

Saturday, February 3, 2024, 8pm
Hertz Hall

Eco Ensemble

David Milnes, *conductor*

John Campion, *narrator*

Amy Foote, *soprano*

Sara Couden, *alto*

Michael Jankosky, *tenor*

Nikolas Nackley, *baritone*

Stacey Pelinka, *flute*

Tod Brody, *flute*

Peter Josheff, *clarinet/bass clarinet*

Jamael Smith, *bassoon*

Shawn Jones, *bassoon*

Robert Giambruno, *trumpet*

Scott Macomber, *trumpet*

Brendan Lai-Tong, *trombone*

William Baker, *bass trombone*

Kate Campbell, *piano*

Allegra Chapman, *piano, keyboard*

Gregory Messa, *percussion*

Garrett Mendelow, *percussion*

Hrabba Atladottir, *violin*

Dan Flanagan, *violin*

Ellen Ruth Rose, *viola*

Leighton Fong, *cello*

Richard Worn, *double bass*

*Cal Performances is committed to fostering a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment for all—
one that honors our venues as places of respite, openness, and respect.*

Please see the Community Agreements page on our website for more information.



The Music of Cindy Cox

Cañon (2010)

for flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, two bassoons, two trumpets, trombone, and bass trombone

- I. Headlong
- II. Tender, Nostalgic
- III. Strong, Punchy

[Four Studies of Light and Dark] (1989)

for piano and percussion

- I. Frame
- II. Very fast, hysterical
- III-IV. Sostenuto
- V. Savagely
- VI. Frame

Hishuk ish ts'awalk [All Things are One] (2014)

for clarinet, violin, viola, cello, and piano

- I. Resonant and fragile
- II. Swaying, swirling—Dark, brooding
- III. Silvery and lilting
- IV. Forceful
- V. Resonant and fragile

INTERMISSION

Scenes from *The Road to Xibalba* (2023, World Premiere)

for narrator, four singers, large chamber ensemble, and field recordings

- Day 1: Kej (Narrator)
- Day 2: Q'anil (Little Blood and the Skull)
- Day 3: Toj (Narrator, Little Blood, and the Owl)
- Day 4: Tz'i' (Xmucane and Blood Woman)
- Day 5: B'atz (Hunahpu, Xbalanque, and the Rat)
- Day 6: E (Narrator)
- Day 9: Tz'ikin (Blood Woman, Xmucane, Hunahpu, and Xbalanque)
- Day 16: Iq' (Narrator, Hunahpu, and Xbalanque)

John Campion, *libretto and concept*

Cindy Cox, *music and electronics*

John Campion, *narrator*

Amy Foote, *soprano*

Sara Couden, *alto*

Michael Jankosky, *tenor*

Nikolas Nackley, *baritone*

*Special thanks to the University of California, Berkeley Department of Music
and CNMAT (Center for New Music and Audio Technology)*

Eco Ensemble

David Milnes, *artistic director*

Jon Yu, *production director*

Jeremy Wagner, *technical director*

Brendan West, *technical director*

***Cañon* (2010) for flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, two bassoons, two trumpets, trombone, and bass trombone**

When Ben Simon approached me about composing a new work for the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, he gave me several choices of “companion” pieces to choose from—works already in the repertoire that would have the same instrumentation as my composition. Somewhat to Ben’s surprise, I chose the Stravinsky Octet, a piece that I’ve loved since encountering it as a student. Having a rather unusual instrumentation, the Octet is not so well known outside of professional circles—but for us composers, it’s a beloved composition, full of energy, charm, and dry wit. If you don’t already know it, you’re in for a treat.

Of course, when I took on this instrumentation, it became filtered through my own creative lens. My sound-world is very different from Stravinsky’s. I love a certain kind of transparency in music, a kind of flow or elegance, but I also prefer the sonic choices to have special or unusual colors. So, for example, I ask the brass players to sing into their instrument while they’re playing or use multiple kinds of mutes to alter the sound. I ask for the wind players to overblow their instrument or to split the airstream to create “multiphonics,” the illusion of chords. I ask the flute player to play “whistle tones”—beautiful, very quiet sounds that for me evoke nature and natural surroundings.

