

## PROGRAM

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*An Automated Sunrise (for Joseph Cornell)* (2014)  
for small ensemble

Oscar Bettison (b. 1975)

*Fast Fantasy* (1977)  
for cello and piano

Charles Wuorinen (b. 1938)

### *Intermission*

*Poems of sheer nothingness* (2012-2013)  
for soprano and chamber ensemble

Aaron Helgeson (b. 1982)

Farai un vers de dreyt nien  
Una chansoneta fera  
Be-m degra de chantar tener  
No sap chantar qui so non di  
A penas sai comensar

Susan Narucki, Soprano

*A Menacing Plume* (2011)

Rand Steiger (b. 1957)

### **Talea Ensemble**

James Baker, Conductor  
Susan Narucki, Soprano

Barry Crawford, Flute  
Stuart Breczinski, Oboe  
Rane Moore, Clarinet  
Yuki Numata Resnick, Violin  
Elizabeth Weisser, Viola  
Chris Gross, Cello  
Steven Beck, Piano  
Alex Lipowski, Percussion  
Matthew Gold, Percussion

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Audience members are reminded to please silence all phones and noise-generating devices before the performance. As a matter of courtesy and copyright law, no unauthorized recording or photographing is allowed in the hall. The Conrad Prebys Music Center is a non-smoking facility.

## TEXT

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### *Poems of sheer nothingness (2012-2013)*

Farai un vers de dreyt nïen:  
non er de mi ni d'autra gen,  
non er d'amor ni de joven,  
ni de ren au;  
Qu'enans fo trobatz en durmen  
sobre chevau.

- Guillaume IX

Una chansoneta fera  
voluntiers, laner'a dir,  
don tem que m'er a murir,  
e far l'ai tal que sen sela.  
Ben la poira leu entendre  
si tot s'es en aital rima.  
Li mot seran descubert  
Alques de razon deviza.

- Raimbaut d'Orange

Be-m degra de chantar tener,  
quar a chan coven alegriers,  
e mi destrenh tant cossiriers  
que-m fa de totas partz doler.  
Remembran mon greu temps passat,  
esgardan lo prezent forsats,  
e cossiran l'avenidor,  
que per totz ai razon que plor.

- Guiraut Riquier

No sap chantar qui so non di,  
ni vers trobar qui motz no fa,  
ni conois de rima co.s va,  
si razo non enten en si;  
Mas lo mieus chans comens'aïssi:  
com plus l'auziretz, mais valra.

- Jaufré Rudel de Blaye

A penas sai comensar  
Un vers que volh far leuger,  
E si n'ai pensat des er  
Que-l fezes de tal razo  
Que l'entenda tota gens  
E qu'el fass'a leu chantar;  
Qu'eu-l fatz per pla deportar.

- Giraut de Borneil

I'll make a poem of sheer nothingness:  
not of me nor of any other,  
not of love nor of youth,  
nor of anything else;  
Because it was composed while dreaming  
on a horse.

I'll make a little song  
willingly, simple to say,  
but in doing so I am afraid to death,  
so I'll make it such of sense concealed.  
Surely she'll understand it  
even though always it's in rhyme.  
Many things will be revealed  
to her desired senses.

I should indeed from singing refrain,  
for a song needs cheer,  
but torment fills my body  
so that throughout my being there is pain.  
Remembering my grief in times past,  
thinking on the conflicted present,  
and considering the future,  
in all these thoughts I weep.

He cannot sing whose song does not sound,  
nor verse compose who not much says,  
nor know his rhyme to place,  
if sense he does not know so well.  
But my own song begun thus:  
the more you listen, the better it will be.

I suffer to begin  
a poem that I want to make light,  
although I've pondered since yesterday  
how to write with such reason  
that all may understand it  
and that it may be easy to sing;  
as I do it purely for pleasure.

(translations by Aaron Helgeson)

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### Oscar Bettison

Described as possessing “an unconventional lyricism and a menacing beauty” and a “unique voice,” British/American composer Oscar Bettison’s recent work has been commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, musikFabrik, Slagwerk Den Haag, So Percussion, the Bang on a Can All-Stars, the New York Philharmonic Contact! series, and the Berkeley Symphony. His latest work has been described as “pulsating with an irrepressible energy and vitality, as well as brilliant craftsmanship.”

