



NACUSA sf Presents

Composers & Friends

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

Saturday, July 20, 2024, 12 noon

Presidio Chapel, San Francisco

PROGRAM

<i>Protocol (from Exploratorium)</i>	James W. Cook
James Pytko, clarinet	
<i>Six Little Piano Pieces</i>	Robert Fleisher
Miles Graber, piano	
<i>Materials, for Cello</i>	Davide Verotta
<i>performer?</i> , cello	
<i>Raven</i>	Anthony Bilotta & John Bilotta
James Pytko, clarinet; Miles Graber, piano	
<i>Childhood Excursions: Are We There Yet?!</i>	Amy Stephens
I. Riding the Rails	
II. Monarchs	
III. Night on the Town	
IV. Waterfall	
V. Harvest	
Amy Stephens, piano	
<i>Don't We, for Clarinet in A</i>	Greg A. Steinke
James Pytko, clarinet	
<i>Nimis, from the cycle Hidden Lands</i>	Ludmila Yurina
Ludmila Yurina, piano	
<i>Corral de Tierra, Six short pieces for two violins</i>	Douglas Ovens
<i>performers?</i> , violin	



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>

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Program notes

Protocol (from *Exploratorium*)

James W. Cook

Protocol, for clarinet and piano, is the eighth movement of the nine-movement ensemble work *Exploratorium*, Op. 1. (Two other movements were heard at the last NACUSAsf concert, played by clarinetist Stephen Zielinski.) It is one of the most enigmatic of the movements in this generally-enigmatic collection, yet it also speaks—or at least refers to—a comparatively familiar musical language (including direct quotations and near-quotations from the classics—or rather the romantics, of which *Die Meistersinger* and the Mahler 5th are the most recognizable). The two instruments are treated as one, and that "single" instrument is in turn treated like an orchestra (the players being instructed at times to think of strings and horns). Thus large-scale symphonic and operatic music permeate the background of this three-minute duo.

James W. Cook is a summa cum laude graduate of the University of Alabama where he studied composition under Craig P. First. He recently received the First Runner-Up Award in the Nancy Bloomer Deussen Young and Emerging Composer Competition.

Six Little Piano Pieces

Robert Fleisher

The *Six Little Piano Pieces* were composed (mostly in 2018) under the influence of Schoenberg's Op. 19 for the noted British pianist Martin Jones, who premiered them at Radford University. His recordings of this work and my *Gig Harbor* (2010) are included in Vol. 5 of PnOVA's American Piano Music Series. Much of No. 1 and most of No. 6 date from the early 1970s. No. 1 has a new middle section derived from the movement's opening phrase. No. 2 begins with a brief gesture from the middle of a piece in Op. 19; (each movement here references another from Op. 19). No. 3 comprises multiple encryptions of Martin Jones' name. No. 4 combines material from a mass Mr. Jones composed while studying at London's Royal Academy of Music and Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*. No. 5 recalls a familiar melody known as "Westminster Chimes." An interior phrase encrypting Schoenberg's last name recalls another one of his solo piano works. No. 6, largely unchanged, has one new pitch and a chord from Op. 19. In recognition of Schoenberg's lifelong triskaidekaphobia, this movement's 13 measures served as a model for each piece in the set.

Robert Fleisher is a composer, author of *Twenty Israeli Composers*, and a contributor to Theresa Sauer's *Notations 21*. His music has been heard throughout the U.S. and in more than a dozen other countries and has been released on ten U.S. and E.U. record labels; his scores have been exhibited in the U.S., France, and the Netherlands. Fleisher's acoustic works have been called "eloquent" (Ann Arbor News), "lovely and emotional" (Musicworks), "astoundingly attractive" (Perspectives of New Music), and "ingenious" (The Strad); his electroacoustic music has been described as "fascinating" (Fanfare), "endearingly low-tech" and possessing "a rich, tactile texture" (The New York Times). Awarded several artist residencies in the U.S. and abroad, he has also received support from the Illinois Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Ruttenberg Arts Foundation. A NYC native, Fleisher attended the H.S. of Music and Art, earned a B.Mus. degree with Honors at the University of Colorado, and his M.M. and D.M.A. Composition degrees at the University of Illinois studying with Ben Johnston, Salvatore Martirano, and Paul Zonn. He is Professor Emeritus at Northern Illinois University.

