

Department of Music | Stanford University



presents

sfSound@CCRMA

CCRMA Stage | Thursday, February 2, 2012, 8pm

# PROGRAM

**Quintet** (2005) by Per Bloland

*John Ingle, alto saxophone*

**Ergodos II (For John Cage)** (1978) by James Tenney

*Kyle Bruckmann, oboe and English horn*

*Matt Ingalls, clarinet and bass clarinet*

*John Ingle, alto saxophone*

*Monica Scott, cello*

**Cell Structure** (2009) by Kyle Bruckmann

*Kyle Bruckmann, oboe*

*Matt Ingalls, clarinet*

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**False Awakening** (2008) by Matt Ingalls (with sfSoundGroup)

*Kyle Bruckmann, oboe and English horn*

*Matt Ingalls, clarinet and bass clarinet*

*John Ingle, alto saxophone*

*Monica Scott, cello*

**Synchronisms #3** (1965) by Mario Davidovsky

*Monica Scott, cello*

**Disseminate** (1998) by Phil Niblock

*Kyle Bruckmann, oboe and English horn*

*Matt Ingalls, clarinet and bass clarinet*

*John Ingle, alto saxophone*

*Monica Scott, cello*

[reception to follow]

## **Quintet (2005)** by Per Bloland

The score for *Quintet* for solo clarinet and electronics is largely improvisational. Although exact pitches are seldom indicated, the sound quality and durations tend to be handled with a greater degree of specificity. The electronic part is based on a Max patch that acts as a recording and looping device, with four individual tracks. The performer controls the patch, initiating recording and playback as well as activating certain processes, the most significant of which is the pitch shifter.

**Per Bloland** is a composer of acoustic and electroacoustic music whose works have been described as having an “incandescent effect” with “dangerous and luscious textures.” His compositions range from short intimate solo pieces to works for large orchestra, and incorporate video, dance, and custom built electronics. He has received awards and recognition from national and international organizations, including SEAMUS/ ASCAP, Digital Art Awards of Tokyo, ISCM, and SCI/ASCAP. Performers of his work include the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, the ICE Ensemble, Bent Frequency, Insomnio, the Callithumpian Consort, and Inauthentica, among others. His music can be heard on the TauKay (Italy), Capstone, Spektral, and SEAMUS labels, and through the MIT Press. Bloland is also the co-creator of the Electromagnetically-Prepared Piano, about which he has given numerous lecture/demonstrations and published a paper. He is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Computer Music at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and serves as the founding director of OINC, the Oberlin Improv and Newmusic Collective. He received his D.M.A. in composition from Stanford University and his M.M. from the University of Texas at Austin.

Saxophonist/composer/improviser **John Ingle** is originally from Memphis, TN and now resides and works in San Francisco. His music is informed and influenced by contemporary concert music, improvised music, electronic music, jazz, various Asian folk music traditions, and the blues and gospel of his native Southeast US. He collaborates with electronics innovator Laetitia Sonami, and in duo with NYC-based composer/dulcimerist Dan Joseph and is a founding member of the sfSoundGroup. John's solo saxophone music emphasizes multiphonics, vocal harmonics and subtle control of extended saxophone techniques, while his chamber music explores such musical parameters as spiral time, linear pulse, and non-linear harmony, and indulges in both simple resonance as well as complex timbre and auditory sleights-of-hand.

## **Ergodos II (For John Cage) (1978)** by James Tenney

**James Tenney** began his professional career in the electronic

music studios at Bell Laboratories, where, drawing on his graduate studies of electronic composition and information theory with Lejaren Hiller at the University of Illinois, he established himself as one of the country's most innovative developers of computer music applications. A number of his experiments at Bell Labs dealt not just with the synthesis of new electronic timbres, but the use of computers in determining broader parameters of a composition (an interest first suggested by his revolutionary thesis "Meta+Hodos"). These experiments culminated in the last work of Tenney's created at Bell, *Ergodos I* for John Cage. During the previous few years, Tenney had attempted a number of different approaches to computer-derived musical structures. *Dialogue*, from 1963, had created a polarity between "noise" sounds and "pitch" sounds interacting largely at the determination of the computer. Tenney had also given the computer control over the hierarchical composition of the musical form itself, a practice continued in *Phases* (for Edgard Varèse) from later in the same year. In this latter piece, Tenney created a more fluid spectrum between tones and sounds, and employed the computer in devising the trajectories of the musical form according to stochastic (statistical) principles. In his *Ergodos* pieces, however, Tenney set out with a different aim: to create music without form, constructed according to absolute "ergodicity." In this regard, the development of technology helped *Ergodos II* exceed the conceptual aspirations of its predecessor, *Ergodos I* (also dedicated to John Cage). While the earlier piece contained two fixed stereophonic channels that could be listened to separately or started at different times, ***Ergodos II*** took advantage of the newly realized possibility of traversing the space between the two stereophonic poles. Employing a musical language and a collection of timbres and sounds similar to the other pieces from this period, this work stands out in the manner in which these sounds emanate from and move through different points in the aural space. An increase in volume or a dip in pitch might be exaggerated by a shift in the sound's perceived position, while a high whistle might shoot from left to right with a palpable Doppler effect. Gurgles of sound bunch themselves together in dense knots, followed by gaping rests or long tenuous strings of sustained tones. At times Tenney's "formless form" confronts the ear head on: at several points a stridently loud tone with a grainy timbral texture jumps unexpectedly from the silence and busy figurations emanate from multiple directions like an ambush. Such moments are not calculated for their emotional effects, however, but conceived by the computer according to preset parameters. Tenney, in the spirit of the piece's dedicatee, even allows for an even greater chance-determined musical experience: he suggests that the listener may divide the 18 minutes of music into any number of segments of equal length, to be played simultaneously. [Jeremy Grimshaw, Rovi, adapted from All Music Guide]

