



SAN FRANCISCO  
**CONTEMPORARY**  
MUSIC PLAYERS

2015/16 45TH SEASON

OCT  
**21**

## **SONGScape**

**SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC**  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE NATURE  
OF UTTERANCE AND COMMUNICATION

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## **BARRIÈRE & SAARIAHO**

**JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF SAN FRANCISCO**

## Message from the Artistic Director



photo by Bill Dean

Welcome to the 2015-16 Season of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players! And, welcome to our first concert, *Songscape*, in which we'll examine the nature of utterance and memory through song.

The beginning of every concert season is a fresh opportunity for exploration: new ideas to be illuminated and new options to be considered. But with *Songscape* we'll start by thinking about the end of things, by examining the language of loss.

In *Death Speaks*, David Lang culls through the songs of Franz Schubert for instances in which death speaks to the living. Lang uses excerpts from thirty-two songs, cutting and assembling them to form a melancholy collage of music and a terrifying image of the voice of death. Whether as "Der Erlkönig," in which death is as fleet as a racing horse or *Die Schöne Müllerin*, in which it is a seductress, beckoning the miller to cross the veil, the voice of death is rendered audible, personal and powerful.

Lee Hyla's *We Speak Etruscan* imagines the sound of ancient Etruscan as it might be spoken by modern reed instruments. It also forces us to contend with the death of a language. How did Etruscan (from this word we get the modern name, Tuscany), the forerunner of Latin, and the language of a major indigenous culture of significant artistic refinement, simply vanish?

That is not far from a more tantalizing question: what happens to the past when we can no longer hear its sounds? By this I don't mean when we can no longer hear the music of the past. Through scores and recordings we know quite a bit about that. But what about the truly missing sounds – the voices of people, the sounds of nature, machines, and animals? An important part of early America was lost with the death of the last passenger pigeon, a bit over a hundred years ago. We

can know what life was like when these were the most populous bird species in the country, but because we can no longer hear their songs, we cannot really remember.

This becomes personal very quickly: I have dozens of photos of my parents, now gone, but I have no recordings of their voices. As hard as I try, I cannot remember now what my mother sounded like, though I can recall many things she said to me. It's as though sound, our most personal and expressive means of communication, is denied to us as memory fades.

Gérard Grisey's magnificent final work, *Quatre Chants pour franchir le seuil* (Four Songs for Crossing the Threshold), is a profound meditation on fading memories. Conceived in four large panels, the work is both a reliquary and an expressive catharsis. It considers in order: the death of the angel, of civilization, of the voice, and finally, of humanity. These panels (Grisey uses the French word *volets*) are less like the traditional movements of a larger piece and more like intense bursts of musical light, illuminating for a short while those who have come and gone before us. The bursts are separated not by silence (with inevitable coughing and paper rustling) but by trembling percussion textures of what he calls "sonic dust." With its combination of sonic invention and emotional intensity, the work is, to this musician, one of the greatest artistic achievements of the 20th century.

*Quatre Chants pour franchir le seuil* was the final composition of Grisey's tragically short life, and features many of the ideas and techniques that he developed while he was on the faculty of the University of California in Berkeley from 1982 to 1986. It has been said that Grisey was not completely contented living in the Golden State. With its unhealthy devotion to the latest devices and whatever might be "trending," California is an unlikely incubator for ideas that reach back in time as well as forward. But in *Quatre Chants* we can feel the aridity of the sarcophagus or imagine a voice from the past as it leaches from memory and spreads into the shadows. After hearing this work we are left, as the final lines tell us, on our knees, perhaps in tears, gazing out at the horizon towards the sea...towards the world.

Steven Schick

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players  
Steven Schick, Artistic Director

## Songscape

Preview October 20, 2015 • Concert October 21, 2015  
San Francisco Conservatory of Music

David Lang

### death speaks (2012)

Alice Teyssier, soprano • Roy Malan, violin • Travis Andrews, guitar  
Kate Campbell, piano  
25 minutes

Lee Hyla

### We Speak Etruscan (1992)

Jeff Anderle, bass clarinet • David Wegehaupt, baritone sax  
9 minutes

### Improvisation

Kyle Bruckmann • Ken Ueno

~ intermission ~

G rard Grisey

### Quatre chants pour franchir le seuil (1998)

Alice Teyssier, soprano • Tod Brody, flutes • Peter Josheff, bass  
clarinet • Jeff Anderle, contrabass clarinet • Dale Wolford,  
saxophones • David Wegehaupt, baritone saxophone • Brad Hogarth,  
trumpets • Ryan Black, tubas • Tiffany Bayly, bass tuba • Hrabba  
Altadottir, violin • Stephen Harrison, cello • Richard Worn, double  
bass • Karen Gottlieb, harp • Willie Winant, percussion • Nick  
Woodbury, percussion • Loren Mach, percussion  
40 minutes

# Texts & Composer Notes

## death speaks

words and music by david lang

### 1. you will return

you will return to dust  
you will turn  
return to dust

turn to the sun  
like me, turn to the sun  
turn to the light  
turn to the light

if there's an eye still open  
grieving  
sweet sleep  
close it for me

turn your heart, your poor heart  
it will only find rest  
when it has stopped beating

turn to peace  
turn to peace  
this is the only road that leads you home

enter

I am your pale companion  
I mirror your pain  
I was your shadow  
all those long nights, all those days long past

listen to me  
this message is for you  
where I am now, all sorrow is gone  
where I am now, all lovers are together  
where I am now  
in my arms only will you find rest  
gentle rest

### 2. I hear you

I hear you  
I hear you call  
I pity you  
I am your friend  
I am not cruel  
give me your hand  
you will sleep so softly in my arms

when love breaks free from sorrow  
a new star shines  
a new star shines

three roses, half red, half white  
they will never wither

the angels  
they shed their wings  
and fall

rest well  
rest well  
close your eyes  
you will rest with me  
until the river drains into the sea

