

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players

David Milnes, Music Director

Moving pictures, picture music

Monday, 30 March 2009, 8 pm

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Forum

Performers:

Tod Brody, flute
Carey Bell, clarinet (Paris)
Peter Josheff, clarinet (Solbiati)
Julie Steinberg, piano (Paris)
Ann Yi, piano (Solbiati)
Christopher Froh, percussion
Graeme Jennings, violin (Solbiati, Paris)
Roy Malan, violin (Paris)
Ellen Ruth Rose, viola (Solbiati)
Nanci Severance, viola (Paris)
Leighton Fong, cello

Alessandro Solbiati, *Sestetto à Gérard* (2006)

U.S. Premiere

(Approximate duration: 17 minutes)

Philippe Hurel, *Loops IV* (2005)

(Approximate duration: 7 minutes)

Daniel Kennedy, marimba

Tristan Murail,

Cloches d'adieu, et un sourire...

(Bells of farewell, and a smile) (1992)

(Approximate duration: 4 minutes)

and

La Mandragore (The Mandrake) (1993)

(Approximate duration: 9 minutes)

Julie Steinberg, piano

↻ Intermission ↻

François Paris, *À propos de Nice* (2005)

U.S. Premiere

with

Jean Vigo, *À propos de Nice* (film, 1930)

(Approximate duration: 22 minutes)

Tonight's performance is supported in part by:

The Ross McKee Foundation;

*The French-American Fund for Contemporary Music, a program of FACE with support
from Cultural Services of the French Embassy, CulturesFrance, SACEM, and the*

Florence Gould Foundation;

Istituto Italiano di Cultura;

The Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (CNMAT) at U. C. Berkeley.



Program Notes

Alessandro Solbiati [b. 1956]

“I have always liked black and white photography,” writes Alessandro Solbiati: “or drawings made with pencil or charcoal and lead, which can only exploit the various degrees of grey to give thickness and depth, making us dream up the colors, in other words asking us for our imaginative cooperation to fulfil the work.” As it happens, Solbiati is speaking here of his recent score *Ianus* (Janus) (2007) for string orchestra, whose title refers to the dual-visaged god of Roman mythology—always looking forward and backward at one and the same time. As he puts it, *Ianus* represents “a very personal investigation into what I consider my two faces, one restless and tense, the other quiet, reflective and inclined to lyricism.” Though he speaks here of a single work in his oeuvre, these passages suggest several attributes common to the composer’s other scores: careful attention to gradations of color, an intent to spark listeners’ imaginations, and a self-conscious positioning on the cusp of tradition and innovation, tension and repose.

Born and trained in the vicinity of Milan, Solbiati found his way to Franco Donatoni’s composition classes in Siena in 1977. He achieved national recognition a few years later when his music was honored at the International Competition of Turin in 1980 and at the 1982 RAI [Italian National Radio] Paganini Competition. Since then, his works have become ever more widely known abroad through performances at many international venues including the Présences, Holland, and Venice Biennale Festivals, a period in residence at IRCAM [Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique], and performances in Boston, Maastricht, Moscow, Strasbourg, Sydney, and Zagreb.

As Italian Musicologist Lidia Bramani has noted, much of Solbiati’s oeuvre makes imaginative use of the past: “...if on the one hand we recognize the linguistic hallmarks of the late twentieth century, we also note a recovery of forms personally re-experienced as ancestral.” This holds true not just in his works for harpsichord and viol consort, but also in several of the piano solos in his impressive series of *Interludes* (2000-06). *Interludio XV* is an homage to György Ligeti and uses a fragment of that composer’s *Musica ricercata*—a fragment also audible in the soundtrack to Stanley Kubrick’s film 2001, while *Interludio XIV* bears the subtitle “Fuga Felix” and (like his *Sonata Felix* of 2005) engages intimately with the music of Mendelssohn. In each of these cases, Solbiati finds in musical traditions a source of new momentum; for example, after composing his quintet *Cadeau III* (Gift III) (2007) he paused to explain: “I have always adored ‘births’ in music, the start of Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloe*, of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, of the *Rheingold*. So, I think there is no better form of greeting for those who work with freshness and enthusiasm

in the not so easy world of music today...than to dedicate a ‘birth’ in music, a gradual explosion of vital energy.”

