

UC San Diego | Division of Arts and Humanities | Music

Wednesday@7

Palimpsest presents

# RENGA

Steven Schick and Kathryn Hatmaker, artistic directors

Wednesday, April 25, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.  
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

L'anello (2018) – *world premiere*

Elisabet Curbelo

Glottogony (2018) – *world premiere*

Fernanda Aoki Navarro

Partiels (1975)

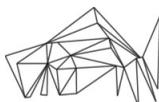
G rard Grisey

*intermission*

Secret Theatre (1984)

Harrison Birtwistle

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Music

## A note from Steven Schick, conductor:

At the core of this concert are two masterworks from the late 20th century—Gérard Grisey’s *Partiels* (1975) and Harrison Birtwistle’s *Secret Theatre* (1984). These are gutsy works, demanding for both players and audience, and richly rewarding at every encounter, even now many decades after their first performances.

*Partiels* zooms in on a single note, a magisterial e-natural played by trombone and echoed by one of the most memorable bass moments since John Paul Jones. Little by little, Grisey draws our attention to the inside of that opening note and invites us to hear its constituent components, the just-intoned upper partials and the small noisy artifacts of performance. As the sound of the trombone is unpacked and mapped onto the rest of the ensemble, we become aware of the oppositional forces within a musical tone—its simultaneous grittiness and sweetness; power and expressivity. The split-second of onset, the noisy attack of lips on a mouthpiece, is translated as overpressured string chords and chaotic vibrations in the winds. Conversely, the resonant body of the tone is revealed in a glossy interplay of harmonies and textures that is often conventionally expressive. The end of the piece is built on that poetic moment when, after a tone has faded to silence, all that remain are small, seemingly insignificant, noises. Oftentimes, we don’t consider these noises to be music. And we might not even notice them at all had our ears not been so sharpened by the invitation to peer inside a musical sound.

Birtwistle’s *Secret Theatre* is a lot like Harry himself: irascible on the surface but lyrical, playful, even sentimental on the inside. Where *Partiels* is about the pulverization of a focused tone into the grains of its construction, *Secret Theatre* affords us a look inside the intricate constructions of rhythm and line. The ensemble is divided into two parts—a “continuum,” which often operates as a unified group and plays from its usual position on stage—and a “cantus,” an oblique force of solo voices, sometimes acting as a confederacy of individuals and at many times as a small choir playing rhythmically unison music.

What is predictable about Birtwistle’s music is that it is not. In a first listening to *Secret Theatre*, you might think that it is the music of rhythmic process. But then you’ll trip over a rhythmic inconsistency or unexpected tempo change. You might also think that this is the typical thorny modernist music of the mid-1980’s only to find, suddenly and inexplicably, a bass line that could have come from Bruckner or a goofy Gershwin-esque moment in the winds. Indeed, sometimes the theatre here does seem secret.

By way of explanation, Birtwistle offers an epigraph from “Secret Theatre” by the 20th century English poet and novelist, Robert Graves:

It is hours past midnight now; a flute signals  
Far off; we mount a stage as though at random  
Boldly ring down the curtain, then dance out our love.

Two UC San Diego composers, Elisabet Curbelo and Fernanda Aoki Navarro, accepted my invitation to respond to these classic works by composing original music of their own. I made no requirements in terms of ensemble or even stage set-up, only that their pieces needed to function well as partners in a program with Grisey and Birtwistle. They responded with extraordinary pieces of music, which are simultaneously wholly original artistic statements and early 21st century re-examinations of the language of the older pieces. As I write this, we are still in the middle of rehearsals, so an in-depth analysis of either piece seems premature. There is still a lot to discover in this new music. But the way Curbelo's *L'anello* (The Ring) pits the energies of a soloist against the weight of an ensemble seems indebted to Birtwistle, just as the way in which she assembles an organic sound from disparate components seems drawn right from Grisey. Yes, I think these are the roots. But the physical theater she creates is utterly original, as is the kind of listening and engagement she demands from her players.

Fernanda Aoki Navarro's *Glottogony* is the bit-by-bit construction of an utterance. We get all the components of speech in abundance—from raucous guttural sounds, produced by strings wrapped in tin foil, to sweet interlocking song-flutes. When language begins to emerge it seems both surprising and inevitable. Navarro's sound world may be extravagant, even kaleidoscopic, but the emotional force it expresses is focused and potent.

