

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT:
Kimberly Burns/510.643.6714
kburns@calperfs.berkeley.edu
Christina Kellogg/510.642.9121
ckellogg@calperfs.berkeley.edu

**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS
ICONOCLASTIC STRING QUARTET**

ETHEL

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27 AT 3:00 P.M. IN HERTZ HALL

“Ethel plays their repertoire vigorously and cultivates a persona closer to that of a rock band than of a conventional string quartet.”

– *The New York Times*

SIGHTLINES: Post-performance discussion with the members of Ethel.

BERKELEY, January 20, 2005 – The new-music band, a.k.a. string quartet, **Ethel** brings its one-of-a-kind blend of rock, jazz and classical music to **Hertz Hall** on **Sunday, February 27** at **3 p.m.** Since the group’s appearance on the musical scene in 1998, **Ralph Farris** (viola), **Dorothy Lawson** (cello), **Todd Reynolds** (violin) and **Mary Rowell** (violin) have created an exciting and rare combination of tastes and talents that developed from each member’s unique experiences in the music world. A “mighty amplified force” that has “style, breadth, power, chops and rock ‘n’ roll spirit,” (Andante.com), Ethel has been hailed by *The New York Times* as “extraordinarily skilled, passionate musicians.” A free *Sightlines* discussion with the artists will be held immediately following the concert.

ETHEL

Before becoming **Ethel**, Ralph Farris, Dorothy Lawson, Todd Reynolds and Mary Rowell each had busy freelance careers in and outside of New York City. In January of 1998 they found themselves in a quartet as a result of a typical freelance musical event. It became clear to these four passionate and skilled musicians that this quartet was not just a one-night stand. “It felt like a group of friends forming a band,” explains Ms. Rowell (*The New York Times*). They realized they could create a performance experience that encompassed all of their musical interests without compromise. “There will always be Bach, Beethoven and Mozart,” Mr. Lawson explains, “We love that music, but we don’t restrict what we expose ourselves to or participate in” (*Inside Arts*, 2003). Originally called Hazardous Waste, they changed the name to Ethel after seeing the film *Shakespeare in Love* where young William Shakespeare considers

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revising the name of his new play “Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate’s Daughter.” From the beginning the group began soliciting work from composer friends in New York’s new-music scene including John King, Phil Kline, Evan Ziporyn and Todd Reynolds himself. “Ethel is a composer’s dream,” explains Ziporyn, “doing everything I ask and making it sound even better than I imagined.”

Members of Ethel have performed and/or recorded with Bang On A Can, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the New York Chamber Symphony, the Steve Reich Ensemble and with artists Sheryl Crow, Roger Daltrey, Reba McEntire and Yo-Yo Ma, among many others. Ethel’s penchant for improvisation and theater is instrumental to its group philosophy and aesthetic. These serious musicians, in fact, consider show-biz as part of their artistic arsenal. One of the band’s most distinctive programming options uses improvisation to weave composed pieces together, creating a seamless, flowing concert experience. With Ethel’s irreverence and panache, listeners are enveloped by the sounds of amplified strings as they are taken on an intense ride of arena-rock proportions.

In 2002, Ethel was awarded a DNA grant from Arts International and performed at the Haus Kulture der Welt in Berlin to commemorate 9/11. They have been featured in performances at the Kimmel Center in Pennsylvania, Bard College, The Library of Congress, MIT, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Suffolk County Community College in New York, and around New York City at The Cutting Room, the Flea Theater, Joe’s Pub, Brooklyn’s Southpaw and Galapagos Art Space. Additionally, Ethel performed in New York City at Columbia University’s Miller Theater for a three-concert series of the complete string quartets of Julia Wolfe and John Zorn, at Lincoln Center for its debut at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, on the CMA Marathon at Symphony Space, and in recital at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Altria (NY).

Festival performances included Lincoln Center Out of Doors, BAM’s Next Wave, the String Summit at The Kitchen, Great Day in New York at Merkin Hall, The Festival Dancing in Your Head in Minnesota, and Bang On A Can Marathons in New York and Hamburg, Germany.

The band has recorded with pop musicians Joe Jackson and Rickie Lee Jones, experimental artists Dick Connette and Blue Gene Tyranny and on film scores by Don Byron and Benny Wallace. Ethel has shared the stage with ensembles such as Erik Friedlander's Rope, the Prism Saxophone Quartet, Ensemble Moderne, Polygraph Lounge, and with individual artists such as Iva Bittova, Mark Stewart and singer/songwriter Dayna Kurtz.

