

UCSD Department of Music
presents

Kirsten Ashley Wiest, soprano

Saturday, April 8, 2017
7:00pm
CPMC Concert Hall

A Sonatina (2016).....Bill Alves
(b. 1960)

Siu Hei Lee, piano

Please Be Okay Till Morning.....Daniel Felsenfeld
(world premiere) (b. 1970)

Ashley Cutright, mezzo-soprano
Kyle Adam Blair, piano

Tacciono i boschi (1981).....James Erber
Phoenix: Two Sonnets by Giordano Bruno (b. 1951)
(world premiere)

Siu Hei Lee, piano

jumalatteret (2012).....John Zorn
(b. 1953)

thank you for joining us for this evening of music by friends, for friends

Siu Hei Lee, piano

RISE | Kirsten Ashley Wiest, soprano

Bill Alves (b. 1960) is a composer, video artist, and writer engaged at the intersections of musical cultures and technology. His recordings include *The Terrain of Possibilities*, *Imbal-imbalan*, *Mystic Canyon*, and *Guitars & Gamelan*. His work with computer animation pioneer John Whitney inspired abstract computer animations with music, now released by the Kinetica Video Library as *Celestial Dance*. He is the director of the HMC American Gamelan, an ensemble that plays new compositions on traditional Javanese instruments. His book *Music of the Peoples of the World* is now in its third edition from Cengage/Schirmer, and Indiana University Press recently published his biography of composer Lou Harrison (with Brett Campbell). He has extensively explored non-standard tunings in his work and is co-director of MicroFest, the annual Southern California festival of microtonal music. Bill teaches at the Claremont Colleges in Southern California.

Notes on *A Sonatina* from the composer:

Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), a pioneering modernist in American literature who endeavored to create in literature the same objectification and immediacy of thought that her friend Picasso had created in his Cubist paintings. At times she went even further, making language into a fascinating abstraction, which has long appealed to me as a composer, as has her musical perspective of language, her use of repetition, and the seeming simplicity of her supposed “difficult” works. This text comes from a very long poem, “A Sonatina Followed by Another,” which she wrote in Vence, France in 1921. According to her friend and collaborator Virgil Thomson, the title refers to her habit of improvising “sonatinas” on the white keys of the piano, though she had no musical training whatever. Although the poem is filled with charming though fleeting images of her stay in southern France, I have extracted lullaby-like bits of the text that seem to refer to her life partner, Alice Toklas.

I need her, she needs me, she needs me, I need that she is splendidly robust. Please me by thinking at ease.
She is gentle and considerate. She can do no more than be gentle and considerate and we find that to be quite
enough to satisfy and not rebuff.

Little singing charm can never do no harm, little baby sweet can always be a treat. And are sonatinas in music
boxes and do they follow one after the other and are music boxes grind organs yes or no. I believe it and I told
her so and she believed it as I very well know. I tell her so so.

Oh no I love you so oh no.

I have often heard it said that a skylark never goes to bed. I have often heard it said that they sing. I have often
heard it said that they are suddenly ahead and I have often heard it said that they sing.

I see the moon and the moon sees me, God bless the moon and God bless me.

From "A Sonatina Followed by Another" (1921)

©1953, used by the permission of the Estate of Gertrude Stein through its Literary Executor, Mr. Stanford Gann Jr. of Levin & Gann, P.A.

Composer **Daniel Felsenfeld** (b.1970) has been commissioned and performed by Trinity Wall Street, Simone Dinnerstein, Two Sense, Metropolis Ensemble, American Opera Projects, Opera on Tap, NANOWorks Opera, Pasadena Opera, Great Noise Ensemble Da Capo Chamber Players, ACME, Transit, REDSHIFT, Blair McMillen, Lara Downes, Secret Opera, Alcyone Ensemble, Stephanie Mortimore, Parhelion Trio, Cabinet of Curiosities, New Gallery Concert Series at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, BAM, Kennedy Center, Trinity Wall Street, Le Poisson Rouge, Bargemusic, City Winery, Galapagos Art Space, The Stone, Jordan Hall, Duke University, Stanford University and Harvard University, and has collaborated with writers like Rick Moody, Robert Coover, Amanda Palmer, Will Eno, Brenda Shaughnessy; has worked with Jay-Z, The Roots, Keren Ann; and is the court composer for John Wesley Harding's Cabinet of Wonders, the co-founder of the New Music Gathering, and co-director of the Curiosity Cabinet.

