



SAN FRANCISCO
CONTEMPORARY
MUSIC PLAYERS

Re-Tuning and Refiguration

November 5, 2022

Barbro Osher Recital Hall

San Francisco Conservatory of Music

A Message from Artistic Director Eric Dudley



Dear adventurers in new music,

It is our absolute pleasure to welcome you to another season of the SF Contemporary Music Players, our 52nd year in the running, and one that's filled with fascinating sonic journeys that we're thrilled to be able to embark on with you.

Our current season is ambitious in scope and offers a number of ways to encounter the music of our time, from intimate chamber concerts to full ensemble presentations, and even a project for recording and eventual realization in a custom-designed Virtual Reality environment! As we continue our return to the city's concert stages, we're overjoyed to present programs that engage with some of the fundamental aspects of musical creation that have captivated composers across the ages - from the physical and acoustic, to the temporal and spatial, and also the interpersonal.

"Re-tuning & Refiguration" (November) makes the world of pitch, and divergent approaches to how it can be defined, the central focus of a concert series. Works by Sky Macklay, Chris Brown and Ben Johnston all employ different tuning systems to change the ways in which we hear harmony and consonance, and to explore frequency interactions that lie outside the "equal-tempered" system. "Temporal Excursions" (April) shifts the focus to rhythm and time, with its centerpiece the newly commissioned Polytempo Music by Brian Baumbusch, flanked by works of Conlon Nancarrow and SF Symphony music director Esa-Pekka Salonen. And "Power Duos & Power Dynamics" (May) closes the season with a focus on human relationships and the drama of performance, with pieces by husband-and-wife and father-and-son duos each exploring the interactions of art, artist and audience. Add to that our several chamber concerts in October, December and January at The Lab in the city's Mission District, and our annual Sound & Wine benefit event, rounding out the season with contrast, community, and celebration.

As always, please keep checking in with our website for up-to-date information about our season events, and THANK YOU for your enthusiastic support of contemporary music and all that we do. We're so honored by your continued engagement with the Contemporary Players and our programs, and if you're joining us for the first time, we hope that you're intrigued by what you hear and keep coming back! Please enjoy all that we have to offer on our 2022-2023 season, and help us to spread the excitement for the music of 'right now!'

Warmest regards,
Eric Dudley



Re-Tuning & Refiguration

A Collaborative Program with San Francisco Conservatory of Music
November 5, 2022 at 8:00 PM
Barbro Osher Recital Hall

Eric Dudley, Artistic Director

7:00 PM - HOW MUSIC IS MADE - a pre-concert conversation with Artistic Director Eric Dudley, composer Chris Brown, percussionist William Winant and pianist Kate Campbell

PROGRAM

- Somewhere I Have Never Traveled* (1949) Ben Johnston (1926-2019)
Eric Dudley, tenor
Kate Campbell, piano
- Elapsy* for Flute and Electronics Cameron Hagaman (b. 2000) *
Tod Brody, flute
- Epimoric Quiverings* for Ptolemy Duple metallophone (2021) Chris Brown (b. 1953)
William Winant, percussion
- Sonata for Microtonal Piano* (1964) Ben Johnston (1926-2019)
Kate Campbell, piano
Special thanks to Thomas Malone, specialized piano tuning
Supported in part by a grant from the Ross McKee Foundation

INTERMISSION

- Cosmigimmicks* (2011-2012) Unsuk Chin (b. 1961)
Joe Brown, trumpet
Haruka Fujii, percussion
Travis Andrews, mandolin
David Tanenbaum, guitar
Chloe Tula, harp
Kate Campbell, piano
Hrabba Atladottir, violin

PROGRAM (continued)

Microvariations (rev. 2017)

Sky Macklay (b.1988)

Tod Brody, flute
Kyle Bruckmann, oboe
Peter Josheff, clarinet
Jeff Anderle, bass clarinet
Jeff Robinson, contrabassoon
Alicia Telford, horn
Joe Brown, trumpet
Brendan Lai-Tong, trombone
Kate Campbell, piano
Kevin Neuhoff, timpani
Hrabba Atladottir, violin I
Erika Aioka, violin I**
Susan Freier, violin II
Clio Tilton, viola
Zoe Yost, viola**
Stephen Harrison, cello
Richard Worn, double bass

* SFCM TAC Composer

** SFCM instrumentalist

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NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

One of the first American composers to extensively examine the realm of just-tuning and pitch relationships from a mathematical standpoint, Ben Johnston created an eclectic musical style informed by a reappraisal and restructuring of the standard 'equal-tempered tuning' system, wedded to rhythmic and harmonic structures that are intentionally complex at times and disarmingly simple at others. His *Sonata for Microtonal Piano* takes full advantage of a keyboard instrument's ability to accommodate an entire range of tuning possibilities on a note-by-note basis, altering the commonly-associated sound world of the 'well-tempered' clavichord to take on an entirely different character.