Born in the UK, he studied with Simon Bainbridge at the Royal College of Music, with Louis Andriessen and Martijn Padding at the Royal Conservatorium of The Hague, and at Princeton University where he completed his PhD with Steve Mackey as his advisor. He is on the composition faculty at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University.

#### *An Automated Sunrise (for Joseph Cornell)* (2014)

composer’s note:

I have been obsessed with the American artist Joseph Cornell’s work for some time now and somehow, when asked to write this piece for Talea, it seemed natural to take it as a starting point. Cornell’s work is concerned with the transformative use of everyday objects but also specifically (at least in his works that most interested me when writing the piece) with automated objects, cases or boxes, and the natural world, especially birds. I suppose I have done something similar in my piece.

Oscar Bettison’s *An Automated Sunrise (for Joseph Cornell)* has been made possible by the Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program, with generous funding provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Chamber Music America Endowment Fund.

### Charles Wuorinen

Charles Wuorinen is one of the world’s leading composers. His many honors include a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship and the Pulitzer Prize. His compositions encompass every form and medium, including works for orchestra, chamber ensemble, soloists, ballet, and stage. Wuorinen has written more than 260 compositions to date. His most recent works include an opera on Annie Proulx’s *Brokeback Mountain* premiered at the Teatro Real in Madrid in January 2014, a major cultural event worldwide. “Madrid has just seen the biggest audience in its history, local and global, for Charles Wuorinen’s *Brokeback Mountain*” (The Australian). Other recent works include *Time Regained* for Peter Serkin, James Levine and the MET Opera Orchestra, *Eighth Symphony* for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and *Metagong* for two pianos and two percussion for the New York New Music Ensemble.

Wuorinen has been described as a “maximalist,” writing music luxuriant with events, lyrical and expressive, strikingly dramatic. His works are characterized by powerful harmonies and elegant craftsmanship, offering at once a link to the music of the past and a vision of a rich musical future.

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Both as composer and performer (conductor and pianist) Wuorinen has worked with some of the finest performers of the current time, and his works reflect the great virtuosity of his collaborators.

His works have been recorded on nearly a dozen labels including several releases on Naxos, Albany Records (Charles Wuorinen Series), and two releases on John Zorn's Tzadik label. Wuorinen is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

### *Fast Fantasy* (1977)

Once a fluent, erudite author of program notes, Wuorinen rarely provides them today. "I just don't know what to write anymore," he said. "In olden times, when I had a specific compositional method to describe, program notes served a purpose. I had something definite to say, you know, even though it seemed pretty technical to some members of the audience. Now my methods are more general, my solutions more intuitive and local, my preliminary material sparser and sparser, so it is difficult for me to draw any communicable conclusion about what it is that I've done."

"Besides, program notes can do more harm than good," he continued. "I've heard it said that Milton Babbitt's music would never have generated the kind of hostility that it did if he had explained it as the 'yearnings of a passionate soul,' or something like that. Moreover, to describe the methods that a composer used to create a piece may have absolutely nothing to do with the meaning of the piece as a musical experience. There is often a profound difference between what a composition really is and what we think it is when we are making it."

Wuorinen allows that the *Fast Fantasy* is "just what the title implies: a fantasy based on a big lump of notes, intuitively rhythmized, with some qualities of recitative." Like most other celebrated musical fantasies, this one is essentially rhapsodic in form and abounds in pyrotechnical display. From the opening flourish (built around an insistently repeated F note passed, rapid-fire, from instrument to instrument) through the hushed, sustained song-like central section, this is a work of charm and unfettered imagination. Particularly effective are the last few bars, when cello and piano join forces to create rich, gonging, multi-textured chords that resound with the authority of conclusion. Yet there is one final surprise in store: As the chords are on the verge of dying out, the cello suddenly scampers off blithely, for an unexpectedly lighthearted ending. The *Fast Fantasy* is dedicated to Fred Sherry.