"Committed as strongly to freshness as to intelligibility, Daniel Felsenfeld composes music that's strong, unusual, intelligent, and considerably skilled." – Composer John Corigliano

Notes on *Please Be Okay Till Morning...* from the composer:

I am very fortunate to have friends like the astonishing poet Brenda Shaughnessy, who I have known for over a decade, and who granted permission to set her beautiful and terrifying poem “Please Be OK ’Til Morning” from her book *So Much Synth*. She and I have daughters around the same age, who play together frequently, and so the fear apparent in this poem—the terror of parenthood, where you just hope your child will live another day...and then another, and another—spoke immediately. The two sopranos form a “parental” duo (most parents come in sets, but not always, and not of the expected variety) of petrified people, aided and abetted by the piano. The music shifts frequently, outlining the neurotic and inconsistent (and even irrational) fear.

While I originally wrote it for Soprani Compagni, I am grateful to the amazing soprano Kirsten Ashley Wiest for organizing and performing this world premiere.

How dangerous air could be if it broke
its pact with your fine little lungs—
just forgot its path a couple minutes,

or the tractor trailer swinging
its back end into our lane, the rickety
scaffolding we're scooting under;

you with your powerful baby girl legs,
rocketing ahead and then fixed, meticulous,
on the sidewalk's cracks and gum stains.

You won't move on till you've questioned
every tree and flower, mother, sweeper,
toddler, dog, rock, and jogger on the street.

I have questions, too, quiet begging: No
lightening, all right? Not poison? Don't bite
her, don't hurt her, watch where you're going.

All the doors you want to try, I see them
swing out with knobs just the right height to
knock out your eye. Cars swerving onto

the sidewalk, drivers texting or heart-failed.
The fall on the sidewalk that isn't skinned knee
and the ritual choosing of the band-aid

but concussed, sleepy, a strangely
early bedtime, unusually late to wake up—
then find you cold at morning.

I say this only because I can't bear to say it;
it runs my mind day and night and night
and day. I am so afraid, always so afraid—

and I don't know if I should try to outrun
this fear, get way ahead so it can never find
me, or stop and stare it down,

stare into its great crack and insist
it recognize me: "Hello! Hello its a nice day
isn't it Mr. Tree Fear? Mr. Car Fear?"

Should I open its door, meet its eyes, fall on
my knees, beseeching, head to floor,
Please let her be okay till morning.

Or stand guard, certain of my powers,
until I nod off, midprayer, then wake up
shaking from the worst dream, my shouts

are how I know lungs kept their vigil tonight
—fear's rhythm—fear that nothing more
mysterious than breath brings you

back to me each day. Let each day be the day
the driver doesn't look down at the text—bad news—
while turning the corner, stunned,

where we cross the street on our way home,
radiant with dreamy leaps, your vital, mighty self,
bright hair whirling in that dangerous air.

British composer **James Erber** was born in 1951 in London of an Austrian father and an English mother. He studied Music at the Universities of Sussex (BA, 1973) and Nottingham (MA, 1975). While a student at the University of Sussex, he took flute lessons with Gareth Morris and conducted performances of his own realisation of Giulio Caccini's opera *L'Euridice* (1600). In 1976, he began work both as Music Editor for Peters Edition Ltd., London and as freelance editor, writer and translator. Still largely self-taught as a composer, it was at this period he produced his first acknowledged works, beginning with *Seguente* for oboe and piano (1976, revised 1980). The guidance and encouragement he received from Brian Ferneyhough prompted him to a serious study of composition, firstly with Jonathan Harvey at the University of Sussex (MPhil in Composition, 1983), then from 1981 to 1982 with Ferneyhough himself at the Musikhochschule, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, for which he received financial support from The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the RVW Trust and the Rivendell Trust.