While composing this piece, I had been reading a work of the great naturalist John Muir, *The Mountains of California*. Even though this book is over 100 years old, his descriptions of our landscape (are they science or poetry?) still resonate—particularly inspiring were passages describing the sculpting process of glaciers and waterways, and these had a direct influence on *Cañon*. Also influential was a trip I took to the amazing Iguazú falls on the border of Argentina and Brazil. The immensity of the falls is

impossible to describe; the wealth of color, the tremendous power and force—these images also formed part of *Cañon*’s genesis.

***[Four Studies of Light and Dark]* (1989) for piano and percussion**

Written 35 years ago, *[Four Studies of Light and Dark]* is the oldest work on this evening’s concert and was composed when I was still a graduate student at Indiana University. It was well received at that time and to my bemusement the recording was played widely on jazz radio stations. The piece is structured in ways that are still quite important in my work—there is a “frame” (movements I and VI) that serve as an introduction and postlude surrounding the four studies II-V. (I use brackets in the title to symbolize the first and last framing movements.) The inner studies are organized symmetrically, with II and V illustrating light and dark respectively. Movement II is cast in a high register and is very fast, with a running high piano and xylophone melody that you will recognize again in dance sections of *The Road to Xibalba* on the second half of the program. Movement V is a complement of II in its low register and likewise fast tempo with fast piano clusters and loud tom-tom drums. The inner Movement III is slow and dark, with a chorale-like chordal melody low in the piano and swirls of tam-tams played with brushes and a bow, and it moves without pause into movement IV, which continues the chorale melody high in the piano with percussion crotales, with bowed suspended cymbals. The odd timbre that is prominent in the piano at the beginning and end of the piece is a dime inserted between the strings of the D-flat just above middle C.

I did quite a bit of performing when I was a graduate student, and my intention with this piece was to write something fun and challenging for myself at the piano and my percussionist friend Kay Stonefelt. *Four Studies* was originally conceived as a dance piece, with “light” and “dark” symbolically

portrayed by two dancers and was choreographed a few years later by the Larry Pech Dance Company.

***Hishuk ish ts'awalk* [All Things are One] (2014) for clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, viola, cello, and piano**

The entwined and enwoven puzzle pieces of my *Hishuk ish ts'awalk* were inspired by a visit to the wild temperate rainforest in the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve of Canada. To the First Nations people of the Nuu-chah-nulth, the title means “all things are one.” My vision was to create a resonant, forceful, yet fragile musical ecosystem, with a musical space full of echoes, noise, and silence.

The large-scale form is in three parts, separated by pauses. There are two movements in Part One, two movements in Part Two, and one movement to finish, making a total of five movements in the piece. Spatial relationships predominate; you will hear the same music reappear in a different register and moving in a different direction, turned upside down and varying in character and speed.

The resonance of the piano's sostenuto pedal is employed throughout Part One and Part Three, against clarinet subtones, and special bowings, harmonics, and swaying double stops in the strings. The clarinet solo at the end of Part One, with its interposed noisy multiphonics, descends to complete movement two, and is complemented by the rising cello solo at the beginning of Part Three. The center of the piece, Part Two, features a silvery and lilting unison line that loops around on itself in the third movement. A contrasting and complementing palindrome, the fourth movement rises with forceful, loud snaps in the strings, slaps in the bass clarinet, and a huge culmination and climax of everyone to the top. In Part Three, the opening music returns, with piano resonance, trembling strings, and the disembodied clarinet sounds.

Scenes from *The Road to Xibalba* (2023, World Premiere) for narrator, four singers, large chamber ensemble, and field recordings

The Road to Xibalba's story is drawn from the great ancient Maya text, *The Popol Vuh*. Poet John Campion developed the English libretto for *The Road* from his own translation of the larger work. *The Popol Vuh* is a creation myth according to the K'iche' Maya people in what is now Guatemala. The text is an ancient account of their origins and cosmology in a world before the coming of Westerners and Christianity. In the early 1700s, a Dominican friar named Francisco Ximénez recorded a transliterated K'iche' text (in a phonetic script with Latin characters) parallel to a Spanish translation (considered the oldest known version of *The Popol Vuh*).