-From liner notes to New World CD 385, written by Tim Page ©1990

### **Aaron Helgeson**

Aaron Helgeson's music—described as "simultaneously virtuoso display and engaging instrumental drama" (New York Times) and "beautifully ethereal" (Sequenza 21)—explores the poetic boundaries of musical perception, drawing on the diverse fields of phenomenology, acoustics, literature, and cognitive science to create surreal and evocative sonic universes. A former Fletcher Jones Fellow at the University of California, Helgeson has received prizes

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and accolades from the Aaron Copland Fund, ASCAP, the Fulbright Institute, American Composers Forum, and the Eiler Foundation. He is regularly a featured composer across the US and abroad at such venues as the Monday Evening Concerts in Los Angeles, IRCAM's Manifeste 2012, the 2013 World New Music Days in Vienna, and the 2014 MATA Festival. His latest projects include a song cycle on fragments from medieval troubadour poetry commissioned by Grammy-winning soprano Susan Narucki, the title track for renowned clarinetist Richard Hawkin's new CD *A place toward other places*, and an anti-oratorio for choir and orchestra based on the lives and music of Norwegian immigrants in the American Midwest during the Children's Blizzard of 1888. Recordings of his music are available on Carrier Records and Oberlin Music, with a forthcoming portrait album on Innova in 2015. He currently resides in Ohio, where he is Visiting Assistant Professor of Composition at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

### *Poems of sheer nothingness* (2012-2013)

composer's note:

Commissioned by Susan Narucki, *Poems of sheer nothingness* is a song cycle on ancient troubadour texts that speak of songwriting itself. All were originally sung. All were subsequently silenced by centuries of dust, their music lost and their native tongue of Occitan (an early ancestor of modern French) nearly forgotten. Some are explanations of the poet's craft. Some are apologies. Some are pained second thoughts. Some are warnings for those who would try and follow suit. The five songs found here are not "settings" in the traditional sense. Nor are they recreations. They are encounters between two imaginations, separated by nearly a millennium. They are beguiling, but also revealing (*e far l'ai tal que sen sela*—"I'll make it such of sense concealed," but also "I'll make her song such that its sense is hers"). Above all, they ask a simple question: If music could speak to language, what would it say? When words encounter other sounds, what secrets do they keep from each other? How can they talk at all when one seems concrete and the other abstract? When one seems so close to meaning as to be indistinguishable and the other seems so far from it that it constantly threatens to disappear into the fog of ineffability? Over such a great distance, what kind of poetry would music write to the words it sets? Would it ask forgiveness? As a preliminary repentance? An apology for singing? Perhaps. For we who make song must remember that we sing to the ears of others. That the price of being listened to is being heard. That we must be careful when we whisper nothings, for they are not always so sweet as we'd wish them to be.

### **Rand Steiger**

Rand Steiger's music has been commissioned and performed by many ensembles, including the American Composers Orchestra, Boston Musica Viva, Ensemble Intercontemporain, International Contemporary Ensemble, Lontano, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, NYNME, Prism Quartet, San Diego Symphony, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Talea Ensemble, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he served as Composer Fellow. Soloists he has composed for include Matthew Barley, Maya Beiser, Claire Chase, Daniel Druckman, Peter Evans, Alan Feinberg, George Lewis, Susan Narucki, Vicki Ray, and Steven Schick.

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Throughout his career, Steiger has been involved in computer music research, having held three residencies at IRCAM, and enjoying a long, fruitful collaboration with Miller Puckette, the leading computer music researcher of his generation. He was Composer-in-Residence at the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology from 2010 to 2013.

Many of Steiger's works combine orchestral instruments with real-time digital audio signal processing. They also propose a hybrid approach to just and equal-tempered tuning, exploring the delicate perceptual cusp between a harmony and a timbre that occurs when tones are precisely tuned. Some examples of works deploying these techniques include: *Ecosphere*, developed during residencies at IRCAM and premiered by the Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris; *Traversing*, written for cellist Matthew Barley and premiered by the Southbank Sinfonia in London; *Cryosphere*, premiered by the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall; *A Menacing Plume*, premiered by the Talea Ensemble in New York; and the *Coalescence Cycle*, premiered on a portrait concert at Miller Theater in New York by the International Contemporary Ensemble in 2013.

