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California EAR Unit

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Chapman University Conservatory of Music

presents the

California EAR Unit

Ensemble in Residence

October 20, 2007 8 pm
Salmon Recital Hall

Veil (1999)

Liza Lim

.oscil (2004)

Raphaelle Biston

Arpège (1987)

Franco Donatoni

---Intermission---

Dubbelspoor (1986)

Louis Andriessen

GO! (1999, rev.)

James Sellars

California EAR Unit Personnel: Dorothy Stone, flute; Philip O'Connor, clarinet; Eric km Clark, violin; Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, cello; Vicki Ray, piano; Amy Knoles, percussion.

Guest Artists: Donald Crockett, conductor; Daniel Rosenboom, trumpet.

This concert is funded by Chapman University Conservatory of Music.

The California EAR Unit is funded in part by grants from the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, The James Irvine Foundation, LA County Arts Commission, the National Endowment for the Arts, Argosy Foundation Contemporary Music Fund, BMI Foundation, Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, the Amphion Foundation and other generous supporters.

The **California EAR Unit**, Los Angeles' premiere new music ensemble and 2007 Ensemble in Residence at Chapman University Conservatory of Music has brought unparalleled versatility, virtuosity and dedication to its performances since 1981, and is recognized today as one of America's finest contemporary chamber ensembles. For its contributions to the field of contemporary American music, the ensemble has garnered awards from the LA Weekly (Best Classical Series 1999 and 2003) and the 1999 "Letter of Distinction" from the American Music Center.

Kaleidoscopic. Eclectic. Violins and pianos one minute, harmonicas and amplified plants the next---the audience never knows what to expect. Attending an EAR Unit concert means experiencing a fresh, exuberant approach to music making. From 1987 to 2005, the EAR Unit has been Ensemble-in-Residence at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and now in its twenty-fifth anniversary year moves to its new home at REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney CalArts Theater) in LA's landmark Disney Concert Hall. The EAR Unit's repertoire of over 500 compositions ranges from the most demanding works for the concert hall to collaborations with major artists in other fields to create original multi-media works. The EAR Unit combines a "classic" instrumentation of flute, clarinet, keyboards, percussion, violin and cello to an "anything goes" including voices, panpipes, handcuffs, playing Bach on the cello with a carrot (Cage's Theater Piece), theatrics and the latest interactive electronic media.

The Unit has performed at major venues all over the world including Tanglewood, Brussels, Aspen, Kiev, Paris, Berlin, the Kennedy Center, Cologne, New York, Boston, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Amsterdam, Reykjavik, and many places in between. The ensemble has been featured in documentaries for the BBC and Japanese television and many of their concerts have been broadcast by American and National Public Radio, WGBH's "Art of the States" Program, WDR(Germany), BRT (Belgium) and DR (Danish Radio) and the International Rostrum of Composers.

The EAR Unit has recorded for Nonesuch, Crystal, New Albion, New World, Tzadik, O.O. Discs, CRI/Emergency Music, and Cambria labels and has the distinction of being one of the first contemporary music groups to be featured on a CD-ROM, Morton Subotnick's All My Hummingbirds have Alibis on the Voyager label. New Albion has released a collection of pre-eminent Dutch composer Louis Andriessen's works, featuring Zilver which was also written and commissioned by the Unit in conjunction with the EAR Unit's tour of England for the Contemporary Music Network. Bridge Records has issued Morton Feldman's four hour long trio for Philip Guston (labeled "Best Classical CD of 1997 by CDNow). Recent recordings include "Go" on the Echograph label and "Settings," music by Mel Powell on New World. Upcoming projects include Morton Feldman's four hour long flute and piano duo "for Christian Wolff," also on the Bridge label.

LIZA LIM (born 1966, Perth, Australia)

Composer Liza Lim writes music marked by visceral energy and vibrant colour, often exploring forms of ritual and performance aesthetics drawn from both Asian and Australian Aboriginal sources. In describing her music, she counterpoints terms such as 'radiance and shadows' and 'violence and meditation'.

