



NACUSAsf Presents

# Composers & Friends

*New music written by members of the  
San Francisco Bay Area chapter of NACUSA*

Saturday, April 13, 2024, 8:00 p.m.

Center for New Music, San Francisco

## PROGRAM

*Entr'acte* John Bilotta

1. Lamento e cavatina
2. Danza

Stephen Zielinski, clarinet

*Three pieces from "Blue Suite"* Mikako Endo

1. Faint Memories
2. A Man in Blue
3. Online Meeting

Mikako Endo, piano

*Your Pieces* Alden Jenks

1. Prelude
2. A Twilight Mazurka
3. Morning Mazurka
4. After the Waltz

Mikako Endo, piano

*Don't We (Image Music VII) for Clarinet in A* Greg A. Steinke

Stephen Zielinski, clarinet

~ Intermission ~

*Variazioni per Violino* Davide Verotta

Monika Gruber, violin

*In Search of Lost Meaning* Alex Shapira

- II. Introspection
- IV. Never Look Back

Alex Shapira, piano

*Two Movements from Exploratorium*

James W. Cook

Stephen Zielinski, clarinet

*Two arias from Finding Medusa*

Jeff Dunn, Madeline Puccioni

1. Prometheus
2. Look Me in the Eye

Buffy Baggott, mezzo-soprano

Sam Faustine, tenor

Frank Johnson, piano

*Promenade with G*

Alon Nechushtan

Frank Johnson, piano



Scan this code for the full program notes and composer biographies.

NACUSA is a non-profit organization founded in 1933 by Henry Hadley, originally as the National Association of Composers and Conductors. It is one of the oldest organizations devoted to the promotion and performance of music by Americans. Each NACUSA chapter typically sponsors several concerts each year which feature music by its members. NACUSA has chapters in Cascadia, East Coast, Great Plains, Los Angeles, Mid-Atlantic, Mid-South, San Francisco Bay Area, the South East, Southern Oregon, and Texas. Started by Nancy Bloomer Deussen and John Webber more than twenty years ago, the San Francisco Bay Chapter has evolved into an active organization with a peak membership of seventy-five composers. It produces four to six concerts each year in the San Francisco Bay Area. Learn more at <http://nacusasf.org>

---

#### Benefactors

---

David Ach	Allan Crossman	Emily Ray
Adrienne Albert	L Peter Deutsch	Roberta Robertson
Anne Baldwin	Brian Field	Karl and JoAnn Schmidt
Laura Barton	Gary Friedman	Kent Smith
John Beeman	Jacob E. Goodman	Artifex Software
John Bilotta	Susan and Stephen Harrison	Greg Steinke
Semyon Bokman	Carolyn Hawley	Vanguard Charitable
Joanne Carey	Lisa Largent	Davide Verotta
Sondra Clark	Sheli Nan	

NACUSA is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax-exempt, and are gratefully accepted by the San Francisco chapter. Please visit <http://nacusasf.org/Donate.html>

# Program notes

## **Entr'acte**

**John Bilotta**

A clarinet solo in two movements, the Entr'acte should be performed as a single work with only a brief pause between movements. This is a virtuoso piece, challenging the player's expressive skills even more than their technical skills. The two movements are "Lamento e cavatina" and "Danza".

John Bilotta has spent most of his life in the San Francisco Bay Area. His works have been performed around the world by Rarescale, Earplay, Talea Ensemble, Washington Square Contemporary Music Society, North/South Consonance, Avenue Winds, Casals Trio, Boston String Quartet, Kiev Philharmonic, San Francisco Cabaret Opera, Bluegrass Opera, Boston Metro Opera, Thompson Street Opera, New Fangled Opera, Floating Opera and VocalWorks. He is currently vice-president of NACUSAsf.

## **Three pieces from *Blue Suite***

**Mikako Endo**

### 1. Faint Memories

--- a sweet farewell song.

### 2. A Man in Blue

---written for my son Jesse when he was a cello student. Now it's a piano piece!

### 3. Online Meeting

--- I actually made this piece while I was in an online meeting, since I could mute myself, and my keyboard below the monitor was hidden!

I was raised in a family of jazz musicians from my grandfather's generation, and I pursued a career as a composer, attending several music schools. I've noticed that the sounds I've been hearing lately seem to have become more and more jazzy. In recent years, a term called "chuunibyuu" has emerged in Japan, referring to exaggerated adolescent's fantasy thoughts. I have harbored a chuunibyuu-like "200-year plan" since my 9th grade. As part of this plan, I've created cards with QR codes for downloading all seven songs of "Blue Suite". I hope many pianists and teachers will find them useful as educational materials—and consider using them as encore pieces during recitals.

