

Saturday, April 12, 2014, 8pm
Hertz Hall

eco ensemble
David Milnes, *conductor*

PROGRAM

Mei-Fang Lin (b. 1973) Multiplication Virtuelle (2004)

Daniel Kennedy *percussion*

Erin Gee (b. 1974) Mouthpiece Segment of the 3rd Letter (2007)

Erin Gee *female voice*

Tod Brody *bass flute*

Loren Mach *percussion*

Ellen Ruth Rose *viola*

Richard Worn *double bass*

INTERMISSION

Jonathan Harvey (1939–2012) Bird Concerto with Pianosong (2001)

Tod Brody *piccolo*
Robyn Smith *oboe*
Peter Josheff *clarinet*
Jeannie Psomas *clarinet, contrabass clarinet*
Karla Ekholm *bassoon*
Alex Camphouse *horn*
Brad Hogarth *trumpet*
Brendan Lai-Tong *trombone*
Loren Mach *percussion 1*
Nick Woodbury *percussion 2*
Dan Levitan *harp*
Dan Cantrell *accordion*
Hrabba Atladottir *violin 1*
Antoine van Dongen *violin 2*
Ellen Ruth Rose *viola*
Leighton Fong *cello*
Richard Worn *double bass*
Ann Yi *piano solo (sampler keyboard)*

eco ensemble

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Cal Performances' 2013–2014 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Mei-Fang Lin (b. 1973)
Multiplication Virtuelle (2004)

In *Multiplication Virtuelle*, Mei-Fang Lin shows a uniquely gestural approach to electroacoustic music, in which the performer's actions shape the electronic component of the music in real time. Her understanding of gesture springs both from her experiences as a performer of Western music and from her understanding of Chinese opera and philosophy; and her facility with electronics springs from periods of intense training at the University of Illinois, at UC Berkeley (where her teachers included Edmund Campion and Edwin Dugger), and during a three-year sojourn in Paris, studying with Philippe Leroux. In 2003–2004, she was selected by IRCAM for a year-long course in computer music and composition, and during this period she conceived *Multiplication Virtuelle*.

In this work, the solo percussionist triggers a variety of sound samples as he strikes each of seven instruments in turn. Although the sound samples themselves are pre-selected, the force of the soloist's attack affects the speed at which the given sample is played back, and each change in speed produces a corresponding alteration in pitch level. Every performer and every performance will therefore involve a fixed sequence of elements but an infinite variety of sounds. Like a practitioner of tai chi, the percussionist moves from station to station around the percussion circle, as if taking part in a ritual. Beginning with the opening invocation, there is a gradual progression from unpitched percussion (bass drum, snare drum) to semi-pitched instruments (high and low conga drums, followed by a quintet of temple blocks) to the vibraphone and crotales. The Lion's Roar is among the less familiar instruments, and in addition to the growl that gives the instrument its name, Lin has invented a pizzicato (plucking) technique that conjures up an amplified double-bass pizzicato sound from the electronics. This back-and-forth between player and speaker, together with a cyclical rotation of rhythmic patterns through-

out the piece, mean that *Multiplication Virtuelle* involves experiencing circles—some obvious and others hidden.

Lin joined the faculty at the Texas Tech University School of Music in 2009, and among her recent honors are awards from the Seoul International Competition for Composers in Korea, the Bourges Competition in France, the Look & Listen Festival Prize in the United States, the Pierre Schaeffer Competition in Italy, and the Music Taipei Composition Competition in her native Taiwan.

Erin Gee (b. 1974)
Mouthpiece Segment of the 3rd Letter (2007)

While recent years have seen a wave of concerts featuring transcriptions of existing music from video games, it's not every day that an autonomous piece of avant-garde sound art is co-opted by the gaming industry and sold to unsuspecting users everywhere. Yet this is exactly what has happened in December to composer Erin Gee, whose *Yamaguchi Mouthpiece 1* now appears in the iPad app "Blek." Alongside Gee's other honors—a 2007 Rome Prize, and a residency at Schloss Solitude in 2010, as well as Radcliffe Institute, Civitella Ranieri, and Guggenheim fellowships—this demonstrates that her music has both an immediate, distinctive impact and a lasting capacity to enthrall.

Having completed her studies in Iowa, Austria, and Germany (with teachers including Beat Furrer), Gee recently joined the faculty at the University of Illinois after teaching at M.I.T. and the Universität für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Graz. She is best known for her series of *Mouthpieces*, an astonishing genre virtually of her own invention and fascinating to behold. "The whole idea," she explains, was "the possibility of erasing ego from a vocal performance." Rather than projecting character or emotion, the voice is used as a phantasmagorical instrument, with the microphone-enhanced ability to "speak" the phonemic fragments of a thousand languages, while being confined by none. Gee calls it "non-semantic vocal writing," also char-

acteristic of her opera *SLEEP*, which was premiered by the Zürich Opera in 2009. In its sounds alone, *Mouthpiece Segment of the 3rd Letter* is a complete and ear-opening experience; in a live performance, the effect is even more visceral, as though we witness the birth of a new “mother tongue.” All the *Mouthpieces* involve the voice, but many in the series, including this one, draw other instruments into the “conversation” with utterances—at once primal and rarified—that create brave new polyglot worlds.

In the words of sound engineer and music software designer Martin Gasser, “an impression of ephemeral, fragile poetry is formed from the gossamer quality of the work, which continually aspires to plumb the possibilities of the human voice, while also serving as the inspirational source for contemplating new instrumental sounds.”

