

THE 45th ANNUAL
FESTIVAL OF NEW AMERICAN MUSIC
PRESENTS ITS ANNUAL PROGRAM OF

LOCAL VOICES

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 4:00 P.M.

Kathleen, As She Was (1989)

Libby Larsen (b. 1950)

Cindy Behmer, oboe
Faythe Vollrath, harpsichord

Harmonies of Afternoon, from
Five Character Pieces (2008)

Steven Coolidge (b. 1953)

Kirsten Smith, piano

Four Movements
for Violin and Piano* (2020)

Maria A. Niederberger (b. 1949)

1. Corona Sonata
2. Meditation
3. Intermezzo: A Vivid Dream
4. Ritournelle: deux amis

Miroslav Hristov, violin
Chih-Long Hu, piano

* *World premiere*

TODAY'S ARTISTS

Libby Larsen, born December 24, 1950 in Wilmington, Delaware, is one of America's most performed living composers. She has created a catalogue of over 500 works spanning virtually every genre from intimate vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral works and over 15 operas. Grammy award-winning and widely recorded, including over 50 CDs of her work, she is constantly sought after for commissions and premieres by major artists, ensembles, and orchestras around the world, and has established a permanent place for her works in the concert repertory.

As a vigorous, articulate advocate for the music and musicians of our time, in 1973 Larsen co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum, now the American Composer's Forum, which has become an invaluable aid for composers in a transitional time for American arts. A former holder of the Papamarkou Chair at John W. Kluge Center of the Library of Congress, Larsen has also held residencies with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony.

Dr. **Cindy Behmer** teaches oboe and English horn at California State University, Sacramento. In addition to teaching, Dr. Behmer freelances with several groups in Northern California and Nevada, including Stockton Symphony, Reno Philharmonic, Sacramento Philharmonic and Opera, Sacramento Choral Society and Orchestra, Music in the Mountains Festival Orchestra, Zion Chamber Orchestra, Fresno Philharmonic, and Merced Symphony. She is also an oboe instructor with the Bocal Majority and Operation Oboe NorCal camp held at CSU, Sacramento (on hold since 2020).

Dr. Behmer maintains a large private studio serving the greater Sacramento area. Her students have achieved principal positions with the Sacramento Youth Symphony and Tucson Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, All-State Bands and Orchestra, and All-Northern Honor Band. In addition, former high school students have gone on to study oboe at the Curtis Institute of Music and other 4-year universities. Upon completion of her Doctor of Musical Arts degree (2011) at the University of Arizona with Dr. Neil Tatman, Dr. Behmer served as tenured oboist and English hornist with the Tucson Symphony Orchestra. She also held positions with the Tucson Chamber Artists Orchestra, the Tucson Pops Orchestra and concertized on several chamber music series including St. Philip's Friends of Music and St. Andrew's Bach Society. Dr. Behmer has also pursued additional study with Thomas Stacy, Carolyn Hove, Dr. Lindabeth Binkley, and Paula Engerer.

Violinist **Miroslav Hristov** was First Prize winner of the International Violin Competition "Dobrin Petkov," and a prizewinner for the MTNA Collegiate String Performance Competition.

Hristov has recorded for Centaur Records, Romeo Records, Blue Griffin Records, the Divine Arts Record label, Bulgarian National Radio and WUOT Knoxville. His recordings are broadcast on NPR stations across the United States and abroad. As part of the internationally-acclaimed Kaleidos Duo with pianist, Vladimir Valjarevic, Dr. Hristov's recordings and performances have received rave reviews from The Strad Magazine, Fanfare, DUMA (Sofia, Bulgaria), and Lucid Culture (New York).

Miroslav Hristov is Professor of Violin at the University of Tennessee. He is also Founder and Director of the University of Tennessee's Ready for the World Music Series, which brings renowned artists to perform and talk about musical styles and literature from diverse regions around the world, emphasizing each region's contribution to western classical music.

