



Old First Concerts

and



**ROSS MCKEE
FOUNDATION**

present

Current: A Piano Festival

Cross Rhythms

featuring

**Sarah Cahill
Allegra Chapman
Gloria Cheng
Monica Chew
Jerry Kuderna
Regina Myers**

Friday, September 17, 2021 at 8 PM

Old First Church

1751 Sacramento St. at Van Ness Ave.

San Francisco, CA 94109

(415) 474-1608 www.oldfirstconcerts.org

ABOUT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

- Great venue for music with beautiful acoustics and amazing Steinway concert grand piano.
- Primarily local emerging and mid-career professional musicians presenting innovative programs.
- Every concert offers new insights and virtuosic performances.
- Complimentary refreshments served at intermission or after the concert.
- An independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization devoted to presenting music at affordable prices, especially for low-income seniors and students.
- Solo, chamber music, and world music concerts year-round since 1970.

DONATING TO OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Ticket sales provide about 38 percent of our operating revenue each year. In addition, we rely on support from private foundations and Grants for the Arts from the city of San Francisco. Our generous individual donors complete the picture. We invite you to join us in our mission to connect audiences and local musicians and build up the classical music and world music scene in San Francisco. Donations are tax-deductible and donating on our website is easy and secure: www.oldfirstconcerts.org/give/, or checks can be mailed to: Old First Concerts, 1751 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94109. Thank you!

COVID-19 RESPONSE: RETURNING TO THE MUSIC

Old First Concerts is committed to the health and safety of our audiences, performers and staff. We look forward to having audiences back in our space when it is safe to do so. In the meantime, we are happy to be able to continue presenting artists of the highest caliber to our audience in the Bay Area—and beyond—via livestreamed events. We are following city guidelines and safety protocols to help ensure the safest possible environment for our performers and staff.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Following us on **Facebook** is a great way to keep informed about the latest concert information. While you are there, don't forget to **share** events with your friends and hit the "Like" button liberally. [facebook.com/oldfirstconcerts/](https://www.facebook.com/oldfirstconcerts/)

You can also find us on **Instagram** [@oldfirstconcerts](https://www.instagram.com/oldfirstconcerts) with information about upcoming events plus photos and videos from our concerts.

PROGRAM

Eleanor Alberga (b. 1949)
Three-Day Mix (1991)

James Newton (b. 1953)
Looking Above, The Faith of Joseph (2008)

Wang Lu (b. 1982) & Anthony Cheung (b. 1982)
Recombinant (2017)

Grażyna Bacewicz (1909----1969)
selections from **Ten Concert Etudes for Piano** (1956)

II. Vivace
V. Andante
X. Allegro

R. Nathaniel Dett (1882–1943)

In the Bottoms (1913)
Prelude (Night)
His Song
Honey (Humoresque)
Barcarolle (Morning)
Dance (Juba)

Adolphus Hailstork (b. 1941)
Scherzo No. 1 (1996)

Fred Onovwerosuoke (b. 1960)
Twelve Studies in African Rhythm, Book I

Okoye
Edo
Udje
Ayevwiomo Dance 1
Tunis
Jali
Iroro
Herero Wedding Dance
Ayevwiomo Dance 2
Barka
Ayevwiomo Dance 3
Agbadza

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, **Eleanor Alberga** decided at the age of five to be a concert pianist, and started composing at the age of ten. She has written operas, symphonic works, chamber music, vocal works, and two violin concertos for her husband Thomas Bowes. She writes: "*Three-Day Mix* is one of a group of 'light' pieces which I wrote for piano. very much influenced by my Caribbean heritage. The first piece I wrote in this vein was *Jamaican Medley* for solo piano, written in 1983 for a concert marking Jamaica's 21st year of independence and almost completely comprising Jamaican folk songs. This was followed in 1986 by *Two-Piano Suite* and in 1990 by *Hill and Gully Ride* for two pianos, eight hands. All these works contain very tonal and rhythmic elements coming out of Afro-Caribbean influences. As implied, *Three-Day Mix* was written in three days when, with very short notice, an opportunity to compose a piano duet for a concert came about in 1991. This work, more than the others, contains jazzy elements but the melodic lines over ostinato figures appear in all the other 'light' works. It lasts about nine minutes and is meant to be no more than a fun piece." This year Eleanor Alberga was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire for services to British music.