I'm grateful to Elisabet and Fernanda—for creating fascinating works of music and being willing to work in the pressurized environment of large-ensemble playing. Thank you. As always, I am grateful to Kate Hatmaker, whose partnership and friendship make our projects together labors of love. To Jessica Flores, David Espiritu and the CPMC crew, how you do all you do is still a mystery! But we are very grateful. And finally to the performers, whose talent, dedication, and fearlessness is nothing short of life-affirming: Thank you all!

Steven Schick

## ***L'anello* (2018)– Elisabet Curbelo** **(world premiere)**

Flute	Wilfrido Terrazas Michael Matsuno
Oboe	Sarah Skuster
Clarinet	Madison Greenstone Theresa Tunnicliff
Bass Clarinet	Robert Zelickman
Horn	Benjamin Jaber Jane Zwerneman
Trombone	Eric Starr
Percussion	Fiona Digney Christopher Clarino
Violin	Kathryn Hatmaker Wesley Precourt
Viola	Michael Molnau Andrew Waid
Cello	Tyler J. Borden
Contrabass	Matthew Kline

**ELISABET CURBELO** is a Spanish composer and performer born in Gran Canaria. She studied piano pedagogy, voice and composition in her hometown, Madrid and Istanbul. Today she pursues a PhD in Composition at UC San Diego under the advisory of Roger Reynolds. Elisabet's work and dedication has been valued throughout her career by diverse institutions, as she has been awarded numerous grants, prizes, and commissions. Her pieces have been performed in Spain, Turkey, USA, Germany, Switzerland and Holland. Her research focuses on the use of sensors to control electronics with movement and the use of extended vocal techniques based on her research of Middle Eastern music and culture.

***L'anello*** (the ring) is a piece about sound, space and the choreographic gestures of the conductor who is also a soloist. The piece was inspired by the multifaceted work of Steven Schick. Here the gestures of the conductor mix traditional conducting movements with different gestures and movements created to indicate changes in volume, articulation and the spatialization of sounds in certain parts of the piece.

The name of the piece not only suggests the positions of the instruments and the conductor on the stage but also the form, timbre, texture and pitch content of the piece. The soloist is located in the middle of the ensemble arrangement as a diamond in a solitaire ring. The sound at the beginning emerges from silence and, at the end, it disappears as the shank of the ring disappears behind the finger as we view it. The soloist, using only high, non-pitched percussion instruments, suggests the multiple facets of a diamond.

In addition, when the soloist moves, playing at different sides of his station and the sound of the ensemble is spatialized, it suggests the way a diamond shines when the ring moves. The entire piece was composed thinking of shapes and their movements. The textures were constructed through the creation of a matrix which distributes pitch, articulation, accentuation, the placement and duration of the rests in particular ways. The composition process started with the soloist's materials without clear pitch structure and moved out into the instrumental groups at his side, where the harmonic content is greater than at the beginning or end of the piece. There, all instruments play the same note: B at the beginning and E at the end. *L'anello* is the ring of his voice "The Little Mute Boy" (poem by Federico García Lorca) wanted to make.

## ***Glottogony* (2018) – Fernanda Aoki Navarro** **(world premiere)**

Flute	Wilfrido Terrazas Michael Matsuno
Oboe	Sarah Skuster
Clarinet	Madison Greenstone Theresa Tunnicliff
Bass Clarinet	Robert Zelickman
Contrabassoon	Leyla Zamora
Horn	Benjamin Jaber Jane Zwerneman
Trumpet	Rachel Allen
Trombone	Eric Starr
Percussion	Fiona Digney Christopher Clarino
Piano	Kyle Adam Blair
Violin	Kathryn Hatmaker Wesley Precourt
Viola	Michael Molnau Andrew Waid
Cello	Tyler J. Borden
Contrabass	Matthew Kline

**FERNANDA AOKI NAVARRO** is a composer born in Brazil based in San Diego, California. She works with acoustic and electroacoustic music and has been exploring performance art, installations and other multimedia platforms. Fernanda doesn't like to be reduced to a gender, doesn't know how to samba, procrastinates to write program notes, doesn't know how to react to compliments or critiques, goes to the cinema every week, drinks coffee every day.