I'll make a bed for you  
the softest pillow  
come, rest  
everyone will sing for you  
for you

I will protect you  
from the hunter, from the forest  
from the flowers, from your dreams  
from the wicked girl, from her shadow  
I will keep your eyes covered  
I will protect you

good night, good night

### 3. mist is rising

mist is rising  
moon is full and rising  
sky above us  
it is so full

I greet you, sister soul  
rise up, like an eagle  
rise up, to where the light is  
rise up, to where the light is from

I am your rest, I am your peace  
I am what you long for, and  
what makes the longing go away  
I am full of joy for you, and  
I am full of grief  
come in and close the door behind you

I will drive your sadnesses away  
my eyes fill with your light  
fill them  
fill them

sweetest child  
come with me  
I will play with you  
I will show you  
the flowers and the shore  
my mother's golden robe  
my daughters and their evening dance  
they know a song to sing while you are  
sleeping  
I love you  
I love all of you  
I love your face  
I love your form  
please don't make me follow me

come and see

tears of love become strands of pearls  
when the angel comes

#### 4. pain changes

pain changes every shape

once you are truly lonely  
you will never be alone

feel my hand  
I feel you  
touch my cold hand  
I will take you  
from her  
to your new cold land

I have chosen you  
my only love  
those others  
they search for you  
but  
where they search  
they will never find you

after the leaves fall, spring returns  
after love is parted, it returns  
all you have to do is  
come with me  
and wait  
one day she will be lowered in the earth  
beside you  
my hand will guide her home  
to the place where love is

and no pain  
when that door opens  
you will be healed

dearest man, dearest woman  
dearest boy, dearest girl  
dearest mother, dearest father  
dearest son, dearest daughter  
you will never leave me

you listen  
you are silent  
you feel me leaning towards you

nothing escapes me  
not the warrior  
not the hunter

everything awaits the way it changes  
when life falls away  
that is the meaning of the swan and its song

the night can't last forever  
nor will this sleep  
beyond this sleep is light  
forever light  
until that light can shine  
until you see it shining  
sleep sweetly here  
in the cool, dark night

#### 5. I am walking

I am walking in the sunlight  
I see the moon, at my feet  
I see the sun, at my feet  
I walk in joy  
I am kissed by angels

your heart  
child of man  
your heart can't know  
what joy I feel

sister soul, come to rest

pure notes of love  
echo around you  
a lily, a rose  
they wait for you  
while you sleep

only you can hear me  
only you can see me  
only you can hear the music  
it never stops

death speaks was commissioned by Carnegie Hall and Stanford Lively Arts, specifically to go on a program with the little match girl passion. The opportunity came without many other parameters, so there were a lot of questions I had to answer. Would the new piece be for an existing ensemble or some group I would assemble for these performances only? Would it relate to little match girl, musically or emotionally, or would it start from its own place?

Something that has always interested me about the little match girl story is that the place where we are left emotionally at the end is so far away from where the match girl is. We are all weeping at the end and yet she is happily transfigured, in the welcoming arms of her grandmother in heaven. The original story switches starkly back and forth at the end, between her state and ours, perhaps in order to show us just how far away from redemption we are; it is Andersen's way of making us feel left behind.

This reminded me of certain other stark comparisons between the living and the dead. I remembered the structure of Schubert's beautiful song "Death and the Maiden" in which the text is divided in half; the first half of the song is in the voice of the young girl, begging Death to pass her by, and the second half of the song is Death's calming answer. This seemed to be the same division as in the Andersen story—the fear of the living opposed against the restfulness of death.

What makes the Schubert interesting is that Death is personified. It isn't a state of being or a place or a metaphor, but a person, a character in a drama who can tell us in our own language what to expect in the World to Come. Schubert has a lot of songs with texts like these—I wondered if I assembled all of the instances of Death speaking directly to us then maybe a fuller portrait of his character might emerge. Most of these texts are melodramatic, hyper-romantic and over-emotional; one of the knocks on Schubert is that he often saved his best music for the worst poetry. Nevertheless, I felt that taking these overwrought comments by Death at face value just might lead me someplace worth going.

I went alphabetically in the German through every single Schubert song text (thank you, internet!) and compiled every instance of when the dead send a message to the living. Some of these are obvious and some are more speculative—Death is a named character in "Der

Erlkönig," the brook at the end of Die Schöne Müllerin speaks in Death's name when it talks the miller into killing himself, the hurdy gurdy player at the end of Winterreise has long been interpreted as a stand-in for Death. All told, I have used excerpts from 32 songs, translating them very roughly and trimming them, in the same way that I adjusted the Bach texts in the little match girl passion.

Art songs have been moving out of classical music in the last many years—indie rock seems to be the place where Schubert's sensibilities now lie, a better match for direct storytelling and intimate emotionality.

I started thinking that many of the most interesting musicians in that scene made the same journey themselves, beginning as classical musicians and drifting over to indie rock when they bumped up against the limits of where classical music was most comfortable. What would it be like to put together an ensemble of successful indie composer-performers and invite them back into classical music, the world from which they sprang?

I asked rock musicians Bryce Dessner, Owen Pallett, and Shara Worden to join me, and we added Nico Muhly, who, although not someone who left classical music, is certainly known and welcome in many musical environments. All of these musicians are composers who can write all the music they need themselves, so it is a tremendous honor for me to ask them to spend some of their musicality on my music.