The Road to Xibalba outlines the exploits of Maya “hero twins” who go down to the underworld to play a ball game with the Lords of Death, and in defeating them affirm the eternal cycle of life. It is a tale full of whimsy, pathos, and timely ecological reflections. There is a humorous cast of animal characters and charmed figures that ultimately point to a higher relation of cosmological order and spiritual connectedness.

In preparation for this piece, Campion and Cox researched the written materials and visited scores of Maya archeology sites and museums in Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. Among many others, these included Chichen Itza, Tulum, Palenque, Uxmal, Tikal, and Copan.

SYNOPSIS

Tonight we present eight scenes in a concert version drawn from the four-act musical theater work that will ultimately include a chorus and dancers. The scenes tonight mostly come from the first half of *The Road to Xibalba*. Each scene opens with a field recording of sounds from Central American birds and wildlife, and roughly follows the 20-day Maya cycle.



The presentation opens with an **introduction by the Narrator**, who serves multiple roles as a poet, a jokester, and an intimate informer. In the **second scene**, we meet Little Blood, daughter of the fearsome Lords of Death in Xibalba, the underworld. In the forbidden garden, she encounters a skull in a tree that she mistakes for a squash. This skull originally belonged to one of the sons of grandmother Xmucane. He had been called One Hunahpu and was murdered along with his twin (Seven Hunahpu) by the Lords of Death after the boys lost a ball game. Following a very humorous verbal exchange, the skull of One Hunahpu spits into Little Blood's hand and makes her pregnant with twins. In the **third scene**, the Lords of Death are very angry when they find out about Little Blood's pregnancy. For punishment, they send a messenger owl to kill her, with explicit instructions to return with her heart as proof the deed was done. Little Blood manages to evade being killed with some clever talk and by providing the owl the red sap from a copal tree that she shaped into a heart. The sap, she convinces the owl, is red like a heart and will burn sweet as incense. The owl agrees and takes the sap back to the Lords and fools them completely.

In the **fourth scene**, Little Blood flees Xibalba, goes to live with grandmother Xmucane, and gives birth to the hero twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque. The **fifth scene** five opens with Hunahpu and Xbalanque working in the field. They hide themselves to find out just who has been eating all their produce—which is how they catch the Rat. In exchange for his freedom, the Rat confesses that grandmother Xmucane has deceived the twins into believing they are farmers, when in fact they were born to be ball players, just like their fathers One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu, who were killed in Xibalba. He shows them where the ball-playing equipment is hidden and the twins joyously play a game. In the **sixth scene**, the Lords in the underworld hear the ball playing and send for the twins to come to Xibalba. In the **ninth scene**, the twins say a tearful goodbye to their mother Little Blood (now called Blood Woman) and grandmother Xmucane, and leave for Xibalba. In the **final scene** this evening, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, having shown that death is not the end but part of the cycle of life, enact a ritual invoking the breath and spirit encircling the world.

—Cindy Cox

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Transparent yet richly multifaceted, **Cindy Cox's** compositions synthesize old and new musical designs through linked strands of association, timbral fluctuation, and cyclic temporal processes. The natural world, ecology, and the concept of emergence inspire many of the special harmonies and textural colorations in her compositions, as in her piano trio *la mar amarga*, the octet *Cañon*, and the string quartet *Patagón*. As Robert Carl notes in *Fanfare*, "Cox writes music that demonstrates an extremely refined and imaginative sense of instrumental color and texture...this is well-wrought, imaginative, and not easily classifiable music."

As a pianist, Cox has performed and recorded many of her solo piano compositions, including the *Sylvan pieces*, *Hierogamos: Seven Studies in Harmony and Resonance*, and *The Blackbird whistling/ Or just after*. A number of her works feature advanced technologies developed at UC Berkeley's Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (CNMAT), such as the *Piano Sampler Etudes* and *Pianos*. Works with text, such as *Singing the lines*, *The Other Side of the World*, and *Hysteria* evolved through collaboration with her husband, poet John Campion.

Cox has received awards and commissions from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Fromm Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the American Composers Forum, ASCAP, Meet the Composer, New Music USA, and the Fulbright Foundation. She has been a Fellow at Tanglewood, Aspen, the MacDowell Colony, Civitella Ranieri, and the Giardini La Mortella on the island of Ischia. Her recent commission from the Toulmin Foundation and the American League of Orchestras was for *Dreaming a world's edge*, premiered by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra in May 2022.

