



The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players has won a national **ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming for the 2005-2006** season. A ten-time winner, the ensemble has received this award more often than any other organization!



SAN FRANCISCO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC PLAYERS

David Milnes, Music Director

Monday, 26 February 2007, 8 pm  
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Forum

**Performers**

Tod Brody, flute, piccolo (*A White Ray of Time*)  
Emma Moon, flute, piccolo, (*Terrain*)  
Sarah Rathke, oboe, English horn  
William Wohlmacher, clarinet, bass clarinet (*A White Ray of Time*)  
Carey Bell, clarinet, bass clarinet (*Terrain*)  
Rufus Olivier, bassoon  
Lawrence Ragent, French horn  
Jeff Biancalana, trumpet  
Hall Goff, trombone  
Ellen Wasserman, piano (*A White Ray of Time*)  
Roy Malan, violin  
Nanci Severance, viola (*A White Ray of Time*)  
Leighton Fong, cello  
Richard Worn, contrabass

*The performance of James Matheson's Falling is underwritten in part by a grant from the Ross McKee Foundation.*

*The world premiere performance of Ellen Harrison's A White Ray of Time is supported in part by the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University.*

*The performance of Brian Ferneyhough's Terrain is supported in part by a grant from the Unbroken Chain Foundation.*

*The entire concert is made possible in part by grants from the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.*

*Steinway Piano provided by Sherman Clay Concert Event Series.*

# CONTROVERSIAL GROUND

**JAMES MATHESON** *Falling* (2000)

(Approximate duration: 13 minutes)

Julie Steinberg, piano;

Roy Malan, violin; Leighton Fong, cello

**ELLEN HARRISON** *A White Ray of Time* (2005)

(Approximate duration: 15 minutes)

World Premiere, Commission

I. Time Refracted

II. Time Suspended

III. Time's Up!

~ INTERMISSION ~

**MARCO STROPPA** *Hommage à Gy. K.* (2003, revised 2006)

(Approximate duration: 20 minutes)

United States Premiere

I. Sehr flüssig [Very flowing]

II. Schwerfällig, drohend [Heavyhanded, menacing]

III. Sinuoso, semplice [Sinuous, simple]

IV. Ruvvivo [Revivified]

V. Prestissimo, volatile e intransigente [Very fast, volatile and intransigent]

VI. Inerme, ingenuo, incauto [Disarmed, naive, unwary]

VII. Lento silente e febbrile [Slow, silent, and feverish]

Carey Bell, clarinet; Julie Steinberg, piano; Nancy Ellis, viola

**BRIAN FERNEYHOUGH** *Terrain* (1992)

(Approximate duration: 14 minutes)

Graeme Jennings, violin

**JAMES MATHESON (B. 1970)**

Success has come early to James Matheson. Still in his mid-thirties, he has won a Guggenheim Fellowship, heard his works performed at Lincoln Center, received commissions from such groups as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and participated in soprano Dawn Upshaw's *Perspectives* series to encourage young singers and composers. Steven Stucky, composer and New Music Advisor for the Los Angeles Philharmonic calls him one of the "brightest lights in the emerging new generation of American composers. . .[He] speaks in a clear, humane, deeply expressive voice. . ." Russell Platt of *The New Yorker* states simply: "James Matheson's music awakes the air through which it moves. . . Keep your ears open: this is a composer who has a lot to offer."