David Lang

The creation of *We Speak Etruscan* was initiated by saxophonist Tim Berne over a beer with the composer at the Great Jones Cafe in New York City. The work is dedicated to Berne, bass clarinetist Tim Smith, and Norm Roberson, portiere and Etruscan enthusiast and tour guide at the American Academy in Rome. The piece is one in a large body of work written by the composer for or involving Smith, in an artistic friendship that spanned more than twenty years. The piece was written in 1992 in New York in the year following Hyla's Rome Prize residency at the Academy, and was premiered by Berne and Smith in 1993 at Jordan Hall in Boston.

Excerpted from liner notes for New World Records album Lee Hyla: *We Speak Etruscan* (80491-2), by Eric Moe. (p) 1996 © 1996 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc. Used by permission.

# Quatre chants pour franchir le seuil

1. D'après Les heures à la nuit de Guez Ricord

De qui se doit  
de mourir  
comme ange  
...

comme il se doit de mourir  
comme un ange  
je me dois  
de mourir  
moi même

il se doit son mourir,  
son ange est de mourir  
comme il s'est mort  
comme un ange

(Interlude)

2. D'après Les sarcophages égyptiens du moyen empire

n. 811 et 812: (presque entièrement disparus)  
n. 814: "Alors que tu reposes pour l'éternité..."  
n. 809: (détruit)  
n. 868 et 869: (presque entièrement détruits)  
n. 870: "J'ai parcouru... j'ai été florissant... je  
fais une déploration... le Lumineux tombe à  
[l'intérieur de..."

n. 961, 963 (détruits)  
n. 972: (presque entièrement effacé)  
n. 973: "...Qui fait le tour du ciel... jusqu'au  
confins du ciel... jusqu'à l'étendue des bras...  
[Fais-moi un chemin de lumière,  
laisse-moi passer..."

n. 903: (détruit)  
n. 1050: "Formule pour être un dieu..."

(Interlude)

I designed the Quatre chants pour franchir le seuil as a musical meditation on death in four parts: the angel of death, the death of civilization, the death of the voice and the death of humanity. The four movements are separated by short interludes, which maintain an energy level slightly above silence, but release the tension in the concert hall between the end of a movement and the start of the next. The selected texts come from four cultures (Christian, Egyptian, Greek, Mesopotamian), and share a fragmentary discourse on the inevitability of death. The choice of instruments was dictated by my desire for the music to oppose the

3. D'après Erinna

Dans le monde d'en bas, l'écho en vain dérive,  
Et se tait chez les morts. La voix s'épand dans  
l'ombre.

(Faux Interlude)

4. D'après L'épopée de Gilgamesh\*

... Six jours et sept nuits,  
Bourrasques, Pluies battantes,  
Ouragans et Déluge  
Continuèrent de saccager la terre,  
Le septième jour arrivé,  
Tempête, Déluge et Hécatombe cessèrent,  
Après avoir distribué leurs corps au hasard,  
Comme une femme dans les douleurs,  
La Mer se calma et s'immobilisa.

Je regardai alentour:  
Le silence régnait!  
Tous les hommes étaient  
Retransformés en argile;  
Et la plaine liquide  
Semblait une terrasse.

J'ouvris une fenêtre  
Et le jour tomba sur ma joue.  
Je tombai à genoux, immobile,  
Et pleurai...  
Je regardai l'horizon de la mer, le monde...

\* Published by La Sétérée, ed. Jacques Clerc, 1992.

lightness of the soprano voice with a serious mass of sound: heavy and yet sumptuous and colorful.

### 1. The death of an angel

I got to know Christian Guez Ricord at the Villa Medici from 1972 to 1974, and we repeatedly discussed the possibility of a joint work. Then our paths diverged, and my research drifted away from vocal music. His death in 1988, concluding a tragic life, overwhelmed me. More so, these few lines from the silent climax of a dense work, rife with mystical, heavy Judeo-Christian images, almost medieval in its relentless pursuit of the Grail. The death of an angel is in effect the most horrible of all, because we must mourn our dreams. In its minimalism, this quiet and perfectly structured poem has induced in its proportions the temporal structures of this first movement. In addition, the structures

remain implicit in the following two movements of *Quatre chants*. The poem also influences the metrical structure, its slight overflow and especially the fatal syntax error, which signs the death warrant of the poem and the poet.



### 2. The death of civilization

My interest in Egyptian civilization is such that it has led to multiple works, including *Jour, contre-jour*, a reading of *The Book of the Dead*. Upon reading this long catalog of hieroglyphic archaeological fragments found on the walls of tombs or on the strips of mummies, I instantly felt the desire to compose this slow litany. The music is diatonic, though riddled with micro-intervals and chords that come from the “waste” of the first movement.

### 3. The death of the voice

Erinna, a Greek poet of the sixth century BC about whom we know almost nothing, left us these two lines. The void, the echo, the voice, the shadow of sound and silence are so familiar to the musician that I felt these lines demanded musical translation. After so many centuries do they still reflect our grief?

### 4. The death of humanity

In The Epic of Gilgamesh, the immortal Utnapishtim tells the hero the "secret of the Gods": the flood. Just as Noah in the Bible, he is saved from the cataclysm of which it is said that the gods themselves were terrified. The Great Mother Goddess screams like a woman in labor and the music replaces the reading of the disaster while the voice appears in the interstices of the crash. Gale, heavy rain, hurricane, flood, storm, carnage, these elements result in greater polyphony where each layer follows a temporal trajectory of its own. Almost a fifth song, a "diatonic" soft lullaby concludes the cycle, and is intended not to lull, but to awaken. The musical dawn of a humanity finally freed from a nightmare. I only hope that this lullaby will not be the one we sing in the future, when the first human clones reveal the genetic and psychological violence that we have done to ourselves and our humanity.