Along similar lines, Chris Brown offers a piece for solo percussion on a constructed instrument, the Ptolemy Duple, that divides the octave into sixteen alternatively-tuned pitches rather than the usual twelve. Sky Macklay's *Microvariations* creates a musical fantasy on the anecdote of British conductor George Thomas Smart, who travelled across Europe in 1825 comparing the tuning of his A = 423.5hz tuning fork to the variant tuning of every musical group he could find. The disposition of a chamber orchestra is broken into two distinct 'towns,' with both groups layering cadences upon each other while playing a quarter-tone apart, at first distinct and eventually congealing and blurring.

In *Cosmigimmicks*, Unsuik Chin turns the concept of pantomime into a sphere in which to blur the identities and timbres of the instruments themselves, with plucked strings as the protagonists toward which the other sound colors bend through unconventional playing techniques and preparations. Each of its three movements play upon applications of pantomime in different settings - shadow puppetry, TV plays, and masks - in a dialogue of instrumental theatre driven by the ability and intent of miming 'to incisively sum up archetypes and whole life stories in a few gestures, without having to be concerned about linear time or plain narrative.'

Chris Brown, Notes on Epimoric Quiverings

Epimoric Quiverings (2020) is a solo for the Ptolemy Duple, a keyed percussion instrument built for Lou Harrison by his partner Bill Colvig, and tuned in Just Intonation, which uses

whole number ratios from the harmonic series to tune all its pitches. The instrument's tuning includes all three pairs of the 1st century music theorist Ptolemy's duple divisions of the tetrachord: namely the $5/4$ (major 3rd) and $16/15$ (minor 2nd); $10/9$ (small major 2nd) and $6/5$ (minor 3rd); and $8/7$ (septimal whole tone) and $7/6$ (septimal minor 3rd). Note that all these ratios are all epimoric, whose numerators are 1 greater than their denominator. Including two septimal pitches in each of the two tetrachords in an octave thus requires a pitch-set of 16 notes to the octave. In addition, every ratio between adjacent notes in the tuning is also an epimoric ratio! Ptolemy, and a couple of millennia later Harrison, considered epimoric intervals to be "the most musical".

While Harrison used these primarily for their melodic identity and character, my piece focuses equally on the orderly beating of these frequencies with each other on the instrument. Beats are heard when two sounds with slightly different frequencies are played together, manifesting as a periodic variation in loudness whose rate is the difference in their frequencies. Listening for and eliminating these beats (possible because they are part of the harmonic series) is how Just intervals are tuned; and regulating the evenly increasing speed of beats of all the intervals except the octave is how equal temperament is tuned by ear. Tuning is an art and practice that reveals many more musical possibilities than it is possible to explore in a lifetime. Tuning provides the foundation defining the diversity of human musical languages. Beats can be used for their rhythmic and timbral qualities as well as for tunings. Perhaps the word "quiver" is a more potent descriptor for these musical beats, as it appears in the Book of Hopi describing the tuning of the universe: 'the whole earth trembled; the universe quivered in tune.' Frank Waters, *The Book of Hopi*, Penguin Books, New York, 1977, p.4.

Dedicated to William Winant — thanks, Willie, for encouraging me to write for this beautiful and unique instrument!

— Chris Brown

Composer Bios

Benjamin Johnston Jr. (1926 – 2019) was an American contemporary music composer, known for his use of just intonation. He was called "one of the foremost composers of microtonal music" by Philip Bush and "one of the best non-famous composers this country has to offer" by John Rockwell. Johnston was born in Macon, Georgia. He attended the College of William and Mary and Cincinnati Conservatory, later studying with Harry Partch, Darius Milhaud, and John Cage. Johnston taught composition and theory at the University of Illinois from 1951 to 1983.

Works include Quintet for Groups, Sonnets of Desolation, Carmilla, Sonata for Microtonal Piano, and Suite for Microtonal Piano, and ten string quartets. All ten quartets have been released in a series of three recordings by the Kepler Quartet (New World Recordings).

Awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, a grant from the National Council on the Arts and the Humanities, and two commissions from the Smithsonian Institute.

In 2006, Johnston moved to Wisconsin in order to better care for his wife, Betty Hall Johnston, who was seriously ill. After her death in 2007, he continued to rehearse intensively with the Kepler Quartet. He was a member of ASCAP and received the Deems Taylor Award in 2007. His Quintet for Groups was awarded the SWR Orchestra prize at the 2008 Donaueschinger Musiktage.

CHRIS BROWN, composer, pianist, and electronic musician, makes music with self-designed sonic systems that include acoustic and electroacoustic instruments, interactive software, computer networks, microtonal tunings, and improvisation. His compositions are designs for performances in which people bring to life the musical structures embedded in scores, instruments, and machines.

