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Friday, March 24, 2023 at 8 PM

Old First Church

1751 Sacramento St. at Van Ness Ave.

San Francisco, CA 94109

(415) 474-1608 www.oldfirstconcerts.org

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.

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.

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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:

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Sunday, March 26 at 4 pm

Bernal Hill Players—*Forces of Nature*

Featuring two newly commissioned works by Bay Area composers, this program features pieces evoking moods both calm and stormy, with Italian volcanoes, Brazilian rainforests, Japanese seas, English forests, New York rain showers, French spring mornings, and California canyons.

Saturday, April 15 at 7 pm

Centennial Tribute to Maestro Ali Akbar Khan

This event celebrating in honor of the Centennial of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan's birthday brings together his two sons, Alam and Manik Khan, on sarod, alongside his long-time tabla accompanist, Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri.

Friday, April 21 at 8 pm

Hyunchae Kim plays Hyo-shin Na's music for Kayageum

Prize-winning kayageum performer Hyunchae Kim plays a concert of solo works by Hyo-shin Na, whose writing for combinations of western and eastern instruments is unusual in its refusal to compromise the integrity of differing sounds and ideas; she prefers to let them interact, coexist and conflict in the music.

For tickets & more information visit www.olderfirstconcerts.org

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PROGRAM

Kurt Erickson

from **Here, Bullet**

I. Here, Bullet

IV. Curfew

Richard Strauss

from **Vier letzte Lieder**

III. Beim Schlafengehen

Arson Fahim

Hiraeth for Piano Trio

Ned Rorem

Aftermath

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Kurt Erickson from *Here, Bullet*

I. Here, Bullet

Here, Bullet is radically innovative poetry— firsthand poetic descriptions of 21st Century warfare by an established poet at the height of his powers. I approached this work with great respect and trepidation, seeking ways to amplify the raw, visceral power of the poetic descriptions. The music starts tentatively, then the pace picks up at measure eight with an ostinato in the piano part mirroring the language in the poetry “Here is the adrenaline rush you crave”, crystalizing in a musical gesture the fear and crazed excitement which drives the piece to the very end. The descriptive beauty of the poetry is highly charged (“Here is bone and gristle and flesh ... here is the clavicle snapped wish ... that insane puncture into heat and blood”). I sought a musical language steeped in expressive dissonance coupled with an angular vocal line to pair with the beauty and horror of the verses. There is a kind of musical arrival at the lines “... here is where the world ends every time”, which then leads directly to the final plaintive calling

out for the Bullet in a mixture of horror, defiance, and even resignation. This is poetry unsparing in its intensity.

IV. Curfew

Trauma and incredibly vivid descriptions of violence are never far off in Turner's poems. Even when the scene is at its most benign and idyllic (as it is in *Curfew*), a memory or a potential disaster is right around the corner. So a picture of bats flying out at dusk, water snakes gliding in ponding basins, policemen sunbathing on traffic islands, even children helping their mothers is of course juxtaposed with a linguistic negative: an announcement that Sgt. Gutierrez did not comfort a man who cupped pieces of his friend's brain in his hands. These are poems from the Iraq War by a poet who saw it all firsthand - this is what we should expect.

The mood I created in my setting has a marked sense of timelessness using static harmonies, an exaggeratedly slow tempo, deep and rich harmonies, and subtle color shifts that underscore the feeling of ease at dusk. We hear ease to match the scene, but violence and trauma are never far off, referenced by unexpected stabbing rhythmic gestures in the highest registers in the piano. The lyric and the languid are adjacent to the dissonant and the discordant—in art as in life.

The music we hear when Sgt. Gutierrez is mentioned is a direct reference to the music we hear when Private Miller is introduced in the second song (*Eulogy*) earlier in the set. Both characters are associated with more traditional diatonic chord progressions that change on every beat—I had in mind a bastardized version of Bach chorales (with their rapidly changing harmonic rhythms) one might hear as part of a funeral service. The use of a unique leitmotiv with each character underscores their importance and shines a light on the human costs of the war. Here is where the abstract becomes personal.

Another musical technique I used in this setting is the use of musical ciphers to spell out names and important parts of the poem using a code based on the musical alphabet. In public presentations of his poems, Turner speaks of the injustice when a Colonial

will guest conduct that orchestra in spring of 2023. In addition, after jumping in at the last minute to guest conduct the San Francisco Civic Symphony he was asked to serve as Principal Guest Conductor for the 2022–23 season. Previously, Paul served as Interim Music Director of the Contra Costa Chamber Orchestra during the 2019-2020 season.