Like many contemporary composers, Solbiati has fostered working relationships with particular musicians, including pianist Jay Gottlieb, cellists Mario Brunello and Alexis Descharmes, and percussionist Dario Savron. The harpsichordist Ruggero Laganà inspired Solbiati to write a set of variations, and other performers have led him into less familiar territory. In particular Solbiati has made an extensive exploration of the cymbalom (a type of zither often associated with Roma “gypsy” music) courtesy of his friendship and collaboration with Luigi Gaggero, for whom he wrote his set of miniatures *Quaderno d’immagini* (Notebook of images) (2002). In the Haiku-based *Otto Canti* (2007) for soprano and cymbalom, he explains, “I started to look for new instrumental timbres and ways of playing (using brushes, bow, percussion techniques...) that blend with the voice to give body and sound to the subtle and fleeting poetic images.” Solbiati has a similar fascination for the accordion family (including the Slavic bayan), resulting in works written for Francesco Gesualdi and Germano Scurti. These scores share with the rest of Solbiati’s music an imaginative approach to sound and performance also present in two of his multimedia, collaborative projects: his *Nesos* (for female voice, percussion and electronics) frames pieces by two other composers to complete the atmospheric *Kirkias* (Circe) cycle for the Festival Pontino 2006; and *Cantico* (2006; for female voice, accordion, and ten instruments) which sets his assigned portion of a text attributed to St. Francis of Assisi.

Solbiati has earned commissions from the Teatro all Scala, the RAI, the French Ministry of Culture, Radio France, the University of Paris, the Mozarteum, London’s South Bank, Lisbon’s Gulbenkian Foundation, and the Festival MilanoMusica, among others. His works have been performed and recorded by Ensemble 2e2m, Ensemble Alternance, the Ensemble Orchestral Contemporain de Lyon, and the Divertimento Ensemble of Milan; he has written two radio dramas for RAI, based on short stories by Paola Capriola, who also helped shape the text of his dramatic score *Con i miei mille occhi* (With my thousand eyes) (1997). In addition to his extensive teaching at the Conservatoire of Bologna, Solbiati has given short courses in composition at the Centre Acanthes in Avignon and in Metz and at the Conservatories of Paris, Lyon, Mexico City, and Sydney. In the mid-1990s, he joined the faculty at the Conservatorio “G. Verdi” of Milan and began collaborating with the Contemporary Music department at the International Academy of Music (Fondazione Scuole Civiche di Milano).

Solbiati, *Sestetto à Gérard* (2006)

for flute/piccolo/bass flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, viola, cello, and piano

The composer writes: “*Sestetto à Gérard* has a double dedication: one, the true dedication, is to Sandro Gorli, not so much for having commissioned the work for the Rondò season 2006 of the Divertimento Ensemble, but above all for the friendship and deep sympathy that has linked me to him ever since, back in 1978, I became his pupil at the Conservatory. The other dedication, contained in the title, is to Gérard Grisey, whom I unfortunately met only briefly, but intensely, at the Festival Pontino 1997, less than a year before his unexpected death. On that occasion I also got to know what for me remains his masterpiece, *Vortex temporum*, a piece that made a big impression on me: great, then, was my joy and emotion when Sandro Gorli proposed that I should use the same instrumental group as *Vortex*, adding that the two pieces would be played together, at the same concert.

“Due partly to the influence of Grisey, but also as part of a phase in my own composition, I feel the need to investigate sound in its own right, to look for ‘new sounds’: this is why for much of the piece the strings use a greatly modified tuning, allowing me to have the twelve different notes available on their open strings: Bb-F-E-B for the cello, C-G-C#-F# for the viola, and G#-D#-A-D for the violin. The piano, following in the wake of my Sonata seconda in 2005, is also prepared in three different ways, allowing me to have some keys dampened non-harmonically, others partially sounding and others still able to emit their second harmonic. If you add to this the fact that the strings, for some time at the start of the piece, use heavy mutes, then you can expect quite a surprising world of sound, in which two situations, one dark and deformed and the other sparkling and crystal clear, alternate repeatedly to form a complex narration that lasts around a quarter of an hour, two thirds of the way through which, almost as if quoting a feature typical of Grisey, the strings are visibly retuned.”