A native of Iowa, Matheson studied at Cornell University and Swarthmore College, where his primary teachers were Steven Stucky, Roberto Sierra, and Gerald Levinson. During his student days, he produced a string of works that, while not meant as a series, explore the physical gestures of performance: *Sleep* (1995-97), *Spin* (1998), and *Pound* (1999)—Matheson still has a penchant for single-syllable titles. In *Sleep*, for violin and chamber orchestra, the movements "Twitching," "Breathing," and "Sweating," give new meaning to the traditional fast-slow-fast pattern of the concerto movements. Similarly, the three movements of *Spin*, for string quartet, address the distinct sorts of "spinning" reflected in their titles: the "whimsical" whirling of "Gyre," the "static, sinewy" textures of "Web," and the "tendency toward implosion" of the finale, "Spiral." With *Pound* Matheson let loose his first major work for solo piano, a piece in which Russell Platt hears the "ghosts" of many formative influences: in turn, "the lonely spaces of Schoenberg's *Klavierstücke*, the chilling sparseness of Ligeti's *Musica Ricercata*. . .the restless chromaticism of American 'ultra-moderns,' like Ruth Crawford. . .[and] the 70's pop music of the composer's youth."

Matheson's appreciation for color and gesture continues in such scores as the orchestral *Gliss* (1999), which coaxes "glissando" techniques from woodwinds and even percussion (not just the usual trombones and strings) and even replicates a type of "sliding" significance in the gradual changes of its harmonic and melodic material. More exuberant is the mixed quartet *Buzz* of 2001, one of Matheson's most frequently performed works, in which clarinet, violin, cello and piano combine in what he calls a "more muscular and acerbic *Flight of the Bumblebee*."

Although most of his music is not explicitly programmatic, Matheson has consistently found inspiration in architecture and literature. Two of his scores mirror the urban spaces of Albany, New York: *Colonnade* (2003, for chamber orchestra) was commissioned to reflect the soaring pillars of the New York State Board of Education Building, and *Umbras and Illuminations* (2004, for full orchestra), which attempts to capture the wintertime phenomenon of empty austerity above ground and a subterranean hive of activity in the Plaza's underground passageways. By contrast, the musical ebb and flow of *River, River, River* (2001), commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for performance by the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, finds a deep literary analog in T. S. Eliot's poem "Virginia" about the "timelessness" and "continuous motion" of a summer waterway. More recently, in his *Songs of Desire, Love and Loss* (2004) for the Dawn Upshaw *Perspectives Series*, Matheson selected the haunting, angry poetry of Alan Dugan because he found in the poet's "combination of emotional directness (often rawness) and complexity" the same "contradictory impulses that impel my work as a composer."

Along with the honors mentioned above, Matheson has received fellowships from the Bogliasco and Sage Foundations, as well as awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, American Music Center and ASCAP, and the Robbins Prize. He has held residencies at Yaddo and the Liguria Study Center, has been a fellow at the Aspen and Norfolk Chamber Music Festivals, and has had works performed at many other Festivals around the country. Among his recent works is *Contact* (2005-06), which was co-commissioned by an ad hoc consortium of nineteen piano/saxophone duos, after the success of his earli-

er duet *Pull* (1995). Last year he was named Executive Director of New York City's MATA Festival, joining Artistic Director Lisa Bielawa and Executive Producer Philip Glass in bringing to life the music of young composers.

## *Falling* (2000)

*for violin, cello, and piano*

The composer writes: "*Falling* represents the coming together of a variety of influences which affected me at various points during the course of its composition. First, the death of the pianist and composer Leo Smit, with whom I had come to have a rather unique relationship. Despite working as his copyist for several years, I had met Leo face-to-face only once, at a concert devoted to his music. We nevertheless came to know each other well, through many letters and countless hours logged in phone conversations. As might be expected, these conversations, at first focused on the work I was doing for him, developed a very personal side as well, as he coached me, with his nearly infinite patience and generosity of spirit, through some very difficult times. *Falling* is dedicated to Leo's memory.

"The inspiration to try my hand at a set of variations comes from the second major influence during this time, the music of John Harbison. A frequent composer of variations, Harbison has approached the form in a variety of ways, arousing enough interest on my part over the years that his use of variations became the topic of my doctoral thesis. Although *Falling* differs markedly in its approach to the form when compared to most of Harbison's sets, the piece owes a great debt to his music, as to me these works demonstrate the continuing ability of such a form to bear the weight of modern musical materials.