Since returning to England, he has combined composition with teaching and lecturing, including three years in the Music Department at Goldsmith's College, University of London from 1991 to 1994. He has written articles and lectured widely on his own work. He was invited as guest lecturer to the Darmstadt Ferienkurse in 1988 and 1990, having won a Stipendienpreis there in 1986. In 1994 and 1996 he was shortlisted for the Hinrichsen Foundation bursary and in 1994 received a Holst Foundation Award, enabling him to write *Abiya* for solo piano. In January 2015 he was composer-in-residence at the soundON festival of Modern Music, San Diego CA.

James Erber's work reflects a wide range of interests, including Renaissance and Baroque music, the music of South-East Asia, Jazz, blues, Mediaeval and Renaissance philosophy, Kabbalah, green politics, recent scientific developments, film noir, Jacobean tragedy, the Gothic novel and historical slang. His music is technically demanding for the player, being multi-layered and complex (especially from the point of view of rhythm and form). Its complexity is, however, combined with harmonic clarity and lyricism as well as a tenuous sense of optimism and a concern with intellectual and spiritual continuity diametrically opposed to much of present-day musical culture.

It has been performed and broadcast widely throughout Europe, in Australia, New Zealand and the USA by soloists such as Mario Caroli, Matteo Cesari, Carin Levine, Nancy Ruffer, Christopher Redgate, Carl Rosman, Gleb Kanasevich, Darragh Morgan, Frank Cox, Diego Castro Magas, Ian Pace and Jonathan Powell, as well as by ensembles including Lontano, Exposé, 175 East, the Arditti Quartet, NOISE and ELISION. Matteo Cesari's critically-acclaimed recording of The 'Traces' Cycle and three other shorter works for solo flute is available on Convivium Records. Other works will be found on NMC, Metier and Centaur Records (USA).

Notes on *Tacciono i boschi* from the composer:

This short setting for soprano and piano of one of the *rime d'amore* by the 16th century Italian poet Torquato Tasso reflects my abiding interest in the music of the early Baroque (especially the sacred music by composers such as Monteverdi and Alessandro Grandi). *Tacciono i boschi* was first performed by Deborah Roberts and Pete Edwards at the British Music Information Centre, London, on 25th February 1981.

Tacciono i boschi e i fiumi,
e'l mar senza onda giace,
ne le spelonche i venti han tregua e pace
e ne la notte bruna
alto silenzio fa la bianca luna;
e noi tengano ascose
le dolcezze morose.
Amor non parli o spiri,
sien muti i baci e muti i miei sospiri.

The woods and the rivers are still,
The sea is without waves, calm,
The winds repose in their caves,
And in the dark night
The moon keeps complete silence.
We, meanwhile, unseen,
Enjoy the sweets of love.
Let love not speak or breathe,
May our kisses and my sighs alike be silent.

Notes on *Phoenix: Two Sonnets by Giordano Bruno* from the composer:

The two songs which make up *Phoenix* are settings of sonnets, both concerned with the subject of love, from "De gli eroici furori" by the 16th century hermetic philosopher Giordano Bruno. In the first, "Unico augel del sol", the lover compares himself with the mythical Phoenix. He himself burns with transitory earthly love, while the flames which periodically consume the Phoenix (the symbol of divine love) cause him to be reborn to new life. The second sonnet "Ben ch'a tanti martir" is a paean to love, which has caused the poet to suffer unimaginable torments but has also rewarded him with transcendental vision.

Like *Tacciono i boschi*, written over 30 years previously, the music of *Phoenix* shows my love of the music of the early Baroque, in particular the solo motets which occur throughout Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*. In both sonnets, the piano part consists of a two-part invention, which both supports and contrasts with the (more freely composed) vocal line. The end of the second sonnet is a vocalise: the voice (symbolizing the voice of the Phoenix) and the two piano lines become one, as earthly and divine love merge.

Phoenix: Two Sonnets by Giordano Bruno was composed in December 2016 for Kirsten Ashley Wiest, and is dedicated to her and Jeffrey Holmes.

1) Unico augel del sol, vaga Fenice,
Ch'appareggi col mondo gli anni tui,
Quai colmi ne l'Arabia felice,
Tu sei chi fuste, io son quel che non fui.
Io per caldo d'amor muoio infelice;
Ma te rattiv' il sol co' raggi sui.
Tu bruggi 'n un, ed io in ogni loco;
Io da Cupido, hai tu da Febo il foco.

