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SFCMP Mourns the Loss of Co-Founder Jean-Louis LeRoux

SAN FRANCISCO (September 22, 2016) – **San Francisco Contemporary Music Players (SFCMP)** mourns the loss of Jean-Louis LeRoux, co-founder/director of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players and of the Chamber Symphony of San Francisco. LeRoux was principal oboist with the San Francisco Symphony for two decades; conductor of the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra for fifteen years; and a prominent advocate for composers Olivier Messiaen, Ernst Krenek, Elliott Carter, Milton Babbitt, and many others. His career spanned the globe, including work in France, Uruguay, Brazil, and Canada. The French government named him Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France's highest cultural honor. LeRoux brought deep insight not only to the performance of American—and specifically West Coast—music, but also to that of the European and Latin American avant-garde.

SFCMP Board President Donald Blais stated earlier today: “Speaking for the SFCMP community, we feel both a heartfelt loss and immense gratitude for Jean-Louis' vision and leadership. We are devoted to honoring his life by continuing the legacy of devotion to new music in San Francisco Bay area.”

Adam Frey, an earlier Executive Director of SFCMP from 1991 to 2009, shared his recollections. “Jean-Louis was so much more than a top instrumentalist who decided it might be fun or rewarding to conduct. He was a natural leader. All the facets of being music director seemed to come easily to him—at least by the time I worked with him. Evaluating scores, shaping programs, deciding how much rehearsal would be needed, engaging gently and playfully in rehearsal and performance with the musicians, meeting the audience with the right dignity, recognizing the contributions of board members—it seemed to me that he understood it all and was able to fulfill his role expertly and without any impatience.

Frey continued: “Jean-Louis said that it was Darius Milhaud who encouraged him to become a conductor when they were at Mills College together in the late 1960s when Milhaud was preparing to return permanently to France and someone was needed to lead the new music group that he had founded there.

“The musicians always said that they loved playing for Jean-Louis because he "trusted" them. That was shorthand, I think, for the fact that he never doubted their professionalism and good will: he expected that their playing would naturally improve hugely between the first rehearsal and the performance through their at-home practice without him needing to pressure them. He didn't bring unnecessary personal anxiety to the rehearsal and performance process—a rare and treasured state of being in a conductor, especially in playing difficult new music.

“I think it's also worth noting that Jean-Louis co-founded the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players at a time when public acceptance of serious new music was at its most strained. It must have been necessary to win audiences over at that time by sheer musicianship. Jean-Louis could do that. He made the most difficult music sound immediately cogent and understandable.”

Stephen Harrison, SFCMP Board member and Cellist, speaking on behalf of musicians who had worked directly with LeRoux, said, “Jean-Louis brought a kind of gratitude to music making that affected us all.”

About the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players (SFCMP) provides world-class contemporary classical music performances of the leading national and international artists of our time to San Francisco Bay Area audiences. SFCMP expands and enhances the contemporary music repertoire by collaborating with composers on the interpretation, recording and commissioning of new works. SFCMP helps develop emerging audiences for this genre of music through the education and mentorship of emerging composers and players.

SFCMP was founded by Jean-Louis LeRoux, Marcella DeCray and Charles Boone in March 1971 and incorporated as a nonprofit in August 1974. Throughout its history, SFCMP has been led by six Artistic Directors and seven Executive Directors with continuous support and oversight by an active Board of Directors. SFCMP plays an important role in the regional and national cultural landscape as the most long-standing, continually performing new music ensemble outside the East Coast.