Her works, which range from operatic and orchestral scores to site-specific installations, have been performed by some of the world's most eminent ensembles. Notably, she was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic to write the orchestral work, *Ecstatic Architecture* to celebrate the inaugural season of the Walt Disney Concert Hall in 2004. Recent major commissions have been received from the Festival d'Automne à Paris 2005, Salzburg Festival 2005, Sydney Symphony 2004-06, Bayerischer Rundfunk Orchestra 2007 and 2009, and Lucerne Festival 2007.

She has been closely associated with the ELISION Ensemble who have produced some of her larger scale works. These include her chamber operas, the 'memory theatre' *The Oresteia* (1991-93), a Chinese ritual street opera, *Yuè Ling Jié* (Moon Spirit Feasting) (1997-99) and installation works *Bar-do'i-thos-grol*, *Sonorous Bodies* and *Glass House Mountains*. She is currently writing a new opera *The Navigator* in collaboration with librettist Patricia SYKES.

Veil (1999)

Veil concerns itself with the paradox of obscuring something in order to perceive it with heightened senses; the detection of invisible presences through a movement at the edge of perception. Traditionally, a veil is a device that acts as a mediating force between viewer and object -- it creates a ritual space around the object, giving potency to the mystery of its forbidden presence. This play of absence and presence generates a poetry of the 'oblique glance' or 'intensely averted gaze'.

- Liza Lim

Raphaelle Biston was born in 1975 in Lyon, France. She studied flute in Lyon and Geneva before beginning her studies in composition. In 2003 she entered the Conservatoire National Supérieur Musique and Dance in Lyon where she studied composition and electro-acoustic music. She obtained her Diploma in 2007 with distinction. Her recent work is multi-directional, incorporating instrumental writing and real-time or pre-recorded computer music. Biston's music consistently explores what she calls the 'poetical potential' of timbre.

.oscil (2004)

In this piece, interpreters have to be very flexible, giving the impression that they are playing one single instrument: the music is not strictly measured; time depends on the musician's feelings and of their acting upon one another. The researched fusion is first based on the unison, a wide "unison" in fact, including micro-intervals producing acoustical beating: an always fluctuating timbre of which, sometimes, is emerging one instrument or the other before they are combined again. I tried to focus the auditor's attention on these very little things: a soft tempo fluctuation, a timbre variation disturbing the fragile balance between the two instrumental sounds, and a gentle change of the staccato playing. Some instrumental actions emerge, giving the music an imperative, urgent quality: short and accentuated notes, fast repeated notes, brief melodic appear, in sudden bursts of energy. They disturb the initial stream, and one can observe the deformation and reactions these accidents induced.

- Raphaelle Biston

Franco Donatoni 1927–2000

An Italian composer of singular originality and unimpeachable integrity, Franco Donatoni was also at heart an artisan for whom 'inspiration comes when I put myself on a chair to write'. Yet, paradoxically, his journey towards maturity was periodically hindered by existential crises and stylistic false starts. Despite a career that spanned nearly fifty years, it is only his compositions of the last two decades or so that sing with his quirky, often radiant voice.

Friendship with Bruno Maderna provided another vital stimulus, and led him to Darmstadt and an absorption in the serial music of Boulez, Stockhausen and Berio, the fruits of which, as exemplified by the *Tre improvizationi* for piano ('a bad copy of Boulez's Second Piano Sonata'), were assimilated into a compositional armoury of considerable sophistication.

More lasting and crucial, however, were the Zen-Buddhist ideas of John Cage, which haunted Donatoni's thinking in the 1960s. Compelled by his muse to banish the ego and its insatiable craving for self-expression from the creative act itself, he invented a complex set of 'codes' to replace the conscious spadework of creation. These rules of engagement were applied to pre-existing music, often that by other composers, such as Schoenberg (in *Etwas ruhiger im Ausdruck*) and Stockhausen (in *Souvenir*).