"*Falling* is a comparatively loosely-structured set of variations, a fact underscored by the absence of a theme per se. The opening, for piano alone, introduces a very simple descending sequence (the simplest form of musical process), distributed throughout the range of the instrument. It is this notion of process, conjoined with the idea of descent, which governs the structure of these variations, more than a tune or harmonic progression as is more traditionally the case

with such works.

“The title refers, of course, on the one hand to the descent inherent in the piano’s introduction, but the piece draws its emotional impetus from the idea of falling as well. As metaphor, “falling” generally represents a degeneration: we fall from grace, fall apart, or have a falling out. The expressive world of *Falling* reflects very much this sense of progressive degeneration, which reaches its lowest point toward the end of the work. Almost as if to suggest, however, the truth of the notion that at some point there is nowhere to go but up, the final variation presents a brighter twist on the idea of falling (after all, we also fall in love); while the musical material continues to fall, the expressive content of this material takes on a decidedly more optimistic tone.”

## ELLEN RUTH HARRISON (B. 1956)

Born and raised in Illinois, Ellen Harrison is an exceptionally well rounded composer and musician. She received her doctorate in composition from the University of California, Berkeley, where her teachers included Edwin Dugger, Richard Felciano, Andrew Imbrie and Olly Wilson. Supported by U.C. Berkeley’s Prix de Paris, she spent two years studying in Paris, also attending composer workshops in electronic music at the prestigious Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique, better known as IRCAM. In addition she has studied with Milko Kelemen at the Musikhochschule in Stuttgart, and with Thomas Frederickson and Paul Zonn at the University of Illinois, producing a corpus of works for all manner of instrumental and vocal ensembles.

Harrison has a love for evocative language and evocative sounds. San Francisco Contemporary Music Players audiences may remember the 2001 performance of her sprightly and capricious septet *Seven Devilish Pieces* (1996), whose manifold musical ideas sprang from a linguistic pun in French: “this [cette] devilish piece” became “seven [sept] devilish pieces,” in a process of infernal multiplication. Multiple, too, are the textures and gestures of these seven movements, which run the

gamut from the icy calm of “Put Those Devils to Rest” to the frenzy of the finale, “Hot Times,” which bears the Shakespearean epigraph: “Hell is empty, and all the devils are here.”

Almost all of Harrison’s scores have similarly memorable, though not always comic, underpinnings. Sporting such whimsical movement titles as “Masks of Regret” and “The Furies Unleashed,” her chamber work *Masques et Visages* (2000, premiered by members of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra), seems to dip into distant and antique sonic realms to portray what she describes as “a series of contrasting characters much like the many and varied expressions of the masks one might see at a Venetian masked ball.” By contrast, *Cité du Globe Captif* (City of the Captive Globe) takes its title from an architectural project by Rem Koolhaas, which focused on urban life in New York City and was meant depict “the capital of Ego, where science, art, poetry and forms of madness complete under ideal conditions to invent, destroy and restore the world of phenomenal reality.” And most recently, her award-winning String Quartet no. 1, *Shifting Landscapes*, pays tribute to the memory of her mother in what a critic for the *Boston Globe* described as “music of mingled grief, remembrance, and celebration.”

Harrison’s music has been performed in both the United States and Europe, and her works have received numerous honors and awards from organizations such as June in Buffalo, The Aspen Music School, the American Conservatory in Fontainebleau, the American Guild of Organists, the Fromm Music Foundation, IBLA European International Competition for Composers, and the Ohio Arts Council. *Shifting Landscapes* was performed by the Emyrean Ensemble at the University of California Davis, and by the Lydian String Quartet on a Festival of Women Composers at Brandeis University given in honor of composer Rebecca Clarke. Harrison is currently writing a quartet for strings (violin, viola, cello, and bass) commissioned by double bass player Matt Zory, of the Cincinnati Symphony, and tentatively titled *Herbstzeitlose*. Harrison teaches theory and composition at the University of Cincinnati, College Conservatory of Music Preparatory Department.