***Philippe Hurel* [b. 1955]**

In the wake of his participation in the 2003 Sounds French festival in New York, Philippe Hurel was asked to explain the event’s unifying themes. In conversation with Matthias Kriesberg of *The New York Times*, he replied: “From Debussy through to spectral composers, [French] music has been organized around harmony.” Hurel neatly encapsulates the historical importance of both the French impressionists’ colorful chords and the spectralists’ attention to the resonant harmonics inherent in the overtone series above any fundamental pitch. Yet if this formulation is also meant to reveal something about Hurel’s own music, then we must consider “harmony” in the very broadest sense of the term—as did the founding figures of spectralism—for

Hurel has always coupled his attention to pitch with a tendency toward counterpoint and, in recent years, with a desire to enliven his music with a wide range of rhythmic characters, including passages reminiscent of jazz.

Like many composers of his generation, including Philippe Leroux and François Paris, Hurel worked with Betsy Jolas and Ivo Malec during his years at the Paris Conservatoire. He also studied computer music privately with Tristan Murail in 1983-84 and was influenced by the example of Gérard Grisey. Not surprisingly, his first compositions paid special attention to the relationships between harmony and timbre (tone color) and to the gradual metamorphosis of musical materials. In his works for solo instruments, he tends to exploit the entire range of timbral possibilities, from the guttural to the ethereal. When he chooses to use electronics, he typically blurs the boundaries between acoustic and synthetic sound. During the late 1980s, Hurel became increasingly preoccupied with the internal counterpoint of his music, initiating a series of works with ever denser notation and ever more “saturated,” rigorous polyphony.

Beginning in the 1990s, a more radical transformation took place as the composer came to grips with rhythms drawn not just from the classical tradition, but from jazz and popular music as well. Between his *Six miniatures en trompe-l’oeil*, written in 1991, and the *Quatre Variations* of 1999-2000, Hurel recalls that he was “trying to consolidate two worlds whose coexistence sometimes seems impossible: rhythms derived from jazz and funk, together with the harmonic and formal work achieved through spectral techniques.” For whatever reason, the vibraphone seems to have had a special role in broadening Hurel’s rhythmic frame of reference. In addition to being a dominant player in his sextet *...à mesure* (1996), it formed half of the featured duo in his *Tombeau in memoriam Gérard Grisey* (1999), which the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players performed in 2005.

Since 2000, Hurel’s works have been inspired less by jazz and more by an attempt to synthesize the compositional facets of his earlier scores. He deepened his interest in counterpoint with the octet *Figures libres* (2001), *Aura* (2002) for piano and orchestra, and *Trois études mécaniques* (2004), in which rhythmic canons (generated in part by computer software) coalesce at times into material that the composer has called his “imaginary folklore” because of its resemblance to various “world musics.”

The kinetic energy and harmonic ingenuity of Hurel’s scores have captured the attention of many performing artists, including the choreographer François Raffinot, who took the *Six miniatures en trompe-l’oeil* as the basis for his 1997 ballet *Rift*. In describing the immediacy of Hurel’s music, he offers what might be considered a “concert-goers’ guide” to the works of this innovative French composer: “Listen to these evolving textures, the constant

renewal,” Raffinot writes. “And then listen for the brusque sonorous signals that return from earlier passages. The incandescent wash of sound suddenly crystallizes in place, stopped short in the midst of its progression. A musical moment suspended, as a melting lava flow plunges into the sea and freezes, for the space of a second or less, passing suddenly through a musical inferno of cadmium red, luminous and inexorable to this language of sounds, black, sooty, corrugated, shadowy, subdued and aged, before bursting anew under the pressure of new acoustic waves... How can you understand these new alloys?”

In addition to being a fellow at the Villa Medici from 1986-88, Hurel has won the Förderpreis from the Siemens-Stiftung in Munich as well as two prizes from SACEM (the French society of authors, composers, and music publishers). He has earned commissions from Ensemble Intercontemporain, IRCAM, the New York New Music Ensemble, the Orchestre de Paris, Radio-France, Les Percussions de Strasbourg, Interface, Ensemble Recherche, Itinéraire, Bit20, Cité de la Musique, the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Tokyo’s Shizuoka Hall, and the French Ministry of Culture, among others. In addition to teaching at IRCAM from 1997-2001, he has served as composer-in-residence at the Arsenal de Metz and the Philharmonie de Lorraine. In 1990, Hurel founded Ensemble Court-circuit and became its artistic director. In 2004, he joined the faculty of McGill University, which featured several of his pieces at their Festival MusiMars, and New York’s ICE Ensemble gave three concerts devoted to his music in 2007-08. This year the Oslo Philharmonic premiered his *Tour à tour* at the Ultima Festival. Among Hurel’s other recent works are a tribute to French writer George Perec called *CANTUS* (2006), which was commissioned by the French government for Françoise Kubler and Ensemble Accroche-Note; *Step*, commissioned by the Fonds Franco-américain and premiered by the New York New Music Ensemble; and a new version of *Aura*, premiered by the Ensemble Intercontemporain. He is currently working on commissions for the Abbaye de Royaumont, Ensemble 2e2m (Paris), the CIRM (Nice), and the ensemble Nikel (Tel Aviv).