Materials, for Cello

Daive Verotta

Materials is a short solo piece for cello divided in a free-flowing first section, a slow enigmatic interlude, and a final fast section based on three musical chords. It was conceived as an exploration of musical materials that might be used for a larger piece for string quartet and percussion.

Daive 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. Daive teaches piano and composition privately and at the Community Music Center in SF. He has received numerous local commissions, international competition prizes, and composition grants. For more information, please visit his web site at <http://www.davideverotta.com>, or his youtube channel at www.youtube.com/@Davideverotta.

Raven

Anthony Bilotta & John Bilotta

“In many stories, ravens connect the material and spiritual worlds, acting as guides that escort souls from one plane of existence to another.” – Lewiston: *Animal Legends and Myths*

Raven is a character portrait drawn from an opera-in-progress. The music interweaves themes from the opera: a mysterious past, seduction, betrayal, an unexpected death, deception, the second betrayal, a murder, a trial, an escape, a flight into the wilderness, the third betrayal, the shadows, the cruelest murder, and a raven wings into the darkness.

Anthony Bilotta, 23, has been composing for orchestra, ensemble, and piano since he was 16. Owing to a scheduling error in high school, he landed in a keyboarding class where he was introduced to music for the first time. Quickly praised for his piano skills by his instructors, he was immersed in the art of creation and fell in love with composition. His two dozen orchestral suites, ensemble works, and songs demonstrate his ability to evoke emotion across diverse styles and mediums. He is currently collaborating with his great-uncle and mentor, John Bilotta, on a new opera.

John Bilotta has spent most of his life in the San Francisco Bay Area. His works have been performed by ensembles and soloists in the US and Europe, including Rarescale, Earplay, Washington Square Contemporary Music Society, North/South Consonance, Avenue Winds, Talea Ensemble, Trio Casals, 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 and serves on the boards of the Society of Composers, Inc., and Goat Hall Productions.

Childhood Excursions: Are We There Yet?!

Amy Stephens

Growing up in the Detroit area was lots of fun, and Canada was just 30 minutes away! We could take the Ambassador Bridge or the Blue Water Bridge, ride through the tunnel, or take a boat across in just a few short miles. My family enjoyed exploring both Ontario and Michigan. In this suite are some of my most-treasured childhood memories set to music. This late-intermediate to early-advanced piano collection was designed to help the performer master upper arm, elbow and wrist motions to facilitate good technique and fluidity at the piano.

Pianist Amy Stephens (NCTM) is a Third Stream, pedagogical, and jazz composer with Red Leaf Pianoworks. Her award-winning solo piano collections include *Scenes of San Francisco*, *A Day at the Beach*, *Becoming: Suite for Solo Piano*, and her *Childhood Excursions* & *'Round the Key Circle* collections. Many of her pieces are in the NFMC bulletin. She released several albums of her ensemble compositions with her jazz quartet, Amy Stephens Group. Amy earned two Bachelors, a Masters, & Performer's Certificate in classical & jazz piano from Indiana University. Her mentors include jazz legend David N. Baker and classical master Evelyne Brancart. She has been teaching all styles of piano, composition, and theory for 33 years. Her San Francisco studio is filled with musically curious students of all ages. www.amystephens.com.

Don't We, for Clarinet in A

Greg A. Steinke

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 ('93-97) and Director, Composers Symposium ('90-97) (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.