## *A White Ray of Time (2005)*

*for flute/piccolo, clarinet/bass clarinet, French horn, violin, viola, violoncello, and piano*

The composer writes, “*A White Ray of Time*. . . consists of three movements: ‘Time Refracted,’ ‘Time Suspended,’ and ‘Time’s Up!’ The outer two movements change mood and tempo frequently, while the second movement remains more consistent in its expression.

“The work opens with a dramatic statement in the piano that introduces the melodic material that in one way or another forms the basis of much of the piece. The piano returns to this idea at several points in the first and third movements, at times forcefully, at times gently, as if from a distant past. The second movement takes the first three notes of the piano’s idea, inverts them and compresses the intervals to create a background for an expressive cello solo. These three notes gain significance after the second movement leads without pause to the third. Here they become the starting point for a capricious melody that kicks into high gear and takes off.”

*A Ray of White Time* was commissioned for the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players by Harvard’s Fromm Music Foundation with additional support from the Ohio Arts Council.

### **MARCO STROPPA (B. 1959)**

At the turn of the twenty-first century, composer Marco Stroppa was asked to offer some reflections on the changing meanings of “contemporary music.” In an essay called “The Paths of Creation,” he observed that, although the modern technologies of our “virtual and cybernetic world” might invite composers to “withdraw into an ivory tower,” this is at best a questionable response to the problems of creative composition: “While the creative act requires great solitude,” he admits, “the activity of the musician leads him toward the social, through relationships with performers, with the

institutions that program his music, with the public.” Coming as they do from a composer active in the most rarified realms of music technology and the most down-to-earth matters of music education—a musician equally intrigued with electronic and acoustic media—these words carry a certain weight.

Though he also earned degrees in piano and choral conducting, Stroppa is best known as a composer and for his achievements in computer music. Beginning in the early 1980s, he has had a continuous association with IRCAM, at the invitation of Pierre Boulez. He has also spent time studying with Barry Vercoe at the Media Laboratory of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and working at the Computer Music Center of the University of Padua, in his native Italy. He has published more than thirty articles (in Italian, French, and English) on the uses of music technology, devoting special attention to the spatialization of sound, the synthesis of new sound materials, and the search for what he calls “a more intimate relationship between an acoustical instrument and a complex electronic environment,” in which a performer’s gestures can trigger and shape a variety of other musical phenomena.

Though widely international in his experiences, Stroppa has extremely close ties to Hungary, thanks to his participation in the International Bartók Festivals at Szombathely. He recalls: “When Péter Eötvös invited [pianist] Pierre-Laurent Aimard and me to give a concert at the Bartók Festival at Szombathely in 1986, I would scarcely have imagined that this concert would be the beginning of a fifteen-year adventure. As I had long been an admirer of Bartók’s multiple talents—musician, composer, pianist, ethnomusicologist—I accepted the invitation to visit his native country with great joy. After this first concert, Tamás Klenjanszky (then director of the festival) asked me if I would agree to develop a course in composition and computer music. For fifteen years, for two weeks every July. . . I’ve had the good fortune not just to teach at Szombathely, but also to encounter some of the greatest Hungarian musicians, to hear their lectures, to familiarize myself with the popular music of a country so rich in tradition, and to discover the work of a number of poets. Every year I would choose a theme that would allow me to examine music from a specific perspective. In fact it was my own music that was in the process of forging the path along which it could mature and grow all the more.”