Hurel, *Loops IV* (2005) *for marimba*

While the vibraphone is the solo voice in *Loops II* (2000-02), *Loops IV* features the marimba and both works involve what Hurel calls a “process of cell transformation [that] always brings you back to the motif announced at the outset.” At the turn of the twentieth-century, any musical evocation of “looping” is likely to refer back to pieces that modified or superimposed loops of magnetic tape, playing them back to create provocative sound patterns. Hurel’s *Loops* series participates in this historical reflection, with material that irregularly doubles back on itself and gestures that seem to fast-forward or rewind in mid-phrase like a tape deck. Yet in performance, *Loops IV* (dedicat-

ed to percussionist Jean Geoffroy) also recalls artistic precedents that are far more corporeal than they are technological. As the balletic marimba player in *Loops IV* pirouettes his way through Hurel’s score, he also seems to enact his own ritual round dance.

***Tristan Murail* [b. 1947]**

Even before the influential postwar activities of Olivier Messiaen in the late 1940s, and Pierre Schaeffer’s experiments in electronic music in the 1950s, a French avant-garde has examined, more or less systematically, new spiritual and technological approaches to sound. The 1970s saw the creation of the prestigious electronic music center IRCAM, founded by Boulez and funded by the French government. At the same time, Tristan Murail, together with Gérard Grisey and others (sometimes known as the “spectral” school), launched the Itineraire ensemble, devoted to creative investigation of the physical aspects of sound production. As critic Gavin Thomas writes: “Returning to the fundamental acoustic properties of sound for his inspiration, Murail has invented (or simply discovered) a musical world of huge originality and often disconcerting strangeness. But for all his work’s theoretical novelty and sophistication, his overwhelming interest in harmony, sonority and musical color places him firmly in the line of great French composers stretching back through Boulez to Messiaen, Ravel and Debussy.”

Murail’s training involved an idiosyncratic combination of factors. Having earned degrees in Arabic and economics, he turned his attention to music in the 1960s, attending Olivier Messiaen’s classes at the Paris Conservatoire from 1967-72 and spending the next two years in Rome at the Villa Medici. After he came back to France in 1974, a group of composers coalesced around the ideas of Murail, Grisey, and the Itineraire ensemble. Most often known as “spectral” composers for the interest in the harmonic “spectra” of the overtone series, they forged new paths in reaction against the strict procedures of serial composition then practiced by composers like Boulez. Murail himself discounts the existence of a spectral “school” of composition, preferring instead to speak of shared techniques and musical preoccupations that unite such disparate composers as Grisey, György Ligeti, Giacinto Scelsi, and Iannis Xenakis. In an interview with Anton Rovner, he explained: “These techniques form an attempt to rebuild a coherent sound world, which was destroyed due to many, many destructive experiences, such as generalized serialization [total serialism] on the one hand and the aleatory experiments of John Cage on the other hand. We came up with and developed fully the idea to use sound itself as a model for musical structure.”

As we will hear tonight, Murail’s explorations of sound have focused with spe-

cial intensity on the piano, perhaps because of that instrument's dual nature. He calls it "undoubtedly a percussion instrument, but above all a collection of vibrating strings, a vast reverberant chamber," and pianist Marilyn Nonken elaborates: "his ability to manipulate the piano's resonance has reached an unprecedented level of sophistication. More than merely for the piano, Murail's works are about the piano." For example, Nonken describes the "waves of sound" unleashed in *Territoires de l'Oubli* (Regions of the unknown) (1977) where the pianist is required to keep the damper pedal depressed more or less from start to finish. She writes: "the 'unknown territories' *Territoires* explores are landscapes of pianistic impossibility and auditory illusion; notes heard but never played (sympathetic vibrations), microtones (resulting from the interaction of the harmonics), and sonorities that emerge seemingly without attack or decay."

