

Saturday, February 11, 2012, 8pm
Hertz Hall

Eco Ensemble

David Milnes, *conductor*

PROGRAM

Kaija Saariaho (b. 1952) *Trois Rivières Delta* (2001)

percussion Loren Mach, Chris Froh,
Daniel Kennedy, Stan Muncy

Magnus Lindberg (b. 1952) *Corrente (China Version)* (2000)

<i>flute, alto flute</i>	Stacey Pelinka	<i>violin 1</i>	Hrabba Atladottir
<i>oboe, English horn</i>	Andrienne Malley	<i>violin 2</i>	Dan Flanagan
<i>bass clarinet</i>	Peter Josheff	<i>viola</i>	Ellen Ruth Rose
<i>trombone</i>	Brendan Lai-Tong	<i>cello</i>	Leighton Fong
<i>percussion</i>	Loren Mach	<i>double bass</i>	Richard Worn
<i>piano</i>	Ann Yi		

INTERMISSION

Saariaho *Ballade* (2005)

Prelude (2007)

piano Gloria Cheng

Franck Bedrossian (b. 1971) *Swing* (2009)

<i>flute, alto flute</i>	Stacey Pelinka	<i>guitar</i>	Travis Andrews
<i>bass clarinet</i>	Peter Josheff	<i>violin 1</i>	Hrabba Atladottir
<i>baritone saxophone,</i>		<i>violin 2</i>	Dan Flanagan
<i>soprano saxophone</i>	David Wegehaupt	<i>viola</i>	Ellen Ruth Rose
<i>percussion</i>	Loren Mach	<i>cello</i>	Leighton Fong
<i>piano</i>	Ann Yi	<i>double bass</i>	Richard Worn

Electronics by Jay Cloidt, Yotam Mann (*Trois Rivières Delta*) and Tom Craft (*Swing*).

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Kaija Saariaho (b. 1952)

**Trois Rivières Delta (2001), Prelude (2007),
Ballade (2005)**

Kaija Saariaho's diverse training and experience has shaped her unique compositional approach. Having grown up in Laakkonen, Finland, before her family eventually moved to Helsinki, Saariaho often highlights her love of nature, its colors, textures and sonic world in her compositions. Throughout her formative years, Saariaho was trained to think about music from a myriad of perspectives. She simultaneously pursued graphics at the Industrial School of Arts and Crafts, piano, organ, theory and composition at the Helsinki Conservatory, as well as musicology, art history and literature at the University of Helsinki.

Ultimately, Saariaho turned to musical creation as her preferred mode of artistic expression, and she entered Paavo Heininen's composition class at the Sibelius academy in 1976. There, inspired in part by her teacher's atonal counterpoint classes, she embraced a post-serialist language as a response to the nationalist, neo-romantic mainstream present in Finland during the 1960s and 1970s. During her time at the Sibelius academy, Saariaho, along with her classmate the composer and conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen, formed the Ears Open! (*Korvat auki!*) society, which was devoted to promoting the performance and study of post-serial music in Finland.

After studying composition with Brian Ferneyhough at the Freiburg Musikhochschule, Saariaho enrolled in an electronic composition class at IRCAM, Paris's state-funded electro-acoustic studio, in 1982. There Saariaho was drawn toward different stimuli for compositional expression, namely the nature of sound itself. This approach, often referred to as Spectralism, which used computer technology to study the various spectra of acoustic sounds as an impetus for musical composition was pioneered in the late 1970s by the French composers Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail, among others. Creating "music for the ears, and not for the eyes," as she once put it, Saariaho is ever conscious of the

listening experience her pieces offer audiences, engaging their intellect as well as their senses.

In 2000 Saariaho solidified her reputation as one of the most important composers of her generation with her opera *L'Amour de loin* ("Love from Afar") premiered at the Salzburg Festival under the baton of Esa-Pekka Salonen and directed by Peter Sellars. Here Saariaho combined her wish to express nature with the overall structure of the opera. The sea in *L'Amour de loin* is as much a dramatic force, creating a natural barrier between two lovers, as a compositional one, serving as a mirror through which Saariaho explores musical symmetry. The opera won her much public acclaim, as well as the prestigious Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition in 2003.

Prelude (2007) exhibits Saariaho's intimate connection with the physical aspects of the piano. Its rich opening texture draws from both extremes of the instrument's register, as if to outline the limits of its physical boundaries. Saariaho then pushes forward into the interior of the opening texture, exploring the various colorful harmonies found within. A slow ostinato (repeated figure) emerges near the center of this texture issuing a paradox over the sensory aspects of this piece. The constant repetition of the ostinato creates a static feeling, one out of sync with time, all the while suggesting forward motion at a walking pace. Saariaho's use of this ostinato and her loosely following the form of a piano prelude bring to mind Debussy's prelude *...des pas sur la neige*.