Early pieces featured instruments he invented and built including a prepared electric piano in the orchestral piece *Alternating Currents* (1983) and a digitally-controlled analog signal processor for *Lava* (1992), an environmental piece for brass, percussion and electronics. *Talking Drum* (1995-2000), was a MIDI network installation exploring polyrhythm, distance, and resonance in large architectural spaces. He is a founding member of the pioneering computer network band *The HUB*, which received the 2018 ZKM Giga-Hertz Prize for Electronic Music. Throughout his career he has composed solos for computer and for acoustic instruments with interactive electronics using self-authored software. Since 2005 he writes music in *Just Intonation*, also integrating rhythmic structures that parallel the proportions used in their tunings

His music is available on New World, F'oc'sle Music, Tzadik, Pogus, Intakt, Ecstatic Peace, Red Toucan, Leo, and Artifact Recordings. As a pianist he has recorded music by Henry Cowell, Luc Ferrari, José Maceda, John Zorn, David Rosenboom, Glenn Spearman, and Wadada Leo Smith; recordings as an improviser include with Pauline Oliveros, Fred Frith, the Rova Saxophone Quartet, William Winant, and Frank Gratkowski; and he produced three albums of music by the great Filipino composer and ethnomusicologist José Maceda.

He taught electronic music and composition as Co-Director of the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College in Oakland, California for 30 years. <http://cbmuse.com>

UNSUK CHIN was born in 1961 in Seoul, South Korea. She studied with Sukhi Kang and György Ligeti and has lived in Berlin since 1988. Her music has attracted the attention of international conductors including Simon Rattle, Gustavo Dudamel, Alan Gilbert, Kent Nagano, Esa-Pekka Salonen, David Robertson, Peter Eötvös, Myung-Whun Chung, George Benjamin, Susanna Mälkki, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, François-Xavier Roth, Leif Segerstam, Hannu Lintu, Jakub Hrusa, Kazushi Ono and Ilan Volkov, among others. It is modern in language, but lyrical and non-doctrinaire in communicative power. Chin has received many honours, including the 2004 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition for her Violin Concerto, the 2005 Arnold Schoenberg Prize, the 2010 Prince Pierre Foundation Music Award, the 2012 Ho-Am Prize, the 2017 Wihuri Sibelius Prize, the 2019 Hamburg Bach Prize, the 2020 Kravis Prize as well as the 2021 Leonie Sonning Music Prize.

She has been commissioned by leading performing organizations and her music has been performed in major festivals and concert series in Europe, the Far East, and North America by orchestras and ensembles such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Gothenburg Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Symphony, Sao Paulo Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Royal

Stockholm Philharmonic, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Ensemble Modern, Kronos Quartet and Arditti Quartet. In addition, Unsuik Chin has been active in writing electronic music, receiving commissions from IRCAM and other electronic music studios.

The music of Baltimore-based composer, oboist, and installation artist **Sky Macklay** (b. 1988) is conceptual yet expressive, exploring extreme contrasts, surreal tonality, audible processes, humor, and the physicality of sound. Some of her pieces incorporate intermedia and extramusical narratives, addressing topics ranging from commuting times to the side effects of contraceptive and assisted reproductive technology. As a 2021 Guggenheim Fellow, her next project is a chamber music album that will synthesize her work as a composer and her raucous, multiphonic-rich oboe performance practice.

Sky has been commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chamber Music America (with Splinter Reeds and Left Coast Chamber Ensemble), the Fromm Foundation at Harvard University (with Ensemble Dal Niente), the Barlow Endowment (with andPlay), the Jerome Fund for New Music (with ICE saxophonist Ryan Muncy), and Kronos Quartet's 50 for the Future project. Upcoming commissions include new works for the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and Klangforum Wien. As a Fellow at the Columbia Institute for Ideas and Imagination in Paris, she is also collaborating with French ensemble 2e2m.

Sky's music has been recognized with awards and fellowships from The American Academy of Arts and Letters, Civitella Ranieri, and ASCAP, and has been featured at international festivals such as Gaudeamus Muziekweek, The BBC Scottish Symphony's Tectonics Festival, and the ISCM World New

Music Days. Since being recorded on Spektral Quartet's GRAMMY-nominated album in 2017, her iconic string quartet Many Many Cadences has been performed around the world by ten different quartets and is studied in dozens of university composition and theory classes.

Born and raised in Chicago, **Cameron Hagaman** is a composer for concert, jazz, film and video game music. Over the past few years, Cameron has composed music for, and has been recorded by organizations such as Sony Entertainment, Classical KDFC Radio, the College of Performing Arts (CCPA) at Roosevelt University, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (SFCM).

Cameron has had the privilege to study with prestigious teachers and institutions including Dr. Teddy Neidermaier and Dr. Kyong Mee Choi of CCPA, Amos Gillespie of the University of Illinois Chicago, Lennie Moore of SFCM, and many more. While completing his senior year as a TAC student at SFCM, Cameron is currently working on an original musical, as well as a series of media projects for video game gameplay.

SAVE THE DATE

Sunday February 26, 2023

SFCMP's **Sound & Wine** event will be one of the great fundraising events of the year, featuring a fun and engaging program of music, food, beverages, and auction items. All funds raised will benefit SFCMP's artistic and educational programming. Don't be the only one of your friends to miss this event!

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A former subscriber, Harold Wollack, left the first bequest to help underwrite the ensemble's concerts and programs. Recently, the ensemble received generous bequests from the estates of Jane Roos and Victor and Esta Wolfram. All bequests help to ensure that our organization will remain vibrant and that future generations will enjoy the music of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. We thank the following individuals who have arranged a legacy gift in support of our future:

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