Jonathan Harvey (1939–2012)
Bird Concerto with Pianosong (2001)

From Britain to the Bay Area, musicians still feel the loss of the late Jonathan Harvey, whose ecumenically powerful music sought and still seeks “to articulate the true nature of man in his blissful, enlightened form.” After his semi-retirement from more than 20 years’ service at the University of Sussex, he was part-time professor for five years at Stanford University beginning in 1995; the same year, he delivered the Ernest Bloch Lectures at UC Berkeley, under the telling title “In Quest of Spirit: Explorations of the Spiritual Nature of Music.” In keeping with this theme, critic Paul Griffiths encapsulated Harvey’s work in an obituary for *The New York Times*: “Mr. Harvey’s music could range from plainsonglike melody to elaborate orchestral textures involving electronics, but there was always a spiritual impulse at its heart, whether reflecting his deep attachment to the music of Christian worship, in which he had been raised, or his reading and meditating on Hindu and Buddhist sacred texts. He found ancient prayers and visions completely consonant with electronic sound.”

Harvey’s music matches its spiritual impetus with knowledge of a wide variety of sacred musics (gained first as an Anglican chorister) and with technical prowess acquired in subsequent study: first, at Benjamin Britten’s behest, with Erwin Stein and Hans Keller, both exponents of Schoenbergian serialism; and then, in the late 1960s, through his personal interest in the music of Karlheinz Stockhausen, whom he met in Darmstadt in 1966, and a year of work with Milton Babbitt at Princeton University. Perhaps most influentially, Harvey was among the earliest composers invited to collaborate in the heady atmosphere of the prestigious Parisian computer music center IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique), founded by Pierre Boulez.

As it happened, Harvey’s time at IRCAM was mutually beneficial. IRCAM gave Harvey tools and technical assistance that would shape many of his subsequent works; in return, Harvey provided IRCAM with one of the earliest “classics” of the electronic repertoire: *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco* (1980), which takes its title from an inscription on the tenor bell at Winchester Cathedral: “I lament the dead, I call the living [to prayer].” This score won many converts to the idea that “computer music” could have not just acoustic, but cultural resonance, in part through its selection of sound sources (pairing the cathedral bell with the treble voice of his own chorister son), and in part through the strategies it employs to create an immersive aesthetic experience. “In general,” Harvey says, “the bells’ partials are distributed statically in space giving the listener the feeling of being inside the bell, whereas the boy flies like a free spirit around the concert hall space.”

Listeners may experience a similar effect in Harvey’s *Bird Concerto with Pianosong* (2001). One of the happiest pieces of Harvey’s California years, the concerto celebrates the collective energy of solo pianist, chamber orchestra, and electronic sound samples of digitized bird sounds, encoded by Bill Schottstaedt at Stanford University’s Center for Computer Research in Music and

Acoustics—surely an homage to (and technological updating of) the birdsong pieces of the influential Olivier Messiaen. The shifting audibility and spatial distribution of sound are carefully indicated by live electronics, yet the effect is free, even whimsical. Present, too, are other dualities characteristic of Harvey's scores (note, for example, the chiastic play on the more conventional title, *Piano Concerto with Bird Song*). The fruitful tensions between light and dark, living and dying, motion and stillness, the mechanical and the spiritual so typical of Harvey's music are here augmented by a further merger between bird world and human world.

The composer writes: "Indigo bunting, orchard oriole, golden crowned sparrow—these are some of the forty colorful Californian birds whose songs and cries sparked the ignition of this work as I started it in the brilliant light of California. 'Real' birdsong was to be stretched seamlessly all the way to human proportions—resulting in giant birds—so that a contact between worlds is made. When I started to transpose them and slow them

down to our natural speeds of perception they began to reveal level after level of ornamentation—baroque curlicues and oriental arabesques. They were put on a triggering keyboard and combined in dialogue with instruments—particularly solo piano, who connects closely by playing birdsong samples and piano simultaneously, and so incorporated in the pitch and time of our own song-world." As Harvey puts it, "If the songs and objects of the score can bring some inkling of how it might feel to be a human in the mind of a bird, or vice-versa, then I would be happy."

Given the prevalence of birds as divine emissaries in the world's religious traditions, it is not too hard to hear an aspect of self-memorial in Harvey's *Bird Concerto*, a more encompassing, and perhaps more naturally exuberant version of message sounded by the Winchester cathedral bell: "*mortuos plango, vivos voco.*"

Notes by Beth E. Levy (including material about Mei-Fang Lin originally written for the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players)

The **eco ensemble** is a group of experienced, highly skilled Bay Area musicians dedicated to performing new music from established and emerging composers. Its mission is to enrich and serve the Bay Area's cultural life through the creation, performance, and dissemination of new music by composers from Berkeley and around the world.

What does "eco" stand for? Like other art forms, new music doesn't exist in a vacuum—it is part of the fabric that makes up our cultural landscape. The San Francisco Bay Area generally (and Berkeley in particular) plays an essential role in the eco ensemble's formation: our musicians, composers, media, and audience are all part of the region's vibrant cultural scene. We are both influenced by—and exert influence on—the artistic ecology within which we exist. The name "eco" acknowledges this ecology and locates our work as part of the Bay Area's abundant cultural community.

David Milnes serves as conductor 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 Mueller, 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 Festival Internacional 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 premièred 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.