## **Cell Structure** (2009) by Kyle Bruckmann

In all my creative work, I gravitate toward the liminal and uncertain, attempting to undermine alleged dichotomies: composition and improvisation, electronic and acoustic, stasis and tension. Not coincidentally, this contrarian bent and affinity for discomfort zones is central to the working methods of sfSound as a collective. **Cell Structure** is very much a product of that unique and wonderful creative environment; it's an outgrowth of a sub-strain of our activities in which we continually develop, mercilessly critique, steal, and repurpose each other's ideas. Particularly prominent here is an exploitation of the uncanny overlap in ensemble founder Matt Ingall's and my improvisational 'bag of tricks;' a select handful of our favored tendencies are yanked into a confrontation with an unnervingly rigid electronic environment. The piece is dedicated to Matt with admiration and thanks for his cursed perseverance and twisted humor, and for inviting me into the fold. [Kyle Bruckmann]

Composer/performer **Kyle Bruckmann's** work extends from a Western classical foundation into genre-bending gray areas encompassing free jazz, electronic music and post-punk rock. Appearances on more than 50 recordings have led to his recognition as "an excellent composer, striking the right balance between form and freedom" (Signal to Noise), "a modern day renaissance musician" (Dusted) and "a seasoned improviser with impressive extended technique and peculiar artistic flair." [All Music Guide]

Shortly after moving to the Bay Area in 2003, he became a member of sfSound and Quinteto Latino (a woodwind quintet specializing in Latin American composers). He has worked with the San Francisco Symphony and most of the area's regional orchestras, performed contemporary concert music with the Eco Ensemble and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, and accompanied 20th century opera productions with Ensemble Parallèle. He has simultaneously become firmly enmeshed in the vibrant local improvised music community; current working groups include Shudder, Addleds, and Pink Mountain. From 1996 until his westward relocation, he had been a fixture in Chicago's experimental music underground; long-term affiliations include the electroacoustic duo EKG, the "rock" monstrosity Lozenge, and the Creative Music quintet Wrack.

## **False Awakening** (2008) by Matt Ingalls (with sfSoundGroup)

One of the goals of sfSound is to try to merge the individuality of improvised music with the structured world of composition. When composed instrumental music is based mostly on sound (what might pejoratively be called "extended technique" music), I start to question

the necessity of a composer. However, when listening to free improvisation I often miss the organization and formal structures of composed music. **False Awakening** is an attempt to allow the players to play their OWN sounds (in this instance amplified soft ones) placed inside a formal structure. The result is best described as something in between a "structured improvisation" and a "composition". [Matt Ingalls]

**Matt Ingalls** is a composer, clarinetist, and computer musician from Oakland. He is the founder and co-director of sfSound and the San Francisco Tape Music Collective. Matt received the Deu xième Prix (Catégorie Humour - Puy) in the 1994 Concours International de Musique Electroacoustique de Bourges and was the first recipient of the ASCAP/SEAMUS Commission and Recording Prize. Matt is also well known for his computer music software. He created the Soundflower audio routing tool for cycling74 and his Csound version for Macintosh, MacCsound won an Electronic Musician Magazine "Editor's Choice Award" in 2004. Matt has taught digital audio synthesis at the University of San Francisco. Recently he has developed audio-based iOS apps (aardvark, MIDI Sliders) and is working as an iOS audio engineer at Voxer in San Francisco.