This increasing reliance on compositional systems proved Donatoni's ultimate downfall, however, torn as he was by a desire for authorial invisibility and for an equally pressing need to determine the overall shape of the musical objects kickstarted into existence. The new Donatoni who emerged in the mid-1970s drew on the old, but dysfunctional complexity was now eschewed. Basic material became simpler, rules were less rigorously applied and, more importantly, introspection yielded to joy.

Thereafter, from the mid 1970s, ensued a remarkable Indian summer. Swept along by 'almost euphoria' (as he put it), Donatoni managed to produce as many as ten pieces a year. His favoured media were the mixed chamber ensemble (preferably capped by high glittering sonorities), and the virtuoso soloist, although a number of fine orchestral essays – including a fifteen-minute BBC Symphony Orchestra commission, *Prom* (mistakenly destined for the Royal Albert Hall), which will be premiered at the Barbican Centre in May – testify to a keen ear for vibrant colour and an impressive command of large-scale rhetoric.

As Donatoni's success increased, his fame rapidly spread. He became a popular lecturer, notably in Siena where he taught – *pâtisserie to hand* – every summer, and at the Conservatory in Milan, the city in which he resided. Many of his ideas, articulated in several volumes of published writings, notably *Questo* (1970) and *Il sigaro di Armando* (1982), continue to resonate among the composing community

Arpège (1986)

Arpège, a study in virtuosity, is representative of his late period, with several sections of varying length connected compositionally by short motivic cells that are developed over the course of the piece. The work is approximately 12 to 13 minutes in length.

- Nicholas Photinos
Eighth Blackbird

Louis Andriessen was born into a musical family, the son of the composer Hendrik Andriessen (1892-1981), brother of composers Jurriaan Andriessen (1925-1996) and Caecilia Andriessen (1931-), and nephew of Willem Andriessen (1887-1964).

Andriessen's mature music combines the influences of Stravinsky and American minimalism. His harmonic writing eschews the consonant modality of much minimalism, preferring post war European dissonance, often crystallised into large blocks of sound. Large scale pieces such as *De Staat* ['Republic'] (1972-76), for example, are influenced by the energy of the big band music of Count Basie and Stan Kenton and the repetitive procedures of Steve Reich, both combined with bright, clashing dissonances. Andriessen's music is thus anti-Germanic and anti-Romantic, and marks a departure from post war European serialism and its offshoots. He has also played a role in providing alternatives to traditional performance practice techniques, often specifying forceful, rhythmic articulations, and amplified, non-vibrato, singing.

Other notable works include *Workers Union* (1975), a melodically indeterminate piece "for any loud sounding group of instruments"; *Mausoleum* (1979) for 2 baritones and large ensemble; *De Tijd* ['Time'] (1979-81) for female singers and ensemble; *De Snelheid* ['Velocity'] (1982-3), for 3 amplified ensembles; *De Materie* ['Matter'] (1984-88) a large four part work for voices and ensemble; collaborations with filmmaker and librettist Peter Greenaway on the film *M is for Man, Music, Mozart* and the operas *Rosa: A Horse Drama* (1994) and *Writing to Vermeer* (1998); and the recent *La Passione* (2000-02) for female voice and ensemble.

Dubbelspoor (1986)

Louis Andriessen is the enfant terrible emeritus of Dutch music, known for explosive, excessive music, for street orchestras and X-rated operas. At first hearing, *Dubbelspoor* (Double Track) seems a radical departure for this confirmed radical - its patient, quiet sonorities, gentle repetitions, and poised silences seem a far cry from the fist-pounding polemics of *Hoketus* and *Hout*. In truth, though, the piece represents the other side of the Andriessen coin, adamant in its quietude, and stoic in its covert romanticism. The chords and melodies are not unlike those found in Andriessen's other, louder works; the course the piece takes is also recognizable. Even the orchestrational techniques - exact doublings, long decays, etc. - are from the