In other cases, plumbing the depths of musical sound required new tools, which Murail found in the electronic music studios of the 1970s and 1980s, first in Rome and later at the Darmstadt Summer Courses and IRCAM. In fact, Murail mastered some of the earliest practical electronic instruments, the synthesizer and especially the ondes martenot, which he performed in such scores as Messiaen's *Turangalila* symphonie. He took inspiration from the "feedback loops" that could be set up between two tape recorders resulting in patterns of inexact repetition; however, unlike the so-called minimalist composers (e.g. Steve Reich), Murail was interested less in the emergence of shifting rhythms and more in the gradual disintegration of the original sound source. As he explained in a 2003 lecture for the festival Ostrava Days: "What happens in this process is that, as the sounds are copied and copied again, they get transformed; degraded in some way."

Some of Murail's important scores, including *Désintégrations* (1982-83) use computer code to generate taped material of unusual complexity, but in other cases, the composer has approximated electronic processes using purely acoustic means. In *Mémoire/Erosion* (1976), for example, he pits a solo French horn against an ensemble that delays, alters, and echoes what the horn has played to create "a certain kind of entropy." A similar simulation of electronic processes with acoustic instruments can be heard in Murail's watershed work *Gondwana* (1980), commissioned by the Darmstadt Summer Courses. The title refers to an ancient Hindu legend about a sunken continent (and also the geological name for one of the prehistoric landmasses that gradually separated into our modern continents). As composer Julian Anderson points out, the music itself "mirrors this process in its perpetual drifting and transformation." Though written nearly thirty years ago, this score still seems emblematic of Murail's ability to shape fundamental, gradual processes into luscious and dramatic scores. According to the *New York Times*, *Gondwana* "shimmers, hisses, snaps and undulates with the sludgy, wayward flow of hot lava, occasionally erupting in livid bursts."

In addition to his Prix de Rome, Murail has won awards from the Académie Française and SACEM, as well as the Grand Prix du Disque and the Grand Prix du Président de la République from the Académie Charles Cros. He has appeared at international festivals of the highest caliber and has taught at the Paris Conservatoire, IRCAM, Darmstadt, the Abbaye de Royaumont, and Toho University in Tokyo. Apart from his impressive roster of students, Murail continues to have a powerful impact on contemporary music through the software package Patchwork, which he developed at IRCAM as a tool for layering multiple "spectral" processes and applying them to the more complicated sound sources that characterized his work of the 1990s (including the distinctive timbres of jew's harp and Tibetan trumpet or the sound of waves on the sand). In 1997, Murail joined the composition faculty at Columbia University and in 2005 an edited collection of his writings on music was published in *Contemporary Music Review* under the title *Models & Artifice*.

Murail, *Cloches d'adieu, et un sourire . . .* (Bells of farewell, and a smile) (1992)

for solo piano

If there is a quintessential metaphor for the sound world of "spectral" composition, it might well be the bell. The initial percussive impact, the awakening of resonance, the long and "messy" decay of sound—these are precisely the sonic elements that have fascinated Murail, Grisey, and others. So perhaps it should come as no surprise to find in Murail's catalogue the 1992 piano score *Cloches d'adieu, et un sourire . . .* (Bells of farewell, and a smile). In this case, however, the tolling of Murail's bells has a more personal story to tell.

Written shortly after the death of his teacher Olivier Messiaen, the piece sometimes bears an "in memoriam" subtitle to the older composer so renowned for his explorations of tone color and harmony. Murail himself says: "The 'bells' heard in the piece belong to the universe of spectral music and to that of Messiaen." What's more, as Murail's piece reaches its close, he incorporates a quotation from Messiaen's prelude *Cloches d'angoisse et larmes d'adieu* (Bells of anguish and tears of farewell). As the interplay between titles suggests, Murail has transformed a moment of mourning into a rite of passage and an occasion for fond remembrance.

Murail, *La Mandragore* (The mandrake) (1993)

for solo piano

There is a macabre magic in the mandrake. This is the suggestion both of folklore and of Murail's piano solo *La Mandragore*. Pianist Marilyn Nonken points out: "Legend maintains that the mandrake, a plant thought to have magical powers, grows in the shadow of the gallows. *La Mandragore* refers overtly to Ravel's *Le gibet* (The gallows) from *Gaspard de la nuit*, and,

although it does not literally quote Ravel, it shares with *Le gibet* decisive elements of form, harmony and ambiance.” As is the case in many of Murail’s pieces, *La Mandragore* gives the performer tremendous rhythmic freedom, allowing the sonority of the moment to dictate movement from one chord to the next. On the page, his score resembles the unmeasured preludes of French baroque keyboard music, which seem to spin their musical threads in accord with the performer’s gestures and fanciful imagination. In the air, speaking ear to ear, *La Mandragore* casts a spell of uncanny beauty and incantatory power.