Nimis, from the cycle *Hidden Lands*

Ludmila Yurina

The idea of the piano cycle *Hidden Lands* was inspired by the objects Arx, Nimis, and Omphalus in Ladonia, a semi-fairy-tale country (geographical location: Sweden). This country of Ladonia and the sculpture objects were created by Swedish artist Lars Vilks. These sculptures/objects are presented in a “sound” version. The scale of each piece is based on the various parameters of each object: height, width, and length.

Ludmila Yurina was born in Uzyn (Ukraine), graduated from Kyiv Music College as a pianist in 1981 and from Kyiv State P.I. Tchaikovsky Conservatoire as a composer in 1990, completing her post-graduate courses there in 1998. She was a Visiting Scholar at the CCRMA, Stanford University in 2011 and 2023/24. She attended workshops with eminent musicians P.-H. Dittrich, Irvine Arditti, G. Staebler, J. Durand at the Rheinsberg Music Academy as well as with H. Lachenmann and W. Rihm in Dresden (Germany). Since 1990 Ludmila Yurina has worked as Associate Professor in the Department of Composition at the National Music Academy of Ukraine, specializing in composition, orchestration, symphony scores reading (and two courses). She was a guest at a few universities with lectures about contemporary Ukrainian music in Germany, Texas Christian University in 2008 and 2011, City University New York Graduate Center (2020), and Stanford University (CCRMA, 2022). In 2010 she got a grant from the Fulbright Foundation for scholarship in Stanford University, CCRMA (USA). Yurina has participated in numerous international festivals. Her works have been performed in Germany, France, Ukraine, USA, Canada, Italy, Finland, Estonia, Israel, Moldova, Poland etc. Recordings of her music were produced on numerous CDs. Her works are published in Ukraine, Canada, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. Yurina was an organizer and co-director of the three festivals of contemporary Ukrainian music in the US: in Fort Worth in 2008 and 2012 and in New York in 2020. She is a member of National Ukrainian Composers' Union, IAWM, SEAMUS, and ASCAP (USA). Related links:

- <http://yurina.ru.gg>
- <http://www.youtube.com/monodia>
- <http://SoundCloud.com/ludmilayurina>
- <http://ccrma.stanford.edu/people/liudmyla-iurina>

Corral de Tierra, Six short pieces for two violins

Douglas Ovens

Corral de Tierra is a set of six pieces inspired by the Bartok 44 Violin Duos as well as his quartets. As a percussionist, I have always been fascinated by the choreography of musical performance—the ways in which performance almost becomes dance. Another model is the Bach Brandenburg Concerto #3 which is often performed with the violins and violas standing (looking a little threatening!). The movement of the lines through the ensemble creating a kind of visual parallel to the unfolding of the musical idea—I aimed for that here.

During the last two years Douglas Ovens has presented his music at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theater in Tallinn, the Center for New Music in San Francisco, Azusa Pacific University, and with New Music Santa Cruz. His *Largo for Solo Violin and Strings* was premiered by the Camerata Chamber Orchestra, Buffalo, NY, on Oct. 8, 2023.

Douglas Ovens “writes music that has been described by the press as ‘theatrical, haunting, and whimsical.’ Also active as a percussionist, his music is often rooted in the physicality of percussion playing and experimentation with sound... The New York Times described his piano piece, *Moving Image*, as ‘a work of special appeal...that

has an almost conversational shape and pacing, and some wonderful textural detail.” (from the notes for *Old Meets New*, Max Lifchitz, piano. North/South Recordings, N/S 1068)

Dr. Ovens has received commissions from the North/South Chamber Orchestra (NYC), the Lehigh Valley Chamber Orchestra, Allentown and Asheville Symphonies. He has composed music for plays ranging from *The Oresteia* of Aeschylus to Gao Xingjian’s *The Other Shore* and Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*, and has been presented in festivals throughout the United States, in Europe, Asia and South America by organizations including Vox Novus, North/South Consonance, NACUSA, and many others.

- Info at: douglasovenscomposer.com.
- Videos at: youtube.com/@douglasovens8070/videos.