Among the distinctive traits of Stroppa's artistic "maturity," are a love for miniature forms, a tendency to group works into series or what he calls "modules," and a thoroughgoing mixture of the acoustic and the electronic—or, in his later works, a transferring of ideas born at the computer to the medium of live performance. In the triptych that brought him to international attention, *Traiettorie* (Trajectory) for piano and computer (1982-84), the performance gestures and acoustic properties of the piano shaped the recorded electronics. In the late 1980s, with his string quartet *Spirali*, Stroppa began exploring the dispersal of live sound sources within the performance space. The composer's many worlds collide productively in the two versions of *élet. . fogytiglan*, an imaginary dialogue between a poet and a philosopher, for ensemble. The work draws together an Italian meditation on "Liberty" (penned by the philosopher Ludovico Geymonat) and the metaphysical verse of Catholic Hungarian writer János Pilinszky, whose output was deeply affected by his experiences as soldier and prisoner during World War II. Initially conceived in 1989 with both a tape component and a complex installation of speakers that scattered the "radiation patterns" of the live instruments into space, it was thoroughly revised in 1998 due to changes in music technology and the composer's desire for greater immediacy in performance.

Musicologist Giordano Ferrari has pointed out that much of Stroppa's music displays a "fertile, if indirect, relationship with music history." His score for piano and orchestra *Upon a Blade of Grass* (1995-96) "contains echoes of the piano concerto tradition," and his radio opera *in cielo, in terra, in mare* (in heaven, on earth, at sea) (1992) evokes the radio dramas of postwar Italy while also alluding to "the pre-operatic Italian tradition." Even when Stroppa eschews electronics, as we will hear tonight, he never abandons exploration. The composer himself hinted at this fact when explicating the title of his massive compendium of amplified piano pieces, *Miniature Estrose* (1991-95). Written for his close associate Pierre-Laurent Aimard, and bearing subtitles that stretch from Oedipal revelation to canonic counterpoint to the giant statues of Easter Island, the set is meant to weave "a sort of unconscious psychological web, made of wincings of memory, of jumps backward in time, of fleeting premonitions." "Miniatures," the composer notes, "are small, simple, profound, short, but not trite, simplistic, inaccessible or aphoristic. "Estrose," however, is "untranslatable in all its shades of meaning—with fantasy, but without eccentricity, with an idea of inspiration, intuition, surprise: it almost

'sounds' like an aesthetic confession!"

Stroppa has won numerous honors, including a Composition Prize from the Salzburg Easter Festival, the Cervo Prize for New Music, and an award from ASCAP. His works have been performed at all the major festivals of Europe, America, Australia, and Japan. Stroppa resigned from the Bartók Festival in 1999 to become the first Italian composer ever appointed as a Full Professor of Composition at the Music Academy in Stuttgart (where he succeeded Helmut Lachenmann) and, until 2006, at the Paris Conservatoire (where he succeeded Gérard Grisey).

### *Hommage à Gy. K. (2003, revised 2006)*

*for clarinet, viola, and piano*

*Hommage à Gy. K.* makes audible Stroppa's love of the miniature, the fruits of the many summer weeks he spent in Hungary, and particularly his affection for György Kurtág, whom he describes as "the greatest living Hungarian composer" and an unforgettable teacher of "extraordinary intensity and originality." Stroppa's work pays tribute to Kurtág not in title alone for, according to Stroppa, the majority of the material in his *Hommage* may be derived in one way or another from Kurtág's own tribute to Robert Schumann, *Hommage à R. Sch.*, which the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players performed in 1990.

As his first set of miniatures for purely acoustic chamber ensemble, Stroppa's *Hommage* spurred him to experiment with the physical spatialization of sound, independent of electronics. "In each section of the piece," he writes, "the instrumentalists create though their placement in particular locations, an ever-changing space" meant to create in-stereo parallels to the more subtle unfolding of formal processes. For example, in the first movement, when the clarinet and viola are united musically, they also appear in front of the piano "as close to each other as possible, [to] create a single body of sound." In the second movement, the bass clarinet attempts to "open" a pathway behind the piano, both musically and physically. Similar parallels shape the other movements: a "diagonal" third movement, fourth and fifth movements in which the players excite the harmonic resonance

of the piano, a sixth movement that requires the “de-tuning” (scordatura) of the viola, and finally, a dispersal of the performers to the far reaches of the stage space, in a reversal of their opening stance.