James Newton writes: "One of my greatest inspirations in the Bible has come from Joseph, the son of Jacob, who kept a steady gaze on the Word of God. Despite his enslavement and imprisonment, Joseph's faith remained steadfast in the knowledge that, as the Bible states, 'The Lord was with Joseph.' The music for *Looking Above, The Faith of Joseph* is partially programmatic, and reflects upon certain aspects of Joseph's life in a non-chronological manner. In writing this work I thought about four great pianists: Yvonne Loriod; Thelonious Monk; Art Tatum; and Cecil Taylor. At particular junctures within the structure of the composition, each of

these pianists is a source of inspiration. I have attempted to reflect my profound admiration for these great artists by infusing the music with a series of vignettes that augment the overall compositional palette and add to the natural sense of development within the composition. At times an imagined interaction occurred among these pianists that compelled me to approach composition in new ways. For example, Art Tatum begins a phrase that is completed by Yvonne Loriod. This 'interaction' creates cultural multiplicity – what is separate suddenly becomes connected.

Looking Above, The Faith of Joseph reflects a sound world that I have been developing for many years. This sound world reflects my experiences in the Jazz, Classical and World Music genres and my improvisational language that mixes all three. Joseph is the conduit for God's revelation to Jacob, 'Fear not to go down to Egypt, for a great nation I will make you there.' As revealed by the great scholar, Robert Alter, one can get lost in the profound numerological structures within Joseph's journey within the book of Genesis. For many years I have incorporated biblical numerology in compositional structures. In this composition, as in others, I have tried to achieve a balance between these numerological structures and holy inspiration. In its own way, this humble offering reveals my love for Joseph's crucial role in inspiring many others to follow his faith by his moving through life steadily gazing at God's luminescent radiance.

Recombinant is a collaborative work between the married couple **Wang Lu and Anthony Cheung**. Cheung wrote his part first, using a three-note motive that recurs through an improvisatory, multilayered texture. Wang then inverted his motive, evoking the romantic era of piano music in what she calls her "nostalgic take on this motive through the lens of romantic influence." The two parts can be performed

separately as well as together. When performed together, Wang's part comes first, followed by the contrasting second part by Cheung.

Grażyna Bacewicz was one of the most significant composers of the 20th century, and yet her music remains seldom performed and relatively unknown. As *San Francisco Chronicle* critic Joshua Kosman asked in 2019, "Why is a creative voice as vivid and original as Bacewicz's so conspicuously absent from our concert halls?" She is certainly recognized in her native Poland today as one of the great Polish composers. Lutosławski wrote of Bacewicz that "as an artist and human being [she] ought to be an inspiration to the succeeding generations of composers in Poland and throughout the world." Through the fire of war and political oppression, Bacewicz composed more than 200 works of music. She was a virtuosic violinist and pianist, author of murder mysteries, host of underground concerts during World War II, and a witty and indefatigable personality. She absorbed the influences of neoclassicism, serialism, folk music, and the avant-garde, and forged her own distinctive style, inspiring a generation of Polish composers. Bacewicz believed that her *Sonata No. 2* and the *Ten Concert Etudes for Piano* were her best piano works. She wrote the *Ten Concert Etudes* in 1956, relatively late in her life. Upon their premiere, they were well received and immediately compared to the etudes of Chopin and Szymanowski. Today we hear three of the ten etudes—No. 2, a jocular etude from the beginning of the set that plays with motivic development and humorous juxtapositions; No. 5, the intermezzo-like, mournful heart of the set; and No. 10, the set's climactic and virtuosic ending that Bacewicz requested of Ms. Smendzianka be played "at maximum speed."

Nathaniel Dett was a Canadian-American Black composer, organist, pianist, choral director, published author, and music professor. During his lifetime, he was known for pioneering the integration of African American folk songs and spirituals with the European classical tradition. Dett writes that *In the Bottoms*, subtitled *Suite caractéristique*, “is a Suite of five numbers giving pictures of moods or scenes peculiar to Negro life in the river bottoms of the Southern sections of North America... (it is not) dependent for its effect upon the introduction of folk songs, either in their natural, or in a highly developed form. As it is quite possible to describe the traits, habits and customs of a people without using the vernacular, so is it similarly possible to musically portray racial peculiarities without the use of national tunes or folk songs, *In the Bottoms* then, belongs to that class of music known as “program music” or “music with a poetic basis.” The source of the “program” or “poetic basis” has already been referred to, and the following notes are appended to show that its relation to the music is intimate.

Prelude – is nightfall; the heavy chords represent the heavy shadows, and the open fifths, the peculiar hollow effect of the stillness: the syncopated melody which occurs, is the “tummy” of a banjo, which music is, however, only incidental to the gloom.

His Song – The psychological phenomenon is historic, that the moods of suppressed people have oftenest found their most touching expression in song. An aged Negro will sometimes sit for hours in the quiet of an evening, humming an improvised air, whose weird melody seems to strangely satisfy a nameless yearning of the heart.