## ***Partiels* (1975) – Gérard Grisey**

Flute	Wilfrido Terrazas Michael Matsuno
Oboe	Sarah Skuster
English Horn	Sammi Jo Stone
Clarinet	Madison Greenstone Theresa Tunnickliff
Bass Clarinet	Robert Zelicman
Horn	Benjamin Jaber Jane Zwerneman
Trombone	Eric Starr
Percussion	Fiona Digney Christopher Clarino
Accordion	Mark Danisovsky
Violin	Kathryn Hatmaker Wesley Precourt
Viola	Michael Molnau Andrew Waid
Cello	Tyler J. Borden
Contrabass	Matthew Kline

**GÉRARD GRISEY** (1946-1998) studied at the Trossingen Conservatory in Germany (1963-65) before entering the Paris conservatory in 1965. There he worked with Olivier Messiaen, eventually earning prizes in composition and other subjects. At the same time, Grisey took courses with Henri Dutilleux at the École Normale de Musique (1968), and also studied in Sienna, Italy at the Accademia Chigiana (1969). In 1972, Grisey attended seminars at Darmstadt with Karlheinz Stockhausen, György Ligeti and Iannis Xenakis. Grisey's studies in electroacoustic music and acoustics date from the early 1970s, training he accomplished under the tutelage of Jean-Etienne Marie and Emile Leip at the Université de Paris VI. In 1972, he was awarded a grant to study at the Villa Médicis in Rome, where he stayed for two years, and it is also during this period that he formed the *Itinéraire* ensemble with Tristan Murail, Roger Tessier and Michaël Lévinas (Hugues Dufourt joined the ensemble later). In 1980, Grisey became attached to IRCAM, and subsequent to a period in Berlin, was appointed professor at the University of California at Berkeley (1982-1986). On returning to Europe from the United States, he taught classes at the Paris conservatory, and gave a number of seminars both in France (Centres Acanthes, Lyon, Paris) and beyond (Darmstadt, Fribourg, Milan, Reggio Aemilai, Oslo, Helinski, Moscow, Los Angeles, Stanford, London). Grisey's *Dérives*, *Périodes* and *Partiels* figure amongst the seminal works of the spectral music movement.

## ***Secret Theatre* (1984) – Harrison Birtwistle**

Flute	Michael Matsuno
Oboe	Sarah Skuster
Clarinet	Madison Greenstone
Bassoon, Contrabassoon	Leyla Zamora
Horn	Benjamin Jaber
Trumpet	Rachel Allen
Trombone	Eric Starr
Percussion	Christopher Clarino
Piano	Kyle Adam Blair
Violin	Kathryn Hatmaker
	Wesley Precourt
Viola	Michael Molnau
Cello	Tyler J. Borden
Contrabass	Matthew Kline

A fellow student of Alexander Goehr and Peter Maxwell Davies at the Royal Manchester College of Music, **HARRISON BIRTWISTLE** began his professional career as a clarinetist before developing his interests in composition to become one of the leading English composers of his generation. He was knighted in 1988. His interest in theatre is reflected in his stage works and in the seven-year period he spent as music director at the National Theatre in London. His personal musical language reflects influences from Stravinsky, Varèse, Webern, Messiaen, Boulez and Stockhausen, brought together into a remarkable synthesis with his own innovative approach to drama in music. Birtwistle's compositions include a wide variety of works (orchestral, instrumental and vocal), often involving an element of drama.

# RENGA

Steven Schick and Kathryn Hatmaker, artistic directors

Steven Schick, conductor

Renga is an ensemble of friends and colleagues from UC San Diego, the San Diego Symphony and beyond. Led by Artistic Directors Kathryn Hatmaker and Steven Schick, Renga unites the most recent and provocative contemporary music with established classical repertoire in settings ranging from solos and small ensembles to full chamber orchestra.

The 2014-2015 season included several premieres and collaborations with ICE and Wu Man, as well as performances at the Carlsbad Music Festival, TEDx San Diego, UCSD and the Ojai Music Festival.

Taking its name from a thousand-year-old Japanese tradition of “shared writing,” Renga seeks to create a progressive forum of shared artistic vision, community outreach, and reflection on the impact of art on our lives.

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