G rard Grisey

# Program Notes

by Robert Kirzinger

The human voice is a powerful medium with far-ranging capabilities: basic communication in which its sound is virtually subsumed into the content of the message; an astonishing potential for mimicry of non-human natural noises; the evocation of nearly pure emotional response; and as a generator of “absolute” sound when used as a musical instrument separate from the role of explicating a text. The voice is frequently held up as the exemplar or root of all “singing” musical instruments, not least because of its universality. Its origin deep in a human body inescapably affects our perception and reception of the sound of the voice. Speech and language, even those languages not our own, add deeply provocative dimensions to this reality. Especially during the past century or so, composers have engaged in and benefited from scientific (physical production) and psychological explorations of the voice and language to map new frontiers for what constitutes singing, what constitutes language, what “voice” means. Thus the concept of voice is constantly shifting, expanding.



photo by Peter Serling

Co-founder of New York’s remarkable Bang on a Can Festival with Michael Gordon and Julia Wolfe, David Lang (b.1958) is one of the best known composers in the world of contemporary music. He won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for his little match girl passion, composed on commission from Carnegie Hall and Perth Theatre and Concert Hall for Paul Hillier and Theatre of Voices, who premiered it in Carnegie’s Zankel Hall in October 2007. Born in California, he is now strongly identified with New York City. His early interests in music were remarkably inclusive, with a strong awareness of the experimental paths of John Cage and LaMonte Young, among others. He attended Stanford University, the University of Iowa, and Yale University, where he subsequently taught; he was also a Fellow of the Tanglewood Music Center, where he worked with and was encouraged by Hans Werner Henze.

Lang's experience with Bang on a Can doubtless helped inform the immediacy and directness of his style, which draws on influences from the Renaissance and Bach to classical minimalism. His works encompass many genres, both instrumental and vocal, as well as the musical theater works *Modern Painters* and *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*. His David Lang Piano Competition invited pianists from around the world to video record a performance of one of his pieces (the winner was the Australian Peter Poston). Recent projects include the film score for Paolo Sorrentino's *The Great Beauty*; questionnaire, a piece for 120 guitars celebrating the 120th anniversary of the Third Street Music Settlement; and the percussion quartet concerto man made for So Percussion, premiered by So and the BBC Symphony and co-commissioned by the Barbican Centre and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. His work ranges from delicate, tightly constructed to experimental, such as his loony crowd out for "1000 people yelling," commissioned by the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group.

On the other end of the refinement scale of Lang's vocal works is the little match girl passion, which conflates the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale with the Christian passion story. Lang's treatment of this secular/sacred idea includes direct references to Bach's passions, but he ultimately wrote it in the inimitable clear style of vocal ensemble music that he has developed over many years, and which includes the recent *where you go*, written for the 75th anniversary of the Tanglewood Music Center and premiered this past August. *death speaks*, for soprano (who also plays bass drum), violin, electric guitar, and piano (all amplified) is a companion piece for the little match girl passion, commissioned by Carnegie Hall and Stanford Lively Arts. Like little match girl passion, *death speaks* draws on a composer from the past, in this case Franz Schubert, employing texts from Schubert songs that reference death. Lang writes:

What makes the Schubert interesting is that Death is personified. It isn't a state of being or a place or a metaphor, but a person, a character in a drama who can tell us in our own language what to expect in the World to Come.... I went alphabetically in the German through every single Schubert song text and compiled every instance of when the dead send a message to the living. Some of these are obvious and some are more speculative—Death is a named character in 'Der Erbkönig,' the brook at the end of *Die Schöne Müllerin* speaks in Death's name when it talks the miller into killing himself, the hurdy gurdy player at the end of

Winterreise has long been interpreted as a stand-in for Death. All told, I have used excerpts from thirty-two songs, translating them very roughly and trimming them, in the same way that I adjusted the Bach texts in the little match girl passion.

The music of Lang's song cycle lies somewhere between Schubert's art song and modern "chamber pop," and in fact the musicians he asked to collaborate on the project in its January 2012 premiere—Bryce Dessner, Owen Pallett, Shara Worden, and Nico Muhly—all have alt-pop credentials. The striking flow and tone of the piece, its almost ritualistic coolness, requires great sensitivity from the performers. As Lang puts it, "Art songs have been moving out of classical music in the last many years—indie rock seems to be the place where Schubert's sensibilities now lie, a better match for direct storytelling and intimate emotionality." The texts—which may or may not ring a bell for the casual Schubert enthusiast—are fragmented, recombined, and redrawn in ways that take them well away from the Romantic poetry of their origins, and Lang's diatonic/modal tunes and counterpoint, his overlapping meters and tempos, create a strangely intimate and personal expressive space.



Lee Hyla (1952-2014) was a mainstay of the Boston and New York new music scenes, working closely with such groups as the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, the Callithumpian Consort, Speculum Musicae, and the Firebird Ensemble. He was a longtime faculty member

of the New England Conservatory and from 2007 until his death was Wyatt Professor of Composition at Northwestern University. His untimely death last year touched his colleagues and friends deeply. SFCMP dedicated its groundbreaking Project TenFourteen to his memory last season.

Hyla was an absolutely exquisite musical craftsman, creating tightly knit, intricate works that nonetheless sound as though they are being created on the spot. He had a reputation for writing brilliant, difficult, but immediately engaging works that tapped into the energy of punk

and jazz, but he had range, too, as in incredibly lyrical moments in his Violin Concerto (2001) as well as the vocal works *Wilson's Ivory Bill* and *The House of Flowers*. In *Lives of the Saints*, he drew on the culture and ideas of Japanese Noh theater, which he studied deeply. Mixing various vernaculars with many strands of the concert music tradition, he also assimilated the natural world, particularly birdsong, into many of his works.