composer's usual bag of tricks. But here they are used for very different purposes - to magnify and to mirror, to crystalize and to reflect. Like all mirrors, this one distorts, to greater and lesser degrees: the first half of the piece is all fractured symmetries, inexact repetitions and "negative melodies" (produced by the disappearance of tones rather than their arrival), all indicative of an inversional, Nabokovian aesthetic. In the second half these same elements produce a gentle motion, eventually motorized into a deliberately synthetic and cosmopolitan hybrid - an operatic boogie woogie as played on Baroque instruments. As Andriessen says: "I prefer the jacks of all trades - the Purcells and Stravinskys, who are at home anywhere, borrowing here, stealing there."

- Bang on a Can All-Stars

At age 17, **James Sellars** left his native Arkansas to study composition at Juilliard and Manhattan School of Music, where his principal teachers were David Diamond and Ludmila Ulehla. He later took a Ph.D. at North Texas University, and presently divides his time between New York and Hartford, where he is on the composition-theory faculty at The Hartt School.

Major works by James Sellars include *Return of the Comet*, commissioned by the London ensemble, Spectrum. *Chanson Dada*, directed by Peter Sellars at the Monadnock Festival with James Bolle conducting and subsequently produced by Lukas Foss at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, most recently opened the 1998 International Music Festival in Alicante, Spain. Sellars's theater piece, *For Love of the Double Bass*, has been performed to great acclaim at the Helsinki and Huddersfield Festivals. *Beulah* in Chicago, part of the 1991 Bergen Festival in Norway, has since been recorded by opera and Broadway baritone Spiro Malas. Sellars's *Radio Sonata*, featuring bassist Robert Black, was released on CD in 1994. *Kissing Songs*, a 1996 commission by the New York Festival of Song, was premiered at the 92nd Street Y, subsequently performed at the Moab Music Festival, and later recorded by the English Chamber Choir, Guy Protheroe conducting. *Stay With Me*, for six dancing doublebass players, choreographed by Yoshiko Chuma, was first performed in 1998 by the School of Hard Knocks in New York City. The Sellars opera, *The World is Round*, directed by Juanita Rockwell and conducted by Michael Barrett, received 15 performances in 1993 at Hartford's Wadsworth Atheneum, and most recently, a CD of seven piano works, performed by seven cutting-edge pianists from around the world, was released by C.R.I.

Sellars's latest compositions include *Don't Stop*, written for the Bang On A Can All-Stars and premiered at Lincoln Center, May 1996, and *Afterwards* for orchestra, premiered the same year by the New Hampshire Symphony Orchestra. In May 1998, The California EAR Unit introduced his ensemble work, *GO!*, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and in September 2000, the Lions Gate Trio gave the premiere of his *Piano Trio*. In progress is *The Turing Opera*, a high-tech stage piece with a libretto by poet Thomas Meyer, based on the life of English mathematician Alan Turing.

GO! (1997)

GO! was composed during July, 1997 for the Los Angeles-based ensemble, EAR Unit. It is a kind of West Coast cousin to *Don't Stop*, which was written in 1995 for the East Coast ensemble, Bang On A Can All Stars. Both pieces are of about 10 minutes duration and have a discernible relationship to rhythms in rock music; they are, however, quite different in many ways, from instrumentation to the musical materials employed.

For the most part, *Go* verges on atonality — or, perhaps I should say, neo-tonality to the point of no tonality. There are virtually no cadences (stopping-off places) until the very end. In fact, one of the primary compositional problems I wrestled with in working out the form was how to get *Go* to stop! There occurred in the work a degree of momentum that searches in vain (like freeway driving in L.A.) for a rest area. But even at such a fast speed, there are perceptible changes of musical scenery, the violin or piano prominent here, the drums prominent there. In the big picture, *Go* falls into two large sections, the second being a re-composition, or alternate view of the first: the same drive at different times of the day. Near the end, a coda sneaks in — an exit ramp: one must sooner or later reach a destination.

- James Sellars