

Saturday, March 8, 2025, 8pm
Zellerbach Playhouse

yMusic

yMusic

Alex Sopp, *flutes/voice*

Yasmina Spiegelberg, *clarinets*

CJ Camerieri, *trumpet/horn*

Rob Moose, *violin*

Nadia Sirota, *viola*

Gabriel Cabezas, *cello*

PROGRAM

Ryan LOTT (b. 1979) *Eleven* (2016)

yMusic *Three Elephants* (2020)

Whosay (2020)

Cloud (2020)

The Wolf (2020)

Gabriella SMITH (b. 1991) *Aquatic Ecology* (2025, World Premiere)

*Commissioning support is provided in part
by New Music USA's Organization Fund.*

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A note from yMusic

Tonight's program, in many ways, spans the breadth of our artistic practice. It opens with *Eleven*, written by our earliest collaborator, Ryan Lott; proceeds through a suite of self-composed works—a form of expression we found only in our second decade as an ensemble; and ends with the world premiere of a significant new work by Bay Area native Gabriella Smith, a longtime yMusic collaborator and singular creative voice. We love this music, which feels like an extension of who we are and what we hold dear.

Ryan Lott

Eleven

Composer Ryan Lott (who also makes music under the band name Son Lux) was the first person to ever write for us and, we suspect, the first to write for our specific group of instruments. In many ways, Ryan's DNA is deeply embedded in our group's sound and textures. From day one, Ryan's vision for our band opened our eyes to the possibilities of our instrumental configuration. We have since collaborated with him on a number of projects, including an album of his compositions for yMusic, *First*, from 2017. *Eleven* is the opening track of that album, and one of our favorite ways to start a concert.

Three Elephants, Whosay, Cloud, and The Wolf

yMusic started to collaboratively compose our own music in 2019. While it's not unexpected for a band to write new material in this manner, classical ensembles usually stick to interpreting pre-written scores. The impetus to write came after spending a significant amount of time on concert tours with artists Ben Folds and Paul Simon performing "off the page"—memorizing, re-writing, and sometimes creating arrangements on-the-fly.

During these tours, we started working out little ideas together backstage, right be-

fore concerts, or in an idle moment of rehearsal. Eventually, it was Paul Simon who took us aside and encouraged us to dedicate time to writing music together. We immediately realized this group was meant to work this way! As six finely-tuned and opinionated musicians, we had literally been training for this our whole lives.

This suite imagines plodding pachyderms, explores watercolor textures, finds a calming break in an anxious time, and ends with our exploring the loudest mood we can make as a group, piling joyful chords into raucous textures.

Gabriella Smith

Aquatic Ecology (World Premiere)

In 2014, cellist Gabriel Cabezas joined yMusic, and soon thereafter Gabe introduced us to Gabriella Smith, his close musical collaborator and onetime college roommate. We were immediately blown away by the clear voice, brilliantly-wrought architecture, and inventive textures of Gabriella's music, and we started commissioning her right away. Tonight's world premiere represents the third piece Gabriella has written for yMusic, and the most significant to date. Gabriella writes about the piece:

Most people think of the ocean as a silent place, but in reality it is incredibly noisy and vibrant. These underwater ecosystems are alien to most—and yet most of our planet is covered in water. The ocean is our planet's largest carbon sink, which makes it "the greatest ally against climate change" (according to the United Nations). Its health is vital for a livable future. In order to conserve aquatic ecosystems, it is important to feel a connection to them. One of my goals with this piece is to make the underwater ecosystems feel less foreign and more tangible to listeners, and to provide them with a connection to the ocean in a way they probably haven't experienced before—through sound.

In this piece, field recordings (made with hydrophones) sometimes appear in

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their raw, unaltered state—particularly when yMusic is not playing—and at other times are processed in musical ways to become part of the ensemble. They appear in this order:

- A coral reef off the island of Huahine, French Polynesia—shrimp crackling, the sound of parrotfish eating algae off coral, grunting (recorded by Gabriella Smith)
- Many species of fish including croakers and herring—grunting and clicking sounds (from many places and sources)

- Ice melting—squeaking, bubbling, sounding kind of like birds (recorded by Francesco Fabris in Iceland)
- Plainfin Midshipmen, humming and growling (recorded by Gabriella Smith on the Olympic Peninsula, Washington, and by researchers in the Sisneros Lab at the University of Washington)
- Rain falling onto a creek, Green Island, Oregon (recorded by Gabriella Smith)
- Cetaceans, including dolphins and whales (courtesy of Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute)

