to her teachers, Abel Ehrlich, Dieter Schnebel, Brian Ferneyhough and Roger Reynolds, as well as a series of scholarships and prizes, she was able to devote herself intensely to the development of her musical language. Czernowin's compositions have been performed at more than forty festivals throughout the world including the 20th Century Music Festival in Mexico, at the Wien Modern in Vienna, the Asia Pacific Triennial in Australia and in Huddersfield. She has been in great demand as a teacher due to her profound knowledge of experimental contemporary music. She taught composition at the Yoshiro Irino Institute in Tokyo in 1993/94 and at the International Summer Courses for New Music in Darmstadt between 1990 and 1998. She was professor for composition at the University of California San Diego from 1997 to 2006 and taught at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna from 2006 to 2009. She received invitations to attend as a guest professor in Göteborg and Seoul. She has been the director of the International Summer Academy for young Composers in Schloss Solitude near Stuttgart since 2003 and was appointed professor for composition at the University of Harvard in 2009.

**Liza Lim's** work as a composer is focused on intercultural exchange, looking particularly at Chinese and Australian Indigenous art, aesthetics and ritual culture. Her projects encompass opera, chamber and symphonic music and site-specific installation. Recent commissions include Ensemble musikFabrik & Holland Festival, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Ensemble InterContemporain, Salzburg & Lucerne Festivals, Bavarian Radio & SWR Orchestras, Sydney Symphony and Festival d'Automne à Paris. She has been closely associated with the ELISION Ensemble with whom she collaborated on three operas. She is Professor of Composition at the University of Huddersfield, UK. Her music is published by Ricordi (Milan, London & Munich). She was born in 1966 and lives in Australia.

**"Summoning  
Ghosts: the  
Art of Hung Liu" at  
the Oakland Museum of  
California through June 30.  
You can own an exclusive  
print of this renowned  
artist and support  
SFCMP!**



### **Hung Liu Exclusive Print Available at Special Offer**

World-renowned artist Hung Liu's work appears in the collections of SFMOMA, San Francisco's Asian Art Museum and M. H. de Young Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The

Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, The National Gallery of Art, The Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, and many others. A limited-edition series of museum-quality prints of her 2002 painting *Dirge* are offered as a special fundraiser to support the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players.

Each print measures 18 inches square and is presented in a custom portfolio with an excerpt of music chosen by the artist and a poem by Richard Lang.

Available to SFCMP patrons at the special reduced price of \$1,400 at  
Electric Works Gallery 1360 Mission Street, San Francisco

**The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players is delighted to present the world premiere of *Streams (Slow Summer Stay I)* by Chaya Czernowin.**

## **Chaya Czernowin on *Slow Summer Stay***

*Streams* and *Lakes* are part of a series of “sister pieces” called *Slow Summer Stay*. Both are written for the same mixed octet. *Streams* is commissioned by San Francisco Contemporary Players. *Lakes* is commissioned by the Library of Congress for orchestra 2001. Both pieces use mostly the same material, which is all about movement (streams ) or stillness (lakes) in and out of the passage of time. The materials are organized so differently that they shift their meaning in this sense when they move from *Lakes* to *Streams*. The culmination of the series is in the piece *Upstream* (commissioned by Callithumpian Consort). This is a piece for two octets where *Lakes* and *Streams* are placed over each other with some changes. The simultaneous/ non simultaneous presentation and cueing of the two pieces creates a loose palindromic cannon. Two conductors are needed because the groups are temporally independent, except for a unisono tutti in the middle and “crossing points” which are cued by both conductors.

# A Note from Lewis Nielson

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## ***on regression, accumulation, and the persistence of ghosts***

Musical instruments are not sound factories in the strictest sense. A factory consists of machines designed for relatively specific purposes and not adaptable to manufacturing products other than those for which they were designed. Many (perhaps most) composers and quite a few instrumentalists, however, do think of instruments exactly this way, with a definable product that is manufactured with little variation from the original design function. Pedagogically, the performer and instrumentalist in this model simply follow the analytical model of, say, “a beautiful tone” and, with predictable minor variants with equally predictable and limited functions, create work that conforms to the time-honored production values of both the compositional and instrumental technique. Predictability becomes a virtue here, much as it does in industrial manufacturing, with the result that the musical product is a commodity and “sold” as such.