Literally, *Honey* is a colloquialism – the familiar term of endearment (South). It may mean much, little, everything or

nothing; the intimation here, is one of coquetry. It is after a poem, *A Negro Love Song* by Paul Laurence Dunbar.

The rhythmic figure which forms the theme of this *Barcarolle* is in reality, the rhythmic motif of the whole Suite; it is of most frequent occurrence in the music of the ante-bellum folk-dances, and its marked individuality has caused it to be much misused for purposes of caricature. Here it paints the pleasure of a sunshiny morning on the Father of Waters.

Dance – This is probably the most characteristic number of the Suite, as it portrays more of the social life of the people. *Juba* is the stamping on the ground with the foot and following it with two staccato pats of the hands in two-four time. At least one-third of the dancers keep time in this way, while the others dance. Sometimes all will combine together in order to urge on a solo dancer to more frantic (and at the same time more fantastic) endeavors. The orchestra usually consists of a single “fiddler,” perched high on a box or table; who, forgetful of self in the rather hilarious excitement of the hour, does the impossible in the way of double stopping and bowing.

One of America’s leading living composers, **Adolphus Hailstork** has composed major works in nearly every musical medium. Born in Rochester, New York and raised in Albany, New York, he studied violin, piano, organ, and voice as a child. He has received commissions from major American orchestras, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Detroit Symphony, the New York Philharmonic and the Chicago Symphony. He currently resides in Virginia Beach Virginia, and is Professor of Music and Eminent Scholar at Old Dominion University in Norfolk.

He is working on his *Fourth Symphony*, and *A Knee on the Neck* (tribute to George Floyd) for chorus and orchestra. Dr. Hailstork describes his composition as “eclectic” and

“multistylistic.” *Scherzo No. 1* is the first of two scherzos written for pianist Karen Alwyn. Hailstork’s first scherzo plays with extremes, opening with a dreamlike, improvisatory introduction before launching into a boogie-woogie-inspired bass that drives the piece loudly and relentlessly. The piece hurtles along, dancing raucously until the opening motive reappears. It invites us to wander away for a moment before the piece’s explosive conclusion.

Fred Onovwerosuoke is an American composer born in Ghana to Nigerian parents. He writes about his *Twelve Studies in African Rhythm: Study I, Okoye*, fuses a commonality I found in some Edo (Nigeria) and Baganda (Uganda) polyrhythms. *Study II, Edo*, is an old Bini (Nigeria) folk melody sandwiched by two layers of balafon (wooden xylophone) ostinato pattern for an ancient Wollof (Senegal) royal dance. *Study III, Udje*, is based on an Urhobo (Nigeria) dance with the same name. *Study IV, Tunis*, is based on an old tune I fell in love with among the Tuaregs in Tunisia and Burkina Faso. *Study V, Jali*, was fashioned from my years hanging out with kora playing griot friends from West Africa and kraar-playing friends from the Abyssinian subregion of northeastern Africa. *Study VI, Iroro*, draws from the 'trance-like' dances of the "River-goddess" cults I observed across the West African coast. *Study VII, Herero Wedding Dance*, is a cross between my travels in Namibia and Ethiopia. *Studies VIII, IX and XI* echo *Study III, Ayevwio*. *Study X, Barka*, brings us back to Arabia and Foula regions of Africa. *Study XII, Agbadza*, draws from the royal and funeral dances of Ghana and Dahomey regions of West Africa.

ABOUT THE MUSICIANS

Recently called “a sterling pianist and an intrepid illuminator of the classical avant-garde” by The New York Times, **Sarah Cahill** is the dedicatee of more than seventy compositions, including works by John Adams, Terry Riley, Frederic Rzewski, Pauline Oliveros, Roscoe Mitchell, and Annea Lockwood. Recent appearances include San Francisco Symphony’s SoundBox, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, the Detroit Institute of the Arts, and the Cleveland Museum of Art. Upcoming appearances include an all-day concert at the Barbican Centre in London and a collaboration with the San Francisco Girls Chorus and composer Theresa Wong. She was named a 2018 Champion of New Music, awarded by the American Composers Forum (ACF).

San Francisco-based pianist **Allegra Chapman**, described as “brilliant” by the *San Francisco Classical Voice*, has performed internationally as soloist and chamber musician at venues including Alice Tully Hall and San Francisco Jazz Center. She is the pianist of the award-winning Delphi Trio and the voice/piano duo Chordless. Allegra is also founding co-artistic director and executive director of the critically acclaimed festival Bard Music West, a San Francisco-based branch of the Bard Music Festival. Allegra studied with Jeremy Denk and Peter Serkin at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, and with Seymour Lipkin and Julian Martin at The Juilliard School. She teaches at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music’s Pre-College division.