### **Synchronisms #3** (1965) by Mario Davidovsky

A longtime resident and citizen of the United States and very much an American composer, **Mario Davidovsky** was born in Argentina of Lithuanian Jewish immigrants. Before coming to Tanglewood in the summer of 1958 Davidovsky was familiar with European electronic music and with the early work of such advanced contemporary composers as Luciano Berio, Maderna, and Stockhausen and knew some of the work of the musique concrète composers of Radio France. Through his association with Milton Babbitt that summer, Davidovsky became ever more intrigued by the relatively young and rapidly growing medium of electronically produced sounds in music and its far-reaching aesthetic and artistic possibilities. That initial association with the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center marked a turning point in his career, which he has always acknowledged as a seminal moment in terms of how he learned to understand and to hear music. He would later become the director of the center (1981 to 1993) while teaching at Columbia. After gaining fluency with the electronic resources in a series of purely electroacoustic studies (the Electronic Studies), which established his international reputation as a pioneer in the field, he turned his attention to joining prerecorded, electronically generated sounds with those of traditional acoustic instruments in live performance. The initial catalytic inspiration for that path was a large-scale 1961 concert of electronic music (probably the first of its kind, certainly on that level) produced by Columbia University at its McMillan Theater (now Bache

Miller Theater). In his series of **Synchronisms**, Davidovsky strived to align the awkwardness he felt on seeing a whole concert devoid of any performers, and artfully sought to coordinate a lively interplay between electronic and instrumental sonorities. Although Davidovsky might remain most famously associated with his compositions that combine electronic and traditional instrumental resources, most of his important music of the 1980s and 1990s and into the 21st century is scored for traditional acoustical forces: orchestra, chamber ensembles, and voices, without electronic sounds. Not surprisingly, much of it has been interpreted as revealing concepts and handling and manipulation of sonorities evidently influenced by his earlier concentration on electronic music—with careful attention to sound details and focus on aspects of attack and decay, texture, timbre, and spatial arrangements of instrumentally produced sounds. In 1994, Davidovsky assumed a professorship at Harvard, where he remained until his retirement from teaching. [adapted from a biography by Neil W. Levin]

**Monica Scott**, cellist, has performed throughout the United States, in almost every European country, Argentina, Canada and South Korea, engaging audiences with her energetic, eloquent playing. Her wide stylistic range and interests span baroque and classical repertoire through avant-garde and improvised music. Currently she is active with sfSound, and with her duo martha & monica with pianist Hadley McCarroll. Their first CD was just released, featuring works by Beethoven, Carter, Poulenc and Boulanger. Monica holds degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and the Sweelinck Conservatorium Amsterdam. A devoted teacher, Monica serves on the faculties of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Preparatory Department, The Crowden School, and College Preparatory School, as well as maintaining an active private studio in Oakland.

### **Disseminate** (1998) by Phil Niblock

"I usually describe that the intention in my music is to create sound differences by combining many simultaneous microtonal pitches / tones (by means of multitrack mixing) to make clouds of sum and difference tones. The drone is simply a means to keep the cloud moving along. The sound source is almost always traditional instruments." [Phill Niblock] .

**Disseminate** is a 20 minute piece scored for 16 parts. For this performance, we pre-recorded 12 parts and are performing 4 live.

**Phil Niblock** is a New York-based minimalist composer and multimedia musician and director of Experimental Intermedia, a foundation born in the flames of 1968's barricade-hopping. He has been a maverick presence on the fringes of the avant garde ever since. In the history books Niblock is the forgotten Minimalist. That's as maybe: no

one ever said the history books were infallible anyway. His influence has had more impact on younger composers such as Susan Stenger, Lois V Vierk, David First, and Glenn Branca. He's even worked with Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore and Lee Renaldo on "Guitar two, for four" which is actually for five guitarists. This is Minimalism in the classic sense of the word, if that makes sense. Niblock constructs big 24-track digitally-processed monolithic microtonal drones. The result is sound without melody or rhythm. Movement is slow, geologically slow. Changes are almost imperceptible, and his music has a tendency of creeping up on you. The vocal pieces are like some of Ligeti's choral works, but a little more phased. And this isn't choral work. "A Y U (as yet untitled)" is sampled from just one voice, the baritone Thomas Buckner. The results are pitch shifted and processed intense drones, one live and one studio edited. Unlike Ligeti, this isn't just for voice or hurdy gurdy. Like Stockhausen's electronic pieces, *Musique Concrete*, or even Fripp and Eno's *No Pussyfooting*, the role of the producer/composer in "Hurdy Hurry" and "A Y U" is just as important as the role of the performer. He says: "What I am doing with my music is to produce something without rhythm or melody, by using many microtones that cause movements very, very slowly." Since 1968 Phil has also put on over 1000 concerts in his loft space, including Ryoji Ikeda, Zbigniew Karkowski, Jim O'Rourke.

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sfSound is one of the Bay Area's leading creators and presenters of contemporary music. Surveying American 'experimental' traditions and the European avant-garde since 2000, sfSound has been groundbreaking in emphasizing the continuum between notated composition and free improvisation. We are unique as a collective of composer/performers that performs our own works, programs avant-garde repertory, and develops highly creative "radical transcriptions" of modern masterpieces. Exploring the intersection of concert music with multimedia, performance art, and live electronics, we have premiered over 100 pieces by figures from the top floors of academia's ivory towers and the grittiest warehouses of the Bay Area's noise scene. This ambitious breadth resulted in a 2008 ASCAP/CMA Award for Adventurous Programming.

<http://sfsound.org>

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