Lee Hyla was one of the best composers ever for that slightly out-of-the-way but terrific instrument, the bass clarinet, which pairs with baritone saxophone in *We Speak Etruscan*. Many of his works feature it, and he wrote a full-fledged concerto for the instrument in 1988. One is reminded, in this completely notated music, of the improvisations of Eric Dolphy and other free-jazz masters, as well as of the free-flowing Beat reading by Allen Ginsberg of his *Howl*, a reading "set" by the composer for the Kronos Quartet in 1996. *We Speak Etruscan* is emblematic of Hyla's high-energy, punkish mode. The piece uses Etruscan—a language whose actual sound is lost in the mists of time—as a kind of metaphor for newly invented contour, rhythm, and timbre. Beginning with a few quiet dissonances, the piece seems to set up the two instruments as characters in dynamic conversation, agreeing or disagreeing as the piece unfolds. Unpredictable unisons and rhythmic correspondences at breakneck tempo, simultaneous arrival at clear cadences, and long passages of intricate harmony deny the passing thought that this could all be the off-the-cuff utterances of two brilliant players, but the sense of spontaneity and excitement is present throughout.

Composer-vocalist Ken Ueno and oboist Kyle Bruckmann perform a duo improvisation on this concert, exploring beyond the boundaries of traditional performance techniques on their instruments, and reacting to one another's immediate musical gestures. Among the describable phenomena one is likely to hear are multiphonics—that is, two or more definite pitches at once—in both instruments (Ueno is a veteran practitioner of throat-singing techniques) and a variety of non-pitched sustained and percussive sounds.

Ueno writes:

Very excited to be performing with Kyle Bruckmann. I have long admired his playing and we have tentatively been making plans to

collaborate for years. Glad that it is finally happening tonight!

I don't want to put words into Kyle's mouth, but I feel that we are kindred spirits. We share a concern for extending the history of our instruments (his oboe, and my voice), through developing our personal arsenals of extended techniques—inspired by American experimental improvisers. In my case, as I also lead a double life as a composer, I have been obsessed with improvising in a way to yield complex structures. Since many of my sounds are more timbral than harmonic, my structural antecedents have drawn from works by modern composers like Sciarrino and Lachenmann. Their structures, you might say, are my Blues. One last thing, as I now live and work in Berkeley. Lately, I have been performing with a megaphone. Not so much to facilitate volume, but to facilitate more complex hypermeter and circular breathing (it also helps me produce sounds I can't make otherwise). It is also a symbol—one that relates to the history of radicalism in Berkeley, and one that I have become more sensitive to as an important signifier, having marched in the streets with undergraduate students. It is the instrument of protest.

Kyle responds:

Beyond nodding my vigorous assent (and Ken's words sit just fine in my mouth, thank you), I'd like to add that in my own multi-tentacled creative life, I particularly see not just the sounds and structures but also the process of improvisation and composition as entangled along the same knotty, spiraling continuum. The key questions are whether and at what stages of the creation one chooses to stop the clock and try to stand outside of time. I'm honored and excited to be bringing this aspect of my work into the context of SFCMP, and very happy to be doing so with Ken.

Gérard Grisey's *Quatre Chants pour franchir le seuil* ("Four songs to cross the threshold") was his last completed work; it was premiered by the London Sinfonietta and soprano Valdine Anderson under George Benjamin's direction in February 1999, a few weeks after the composer's untimely death of an aneurysm in November 1998, at age fifty-two. That this piece, one of his most important, concerns itself fundamentally with death—the "threshold" of the title—is one of those chilling coincidences that crop up throughout music history.

Grisey's work is among the most influential of the past century. Having studied with Messiaen and Dutilleux, he turned his attention

to electronic music and acoustics and began examining the properties of sound via computer analysis, folding his research back into his own music. In such works as the multi-part *Les Espacesacoustiques* (1974-85), he explores how a piece of music might be modeled on the changing timbral (that is, harmonic) characteristics of individual sounds. This approach came to be known as *spectrale* for its basis on the harmonic spectrum. (That “spectralism” became an oversimplified, overused stylistic term has proved predictably limiting.) He met Tristan Murail while in Rome as holder of the Rome Prize, and with Murail, Michaël Lévinas, Hugues Dufourt, and Roger Tessier, founded the Ensemble *l’Itinéraire*. Grisey taught at Darmstadt and the Paris Conservatoire, and also at the University of California, Berkeley.

The acoustic spectral analysis approach, which built on ideas explored by Messiaen, Stockhausen, Vivier, and others, came as a breath of fresh air to many composers looking to solve problems of form, harmony, and flow organically in a post-serial era. This approach (helped by the increasing ease of computer analysis of sound) has been growing in influence for the past few decades, and has had its effect not only on concert music but also on some pop and electronica. Along with timbre, and closely related to it, is perhaps the most striking aspect of Grisey’s innovation: the manipulation of musical time. Both intuitively and empirically, Grisey based his forms on an organic reflection of time as experienced in the world, though the base structures can be and are manipulated for essential musical ends. The experience of passing time in Grisey’s work has its parallels less in European traditions than in certain Asian classical traditions, such as those of India and Tibet; strict repetition of episodes or individual elements has a very limited role. Grisey contemplated time, too, via poetic metaphors, considering that different organisms could and presumably do perceive time very differently. His *Le Temps et l’écume*, for example, imagines immensely stretched out “whale-time” as well as human time.

*Quatre Chants pour franchir le seuil* introduces language into Grisey’s time-manipulation strategies. Taking texts from four different sources, Grisey explores death from four different vantages: death of the angel, death of civilization, death of the voice, death of humanity; and the texts reflect the views of death in Christian Egyptian, Greek, and Mesopotamian civilizations. The composer said that the choice of instruments was intended to oppose the soprano’s voice with a

potentially massive but sumptuously colorful ensemble. The piece begins with a Prelude, indeterminately long, of extremely quiet white-noise-like sustained sounds. *La mort de l'ange* uses a text by Grisey's friend, the poet Christian Guez-Ricord (1948-88), from his *Les Heures à la nuit*. (The poet's middle name, like the angel's, was Gabriel.) The soprano spaces the text, its syllables short or sustained and separated by long rests, over a shimmering quarter-tone scale screen with unpredictable percussive highlights in the ensemble. The singing is at its most intense a few lines before the end, and then fades in exhaustion: "as he died like an angel."