François Paris [b. 1961]

François Paris has gained international recognition for his flexible relation to tradition and his easy embrace of recent developments in the arts—not just in music, but also in dance, film, and visual media. He was trained in orchestration and composition at the Paris Conservatoire (with Gérard Grisey and Ivo Malec), where he also became a proficient conductor, able to lead performances of his own music for Radio France and for the new music courses at Darmstadt. His earliest music shows both his interest in harmonic adventures and the dramatic approach that would come to characterize his later works. The cello solo *Roque* (Castling) (1990), for example, takes its title from Milan Kundera’s thoughts on chess, in *L’immortalité*, and its substance from an intense collaboration with cellist Florian Lauridon. Its harmonic language is fully in keeping with the “spectral” school, giving special emphasis to the pitches that sound as part of the overtone series when the cellist plays open strings. The melodic and rhythmic language of *Roque*, however, suggests a special attention to the act of performance. Paris notes, “A work for solo instrument very often implies a certain ‘violence of writing’ in the sense that all energies are concentrated on one and only one point.” This single source should bring into existence every aspect of the music: “the unsaid, the reflections, the extensions imagined or derived from the instrumental gestures, the shadow of the soloist.” The collaborative implications of *Roque* found further expression in *Lecture d’une vague* (Reading of a Wave) (1992), inspired by Italo Calvino’s novel *Mr. Palomar*. Here, the composer specifies that the solo flutist should “ground” herself in a pre-recorded mix of five other flutes; likewise, the sound engineer may be considered “fully an interpreter in his own right” as he helps realize the work with the particular electronic media at his disposal.

Paris conceived *Lecture d’une vague* as the prelude to a larger cycle of pieces, *les champs de l’ombre blanche* (The Fields of the White Shadow). As such, it hints at one of the more striking facets of the composer’s method: a tendency to build new works quite literally on the basis of older ones, through revisions so pervasive that the “revised” piece is really a new creation. The septet *Sur la*

nuque de la mer étoilée (On the Nape of the Starry Sea) was originally finished in 1994 but completely reworked in 2002-03 to take account of what Paris calls “new possibilities created in part by the evolution in my own musical language and in part...by recent technological developments,” specifically those associated with “contextual synthesis,” in which the nuances of live performance help trigger and shape the unfolding electronic components. A more complicated relationship exists among Paris’s 1998 cello concerto *L’empreinte du cygne* (The Impression of the Swan), his violin solo *Sombra* (Shade) of 1999, and his quartet *Soleado* (Sunny), written the following year and dedicated to Philippe and Emmanuelle Leroux. Just as *Sombra* represented “an attempt at deepening the questions posed by the [cello concerto],” so *Soleado* presented “another side” of *Sombra*. More specifically, he writes: “Between the shadow and the light, one may find two visions of the same material, the same harmonic environment, common rhythmic elements and manners of development. The two works, in fact, have but little relationship to one another because the context (or the light) in which their common elements are presented is so radically different.”

Literal collaboration between artists and figurative “collaboration” with existing artworks remain hallmarks of Paris’s output, as his music for Jean Vigo’s film *À propos de Nice* makes plain. His 2004 *Drei Handspiele* (Three Handgames) for six a capella voices interweaves a lullaby, Louis Armstrong’s “What a Wonderful World,” and gestures drawn from a variant of the classic “rock-paper-scissors” game of chance. He has also completed a large-scale project involving music and dance called *Les arpenteurs* (The surveyors), co-sponsored by CIRM (National Center for Musical Creation) and Les Percussions de Strasbourg. With his recent percussion sextet *Senza* (Without), the composer embarked on what he considers both a new beginning and a continuation of the long-standing interest in “anamorphosis” (sonic metamorphosis through various processes of artful distortion) that also characterized his *12 préludes pour quatre pianos imaginaires* (1995) for four digitally sampled pianos, which the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players featured in 2005.