The serene atmosphere created by the lush textures of this piece are accented by intense gestures enunciated using the whole range of the piano's keyboard. These bursts of energy are highly personal, and highlight the physical response soloists have with the piano. Often their delayed decay creates other textures and colors from which, in turn, more pianistic gestures emerge. *Prelude* highlights Saariaho's interest in allowing musical material to present itself in various ways throughout a piece being ever changed by its surroundings.

Ballade (2005) also showcases intense pianistic passagework, although in this case, their

appearance is more forceful, driven emotionally in gestures reminiscent of Liszt and Chopin. Although the solo-piano ballade has no set form (apart from a loose connection to the French poetic form involving three stanzas), or any expected overall feeling, what connects all the pieces written under this title by numerous composers since the early Romantic period is the idea of a narrative being expressed musically.

Saariaho's *Ballade* draws upon stylistic attributes of the Romantic period namely in terms of gesture, and the articulation of musical material rather than the material itself. She also uses the form as narration, not to express a specific story in her music, but rather to guide the piece along through an unfolding of musical material in various contexts. This material expresses itself lyrically and is driven forward by underlying dense, cloudlike harmonies, whose elusive pitches are constantly in flux. These harmonies provide a rich sensual background for Saariaho's melodic material, whose beauty and purpose of motion speak to her sophistication as well as her innate ability to convincingly convey emotion.

Trois Rivières Delta (2001) is a piece for percussion and electronics divided into three sections. As the title suggests, these sections flow into one another and ultimately join together to form a diverse but somewhat unified whole. These three sections can be thought of as different aspects or approaches to a single type of saturated matter. In the opening section, the diverse sound world of the piece is presented in concretely distinguishable instrumental colors. Without a clear rhythmic aspect, the focus is centered on colors, resonances, attacks and textures. Here unpitched instruments are given a primary role.

In the second section, rhythm comes to the fore, providing the previously stated colors and textures another framework in which to be experienced. As in a number of other pieces heard during this concert, an ostinato is developed in this section, which marks the passage of time as well as moves the piece forward in varying directions.

Finally, in the third part of this piece, aspects of the material from the two preceding

sections are recalled and rethought in a different context. Their reorganization does not render unfamiliar the various previously heard components, but rather changes their perception and perceived meaning.

Saariaho uses the human voices of the percussionists in this piece to add to its diverse sonic world. As source material for their spoken recitation, Saariaho uses the poem *La nuit de lune sur le fleuve* ("Moonlit Night on the River") by the Chinese poet Li Po (701–762). Echoes of this poem are amplified, electronically enhanced, and combined creating various textures and colors that sometimes adhere to strictly notated rhythms, while at other moments, recall the rhythmically free atmosphere from the first section.

Magnus Lindberg (b. 1952)

Corrente (China Version) (2000)

Magnus Lindberg has shown himself capable of reaching wide audiences in a number of different styles throughout his compositional career and has become one of the most widely heard composers of his generation. A native of Finland, Lindberg studied piano and composition at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki with Paavo Heininen. Along with Kaija Saariaho and Esa-Pekka Salonen, he was instrumental in the founding of the Ears Open! (*Korvat auki!*) society, which provides one of many examples of Lindberg's actions as a contemporary music advocate. In the early 1980s, Lindberg traveled throughout Europe, attending summer courses in Siena with Franco Donatoni, with Brian Ferneyhough at Darmstadt, and studying privately with Gérard Grisey in Paris.

Also having spent time in Berlin, Lindberg developed an interest in punk rock, which served as an inspiration for *Kraft* (1985), a work whose rhythmic punch and abrasive sonorities broke with his earlier styles of composition and propelled him onto the international stage. At one point in the piece, the score calls for a 70-note harmony, made up of acoustic instruments, as well as the ensemble's playing of various household objects.

In the late 1980s, Lindberg's shifted his focus from experimental electronics toward the expression of harmonic continuity through contrapuntal techniques, all the while retaining his characteristic energy. He brought his experience working in an electronic studio to the orchestra, and proved to be quite successful writing in this medium, as his works have been championed by many renowned conductors. During an interview in 2000, conductor Simon Rattle described Lindberg as "one-man living proof that the orchestra is not dead."