These changes are not merely visual, they are also dramatic, inventing what Stroppa describes as a “spatio-temporal dramaturgy” or a type of “sound theater.” In this case, the drama is meant to be enlivened with all the resources of the concert hall, including lights and a little bit of extra percussion. Like the manipulation of stage space and the preference for short movements, the entrance of a “foreign” instrument as the piece reaches its quiet close calls to mind a similar moment in Kurtag’s *Hommage à R. Sch.* Thus does Stroppa pay his own “homage to all the ‘homages’ disseminated through Kurtag’s oeuvre.”

## 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 another planet).” 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 and today he is one of the best known teachers in the composition world, mentoring an international array of students that includes Magnus Lindberg and Kaija Saariaho (Finland), Joel-Francois Durand and Bruno Mantovani (France), Klaus K. Hübler and Klaus-Steffen Mahnkopf (Germany), Chaya Czernowin

(Israel), Toshio Hosokawa (Japan), Anders Hillborg (Sweden) and Arturo Fuentes (Mexico), to name just a few among many. His Californian students are legion, and Roger Redgate, one of his most famous British students, has devoted an entire article to the composer’s wide-ranging pedagogy, which Ferneyhough describes as a reciprocal process of discovery. “If a student comes to you and wants to learn to compose, you’ve got two ways of going,” he told Molly Sheridan in a 2005 interview for *New Musicbox*: “One is to teach him what composers have done before and why they’ve done it. And the other is simply to sit them down at a table and invent some sort of situation they must react to.” Ferneyhough emphatically prefers the latter strategy.

Ferneyhough himself is sometimes considered self-taught, though he did work with Lennox Berkeley at the Royal Academy of Music, before traveling to Amsterdam (where he was a pupil of Ton de Leeuw) and receiving 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 1973, 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-four 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 the late 1980s and 1990s, Ferneyhough took up a multi-part investigation of different solo-ensemble interactions (in such works as *Incipits* of 1996 and *Terrain*), and even his more recent opera *Shadowtime* (1999-2004), premiered at the Munich Biennale in 2004 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 our selves.”

Ferneyhough’s impressive list of honors begins during his fifteen-year tenure in Freiburg with a Heinrich Strobel Foundation award from the Southwest 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. Since its premiere at the 2004 Munich Biennale, his opera *Shadowtime* has been heard in Paris, New York, Bochum, London, and Stockholm, and his orchestral score *Plötzlichkeit* (Suddenness) received

its premiere at the Donaueschingen Festival last year. Ferneyhough is currently on the faculty at Stanford University and this month he was awarded the prestigious International Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, sometimes referred to as the “Nobel Prize of Music” for his “consistently deep” explorations of the musical avant-garde.

## *Terrain* (1992)

*for solo violin, flute/piccolo, oboe/English horn, clarinet/bass clarinet, bassoon, French horn, trumpet, trombone, and double bass*

Like Ferneyhough’s memorable *Bone Alphabet* (1991-92)—which percussionist Christopher Froh brought to life for the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 2005—*Terrain* is built on the virtuosity of a solo performer, in this case Irvine Arditti of the Arditti Quartet. But Arditti is not the only figure in the background of Ferneyhough’s *Terrain*. The composer links the instrumentation and aesthetic of his own musical edifice to the example of Edgard Varèse’s 1923 score *Octandre*, which impressed him as a teenager: “I was excited by the crystalline sonic images and the refreshingly unsentimental and vigorous language in which they were couched. In some ways, *Terrain* is a repayment, via circuitous detour, of a long-standing debt.” The work, like several others in Ferneyhough’s oeuvre, also makes reference to one of the composer’s favorite poets, A. R. Ammons, in both its title and some of its conceptual underpinnings.