Her work has been performed at the Venice Biennale in Italy; the Leo Brouwer Festival of Music in Havana, Cuba; the Center for New Music in San Francisco; the American Academy in Rome; Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, and Roulette in New York City; the National Gallery, the Library of Congress, and the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC; the Biblioteca Nacional in Buenos Aires, Argentina; and it Los Angeles at the REDCAT Center and the Aratani Theater with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Green Umbrella series. Interpreters include the Kronos Quartet, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the National Symphony, the California Symphony, the Alexander Quartet, the Paul Dresher Ensemble, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Earplay, the Eco Ensemble, and the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra. Notable performers of her work include David Milnes, Gloria Cheng, Lucy Shelton, Oni Buchanan, Ann Yi, Laura Carmichael, and Jenny Q. Chai.

There are five monograph recordings of Cox's music, including compilations of her complete string quartets by the Alexander Quartet on Naxos, and her piano music, on ArpaViva recordings. Her piano trio *Wave I* is available on *Heard in Havana*, a compilation on the Innova label of new works performed in Cuba marking the first

performance of American composers there since the embargo. Her scores are published by World a Tuning Fork Press.

Cindy Cox is presently Professor and former Chair of the Music Department at the University of California at Berkeley. For more information, visit www.cacox.com.

John Champion's work explores different aspects of the intra-relationship between the environment and the co-extensive elements of human culture. With this aim, he has published over 1,000 pages of poetry and created additional related works in fine art, fiction, essays, philosophy, and translation (including the first translation in English of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz' *magnum opus*, *Primero Sueño*. As a medium for these concerns, Champion started the nonprofit groups The Open Theatre (1975), Ecotropic Works (1990), and World a Tuning Fork (2005)—publishing, among many others, essays by the great biologist Lynn Margulis, anthropologist Steven Feld, and archaeologist Solveig Turpin.

In the 1980s, Champion's work on *The Road to Xibalba* emerged after one of the annual conferences on Maya glyphs and culture at UT Austin—where he became friends with the preeminent Maya epigrapher, Linda Schele (she illustrated the cover of his book, *Tongue Stones*). Now that she has passed, all across the Mayan speaking world, you will see monuments expressing gratitude for her helping to bring the Maya histories to light, and for helping native peoples learn to read and write about the ancient Maya glyphs, a lost skill that had been forbidden to them. At one of these occasions, Champion met the poet and translator, Dennis Tedlock (given the title and great honor of Daykeeper by the K'iche' Maya), whose translation of *The Popol Vuh* initiated Champion's love and appreciation for this great myth and guided the way towards his own English translation, from which he produced his libretto for *The Road to Xibalba*.



CULT OF LOVE
 BY LESLYE HEADLAND
 DIRECTED BY TRIP CULLMAN
JAN 26–MAR 3, 2024



THE FAR COUNTRY
 BY LLOYD SUH
 DIRECTED BY JENNIFER CHANG
MAR 8–APR 14, 2024



**BERKELEY
REP**

berkeleyrep.org
510 647-2949

SEASON SPONSORS




ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Campion recalls an evening after one of the conferences, when Linda Schele told him that our Western culture has not only tried to destroy the Maya people along with so many other Native Americans, but has shut itself off from any receptivity to their deep knowledge, wisdom, and beauty. Throughout *The Road to Xibalba* project (now ongoing for decades), John Campion has been seeking what Schele spoke of—discovering in this extraordinary myth the environmental virtues so necessary for the future health of this shared and endangered Earth—if we have the wisdom to receive them.