Among the numerous composition prizes that Lindberg has won are the Prix Italia in 1986, the UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers in the same year, the Nordic Music Prize in 1988 and the Royal Philharmonic Society Prize in 1992.

Throughout the various styles in which he has composed, Lindberg has maintained his electric ability to speak to an audience. He has taught composition at UC Berkeley and is currently the composer in residence at the New York Philharmonic.

Corrente (China Version) (2000) bears reference at least in part, to the baroque dance form the courante, based on a succession of shifting ostinati. Lindberg has also alluded to the Baroque era in this piece by using a quotation from Henry Purcell's *Funeral Music for Queen Mary*. Lindberg has described the baroque dance form as simply the "tip of the iceberg" for this rhythmically and harmonically dense piece for chamber ensemble. The various continuums, or rhythmic loops present in *Corrente* are continually weaving in and out of each other, blending together to obscure clear points of transition. Particular continuums may seem reminiscent of minimalist techniques, but the irregular transitions between them, as well as their superimposition, shows Lindberg's unique and complex approach to the use of ostinato to form a narrative. The piece becomes then not about the continuums per se, but rather about how they interact with one another. Their ever-changing relationship serves as the driving force behind this energetic work, and provides one of the connecting threads of its continuity.

Although the framework of the piece primarily highlights the textural transitions of the continuums, the development of certain motivic gestures also contributes to the piece's narrative. Most notably, a descending gesture comes to light early on in the piece. It is enunciated multiple times throughout *Corrente* in various forms, including its ascending inverse, and various combinations as the two are blended. The blurring of divisions through nuanced blending techniques is also of note in Lindberg's rich orchestration. His various colors and textures presented in the piece are highly balanced orchestrally, creating a blended unity of sound that is in constant motion. *Corrente (China Version)* is a revision of Lindberg's *Corrente II*, which was composed in 1992.

Franck Bedrossian (b. 1971)
Swing (2009)

One of Franck Bedrossian's main compositional interests is the sonic phenomena that categorize our modern audio culture. He has often mentioned influences coming from outside the realm of contemporary composition, including jazz, rock and various oral traditions. He also has been heavily influenced by the sound world made possible by electronic technology, and how that technology can be used to manipulate natural acoustic sounds, such as the human voice in particular. Throughout his compositions, the ways in which sounds are communicated through music are rethought, and notions of pure, acoustic sounds upended. Bedrossian embraces instead a sonic phenomenon of a different nature, one categorized by saturation. As stated during a conference devoted to the concept at Paris's Centre de documentation de la musique contemporaine, "the saturated phenomenon in the acoustic domain is an excess of matter, energy, movement and timbre." In the words of Omer Corlaix, French music critic and producer for the radio station France Musique: "Inharmonic, distorted and multiphonic sounds, the Berio tremolo doubling a flatterzunge, Larsen effects, static, etc. are part

of the field of saturated sounds. Certainly, the serial system tended towards an excess of sounds—Iannis Xenakis as well as Pierre Boulez perceived this quite well in their time. But rather than consider it a 'sound barrier,' a limit not to be crossed, the 'saturationists' apprehend this situation of sound accumulation as the natural condition of sound today."

Detailed study into the physical nature of sounds and how their elements can be manipulated was a major part of Bedrossian's compositional training at the Paris Conservatoire with the late Gérard Grisey and Marco Stroppa. He was then taught by a number of prominent composers at IRCAM including Philippe Leroux, Brian Ferneyhough, Tristan Murail and Philippe Manoury. There he further explored how electronics can be used to create saturated sounds, and transition between them. His compositional work at IRCAM culminated in *Transmission* (2002) for bassoon and electronics, whose multiple performances speak to its importance for the studio.

Bedrossian's works have been performed in Europe and more recently in the United States by a number of prestigious new-music ensembles, including l'Itinéraire, 2e2m, Ictus, Cairn, the Ensemble Intercontemporain, the Orchestre National de Lyon, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, and the Danel and Diotima string quartets. Many prominent festivals have seen performances of his works, and he has been the precipitant of numerous awards such as the Hervé-Dugardin prize at Sacem, the Prix Pierre Cardin from the Institut de France, and was a Rome Prize Fellow at the Villa Medici from 2006–2008. In September 2008, Bedrossian joined the music department at UC Berkeley, where he has since served as Assistant Professor of Composition.