The second movement is yet more austere and cool; the composer calls it a "slow litany," setting translations of hieroglyphs found in Egyptian tombs. The text of the third movement (preceded by a long interlude of slowly changing percussion sounds) is from the ancient Greek poet Erinna, of whose text apparently only this couplet survives. The gestures in the ensemble are a skewed echo of the voice, illuminating the text: "In the world below the echo drifts in vain." Voice becomes shadow. The gestures rock back and forth in different, shifting tempos. Following a quiet percussion-driven "faux interlude" (about two minutes) the final movement ensues, taking its text from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. In the first part, a long percussion preamble, the ensemble is at its most active, the individual gestures at their most defined. The ensemble and the voice seem actually to be illustrating the "hurricanes and floods," the cataclysm described by the Noah-like figure Utnapishtim. The quiet, diatonic closing of the movement—beginning with a clarified version of the falling scales from the first movement, and referring, too, to the rocking dyads of the third—is a lullaby, "finally dispelling the nightmare": "I opened the window and the day fell on my cheek."

# Special Concert – Barrière and Saariaho

October 24, 2015  
Jewish Community Center of San Francisco

Kaija Saariaho  
**Six Japanese gardens** (1994)  
Steve Schick, percussion  
16 minutes

On-stage interview with Jean-Baptiste Barrière

Jean-Baptiste Barrière  
**Violance** (2003)  
Hrabba Atladottir, violin  
20 minutes

Following intermission: on-stage interview with Kaija Saariaho

Kaija Saariaho  
**NoaNoa** (1992)  
Tod Brody, flute  
9 minutes

Jean-Baptiste Barrière  
**Time Dusts** (2001)  
Nick Woodbury, percussion  
22 minutes

Jean-Baptiste Barrière, electronics, video  
Isabelle Barrière, live cameras  
Thomas Goepfer, musical assistant

## Composer Notes

*Six Japanese Gardens* is a collection of impressions of the gardens I saw in Kyoto during my stay in Japan in the summer of 1993 and my reflection on rhythm at that time.

As the title indicates, the piece is divided into six parts. All these parts give specific look at a rhythmic material, starting from the simplistic first part, in which the main instrumentation is introduced, going to complex polyrhythmic or ostinato figures, or alternation of rhythmic and purely coloristic material.

The selection of instruments played by the percussionist is voluntarily reduced to give space for the perception of rhythmic evolutions. Also, the reduced colours are extended with the addition of an electronics part, in which we hear nature's sounds, ritual singing, and percussion instruments recorded in the Kunitachi College of Music with Shinti Ueno. The ready-mixed sections are triggered by the percussionist during the piece, from a Macintosh computer.

All the work for processing and mixing the pre-recorded material was done with a Macintosh computer in my home studio. Some transformations are made with the resonant filters in the Chant program, and with the SVP Phaser Vocoder. This work was made with Jean-Baptiste Barrière. The final mixing was made with the Protools program with the assistance of Hans Peter Stubbe-Teglbjaerg. The piece was commissioned by the Kunitachi College of Music and written for Shinti Ueno.

Kaija Saariaho

*Violance* proceeds from the search for a new scenic and musical form, merging instrumental writing, images, texts, and sounds transformed by computer. The piece belongs to my Reality Checks cycle, which includes interactive installations, stage pieces, and concert works. All are investigations, by means of the senses, into questions of identity and representation in the digital age, as explored and renewed by bringing about dynamic interactions between artistic disciplines in computer-assisted creative work.

This cycle includes, among other works, a piece for cello and electronics, *Cellitude*, based on an old Japanese poem on the difficulty of distinguishing between dream and reality. *Violance* is its continuation in spirit, this time concerned with the idea of violence.

The piece starts out from the Massacre of the Innocents as described in the Gospel According to Matthew II.16. Painted by Pieter Bruegel the Elder and given a literary interpretation by Maurice Maeterlinck. I have adapted Maeterlinck's text to develop its universal dimension, outside of any religious and nationalistic context, and unfold its span for all times and places.

Materials are staged, assembled, and processed, together with other sources from various origins, to propose an enigmatic re-reading, a "mise en abîme" altogether of the myth, the painting, and the poem, an attempt at an extra-temporal reflection on the representation of violence and war.

A timeless African lullaby, computer-analyzed, was used to produce melodic interpolations for the instrument part and harmonic textures for the electronics. The "child's voice" reciting the text was created from that of a woman voice, and the visual aspect combines prepared imagery with live capture and transformations of the player.

The work was commissioned by the French government and performed for the first time at the Théâtre de La Criée, Marseilles, in May 2003.

Jean-Baptiste Barrière

*NoaNoa* ('Fragrant' 1992) was born from the ideas I had for flute while writing my ballet music *Maa*. I wanted to write down, exaggerate, even abuse certain flute mannerisms that had been haunting me for some years, and thus force myself to move onto something new.

Formally I experimented with an idea of developing several elements simultaneously, first sequentially, then superimposed on each other.

The title refers to a wood cut by Paul Gauguin called NoaNoa. It also refers to a travel diary of the same name, written by Gauguin during his visit to Tahiti in 1891-93. The fragments of phrases selected for the voice part in the piece come from this book.

NoaNoa is also a team work. Many details in the flute part were worked out with Camilla Hoitenga. The electronic part was developed under the supervision of Jean-Baptiste Barrière and programmed by Xavier Chabot.