## **Your Pieces**

**Alden Jenks**

Composer/performer Mikako Endo, to whom these pieces are dedicated, asked me "What do you want to call your pieces?" So I told her. (They can be your pieces too, if you scan the QR code on the card that Mikako designed for me—find them at the entrance.) The group (lasting about 8 minutes) can be considered a four movement composition, each movement titled: Prelude; A Twilight Mazurka; Morning Mazurka; After the Waltz.

## Don't We (Image Music VII) for Clarinet in A

Greg A. Steinke

Based on the following poetic image:

### Don't We

They say there are No such things as

Indian devil spirits.

But we know differently, Don't we ...

They say there are

No such things as

Good Indian spirits.

But we know differently, Don't we ...

K'os Naahaabii (Don Jordan) from *Notes from the Center of the Earth* © 1974, Blue Oak Press Auburn, CA

This is a short unaccompanied work originally written for inclusion in the clarinet anthology, *Etudes for the Twenty-First Century Clarinetist Project*, (A Festschrift for the 64th Birthday of Barney Childs) commissioned by Phillip Rehfeldt. The listener should just enjoy contemplating ... there are no such things as ...

Dr. Greg A Steinke is retired, former Joseph Naumes Endowed Chair of Music/Art and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Marylhurst University, Marylhurst, Oregon; Associate Director, Ernest Bloch Music Festival (1993–97) and Director, Composers Symposium (1990–97) (Newport, OR); served as the National Chairman of the Society of Composers, Inc. (1988–97). Composer of chamber and symphonic music and author with published/recorded works and performances across the U. S. and internationally; speaker on interdisciplinary arts, and oboist specializing in contemporary music. Dr. Steinke is a past national president of NACUSA (2012–19) and also currently serves on the NACUSA Cascadia Chapter Board.

## Variazioni per Violino

Davide Verotta

*Variazioni per Violino* is an early work from 2007, pruned and cleaned and tightened up in January 2024. The work is in four short movements (moderatamente, pensieroso, scherzando, allá improvvisata), with the mood correspondingly ranging from the moderately serious, to the thoughtful, then playful and finally a little bit boastful. A fun piece, with some introspection glittered in.

Davide Verotta was born in an Italian town close to Milano and moved to San Francisco as an eager twenty-seven-year-old. A professor at UCSF in biomathematics and statistics (gasp) for thirty years, he has been actively involved in the SF new music scene for a good twenty, and eventually left math behind to concentrate exclusively on composing. He studied piano at the Milano conservatory ages ago. Composition is more recent, with studies at SFSU, where he earned an MA, and UC Davis. Davide teaches piano and composition privately and at the CMC in SF. He has received numerous commissions, international competition prizes, and composition grants. He is the current President of NACUSA SF. For more information, please visit his web site at <http://www.davideverotta.com>, or his youtube channel at [www.youtube.com/@Davideverotta](http://www.youtube.com/@Davideverotta).

## In Search of Lost Meaning

Alex Shapira

I composed the first version of *In Search of Lost Meaning* in 1977, when I was still in Romania. At that time, it was a cry against the limitations that the Communist regime inflicted on people's free spirit. More than 40 years later, now living in Texas, I found the manuscript and continued working on it and writing the last movement. Now I see it as a meditation on my adolescent dreams, what remained meaningful and what changed over a lifetime. *Introspection*, the second movement of the cycle, starts with low energy, as if the fingers of the pianist can barely move on the keyboard. Gradually, things are starting to pick up, although the changing rhythms suggest a meaningless movement without a clear direction. Towards the end, the initial motive returns in a more assertive way, ending abruptly with a dissonant chord—a painful reminder that nothing has been resolved. *Never Look Back*—the last movement of the cycle, is an Orphic attempt to focus on the present and look into the future.

Alex's music is performed throughout the US, he is the recipient of several awards such as the New Ariel Piano Composition Competition, Saint-Saens International Music Competition, Vivaldi International Music Competition, King's Peak International Music Competition, Fidelio International Piano Composition Competition and is featured on the Navona Recordings label.

He studied piano and composition in Romania, Israel and the US and also received comprehensive scientific education, followed by a successful hi-tech career. Alex is now pursuing his passion for music again, creating music at the intersection of East and West, which balances between artistic intuition and structural rigor, always prioritizing the emotional experience. He is leveraging his scientific and high-tech background as well as the understanding of social and corporate processes in shaping new musical structures.

Alex is pursuing creative collaborations with composers, performers and visual artists to expand his creative reach and challenge himself to get out of the comfort zone. He joined National Association of Composers USA in 2021, NACUSAsf in 2023 and serves on the NACUSA National Board.