Steiger was also active as a conductor specializing in contemporary works until deciding in 2010 to concentrate entirely on composition. He led a series of critically acclaimed concerts with the Ensemble Sospeso in New York City in the early 2000s, and with the California EAR Unit at the Los Angeles County Museum in the 1980s and '90s. Among other groups he conducted were the Arditti Quartet, Aspen Chamber Ensemble, La Jolla Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, New York New Music Ensemble, and the Nouvel Ensemble Contemporain (Switzerland). Among his recordings as conductor are operas by Anne LeBaron, Hilda Paredes, and Anthony Davis, and chamber works by Elliott Carter, George Lewis, Mark Osborn, Roger Reynolds, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Morton Subotnick, Iannis Xenakis, and Wadada Leo Smith. He has also conducted many world, New York, and California premiere performances, including works of Muhal Richard Abrams, Louis Andriessen, Milton Babbitt, Pierre Boulez, Henry Brant, Elliott Carter, Brian Ferneyhough, Michael Gordon, Jonathan Harvey, Aaron Kernis, Scott Lindroth, James Newton, Luigi Nono, Augusta Read Thomas, Roger Reynolds, Terry Riley, Poul Rudders, Frederick Rzewski, Kaija Saariaho, Giacinto Scelsi, Elliott Sharp, Julia Wolfe, Toru Takemitsu, Jon Tavener, and Erki-Sven Tuur. His compositions and performances are recorded on the Centaur, CRI, Crystal, Einstein, Koch, Mode, New Albion, New Dynamic, New World, Nonesuch, and Tzadik labels. Recent works for instruments and electronics are available on *Ecosphere*, a portrait CD/DVD on EMF, and *A Menacing Plume*, a portrait CD on New World Records.

After serving on the Faculty of California Institute of the Arts from 1982 through 1987, Steiger joined the Music Department at U.C. San Diego, where he currently serves as Department Chair. In 2009 he was a Visiting Professor at Harvard University.

*A Menacing Plume* (2011)

composer's note:

From the moment I read about the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil platform (April

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20, 2010), I was filled with a sense of dread. I thought immediately of the strange, unworldly creatures that thrive in the ocean's depths as well as those that swim near the surface or fly above it. My feeling of horror grew as we read day after day of the massive, uninhibited flow of oil from the sea floor and the unregulated use of chemical dispersants (which we now know will linger longer than the oil itself, with as yet unknown consequences). After a few weeks, news reports described huge plumes of oil gathering in the Gulf and drifting out into the Atlantic Ocean. It was impossible to know how large these were or how deadly they would be, but that image of a menacing plume, obliterating life in its wake, stayed with me. Although in many of my earlier works I have reflected on the natural world, I have never before attempted so directly, almost literally, to narrate something like this event in musical terms.

My piece begins with an image of the vast, undisturbed surface of the sea as the blinding, bright morning light first arises, followed by a flock of seabirds that soar above. Then layers of material emerge through all the instruments, inspired by the diversity and complexity of undersea life. Finally, an ominous darkness enters and ultimately squeezes out all life. In addition to the conventional instruments on stage, you will hear two vibraphones with specially tuned bars that enable just intonation. We will also be deploying digital signal processing to transform the sound of the instruments in a variety of ways (just-tuned harmonizing, delays, filters, etc).

I would like to thank Talea and Miller Puckette for their inspiring collaboration.

## MUSICIANS

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“Championing works like these, and playing them with a compelling lucidity, is precisely what Talea Ensemble does best.”

-New York Times

**The Talea Ensemble** has been labeled “...a crucial part of the New York cultural ecosphere” by the New York Times. Recipient of the 2013 CMA/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, the ensemble has given many important world and US premieres of new works by composers including Pierre Boulez, Tristan Murail, Olga Neuwirth, John Zorn, Unsuik Chin, Rand Steiger, Beat Furrer, and Fausto Romitelli. Talea has performed at Lincoln Center Festival, Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt, Wien Modern, Contempuls, Newport Jazz Festival, La Ciudad de las Ideas (Mexico), Art Summit Indonesia (Jakarta), and the International Contemporary Music Festival (Peru). Radio broadcasts of performances have been heard on ORF (Austria), HRF (Germany), and WQXR’s Q2. As an active collaborator of new music Talea has joined forces with the Austrian Cultural Forum, Consulate General of Denmark, Korean Cultural Service NY, Italian Cultural Institute, and the Ukrainian Institute. Assuming an ongoing role in supporting and collaborating with student composers, Talea has served as ensemble in residence at Harvard University, Columbia University, Stanford University, Ithaca College, Cornell University and New York University. Talea has recorded works on the Living Artists Label, Gravina Musica, Tzadik, Innova, and New World Records. Recently commissioned composers include Anthony Cheung, Oscar Bettison, and Georges Aperghis. For more information, please visit [www.taleaensemble.org](http://www.taleaensemble.org)