Paris gained European fame in 1993, when he won a “triple crown” of sorts: a prize (awarded by Luciano Berio) at the International Competition of Besançon, a commission from IRCAM, and a residency (sponsored by the French Academy in Rome) at the Villa Medici, where he remained until 1995. In 1999, he received a prize from the French Association for Artistic Action’s program “Villa Medici and Beyond,” and two years later, he won the Claude Arrieu prize from SACEM, the French organization in charge of copyright and royalties. Paris has received commissions from Radio-France, Nuova Arca, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne (Montreal), and the French government, among others. In 2004, he became a Professor at Capital Normal University in Beijing, while continuing to direct CIRM in Nice and their annual festival MANCA (New Music Nice/Côte d’Azur). He has also taught at U. C. Berkeley, at Fondation Royaumont in France, at Domaine Forget in Canada, and at

the Tchaïkovsky Conservatory in Moscow. Since 2006 he has been Professor of Composition at the Conservatoire américain in Fontainebleau. He is currently working on a chamber ensemble score called *Settembre*, commissioned by the Itinéraire ensemble and the French State; after that he has planned a piece for soprano, flute and clarinet commissioned by the ensemble Accroche Notes and an opera titled *Maria Republica*.

Paris, *À propos de Nice* (2005)

for flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, piano, percussion, 2 violins, viola, and cello

When renowned director Jean Vigo went to Nice, he was aiming to recover from tuberculosis. Neither he nor his wife would survive the disease, but they found on the French riviera a climate rich in contradiction—an upper-class resort full of casinos and clubs with a hardscrabble underbelly of urban poverty. Together with Russian cameraman Boris Kaufman, Vigo set out to produce a social documentary of sorts but, captivated by the currents of surrealism, he instead produced a landmark of the silent film era, renowned for its striking juxtaposition of images and its shifting “point of view.” According to film historian Dudley Andrew, “*À propos de Nice* is a messy film. Full of experimental techniques and frequently clumsy camerawork, it nevertheless exudes the energy of its creators and bles forth a message about social life. The city is built on indolence and gambling and ultimately on death, as its crazy cemetery announces. But underneath this is an erotic force that comes from the lower class, the force of seething life.”

According to François Paris, Vigo’s film invited him to meditate on the inevitably multi-media aspects of musical creation. He encourages us to think of his new film score not as a commentary on the images but as a dialogue with Vigo’s creative voice. His *À propos de Nice* can stand alone and has done so successfully in concert. When played alongside Vigo’s film, however, parallels emerge—not merely in the pairing of sound and image but in the loose association between camera movement (horizontal, circular) and musical movement, and between editing technique (rapid cutting, long shots) and compositional technique. Paris writes: “It has been nearly seventy years between the production of *À propos de Nice* and the composition of my score. For me, this distance in time poses no problems because the point of the film director seems always to have been to capture current events.... I hope I have never deviated from the subject of the film to weaken it, soften it, or make it more accessible.... This would be genuine treason.... What remains is a dialogue based on subjectivities [points of view]. This dialogue, I trust, is a constructive one.”

—Program Notes by Beth E. Levy

The Performers

Daniel Kennedy holds a master’s degree in music from California Institute of the Arts, and a doctoral degree in percussion performance from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, under the guidance of multi-percussionist Raymond DesRoches, hand-drum specialist John Bergamo, and tabla master Swapan Chaudhuri. He has been a founding member of the California E.A.R. Unit and the Talujon Percussion Quartet, and has performed throughout the United States, Europe, India, Bali, and Japan. Kennedy has been featured as a percussion soloist for the California Arts Council Touring Program and in performances of Steven Mackey’s *Micro-Concerto* at the Kennedy Center and the Los Angeles County Museum. He has played with the So Percussion Quartet at the “Other Minds” Festival, and as a soloist for “Day of Percussion” events at U. N. Omaha, Queens College, C. S. U. Fresno, and S. O. U. Ashland. Kennedy has been a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 1993, and has given U. S. premiere performances of solo works by Franco Donatoni and Mei-Fang Lin on the ensemble’s concert series. He is currently the Instructor of Percussion at Sacramento State University.