Ferneyhough’s *Terrain* is tremendously varied, pitting a demanding and manic violin part against a changing background of wind timbres that *New York Times* critic Paul Griffiths has called “as compelling and as expressive as a slow movement by Franck or Bruckner.” In the composer’s conception, the relationship between soloist and chamber group evolves in subtle but perceptible ways. He writes: “Like a rugged landscape, *Terrain* may be imagined as a provisional and volatile balance established between forces operating on different, but simultaneously unfolding, levels. The initial multi-faceted violin solo becomes gradually amplified, distorted, and obscured by various strata of activity, some consisting of diverse duos (the first is for piccolo and double bass) and others marked by florid solo passages or larger tutti blocks. The dense middle of the work is composed of a chain of progressively more chaotic ‘re-readings,’ in which the violin succeeds more and more in reestablishing some of its initial assertive preeminence. Toward the end, obsessively iterated grey fragments of previous statements return to lie like irregularly shaped boulders in a bleak tundra of postglacial devastation.”

—Beth E. Levy

Violinist **Graeme Jennings** is best known for his expert performances of contemporary music, which have won him accolades from major figures in contemporary music, including Luciano Berio, Elliott Carter, Wolfgang Rihm, Michael Tippett, and Witold Lutoslawski, who called him an “inspired performer” following his performance in the 1987 Australian premiere of that composer’s *Partita* (originally written for Anne Sophie-Mutter). For eleven years (1994-2005), Jennings was a member of the world renowned Arditti Quartet (the ensemble for which most of Ferneyhough’s string quartets were written). He toured internationally with the Quartet, giving over 300 premieres, recording more than seventy CDs, and winning both the 1999 Siemens Prize and two Gramophone Awards. As a recitalist, Jennings has a wide repertoire ranging from Bach to Boulez and beyond. Today, he lives in San Francisco and devotes his time to chamber music, solo work, and masterclasses on contemporary violin techniques.

Born in Australia, Jennings studied at the Queensland Conservatorium before earning degrees at the San Francisco Conservatory in 1992 and 1994; his principal teachers were Isadore Tinkleman, Mark Sokol, Anthony Doheny and John Curro. He made his solo debut with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra in a performance of Prokofiev’s first Violin Concerto, and he has since appeared with orchestras in Europe, North America, Asia, and Australia. In 2003, he gave the Australian premiere of Ferneyhough’s *Terrain* with the Elision Ensemble, and when he reprised it at the 2005 Sydney Festival, a reporter for the *Sydney Morning Herald* called his performance “transfixing either as a display of fiddling pyrotechnics, or as an exercise in mind-bending mathematics, or as a lovingly crafted exploration of gestures.”

—Beth E. Levy

**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.

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.

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., 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, **Matthew Schumaker** studied music and philosophy as an undergraduate at Dartmouth College and continued as a graduate student at Princeton University, where he received an MA in music composition. While at Princeton, he took part in coordinating 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 2004.

**Kate McLoughlin**, Production Associate, earned her M.M. in Orchestral conducting at McGill University in Montréal, Canada, where she also completed undergraduate work in bassoon performance and music theory. She is currently the assistant conductor of the Oakland Civic Orchestra, and manager of the Berkeley Youth Orchestra. She joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players' staff in 2006.

The **San Francisco Contemporary Music Players** (SFCMP), now in its 36<sup>th</sup> 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. A ten-time winner of the prestigious national ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players has won this award more times than any other ensemble. It has commissioned 68 pieces and performed over 1,000 new works, including 56 U.S. and 130 world premieres.

Each season the ensemble performs a subscription series in the Bay Area. 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 ten albums of its own and contributed to nine others. Its musical outreach programs include presentations in public high schools and its new Contemporary Insights series of intimate performances with conversation.