**James Baker** is Principal Percussionist of the New York City Ballet Orchestra, Music Director and conductor of the Composers Conference at Wellesley College, and Director of the Percussion Ensemble at the Mannes College of Music. He is Guest Conductor of the Slee Sinfonietta at the Institute for 21st Century Music in Buffalo and the principal conductor of the Talea Ensemble. He has led concerts across North America, Europe, and Asia at festivals including the Beijing Modern Festival, Monday Evening Concerts, US Library of Congress, Darmstadt, Wien Moderne, and the Transit Festival. He has collaborated with composers on hundreds of world and American premieres including John Cage, Pierre Boulez, Earl Brown, Charles Wourinen, Mario Davidovsky, Hans Werner Henze, Roger Reynolds, Hans Abrahamsen, Milton Babbitt, Donald Martino, Elliott Carter, Stefano Gervasoni, David Felder, George Crumb, Beat Furrer, Olga Neuwirth, and Georges Aperghis. An active composer of electro-acoustic music, Mr. Baker has won a Bessie award for composition for dance. He has written extensively for the theater and for various ensembles with electronics and has written a number of pieces for long time collaborator, choreographer Tere O’Connor. Recent commissions include the Opera Ballet de Lyon, BAM Next Wave, The Dublin Dance Festival, and the Abbey Theater in Dublin.

With luminous tone and distinctive artistry, American soprano **Susan Narucki** has earned international acclaim for over two decades. She has appeared with the Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Netherlands Opera, San Francisco Symphony, MET Chamber Ensemble, on the Great Performers Series at Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall with conductors such as Boulez, Levine, Salonen, Tilson Thomas, de Leeuw and Knussen.

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A dedicated advocate of the music of our time, Ms. Narucki has given over one hundred world premieres, and has enjoyed close collaborations with composers including Andriessen, Kurtág, Carter, Dusapin and Crumb.

Her extensive discography includes both a Grammy Award and Grammy Nomination for Best Classical Vocal Performance; her recording *The Light that Is Felt: Songs of Charles Ives* (New World) with pianist Donald Berman received international acclaim and was selected as Editor's Choice of BBC Music Magazine. An important interpreter of the music of Claude Vivier, she was featured in the ground-breaking opera *Rêves d'un Marco Polo*, directed by Pierre Audi. Of her performance, Vrij Nederland wrote "...one name we will never forget: Susan Narucki, the American soprano, who gave us all goosebumps and moved us to tears."

During the 2012-13 season, Ms. Narucki made her debut with Opera de Montpellier in the French premiere of Carter's *What Next? (Mama)* and the world premiere of Mathis Nitschke's *Jetzt*, and created the role of Nora Lear in the world premiere of Anthony Davis' *Lear on the Second Floor*. She serves as artistic director and soloist in the critically acclaimed chamber opera *Cuatro Corridos*, which addresses the subject of human trafficking across the U.S.-Mexican border. Highlights of the current season include performance of Hadewijch in a rare performance Louis Andriessen's opera *De Materie* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Reinbert de Leeuw.

Ms. Narucki is Professor and Associate Chair of the Department of Music at the University of California, San Diego.

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Special thanks to Scott Paulson of the UC San Diego Library.





UC SAN DIEGO  
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

UPCOMING EVENTS, Fall 2014

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**red fish blue fish**

October 28, 8pm

**Chamber Music Recital**

featuring Robert Zelickman and friends

November 9, 3pm

**Palimpsest: Concertos! for Clarinets, Harp, and Piano**

curated by Aleck Karis

November 19, 7pm

**Gospel Choir**

November 25, 8pm

**Michael Mizrahi, piano**

December 5, 8pm

**International Contemporary Ensemble**

performing Rand Steiger's *Coalescence Cycle*

December 11, 7pm

**Wind Ensemble**

December 11, 8pm

**Camera Lucida**

November 17 and December 15, 7:30pm

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Event Manager: Antonio Estrada

Audience Services Manager: Chelsea Largoza

Stage Crew: Peter Ko, Tiffany Lee, Arthur Nguyen,

Kimberly Vazquez, William Werner, Gigi Yip

Chief Recording Engineer: Josef Kucera

Recording Assistant: Andromeda Bradley

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**CONTACT US**

For information on upcoming concerts:

Music Box Office: (858) 534-3448

<http://music.ucsd.edu/concerts>

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