Pianist **Chih-Long Hu**'s performance career was launched after winning prizes from the Mauro Monopoli International Piano Competition in Italy, the Concours International De Piano D'Escaldes-Engordany in Andorra, the Takamatsu International Piano Competition in Japan, and San Jose International Piano Competition in California. Hu performs extensively as a concerto soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician. His CD albums "Formosa Caprices," "Rachmaninov Etudes-Tableaux," "Goldberg Variations," and complete Beethoven violin sonatas with Miroslav Hristov have received critical acclaims. Hu holds a doctorate in piano performance from the University of Michigan. He is currently an endowed professor and the coordinator of keyboard studies at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Faythe Vollrath, harpsichordist, is actively heard as a soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States. Hailed by the Wall Street Journal for her “subtly varied tempo and rhythm that sounds like breathing,” her solo performances include venues such as MusicSources in Berkeley, CA, Gotham Early Music in New York City, and Bruton Parish Church in Colonial Williamsburg, VA. Other unique experiences include a solo performance pairing Japanese harpsichord works with Japanese art at the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, CA, and performing in a columbarium as part of the Garden of Memory in Oakland, CA. Enamored with the contrast of new music written for historic instruments, Faythe combines these new vs. old elements in many of her performances. Concerts dedicated specifically to this pursuit include the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento, CA, and the Center for New Music in San Francisco, CA. She has performed concerts of new music in both Serbia and France, introducing new American composers to the audience.

Faythe received first place in the Charleston International Music Competition in 2021, competed as a semi-finalist in the 2012 Jurow International Harpsichord Competition, and was the 2009 Betchel award recipient presented by the Midwestern Historical Keyboard Society. Her duo, Zweikampf, was a finalist in Early Music America’s inaugural Baroque Performance Competition. They have been featured on public radio in both Michigan and Arizona and perform throughout the United States. Faythe received her doctoral diploma from SUNY-Stony Brook under Arthur Haas, and artist diploma from the U of I Urbana-Champaign under Charlotte Mattax Moersch.

Steven Coolidge attended the Berklee College of Music and earned a degree with honors in composition from the New England Conservatory of Music. He has studied composition with Malcolm Peyton and studied piano with Jean Kopf, Edi Boman, Dilworth Simmons and currently studies with Tom Hulse of Pease Conservatory in Sacramento. The Camellia Symphony orchestra performed his “Comfort: Music for Orchestra” in 1999. Coolidge completed his first symphony in 2002. Currently he is the music director for the Turner Harmonie Choir of Sacramento and plays original art rock in his band, Volcano School. He teaches piano, music theory, and composition, and is a Registered Piano Technician (RPT). He owns Coolidge Piano Service in Sacramento.

Kirsten Smith received both her undergraduate and graduate degrees in piano performance from Arizona State University where she studied with Van Cliburn Gold Medalist Steven De Groote. A passion for learning motivated her to enter college at the age of thirteen, studying history, mathematics, sociobiology and foreign languages in addition to music. Ms. Smith has won many competitions and has been the recipient of awards, scholarships and invitations to music festivals including the Aspen Music Festival, Interlochen Center for the Arts and the Van Cliburn Institute. She has been chosen to premiere numerous new works by contemporary composers and has recorded several times for the Centaur label.

In addition to the solo repertoire, Ms. Smith is devoted to the performance of collaborative works, and is a passionate teacher who believes deeply in the importance of discovering and sharing musical knowledge. Ms. Smith has been on the faculty of Sacramento State since 1996, where she teaches piano, music theory, aural skills, collaborative piano and piano pedagogy. In demand as a lecturer, adjudicator and columnist, Ms. Smith was awarded a prestigious Pedagogy Enhancement Award at CSUS. Raised in a musical family, she began formal lessons with her mother at age four and began teaching piano by age thirteen. Ms. Smith resides in Sacramento, where she divides her time between university teaching, performing, and private studio instruction.

Maria A. Niederberger’s compositions encompass a variety of genres. She creates animated textures with interweaving melodic strands. *Recording Reviews* described her music as “compelling and colorful” and its effect as that of “constant change, surprise, humor, and expansiveness.” Niederberger’s composition *Full Pockets* won the international Miriam Gideon Award (2006).

Numerous ensembles and soloists have performed Niederberger’s music across the United States, Canada, Europe (Finland, Albania, Switzerland, Germany, England, and Czech Republic), and in Asia (Korea and China). Niederberger enjoys writing for instrumental as well as vocal ensembles and soloists. Her output also includes works for children’s choirs.

Niederberger was born and raised in Switzerland and immigrated to the US as a young woman. She earned her undergraduate music degree from UC Davis and her PhD in Music Theory and Composition from Brandeis University. She taught Music at UC Davis and subsequently at East Tennessee State University until her retirement. She also chaired the ETSU Department of Music, establishing a string degree program and a scholarship for string players.