As a pianist, Paul has performed in recital, with orchestras, and in jazz settings across the United States, in Europe, Brazil and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He has performed in such diverse venues as the INSAP Festival in Chicago, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the main square in Warsaw, Casa Huey Barbosa in Rio de Janeiro, and with the Orchestre Symphonique Kimbanguiste of Kinshasa. Equally at home in the classical and improvisational realms, he frequently performs half classical, half jazz recitals. Paul has strong relationships with living composers, and has performed world premieres of works by Ingrid Stozel, Rubin Zahra, Eric Choate, and Paul Davies, among others. He was the Pianist-in-Residence of the Contemporary American Music Project, where he frequently collaborated with musical theorist and historian Cameron Logan.

Combining his artistic endeavors with extensive experience as an impresario, Paul founded Symphonia Caritas in 2015 and has since partnered with numerous non-profit organizations such as Swords to Plowshares and the Gubbio Project, raising over \$100,000 in proceeds that go directly to the partner organizations. In addition to serving as Music Director for the Midsummer Mozart Festival, Paul assists with vital organizational components including fundraising campaigns and providing guidance on programming and concert production.

Released in 2004, Paul's first solo album showcased the music of Mozart, Liszt, and Copland, as well as original compositions and jazz selections. With the jazz trio the Sideways Trio he released *In Defense of Our Dreams*, alongside drummer Jeff Hanson and bassist Doug Pohorski, featuring arrangements of rock songs, classical works, and original compositions.

performance with pianist Lang Lang. In 2019 she was awarded the prestigious ‘Best in the Bay’ award for her Richard Strauss recital featuring John Parr of Deutsch Oper Berlin at the piano.

Joel Pattinson is a teacher, performer and adjudicator throughout California and the US. He operates the South Bay String Academy of Sunnyvale, California and is currently violin faculty for Santa Clara Chamber Music. His specialties include Baroque, Classical, and Romantic Performance Practice as well as Renaissance Counterpoint. Joel appears as concertmaster, chamber musician and soloist for many groups and plays with international artists such as Il Volo, Josh Groban, and Sarah Brightman.

Praised for the warmth of his sound and range of color, American cellist **Peter Myers** (b. 1985) is internationally known as a chamber musician. A founding member of the Saguaro Piano Trio, which won first prize in the 2009 International Chamber Music Competition Hamburg, as well as SAKURA, a unique and innovative quintet of cellos (both currently Young-Ensembles-in-Residence with the Da Camera Society, Los Angeles), Mr. Myers has appeared at the Marlboro, La Jolla, and Mozaic festivals, on tour with Musicians from Marlboro, and abroad in Germany, Italy, Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, Mongolia, Laos, and Pakistan. Since 2017, he has held the position of Assistant Principal Cello with the San Francisco Opera; he has also performed as guest principal cellist of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. His mentors have included Ronald Leonard at the Colburn Conservatory and Ralph Kirshbaum at the University of Southern California. He plays on an 1876 cello by Claude-Augustin Miremont.

Conductor and pianist **Paul Schrage** appears frequently throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and United States, leading from the podium as well as performing as a solo and chamber artist. He currently serves as Music Director the Midsummer Mozart Festival, as well as Music Director of Symphonia Caritas, a professional orchestra that provides benefit concerts in partnership with other non-profits. Most recently, Paul was named a finalist in the Music Director position with Symphony of the Redwoods, and

addressing the troops at a parade ground neglects to name Private Miller among those killed in Iraq, perhaps because he died by suicide and not a “soldier’s death”. Turner writes a poem about Private Miller as a way of honoring his colleague; putting Miller’s name in a cipher and giving him a leitmotif associated with human suffering is another small way to recognize and honor the memory of all soldiers who perished in the war. So ‘Miller’ gets spelled out musically, the same way ‘Love’ gets spelled out, referencing the first line in the poem *A Soldier’s Arabic* (“The word for love is written from right to left...”)

There is an emotional trajectory in the set that moves from trauma to a kind of acceptance. The first song *Here, Bullet* ends with the repeated refrain “Here Bullet!”—the last song also ends with a repeated refrain, but this time the repeated refrain is “Today!”, referencing not bullets and violence to the flesh but instead the absence of bombs, panic, and the idyllic scene of white birds rising from the Tigris.