— Gabriella Smith

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Bay Area native **Gabriella Smith** is a composer whose work invites listeners to find joy in climate action. Her music comes from a love of play, exploring new instrumental sounds, and creating musical arcs that transport audiences into sonic landscapes



inspired by the natural world. An “outright sensation” (*Los Angeles Times*), her music “exudes inventiveness with a welcoming personality, rousing energy and torrents of joy” (*New York Times*). *Lost Coast*, a concerto for cello and orchestra, written for her

longtime collaborator Gabriel Cabezas, received its world premiere in May 2023 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic conducted by Gustavo Dudamel. This work joins her organ concerto, *Breathing Forests*, written for James McVinnie also premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Other current projects include *Keep Going*, a large-scale work for Kronos Quartet, commissioned in celebration of the group’s 50th anniversary season. In December 2023, Smith’s work *Tumblebird Contrails* was performed on the Nobel Prize Concert by the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Smith grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area playing and writing music, hiking, backpacking, and volunteering on a song-bird research project.

yMusic is a genre-leading American chamber ensemble. Now in its 16th season, the group is renowned for its innovative and collaborative spirit. Since its inception, yMusic has had a unique mission: to work on both sides of the classical/popular music divide, without sacrificing rigor, virtuosity, charisma or style. The group was recently

praised by *NPR Music* as “deeply, profoundly skilled. They’ve formed a language all their own.”

Named for “Generation Y,” yMusic and its cohort of composer-collaborators, who include Andrew Norman, Missy Mazzoli, Nico Muhly, Marcos Balter and Caroline Shaw, have come to represent the vanguard of American contemporary music. Simultaneously, yMusic has been tapped to lend its orchestral sound and instantly recognizable style to recordings and concert projects by a dizzying array of popular artists from ANOHNI to John Legend to Paul Simon.

Alex Sopp, flutes/voice

The flutist of yMusic, The Knights, and NOW Ensemble, Alex Sopp has been praised by the *New York Times* for playing that is “exquisite” and “beautifully nuanced.” Comfortable in many genres, she has commissioned, premiered, toured, and recorded with some of the most exciting composers and songwriters of our time. In addition to playing the flute, Sopp is a singer and a visual artist. Her debut album *The Hem & The Haw* was released in 2024.

Yasmina Spiegelberg, clarinets

Hailed for her “enchanting” playing (*New York Classical Review*), Yasmina Spiegelberg is a laureate of international competitions and performs as a soloist and chamber musician across the US and Europe. She is a former member of Ensemble Connect and has appeared at Avaloch, Caramoor, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and Yellowbarn, and with ensembles including the Argento New Music Project, Nu Deco Ensemble, and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Spiegelberg completed an Artist Diploma at USC with Yehuda Gilad.

CJ Camerieri, trumpet/horn

A graduate of the Juilliard School, CJ Camerieri plays trumpet, French horn, and keyboards for some of the most important

artists of our time. He founded the classical ensemble yMusic, joined Bon Iver—winning two Grammy Awards for the band’s sophomore album—and became an integral member of Paul Simon’s touring band in 2014, assuming a pivotal role in the legend’s last two records. To date, he has released two solo albums under the band name CARM.

Rob Moose, violin

Rob Moose is a three-time Grammy Award-winning arranger and string player based in Brooklyn. He has written and recorded charts for thousands of albums, including work by Bon Iver, Taylor Swift, Paul Simon, and Phoebe Bridgers. As an orchestrator, Moose’s work has been performed by the Atlanta, Colorado, Dallas, Indianapolis, and National symphony orchestras, as well as the Boston Pops.

Nadia Sirota, viola

Nadia Sirota is a violist, conductor and Peabody Award-winning producer and broadcaster. As a soloist, she has appeared with orchestras around the world, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orquesta Nacional de España, and the Orchestre National d’Île-de-France. To date, Sirota has released four albums of commissioned music. Previously Creative Partner of the New York Philharmonic, she joined the Juilliard faculty in 2023 and serves as the school’s first Creative Associate at Large.

Gabriel Cabezas, cello

Cellist Gabriel Cabezas is a true 21st-century musician. Named one of “23 Composers and Performers to Watch in ’23” by the *Washington Post*, he is a prolific soloist and collaborator, and co-founded the string group Owls. Cabezas has appeared with America’s finest symphony orchestras and has premiered dozens of new works. In 2016, he received the Sphinx Medal of Excellence.