Kaija Saariaho

Time Dusts reworks and develops percussion materials composed for Peter Greenaway's show 100 Objects to Represent the World. Unloosed from their scenic context and from some related referential elements, they recover their abstract and formal nature, proceeding from musical ideas that are important to me, of timbral and rhythmic interpolations. The percussion materials also allowed me to develop, in this version commissioned and first presented by the Groupe de Recherches Musicales in 2001, interactions between sonic and visual processes, which proceed from the same formal preoccupations. To conclude, they helped me in a quest for a form of abstract narrativity in music.

A relatively restricted set of instruments (bell plate, low cow bell, and tympani, Korean gong, Chinese cymbal, log drum, bongos, temple blocks, snare drum, crotales), was chosen to represent the different timbre families on a sort of conceptual map. Categories defined as such were then used to elaborate interpolations, formal developments that constitute paths through the sonic material represented. A similar approach was carried out for rhythm, starting from archetypes, rhythmic characters.

Music then proceeds from explorations of qualities of time, light, and color, and also of language games, these appearing progressively in the electronics.

Each of the percussion player's gestures is prolonged by the computer, triggering bits of language, processing of the sound of the instruments, synthesis of musical fragments, and also prepared sequences and

processing of live images of the percussionist, as well as of different natural sources that were pre-recorded.

Like *Violance and Cellitude*, *Time Dusts* belongs to the Reality Checks series, which stages interactive situations under the form of installations, as well as concert pieces under the form of performances, both based on the confrontation, in one case of the spectator, in the other of the musician, to his or her own reflection and its electronic becomings.

Sounds and images, captured and transformed in real time, are mixed and interpolated with pre-recorded sources coming from percussion instruments and other origins, mainly natural.

Thus the electronic involvement prolongs the instrumental writing, reveals a hidden becoming of the instruments (cf. Gérard Grisey: "Music is the becoming of sounds"). In this case, vowels and consonants prolong percussive attacks and resonances, quasi-obsessional pulsations and polyrhythms, to become figures in a musical dramaturgy that takes place at the borders of music, language, and image.

Jean-Baptiste Barrière

# Program Notes

by Robert Kirzinger

Kaija Saariaho (b.1952) and Jean-Baptiste Barrière (b.1958) have been close collaborators since the mid-1980s. Saariaho is known for traditional musical genres from solo instrumental works to concertos and opera, but many of her pieces involve electronic sound sources or manipulation; Barrière has been Saariaho's technical and artistic co-creator for nearly all of her works involving electronics and sound projection, including the two on this program. He is also a composer and multimedia artist, working in acoustic, electro-acoustic, and acousmatic media and with theatrical and film dimensions.

Kaija Saariaho is of that remarkable flowering of Finnish musicians who reached artistic maturity in the 1980s. In her 20s she enrolled at the Sibelius Academy to study with Paavo Heininen. Among her classmates were Esa-Pekka Salonen, Magnus Lindberg, and several other composers and performers who have also achieved international reputations. She worked with Klaus Huber and Brian Ferneyhough, attended the Darmstadt new music courses, and engaged in research in electroacoustic media in the early 1980s.

Saariaho's interest in unusual sounds began in her childhood, but there was little precedent in the mainstream repertoire for the notation and production of the kinds of sounds she liked. She also studied visual arts, ideas from which show up as titles for many of her works, such as *Lichtbogen*, *Nymphéa*, *Lanterna Magica*. Like Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail, she has used detailed computer analysis of sound as a basis for musical narratives and formal structures. Every sound has its own unique spectrum of frequencies, and most natural and musical sounds—such as a human voice or a violin—change over time, from the onset of a sound to its end. This acoustic “shape” can then be used as the basis for formal choices. The benefit, ideally, is that the elements of a piece are derived from the natural phenomenon of sound itself, lending an integrated cohesiveness to the whole.

Saariaho's compositional tendencies have undergone many changes over the years most significantly during her immersion in works for the human voice, beginning with her opera *L'Amour de loin* (2000). The most evident outcome of this vocal immersion was the composer's re-examination of the role of melody in her music. More subtly, the role

of harmonic motion, analogous in many ways to that of tonal music, has become an added source of architectural solidity in her recent work. Since *L'Amour de loin*, she has written several other operas and music dramas; in March 2016 her latest, *Only the Sound Remains*, will premiere at the Dutch National Opera. Other recent works include *Circle Map*, an orchestral piece with electronics co-commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and several major European ensembles; and *True Fire* for baritone and orchestra, premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Both *NoaNoa* and *Six Japanese Gardens* date from the 1990s and have somewhat focused musical concerns. Written for the flutist Camilla Hoytenga, who played the premiere at Darmstadt in July 1992, *NoaNoa* was conceived during Saariaho's work on her ballet *Maa*. *NoaNoa* takes its title (meaning "fragrant") from a Gauguin woodcut of his Tahitian period, and from the travel diary of his time there. In a single nine-minute movement, Saariaho exhaustively mines the capabilities of the flute, with the electronic component modifying both the instrumental sound and audible artifacts of performance, such as the player's intake of breath. The flute's gestures alternate between stable, slowly evolving harmony-generating sustained pitches and rapid figuration. The spoken phrases come from Gauguin's journal.

*Six Japanese Gardens* (1993, rev. 1995), for percussion and electronics, reflects the composer's growing attention to rhythmic elements in the early 1990s, and more generally a broadening out of her relationship with musical time. The piece is dedicated to the noted Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu. Throughout the six movements, tightly controlled moments of rhythmic "irregularity" contrast with regular and often hypnotic patterns (especially in the first and fifth movements), evoking an alternately ritualistic and meditative mood, the latter enhanced by chant-like singing on tape. The sound of crickets in the first movement establishes an idyllic garden atmosphere, but these gardens are not strictly oases of contemplation.