Ethel's 2004-2005 season highlights include the Cantaloupe Music release of its second CD – Ethel's self-named debut album was released on Cantaloupe Records in 2003; the premiere of Mary Ellen Childs' and Tony Brown's "Dream House" at the Southern Theater in Minnesota; the premiere of a new work by Vijay Iyer at Merkin Hall; their Kennedy Center debut; first-time performances in Houston, Berkeley, Nashville, San Antonio, Seattle, Portland, Austin and Cleveland among others; plus a 25-city US tour opening for Joe Jackson and Todd Rundgren.

RALPH FARRIS

Ralph Farris's (viola) versatility is reflected in his collaborative performance history from Joseph Silverstein and Allen Ginsberg to Barry White and the Georgian pop band Mtziuri. He has toured Europe and Asia with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the former USSR with International Arts for Peace/Children Are the Future, and as music director and fiddler for the Roger Daltrey Band. A graduate of The Juilliard School's Accelerated BM/MM program, he received the school's William Schuman Prize for outstanding achievement and leadership. Mr. Farris has served as composer/arranger for Las Vegas' Classical Magic and as arranger/orchestrator for Dishwalla, Chantal Kreviazuk, Stage, The British Rock Symphony, The NBC film *Martha, Inc.*, the national touring company of *A Chorus Line* and the Grammy-nominated Five for Fighting single *Superman*. His string quartet arrangement of *The Star-Spangled Banner* was performed at Ground Zero on Sept. 11, 2002. Violist/violinist/assistant conductor for the Tony Award-winning Broadway production of *The Lion King*, Ralph is a graduate of The Walnut Hill School for the Arts.

DOROTHY LAWSON

Appearing regularly with New York's finest ensembles, including the New York Philharmonic, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, American Symphony Orchestra and Philharmonia Virtuosi, **Dorothy Lawson** (cello) "makes chamber music seem like truly serious fun" (*The New York Times*). Co-founder of both the Andreas Trio and the Rossetti Quartet, Ms. Lawson is the cello voice of Brazilian jazz pianist Marcelo Zarvos + Group and has toured extensively with Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project. Her recent concerto engagements include a recording of Irwin Bazelon's *Entre Nous* (written for her) with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, concert appearances with the Lithuania National Philharmonic featuring Goldshmidt's Cello Concerto, and the New York performances of Ghedini's Double Cello Concerto with colleague Carter Brey and Philharmonia Virtuosi. She most recently served as first cello in the Jason Robert Brown show *The Last Five Years*.

TODD REYNOLDS

Todd Reynolds (violin), "New York's leading classical/jazz violinist" according to *The New Yorker*, is a long time member of Steve Reich and Musicians and violinist for Bang On a Can. He is currently performing in New York his music-based performance art project Still Life With Microphone and new music cabaret act, Nuove Uova. A composer and conductor, Mr. Reynolds is a recipient of Meet The Composer and American Composers Forum Grants and is Associate Conductor to Sound Painting guru Walter Thompson and the Steve Reich Ensemble. He collaborates with world musicians frequently and is also a member of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Project. A member of the Betty Buckley Band and an original member of the Mahavishnu Project, he originated the role of the dancing fiddler in the Tony Award-winning Broadway revival of *Annie, Get Your Gun*.

MARY ROWELL

Considered by critics and colleagues to be one of the most important and exciting performers on the scene today, **Mary Rowell** (violin) is equally at home on the stages of Lincoln Center and grunge rock clubs. Critics have described her playing as "amazing" and "fascinating," a "versatile" performer who plays with "hyperactive brilliance." She has appeared as soloist with such orchestras as National Symphony, Houston Symphony, Colorado Symphony,

Northwest Arkansas Symphony, Warsaw Philharmonic, the Concordia Orchestra, and has recorded and toured with Sheryl Crow, Joe Jackson, the Tango Project, and the Silos. Ms. Rowell is concertmaster of the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra and the Palm Beach Pops.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Ethel** on **Sunday, February 27** at **3:00 p.m.** in Hertz Hall are priced at **\$32.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu.

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Cal Performances' 2004/2005 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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(Ethel calendar information on next page)

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Sunday, February 27 at 3:00 p.m.

Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at College Avenue, Berkeley

20th Century Music & Beyond
Ethel

Program: Ethel has been called "New York's hippest bunch of vibrating strings." Unencumbered by convention, genre or style, the tastes, talents and experiences of these four musicians come together to create a flexible entity that explores new possibilities in string quartet performance.

Tickets: \$32.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door.

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SIGHTLINES

Post-performance discussion with the artists immediately following the concert. *Sightlines* is a continuing program of pre- and post performance discussions with Cal Performances' guest artists and scholars, designed to enrich the audience's experience. These events are free to ticketholders.

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