An active proponent of new music, pianist **Julie Steinberg** has given critically acclaimed performances of music by John Cage, Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, Olivier Messiaen, Frederic Rzewski, John Zorn, and many others. Joined by violinist David Abel and percussionist William Winant, she was a founding member of the Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio, a virtuoso ensemble specializing in new music from the Americas and Pacific Rim. Since 1980, she has appeared with the San Francisco Symphony in the world premiere of John Adams’s *Grand Pianola Music*, as a soloist in Arvo Pärt’s *Tabula Rasa*, and in Michael Tilson Thomas’s Mavericks concerts. Steinberg has appeared at New Music America, the Ravinia Festival, Japan Interlink, and Lincoln Center Outdoors. Other performances include *Le Sacre du printemps* with the Paul Taylor Dance Company in San Francisco, Seattle, and Paris, and master classes with Jean-Pierre Rampal and Mstislav Rostropovich. Steinberg holds a Doctor of Musical Arts from Stanford University and taught for years at Mills College and U. C. Berkeley. She has been a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 1989.



Please join us for a reception in the lobby after the concert. Scores from tonight’s program will be on display.

Music Director

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 2002.

The Ensemble

The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players (SFCMP), now in its 39th 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 1,100 new works, including 69 U.S. and 137 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 eleven albums of its own and contributed to nine others. Its musical outreach programs include presentations in public high schools and its *Contemporary Insights* series of intimate performances with conversation.

Staff

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 has served 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*.

Carrie Blanding, Director of Operations and Marketing, joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 2007, after six years as co-owner and Administrative Director of Next Big Thing Children's Theatre, a popular performing arts camp for children in the East Bay. She has also worked at the Mountain Play Association and trained through internships at the San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Performances. An avid singer, Ms. Blanding has performed with the San Francisco Symphony Chorus and was a soloist with the U. C. Jazz Ensembles. She obtained her B. A. degree in Comparative Literature from the University of California at Berkeley, where her work was honored with the department's academic achievement award.

William Quillen, Project Developer, is a Ph. D. candidate in musicology at the University of California, Berkeley, writing a dissertation on contemporary Russian music. He earned a master's degree in musicology at U. C. Berkeley and a bachelor's degree in history and music at Indiana University, Bloomington. During 2007-08, he was a Fulbright scholar at the Moscow Conservatory, where he spent the year working with contemporary Russian composers. He has been the assistant director of the University Chorus at U. C. Berkeley, an intern with the San Francisco Symphony, and has co-organized symposia and concerts in California and Moscow. He joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in September 2008.

SAN FRANCISCO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC PLAYERS

55 New Montgomery St., Suite 708, San Francisco, CA 94105

Phone: 415.278.9566

Email: info@sfcmp.org

Fax: 415.778.6402

Website: www.sfcmp.org

THE PLAYERS

Tod Brody (2001)*, flute
William Wohlmacher (1995), clarinet
Carey Bell (2004), clarinet
Rufus Olivier (1991), bassoon
Lawrence Ragent (1981), French horn
Jeff Biancalana (2006), trumpet
Hall Goff (1979), trombone
Peter Wahrhaftig (1989), tuba
Karen Gottlieb (1990), harp
David Tanenbaum (2008), guitar

Julie Steinberg (1989), piano
William Winant (1988), percussion
Daniel Kennedy (1993), percussion
Christopher Froh (2003), percussion
Roy Malan (1976), violin I
Graeme Jennings (2007), violin I
Susan Freier (1993), violin II
Nanci Severance (2008), viola
Stephen Harrison (1982), cello
Leighton Fong (2006), cello

**Dates indicate year of joining.*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Susan Hartzell, President
Donald Blais, Vice President
George Bosworth, Secretary
Timothy Bridge, Treasurer
Tod Brody
Melanie Johnson, PhD
Richard Diebold Lee
Sajjad Masud
Terry McKelvey
Gene Nakajima
Erik Neuenschwander
William Wohlmacher
Susan York

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Anne Baldwin
Caroline Crawford
Didier de Fontaine
Margot Golding
Paul Griffin
Roy C. (Bud) Johns
Renate Kay
Jane Roos LeRoux
Jean-Louis LeRoux
T. William Melis
Olly Wilson

HONORARY COMMITTEE

John Adams
Alicia De Larrocha
Ruth Felt

Patricia Taylor Lee
Pamela Rosenberg
Donald Runnicles
Helgi Tomasson

STAFF

David Milnes, *Music Director*
Adam Frey, *Executive Director*
Carrie Blanding, *Director of Operations
& Marketing*

William Quillen, *Project Developer*
Beth E. Levy, *Program Note Writer*
Robert Shumaker, *Recording Engineer*