Jean-Baptiste Barrière has been concerned from the beginning with integrating many strands of artistic and cultural endeavor in his work and of breaking down barriers between different artistic media, including music, language, visual art, and movement. He was intimately connected with IRCAM, the contemporary music research

institute in Paris, as a researcher and instructor, having helped shape the direction of that institution for almost twenty years before leaving to concentrate on creation in 1998. He studied a variety of subjects including philosophy, art history, and mathematical logic at the Sorbonne. His early computer piece *Chréode I* is considered a watershed work in the medium. He has worked extensively in the realm of multimedia events including virtual reality projects in collaboration with Maurice Benayoun. He worked with the filmmaker Peter Greenaway for the shows *Flying over water* and *100 Objects to Represent the World* in the late 1990s. He has also created visual elements for concert performances of Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin*, Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, Messiaen's *Saint François*, and Berg's *Wozzeck*, among others. Barrière has served as visiting lecturer on many occasions. While Composer in Residence at Columbia University's Computer Music Center, he was honored with a Portrait Concert of his works at Miller Theater in March 2014. Next month, he will be featured in *Jean-Baptiste Barrière: A Visual Concert* at UCLA's Schoenberg Hall.

*Time Dusts* (2001/2014) and *Violance* (2003) are both multimedia compositions in Barrière's "Reality Checks" series, which encompasses installations and concert performances: "Sounds and images, captured and transformed in real time, are mixed and interpolated with pre-recorded sources coming from percussion instruments and other origins, mainly natural. Thus the electronic involvement prolongs the instrumental writing, reveals a hidden becoming of the instruments (cf. Gérard Grisey: 'Music is the becoming of sounds')." Both pieces deal with language, narrative, and emotional perception. *Violance* uses an early text by the playwright Maurice Maeterlinck—he of *Pelléas et Mélisande*—that spins out a narrative based on a Pieter Brueghel the Elder painting, conflating the biblical Massacre of the Innocents with the sometime savagery of Spanish rule over the Low Countries during the seventeenth century. Maeterlinck's arm's-length observational style lends the scene a dreamlike quality, expanded and enriched by Barrière's visual/musical setting. Compared to the very human narrator, the violinist could be a superhuman presence—the painter, the composer, the author, a dispassionate or compassionate angel.

The composer writes of *Violance*:

*Violance* proceeds from the search for a new scenic and musical form, merging instrumental writing, images, texts, and sounds transformed by computer.... I have adapted Maeterlinck's text to develop its universal

dimension, outside of any religious and nationalistic context, and unfold its span for all times and places. Materials are staged, assembled, and processed, together with other sources from various origins, to propose an enigmatic re-reading, a *mise en abîme* altogether of the myth, the painting, and the poem, an attempt at an extra-temporal reflection on the representation of violence and war. A timeless African lullaby, computer-analyzed, produced melodic interpolations for the violin part and harmonic textures for the electronic. The “child’s voice” reciting the text is created in real time from that of Raphaële Kennedy, and the visual aspect combines prepared imagery with live capture. The work was commissioned by the French government and performed for the first time at the Théâtre de La Criée, Marseilles, in May 2003.

Time Dusts, like the earlier “Reality Checks” work *Cellitude*, doesn’t have an explicit narrative and is therefore perhaps one level more “abstract,” in a sense, than *Violance*. It’s interesting to consider these works in light of the long tradition of virtuosic solo pieces (of the Paganini variety): an extremely high level of performance capability is called for but is subsumed into the larger framework of the piece, becoming invisible unless the listener/viewer chooses to focus on that (limited) dimension. The correspondences and differences between Time Dusts and Saariaho’s *Six Japanese Gardens* are illuminating for both, despite their ostensible fraternity as “solo percussion pieces.”

These works of Barrière’s and Saariaho’s invite the observer-listener to witness a rare level of intimacy between performer and instrument. In fact, the performer, too, must engage in an emotional immersion that takes into account the added dimensions of perception. This leads to a dynamic and invaluable rejuvenation of music’s power and potential at every step along the way, from creation through performance to audience, that in turn regenerates itself time and again.

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Artistic Director, percussionist, conductor, and author **Steven Schick** was born in Iowa and raised in a farming family. For forty years he has championed contemporary music by commissioning or premiering more than one hundred-fifty new works. He was the founding percussionist of the Bang on a Can All-Stars (1992-2002) and served as Artistic Director of the Centre International de Percussion de Genève (2000-2005). Schick is founder and Artistic Director of the percussion group, “red fish blue fish,” and Music Director of the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus. In 2012 he became the first Artist-in-Residence with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE). Schick founded and is currently Artistic Director of “Roots and Rhizomes,” a summer course on contemporary percussion music held at the Banff Centre for the Arts. He maintains a lively schedule of guest conducting including appearances in this season with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Nova Chamber Ensemble and the Asko/Schönberg Ensemble. Schick served as music director of the 2015 Ojai Festival. Among his acclaimed publications are a book, “The Percussionist’s Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams,” and numerous recordings of contemporary percussion music. Steven Schick is Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego.

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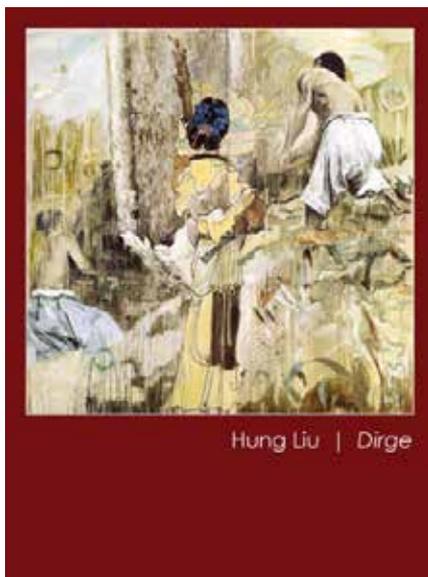
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