Theodor Adorno suggests that music is “like” language but with numerous differences. I would add that a musical instrument is “like” a factory but with a vastly wider field of products, limited only by the ability of the composer to hear/imagine and the performer to hear/execute gradations of variance. Since Helmut Lachenmann demonstrated the benefit of this viewpoint, innovative approaches and multiple production possibilities for composing and sound execution have entered the thought process of many composers; unfortunately mainly as simply adding new bits of machinery to the old factory concept, with the result that the same old product has been “modernized,” “brought up to date” using the latest technology. The real import of Lachenmann’s approach – one cannot say discovery since all of the sounds an instrument possesses were always present, if only latently – concerns what can be done in the realms of

perception and multi-dimensionality of structure. The factory we have has no walls, no givens, and no absolutes.

Resulting structures may possess a number of different and yet perceptible (and carefully crafted) modes of coherence that can yield more than one viable form. Multi-dimensionality and multiple listening strategies in and of themselves are not new - Beethoven's radicalizing of thematic form in his *Symphony III* in the service of intensifying (for some) or undermining (for others) sonata principles - but taking this into each instrument and democratizing the expanded sound world invites - at last! - the opportunity to speculate and to breathe again; we can take advantage of the past while striving toward a sense of identity and universality. Not how to use music as a language that we all know (all too well!) but creating new languages with more than one means of interpretation. The multi-dimensional sound world of the opening can indicate a multiplicity of structural motions, the one taking place emerging with considerable concealment and, I hope, sudden impact where the vitiating pitch content of the whole yields both its content and its basic elements.

**As to those basic elements** ... suffice it to say that they are embedded throughout. They form defined melodic and harmonic material that, when modified as to tone color and blend, take on timbre attributes that engulf the pitch content. As they are revealed, they become quite clear; perhaps too much so if revealed too soon or if dwelt upon too long. Like a number of composers, I love anagrams and the notion of *sogetto cavato*. These elements, textual in origin, provide building blocks for the work. The exact comprehension of these elements is immaterial to the perception of the whole: the musical direction and structure is capable of rendering a sense of completeness using many different such elements. I only mention this in reference to the use of text and some underlying dialectical notions that assist in the unification of my piece.

# A Conversation with Evan Ziporyn

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## **Hive**

**SFCMP:** On the list of works on your website, the first section is labeled as “Works for Clarinet/Bass Clarinet,” but many of the pieces, including *Hive*, appear in other sections as well. Of course, since you play clarinet yourself this isn’t all that surprising, but could you talk a bit about how you think about these works as somehow distinct from the other pieces with which they share “secondary” categories?

**EZ:** Mainly this is navigational – my default job description is ‘composer/clarinetist,’ many of my works are for clarinet, so a significant number of visitors to the site are clarinetists – putting that section first is the equivalent of displaying something in the front of a store – if this is what you’re here for, you need look no further! Of course it also reflects something about my music, the depth of my relationship to the instrument, technically and personally.

**SFCMP:** While writing for only wind instruments is maybe not all that unusual, it’s also not an ensemble type that many people are particularly familiar with, and in fact *Hive* is the *only* piece of its kind (in terms of instrumentation) that we’ll be featuring in our programming for this season. Could you talk about how you approach the wind ensemble and perhaps what you find particularly interesting and unique about these instruments?

**EZ:** This is really a continuation of the last answer. For years I thought of the solo clarinet pieces as self-portraits; it at first took me by surprise that other musicians would want to play them. (Coincidentally one of the first players who approached me years ago was Jeff Anderle, and he’s played several of my pieces brilliantly, so it’s great to have him be part of this

performance). I had to find a way to codify my idiosyncratic techniques, find notations and alternate fingerings, set aspects that in my own performance could be more open, etc. *Hive* was a commission from another 'legit' player who has performed my music extremely well, Ted Schoen of Minnesota. The other members of the original group were two extremely fine orchestral players, principals in St. Paul and Atlanta. Classical clarinet, wind ensembles, and clarinet choirs were a large part of my youth, but over the years I had come to feel like an outsider in that world. So the fact that they wanted to do this was very important to me – an opportunity to reconnect to that community and to that style of playing, to find a way to meaningfully merge our sensibilities. I felt like I was returning to my hive after a very long day out, bringing back nectar and pollen from the outside world.