- Notes by Kurt Erickson

Richard Strauss from *Four Last Songs*—
IV. Beim Schlafgehen (Upon Going to Sleep)
text by Hermann Hesse

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Nun der Tag mich müd gemacht, | Now that day has made me tired, |
| Soll mein sehnliches Verlangen | My blissful yearning |
| Freundlich die gestirnte Nacht | Will welcome starry night |
| Wie ein müdes Kind empfangen. | In friendship like a sleepy child. |

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Hände, lasst von allem Tun, | Hands, rest from all your tasks, |
| Stirn, vergiss du alles Denken, | Brow, forget all thinking |
| Alle meine Sinne nun | All my senses now |
| Wollen sich in Schlummer senken. | Want to sink in slumber. |

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Und die Seele, unbewacht, | And my unguarded soul wants to |
| Will in freien Flügen schweben, | Soar in freest flight within |
| Um im Zauberkreis der Nacht | Enchanted night time circles, |
| Tief und tausendfach zu Leben. | To live a thousand fold profoundly. |

Arson Fahim *Hiraeth* for Piano Trio

Hiraeth is a Welsh word which doesn't have an exact English translation but roughly translates to deep longing for a place you cannot return to. For so many people the world became a completely different place on September 11th, 2001. Those who lost loved ones will always want to return to the world that existed before that day, the world in which their loved ones lived, but they will have to carry the burden, pain and grief of their loss with them. The tragic events of 9/11 also changed the lives of millions of Afghans and Iraqis and continues to impact us to this day. In the two decades of the US war in Afghanistan, hundreds of thousands of Afghans lost their lives, leaving their loved ones longing for the world which is now lost. With the immature US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, and the country's collapse into the hands of the Taliban, the nation is grieving the loss of a country. I hope one day we can return to the Afghanistan that once existed. I hope someday peace and love can prevail over hate and war - that might bring consolation to those who are grieving and long for the world that existed before 9/11.

This work was commissioned by Symphonia Caritas.

Ned Rorem *Aftermath*

In the wake of the September 11th shock, I asked what a thousand other composers must have asked: what is the point of music now? But it soon grew clear that music was the only point. Indeed, the future will judge us, as it always judges the past, by our art more than by our armies—by construction more than by destruction. The art, no matter its theme or language, by definition reflects the time: a waltz in a moment of tragedy, or a dirge during prosperity, may come into focus only a century later.

My need though, as I pondered this instantly and forever changed world—with the Twin Towers in ruins and the Middle East in sorrow—was to reflect the immediate through the choice of texts to be used for this project for Ravinia. A week earlier I might have opted for a whole different slant.

As a Quaker I was raised to believe that there is no alternative to peace. Perhaps it's wrong, perhaps right, but I am not ashamed of this belief. As with war, so with love. Seven decades of observation has shown that love has as many definitions as there are definers. Having lost a great love three years ago, my mood at the close of my life is one of quizzical melancholy. As to whether that mood seems reflected in these songs is not for me to say here in words. Music speaks for itself.

Noted for her “rich and radiant soprano” (Edward Oriz, *Sacramento Bee*) **Heidi Moss** has performed on national and international stages such as Opera Memphis and IVAI in Italia as well as numerous local companies such as Opera Parallèle, Festival Opera, West Edge Opera, Livermore Opera, Opera San Jose, Fremont Symphony, Peninsula Symphony, Oakland Symphony, Livermore Amador Symphony, Diablo Symphony, and the Sacramento Choral Society.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

A champion of new music, she helped spearhead the performance of eight song premieres by eight different renowned composers for an alte/neue lieder fest with LIEDER ALIVE! including Daron Hagen, David Conte, Erling Wold, Kurt Erickson, and Henry Mollicone. In 2022 she will premiere a new song set by Tarik O'Regan as a part of the same series. Her collaborations with living composers included a recital of works by Jake Heggie, with the composer himself at the piano. She has also premiered works by philanthropist Gordon Getty with the Russian National Orchestra and San Francisco Opera, most recently in a reading of his opera *Plumpjack* with Lester Lynch. She frequently collaborates with her husband, composer Kurt Erickson, and has premiered many of his works such as *Song of Solace*, *Young Sea*, and the Neue lieder set *Ich und Du*.

Heidi has also garnered recognition in major vocal competitions, including the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions (NYC First Place Winner), the Liederkrantz Awards, the MacAllister Awards, and the KDFC competition which resulted in a