"An invaluable new-music advocate and a preferred collaborator of composers like Pierre Boulez and Esa-Pekka Salonen" (*The New York Times*), pianist **Gloria Cheng** has been a concerto soloist with the L.A. Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta and Pierre Boulez, and on its acclaimed Green Umbrella series with Esa-Pekka Salonen and Oliver Knussen.

She was awarded the Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (without orchestra) GRAMMY in 2008 and received a second nomination in 2013. Her film project, *MONTAGE: Great Film Composers and the Piano*, aired on PBS SoCal and captured a 2018 Los Angeles Area Emmy. Her education includes a B.A. in Economics from Stanford University, a Woolley Scholarship for study in Paris, and graduate degrees in performance from UCLA and the University of Southern California. She teaches at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music.

Monica Chew is an Oakland pianist and composer. In 2017 she released her first solo album, *Tender and Strange*. A “gifted player with an affinity for deeply sensitive expression” (*Whole Note*), her playing is “wonderfully delicate, like tissue” (*International Pianist*). She started composing in 2017. Her work has been featured by Gabriela Lena Frank’s Creative Academy for Music, Hot Air Music Festival, and Left Coast Chamber Ensemble’s Intersection. Her first string quartet, *Delayed Send*, was premiered by Friction Quartet and reviewed as “monumental” and “stunning” by *San Francisco Classical Voice*. In spring and summer of 2020 she gave free twice-weekly live concerts on her Facebook and YouTube channels.

Jerry Kuderna received his initial training in piano and conducting in Denver with Antonia Brico. While studying the music of Webern and Schoenberg with Rudolf Kolisch, he performed works by the Second Viennese School with soprano Bethany Beardslee. He studied piano with Adele Marcus at Juilliard and Robert Helps at the New England Conservatory. He has taught at the University of Louisville and at Princeton University where he met Roger Sessions and Milton Babbitt. His doctoral studies at NYU included a Ph. D dissertation on the piano works of Babbitt. Kuderna recorded

Babbitt's *Phonemena* with Lynne Webber for New World Records, and he gave the West Coast premiere of Elliott Carter's *Piano Concerto* with the Berkeley Symphony.

Regina Myers studied piano performance at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Mills College, where she focused on new and experimental music under the guidance of pianist Marc Shapiro, ensemble leader/composer Steed Cowart and percussion master William Winant. In 2004 she founded the concert series/performing collective *New Keys* to surface and promote the newest and most innovative music for the piano. Regina prides herself on expanding the reach of new music by commissioning new works and relishes working with emerging composers as well as keeping seminal new music masterpieces alive.



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Sunday, September 19 at 4 pm

Alisa Rose with the Americana String Quartet and Fog Holler

World Premiere of Alisa Rose's *Quartet with Solo Violin: Embracing Roots*, integrating American fiddle idioms into classical concert forms.

Saturday, September 25 at 8 pm—Current: A Piano Festival

Stephen Prutsman—Prog to Bach & Bach Again

Pairing music of J. S. Bach with Progressive Rock classics by Gentle Giant, Yes, and Genesis.

Friday, October 1 at 8 pm—Ninth Planet

A program exploring themes of realism and surrealism, featuring the world premiere of a work by Bay Area resident Assaf Shatil, plus works by Shelley Washington, Yaz Lancaster, and Amy Beth Kirsten.

Sunday, October 3 at 4 pm—Fusion Soul

Karlton Hester, flute & saxophone; Matoko Honda, piano; David Smith, bass; Yunxiang Griswold, pipa; Hwayoung Shon, gayageum

A dialogue between Karlton Hester's expressive works engaging themes of creative freedom and Hwayoung Shon's work drawing from Korean traditions leads to a transcontinental collaboration of Miseon Jeong's *Fusion Soul*, dramatizing the fusion of jazz and Korean music into one.

Friday, October 15 at 8 pm—Ensemble for These Times: Alchemy

Nanette McGuinness, soprano; Abigail Monroe, cello; Margaret Halbig, piano; with special guest Chelsea Hollow, coloratura soprano

World Premieres by Brennan Stokes and Mary Bianco plus works by Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, Darian Donovan Thomas, Marcus Norris, Gabriela Ortiz, Pablo Ortiz, Julia Perry, and George Walker.

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Old First Concerts' piano is a New York Steinway D model, circa 1980, with Hamburg action. It was donated by The Stanley Ibler Fund, and is maintained by David Love Piano Service and Restoration.