**SFCMP:** Continuing somewhat with this thread of interest in unique sound-worlds, could you talk a little bit about how your experience with Gamelan music shapes your compositional style?

**EZ:** I began studying Balinese gamelan over 30 years ago; and I've led my own ensemble and composed for it for over 20 years – so at this point it feels like part of the DNA – hard to know where to even begin! Direct evocations and quotes aside (though these almost always seep in), I suppose it's a cyclical orientation, a love of syncopation, an emphasis on ensemble interaction, and an awareness of the visceral and the beautiful. That would be the musical side of it. There are also community aspects of gamelan – both how the ensemble works and how it fits into Balinese society – that I find continually instructive and inspiring. These have been equally important to me in shaping my musical activities over the years.

**SFCMP:** Finally, in the notes for *Hive* you mention that the piece is in part derived from your experiences as an amateur bee-keeper. Could you talk about your decision to use bees as the jumping off point for this piece? Did you decide to start keeping bees knowing that it would inform your music?

**EZ:** My wife and I had begun keeping bees in 2007, right around the time this piece was commissioned. Like many non-musical avocations – chess or child-rearing, to name two – it opens up entirely new ways of thinking about the world: sometimes small observations, sometimes life-changing epiphanies. In this case it was somewhere in between – there is something so ‘other’ about bee society, it is one thing to know this in the abstract, quite another to experience it in an ongoing and interactive way, dealing with this bizarre alien culture (which incidentally has the ability to kill you) in a box in your backyard. That said, the meaning of bee life is structural and formal – the life cycle, the rhythm of their interaction, the way they work together. All fueled by a daily hunt for the sensuous. You will notice how well that corresponds to the list in the previous answer... so how could I resist?

# A Conversation with Liza Lim

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## **Philtre**

**SFCMP:** To start, we'd like to know about the title of the piece. In the note on the website you explain that a philtre is a "love potion" and that the piece seeks to exploit the unique resonances of a Norwegian Hardanger fiddle, so what about this instrument or the music you've written is "love-potion-like"?

**LL:** The idea of the piece is quite simple - it is a sensual stroking and sounding of the resonant characteristics and tuning of the instrument. The way the piece cycles through the same basic materials creates an incantatory quality and hence the association with 'enchantment' that the title conjures up.

**SFCMP:** Your bio claims that "meditation" and "ecstatic transformation" are recurring themes in your work. Could you talk about what draws you to these ideas, and perhaps also touch upon the importance that Asian and Australian aboriginal cultures hold for your music?

**LL:** I've had various very strong personal experiences of music as a medium for transcendence and transformation in ritual, particularly in the context of Chinese shamanic rituals and in Australian Aboriginal Yolgnu culture. A lot of my work as a composer seeks to find ways of accessing the visceral and emotional intensity of these kinds of experiences, though in more abstracted ways.

**SFCMP:** Finally, since you've now written three operas, it's safe to say that you have a good deal of familiarity with the theatre, and in fact *Philtre* was written within very close proximity to *Yu Ling Jie*, the second of the three. It seems that performances of solo pieces can fairly easily blur the line between musical and theatrical experience when heard live, so we were wondering how much of *Philtre* or any of your other work is informed by your experience with the theatre?

**LL:** *Philtre* is not related to that opera but yes, I think there is something inherently theatrical in the solo performer – a sense of vulnerability and exposure, of someone speaking directly and intimately to the listener. I'm interested in exploring the physicality of performance, the synaesthetic or kinaesthetic elements that are an important part of a performer's communication. I love it when there's a tactility to the sound; when as a listener one can sense the qualities of the contact the performer's body has with the instrument and through that, also sense the inner states that are reflected in the embodied