Alex lives in Dallas with his wife, they have two adult children and two granddaughters. He likes to hike, jog, meditate and enjoys modern art and a good laugh.

## Two Movements from *Exploratorium*

James W. Cook

*Exploratorium*, Op. 1, is a collection of nine short movements for various instrumental combinations written in 2018-19. A number of the movements are solos, and of those, two—"Variant" and "Style"—are for solo clarinet.

### "Variant"

Most of the titles in *Exploratorium* are cryptic, with a multiplicity of esoteric and elusive references. What the piece called "Variant" is a variant of is another clarinet work by the composer, the first movement of the Three Movements for Solo Clarinet, op. 0a, of which it is a fantastically complex elaboration and commentary. It also mirrors the whole of that work in its tripartite structure, with two outer "sections" interrupted by a "Crisis" outburst entirely (or almost!) in sixteenth notes.

“Style”

Perhaps the most overt of this title's meanings is the set of “stylistic” constraints imposed on the music: unchanging 4/4 meter, constant tempo, no tuplets -- apparently a recipe for rigidity. Despite this, the piece is surprisingly flexible, and entirely unpredictable. I would propose this as one possible response to what it might mean to compose “with style”. And, needless to say, it is also “with style” that this highly virtuosic piece should be performed!

James W. Cook was recently awarded the First Runner-Up Award in the Nancy Bloomer Deussen Young and Emerging Composer Competition.

## **Two Arias from *Finding Medusa***

**Jeff Dunn, Madeline Puccioni**

*Prometheus* and *Look Me In the Eye* are from Act 1 of our recently completed operetta *Finding Medusa* ([www.findingmedusa.com](http://www.findingmedusa.com)). One version of the work opens with the young Perseus asking for the immortal Prometheus' guidance so he can rescue his mother from the evil king Polydectes. Instead, the goddess Athena promises help if Perseus will slay Medusa. At the end of the act, Medusa appears to Perseus at night and taunts him as he vainly tries to track her reflection in his shield in order to behead her. She deftly eludes her attacker, but secretly, she wants Perseus to free her from her petrifying curse. Her scream at the end is one of both terror and joy.

Jeff Dunn, composer, first began to love the creation of musicals when Meredith Willson played a preview of his *Unsinkable Molly Brown* on the piano at his childhood home. Earning a B.A. in Music at Grinnell College, where he received the Steiner Prize for musical composition, Jeff went on to a career in academia and project management while composing art songs, a film score (*A Wilderness In Your Heart*), chamber works, and incidental music for plays such as *The Tempest*. Jeff has been a music critic writing for numerous journals in the San Francisco Bay area since 1993. His musical *Castle Happy* with collaborator John Freed was produced at the Altarena Playhouse in 2017.

Madeline Puccioni, librettist, is a company member of Towne Street Theatre, L.A. Since she retired from teaching, she has had dozens of short plays produced and several of them published by Next Stages Press. Madeline's new feature screenplay, *The Cassandra Murders*, has won four Best Script Awards and her TV Pilot, *Now and at the Hour* has won two Best TV Pilot Awards via FilmFreeway.

## Promenade with G

Alon Nechushtan

This piece is written in honor of 100 years for *Rhapsody in Blue* and *3/4 Piano Blues* that it is referring to as a set of micro variations ranging from impressionism, to jazz and blues.

Alon Nechushtan's music adventures has brought him to various far corners of the globe such as the Yokohama "Rejoicing Sounds" Festival in Japan with his contemporary orchestral compositions, The Manila Cultural Center of the Arts, with his Clarinet Concerto for the Philippines Philharmonic Orchestra, The Sao-Paolo Brazil Jewish Music Festival with his groove based Quintet Talat, Toronto and Montreal with his words beyond Jazz Trio and Tel Aviv New Music Biennale with his Compositions for Large Ensemble. Resident of New York City, Alon has performed in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Jazz @ Lincoln Center, Central Park Summer Stage, The Blue Note Jazz Club and the Kennedy Center with his projects as a band leader of various groups or as an in demand sideman. In October 2015 the Kennedy Center has commissioned from Alon Nechushtan a new piece for Billy Strayhorn Centennial Celebration, following by a Far East tour in China and Phillipines, along with Jazz Festivals in Belo Horizonte-Brazil, Israel. In 2017 the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C has commissioned from Alon Nechushtan a new program of Thelonious Monk's less known compositions. All About Jazz magazine called him "A fantastic pianist-composer with abundant chemistry and boundless eclecticism." [musicalon.com](http://musicalon.com)