Swing (2009) is a highly energetic piece for a chamber ensemble that demonstrates various ways in which the concept of saturation can be employed. As the title suggests, jazz is referenced in the piece's musical material, but in diverse electric bursts that abruptly retreat into various textures often moments after their appearance. In the composers own words: "The

implicit reference to jazz music must once again be considered as an expression of an allusive irony, since the connotation of each musical component is diverted away, emerging then disappearing behind a sound that at times intrudes and is often unpredictable. An often conflicting dialectic is established between the reference features and the dominant tone, thus taking on a structural role. It takes the form of twelve episodes, the sequences flowing without interruption. Its hidden dramatic tension generates a specific form of rhythm, characterized by the rotary motion of events with a temporality that is slowly toned down, spuriously static or violently stepped up to a faster pace. The notion of swinging suggested in the title of this work is omnipresent. It proves to be representative of the tone (a symbol of the up-and-down nature of its structure) and the general architecture (the flexibility of the interludes)."

Swing plays with expectations of sound quality, rhythm, and form and actively engages its audience to enter its saturated sound world. The extended instrumental techniques bring the performers' breath and voice to the fore and suggests a particularly human attempt at communication. The messages being communicated are saturated, presented on top of one another, shifting focus between individual voices, and the texture as a whole. Their abrupt attacks and endings fall out of line with expectations of complete musical phrases, highlighting ambiguity and rapid change of direction, not unlike the work of experimental jazz artist John Zorn. In *Swing*, even the silences can be thought of as saturated. Dense with memory, tension and expectation, moments of sonic absence in *Swing* create a rhythm of their own in relation to the diverse sound blocks that flank them. A constant feeling of uncertainty drives this piece along with energetic motion that eludes and distorts the piece's form put in place in part by its complex metarhythms. The ever-shifting context for *Swing*'s musical material saturates the meanings and emotions it so exuberantly conveys.

Notes by Alexander Stalarow

Li Po (701–762)

Moonlit Night on the River

Translation by Harold Slamovitz

Softly the breeze rises on the river,
 Sadly the trees shiver near the lake.
 I go up to the prow in the calm, beautiful night.
 The mats are spread out and the boat springs lightly forward.
 The moon follows the fleeing of the dark mountains,
 The water flows with the blue sky,
 As deeply, upside down, as the celestial sky.
 Nothing is visible, only the blended shadow of tree and cloud.

The road of return is long, long;
 The immensity of the river is sad, sad.
 I am alone, the orchid flowers disappear,
 The song of the fisherman recalls my sadness.
 The steep detour hides the shore behind,
 The pale sand shows a reef in front.
 I think of you, Lord, my sight no longer reaches you,
 And my vision, lost in the distance muses on my regret.

The **Eco Ensemble**, under the direction of David Milnes, is a new group of leading Bay Area musicians dedicated to exploring and sharing the work of adventurous composers. Its mission is to bring exciting, contemporary music to both experienced audiences and new listeners.



David Milnes serves as Music Director of the Eco Ensemble, Berkeley's professional new music ensemble in residence, as well as Music Director

of the UC Berkeley University Symphony Orchestra since 1996. In his early years, he studied piano, organ, clarinet, cello and voice, and briefly entertained a career as a jazz pianist, appearing with Chuck Mangione, Gene Krupa, Billy Taylor and John Pizzarelli. After receiving advanced degrees in conducting from SUNY Stony Brook and the Yale School of Music, and studying with Otto-Werner Müller, Herbert Blomstedt, Erich Leinsdorf and Leonard Bernstein, he won the prestigious Exxon Assistant Conductor position with the San Francisco Symphony, where he also served as Music Director of the highly acclaimed San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, which he led on its first European tour in 1986.

Mr. Milnes has conducted frequently in Russia and the Baltics, serving as Music Director of the Riga Independent Opera Company and as a principal guest conductor of the Latvian

National Symphony. Recent engagements have included appearances at the MANCA Festival in Nice, France, with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Nice; in Mexico, at the International Festival "El Callejón del Ruido" with the Guanajuato Symphony Orchestra; and in Russia, with the Novosibirsk Symphony Orchestra. He has collaborated in performances with Frederica von Stade, Dawn Upshaw, Bill T. Jones, Paul Hillier, James Newton, David Starobin and Chanticleer, and has appeared at the Santa Fe, Tanglewood, Aspen and Monadnock music festivals.

A dedicated proponent of new music, from 2002 to 2009 Mr. Milnes was Music Director of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, with whom he commissioned and premiered many new works from around the world. He has made recordings of music by John Anthony Lennon, James Newton, Edmund Campion, Jorge Liderman and Pablo Ortiz.

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