Only bird of the sun, fair Phoenix,
Who equals the world's years with your own,
Which you live out in Arabia Felix,
You are what you were, I am what I was not.
I die unhappy from the heat of love,
But the sun revives you with his rays.
You burn in one, and I in every place.
I have my fire from Cupid, you from Apollo.

Hai termini prefissi
Di lunga vita, e io ho breve fine,
Che pronto s'offre per mille ruine;
Né so quel che vivrò, né quel che vissi:
Me cieco fato adduce,
Tu certo torni a riveder tua luce.

You have fixed terms
Of long life, and I have a short course,
Which readily reveals itself in a thousand ruinings;
Neither do I know what I shall live out,
nor what I have lived: Blind fate leads me,
While you will surely return to see your light again.

2) Ben ch' a tanti martir mi fai soggetto,
Pur ti ringrazio, e assai ti deggio, amore,
Che con sì nobil piaga apristi il petto,
E tal impadronisti del mio core,
Per cui fia ver, ch' un divo e viv' oggetto
Di dio più bella imago in terra adore.
Pensi chi vuol, ch' il mio destino sia rio,
Ch' uccide in speme, e fa vivo in desio!

Pascomi d' alta impresa;
E ben ch' il fin bramato non consegua,
Et in tanto studio l'alma si dilegua,
Basta, che sia sì nobilmente accesa,
Basta, ch' alto mi tolsi,
E da l' ignobil numero mi sciolsi.

I thank you and am grateful to you, o Love,
For you opened my breast with so generous a wound
And have so mastered my heart,
That it adores a divine and living object,
The most beautiful image of God on earth.
Let him who will think that my fate is cruel,
For it kills in hope and revives in desire.

I am nourished by my high enterprise,
And even if the soul does not attain the desired end,
And is consumed by so much zeal,
It is enough that it burns in so noble a fire;
It is enough that I have been raised up on high
And delivered from all ignoble ties.

John Zorn (b. 1953) is an American composer, arranger, producer, saxophonist, and multi-instrumentalist with hundreds of album credits as performer, composer, and producer across a variety of genres, including jazz, rock, hardcore, classical, surf, metal, klezmer, soundtrack, ambient, and improvised music. Zorn established himself within the New York City downtown music movement in the mid-1970s performing with musicians across the sonic spectrum and developing experimental methods of composing new music. He has led the hardcore bands Naked City and Painkiller, the klezmer/free jazz-influenced quartet Masada, composed over 600 pieces as part of the *Masada Songbooks*, composed concert music for classical ensembles and orchestras, and produced music for opera, sound installations, film and documentary. His compositions cross many genres, stating that "Composing is more than just imagining music—it's knowing how to communicate it to musicians. And you don't give an improviser music that's completely written out, or ask a classical musician to improvise. I'm interested in speaking to musicians in their own languages, on their own terms, and in bringing out the best in what they do. To challenge them and excite them." And challenge, he does.

The text for *Jumalattaret* is adapted from the ancient Finnish mythological text "The Kalevala", and speaks to the formation and evolution of humanistic thoughts, words, and songs. Each movement of the work is dedicated to a different Finnish goddess.

Mieleni minun tekevi, aivoni ajattelevi lähteäni laulamahan, saa'ani sanelemahan, sukuvirttä suolamahan, lajivirttä laulamahan. Sanat suussani sulavat, puhe'et putoelevat, kielelleni kerkiävät, hampahilleni hajoovat, ylistykseksi jumalattaret! Viel 'on muitaki sanoja, ongelmoita oppimia: siiti siivet sulkinensa kuuher käsin tavoitti. Keksi piirtämän kivessä, valeviivan kalliossa. Parempi olisi ollut ilman impenä eleä, Ellös täältä ilman pääskö, muosko, kuu, kumottamahan, pääskö, päivä, paistamahan, kun en käyne päästämähän, itse tulle noutamahan yheksän orihin kanssa, yhen tamman kantamalla!