Eco Ensemble, under the direction of David Milnes, is a group of prominent Bay Area musicians who are passionate about exploring and performing contemporary works. Its mission is to enrich and serve the Bay Area's cultural life through the creation, per-

formance, and dissemination of new music by composers from Berkeley and around the world. Called a “dream team of local musicians who embody a high point in the Bay Area’s vibrant contemporary music scene” by the *New York Times*, Eco Ensemble has been featured at the Festival of New American Music and the Venice Biennale and has worked closely with renowned composers including Kaija Saariaho, Beat Furrer, Philippe Leroux, George Lewis, Erin Gee, and Ivan Fedele. The group is the ensemble-in-residence at UC Berkeley’s Department of Music and the Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (CNMAT), and as the university’s principal performance outlet for performers and composers of new music, commissions and premieres works from UC Berkeley composers. With a focus on education for both experienced audiences and novices, Eco Ensemble’s and CNMAT’s pub-



lic outreach efforts include lectures, demonstrations, workshops, and composer residencies. Members of the ensemble work extensively with undergraduate and graduate musicians in new-music studies. Eco Ensemble's unique collaboration with CNMAT inspires works that are informed by contemporary explorations into the intersection between science and music. The ensemble seeks to expand the possibilities for new music by working with CNMAT faculty, students, and researchers to develop new instruments, new applications of technologies for composition and performance, and new modes of expression.

David Milnes serves as Music Director of the Eco Ensemble, UC Berkeley's internationally recognized professional new-music ensemble-in-residence, as well as the UC Berkeley Symphony Orchestra. During 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 studying with Charles Rosen, Otto-Werner Müller, Herbert Blomstedt, Erich Leinsdorf, and Leonard Bernstein, Milnes won the prestigious Exxon Conductor position with the San Francisco Symphony at age 27, where he appeared frequently on the New and Unusual Music Series. He also served as Music Director of the highly acclaimed San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, which he led on its first European tour.

A dedicated proponent of new music, Milnes has led many performances with Earplay, the Empyrean Ensemble, Composers Inc., and the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble. As Music Director of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, he commissioned and premiered new works from around the world from such composers as Phillipe Leroux, Liza Lim, Edmund Campion, Shulamit Ran, Zhou Long, Kui Dong, Earl Kim, Jorge Liderman, and

Cindy Cox. With the Eco Ensemble, he has conducted works by Pierre Boulez, Giorgi Ligeti, Jonathan Harvey, Beat Furrer, Harrison Birtwistle, Franck Bedrossian, Andrew Imbrie, and Ivan Fedele. He has made recordings of music by John Anthony Lennon, James Newton, Edmund Campion, Jorge Liderman, and Pablo Ortiz.

Milnes has led the UC Berkeley Symphony Orchestra and Eco Ensemble on four European tours since 2014, each featuring new music from Berkeley composers. In performance, he has collaborated with Pinchas Zukerman, Chanticleer, Frederica von Stade, Dawn Upshaw, Anna Netrebko, Bill T. Jones, and Paul Hillier, and has appeared at the Venice Biennale and Santa Fe, Tanglewood, Aspen, Other Minds and Monadnock music festivals.

The **Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (CNMAT)** houses a dynamic group of educational, performance, and research programs focused on the creative interaction between new music and emerging technologies. The center combines technical science-based research with a humanistic critical perspective and practical investigation into the process and possibility for new-music creation. At CNMAT, the laboratory and stage merge to push the boundaries of present-day music making. In addition to three decades of published research, CNMAT continues to support the software tools that it has pioneered since its founding in the late 1980s. CNMAT collaborates with all of UC Berkeley's disciplines dedicated to the study or creative use of sound.

CNMAT was conceived and established by composer and Professor Emeritus Richard Felciano in the 1980s, with a focus on the creative interaction between music and technology. Professor David Wessel, a pioneer in computer music and music cognition, directed the center until his death in 2014. During these years, Research Direc-

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

tor Adrian Freed, organized an ambitious research agenda that produced concrete, practical developments in music-related technologies, including widely adopted innovations such as Open Sound Control (OSC), the Sound Description Interchange Format (SDIF), the CNMAT tools for Max/MSP, and the recent cross-platform “odot” programming objects.

In the mid 1990s, the team expanded to include current Director, Professor Edmund Campion, current Associate Director Richard Andrews, as well as Musical Appli-

cations Programmer Matthew Wright and John MacCallum.

Today, CNMAT works with leading artists, performers, composers, and improvisers to continue in the spirit of its history. In addition to its robust research agenda, the center produces numerous concerts, lectures, and symposia.

The Eco Ensemble, a leading Bay Area new-music ensemble, is in permanent residence at CNMAT.

To learn more about CNMAT, visit the website at cnmat.berkeley.edu.