

# COMPOSING IN THE TIME OF THE PANDEMIC

New Music for Strings Quartet

Broadcast from the Center for New Music  
55 Taylor Street, San Francisco  
Saturday, November 28, 2020, 8:00 pm

## P R O G R A M

DAVIDE VEROTTA     **Solitari**

SHAWNE ANELL WORKMAN     **Airwaves**

MONICA CHEW     **Delayed Send**

ALLAN CROSSMAN     **Two Dances**

The Friction Quartet

*Kevin Rogers, violin, Otis Harriel, violin, Lucia Kobza, viola, Doug Machiz, cello*

Due to Covid-19, musicians cannot rehearse in person, and the public cannot attend concerts. But music must go on, so we wrote pieces that can be rehearsed and performed remotely. Inherent time delays in online connections created unique compositional, logistic, and performance challenge, but we are now ready to share the results! Please join Monica Chew, Allan Crossman, Davide Verotta, and Shawne Workman together with the acclaimed Friction String Quartet in a concert of new music for string quartet.

### **The Friction Quartet**

**Doug Machiz.** A native of Washington, DC, cellist Doug Machiz resides in Oakland where he is co-founder, manager, and cellist of Friction Quartet. With Friction, Doug is extremely fortunate to perform old and new string quartets around the United States with amazing musicians. He is also grateful for the many opportunities Friction has to inspire young people with the power of music. In addition to his work with Friction Quartet, Doug is an active free-lance musician and teacher. He has participated in the Banff Chamber Music Residency, Deer Valley Music Festival with the Muir Quartet, the St. Lawrence Emerging String Quartet Program, Bang on a Can Summer Festival, Fontainebleau Conservatoire Americain in France, and the Zephyr International Chamber Music Course and Festival in Italy.

**Otis Harriel.** Violinist Otis Harriel earned his Bachelors Degree from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in Spring 2013. He began his studies with Rob Diggins in his hometown of Arcata, CA. Under his teacher's guidance he began performing with many local orchestras and chamber ensembles including the Eureka Symphony and Humboldt State Symphony. He attended the Sequoia Chamber Music Workshop, Idyllwild Chamber Music Program, Sphinx Academy of Music. Mendocino Music Festival and Castleton Festival.

**Kevin Rogers.** As a young violinist, works of composers such as Penderecki, Boulez, and Berio captivated Kevin Rogers long before his first exposure to even a complete Beethoven Symphony, setting the groundwork for his passionate career in contemporary classical music. He is the founding violinist/violist of Nonsemble6, a contemporary Pierrot Ensemble based in San Francisco. As part of this group he has performed at the Astoria Music Festival as guests-artists-residence, at Universities throughout the country, in unorthodox venues through Classical Revolution SF, and at the Kennedy Center.

**Lucia Kobza.** Lucia is currently a doctoral candidate at Stony Brook University in New York in the Doctorate of Musical Arts (DMA) program where she is pursuing a double major in violin and viola performance with Emerson String Quartet's violinist Philip Setzer and violist Lawrence Dutton. She has also received Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Hochschule der Künste Bern, Switzerland, with distinction. She studied under the tutelage of Ida Bieler at UNCSCA and was honored with the UNCSCA Graduate Excellence in Performance Award both for her Master's degree and Professional Artist Certificate.

### **The Composers**

**Davide Verotta** was born in an Italian town close to Milano and moved to San Francisco in his late twenties. He studied piano at the Milano and SF conservatories, and composition at SFSU and UC Davis. Professor (now emeritus) at UCSF, he is actively involved in the new music scene in SF where he also teaches piano and composition at the Community Music Center and privately. Recent compositions include works for orchestra, string quartet, wind quintet, two pianos, piano, and cello. For more information please visit his web site at [www.davideverotta.com](http://www.davideverotta.com).

**String Quartet No.7, Solitari**, is a dramatic piece written during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. It is divided in five sections: a slow-paced *Lontano*, characterized by high-register chords (played in harmonics); a faster *Scherzando Imperioso*; a pensive adagio movement, *Memories*; the fastest *Agitato*; and finally, a slow section that

replays the opening chords of *Lontano* (now in a low register), and a distilled version of one of the main motives of the piece. **Solitari** is as an asynchronous composition, in which the players are not required to play notes according to their vertical alignment in the score. The motivation for the piece arose as a response to shelter-in-place directives, which prevent ensemble players from rehearsing and performing together. To solve the problem of retaining coordination among players, the piece rotates a lead (the *solitario*) who serves as a point of reference

**Shawne Anell Workman.** For me, creating with sound or text is about emotional flow – searching for the rare ebb and flood of narrative, imagery, and sonorities that can raise the hair on my arms. I aim to keep chasing those goosebumps through concert music, lyrics and librettos, and media collaborations. I studied composition (MM, 2019) with Elinor Armer at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and media composing in the SFCM department of Technology and Applied Composition (PSD, 2020). My vocal writing has received second prize in the 2019 SFCM Biennial Art Song Composition Competition and third prize in the 2018 SFCM Biennial Choral Composition Competition.

This set of five miniatures explores three styles of real-time musical interaction among players collaborating over a digital platform such as Tuneyard or Zoom. Given how these connections delay what players hear from each other, with potential variance in latency among players, the music aims to avoid any need for precise timing. The opening section is entirely unmeasured; the score provides tempo and note order among players, and indicates approximate timing via horizontal spacing. Section 2 asks each player to keep an independent meter, allowing their parts to intersect as they will. In later sections, players take turns providing a metered solo or *ostinato* line as a backbone for loosely timed accompaniment and embellishment. Striving for musicality without a precise pulse, *Airwaves* is meant to allow space for chance collisions — just a touch of a wind chime’s freedom on a breeze.

**Monica Chew** (<https://monicachew.com>) is an Oakland pianist and composer. In 2017 she released her first solo album, *Tender and Strange*, featuring works by Bartók, Janáček, Messiaen, Takemitsu, and Scriabin. A “gifted player with an affinity for deeply sensitive expression” (Whole Note, June/July/August 2018), her playing is “wonderfully delicate, like tissue” (International Pianist, July/August 2018). She has been a featured artist on KVMR, KPFA and radio stations across the United States. She started composing in 2017 and couldn’t be happier about it. Her work has been featured as part of the Gabriela Lena Frank’s Creative Academy for Music’s #GLFCAMGigThruCovid initiative, Hot Air Music Festival 2020, and Left Coast Chamber Ensemble’s Intersection 2019. Friction Quartet will premiere her first string quartet in November 2020. She loves playing chamber music and received a Zellerbach Family Foundation award for her chamber music work. Prior to 2015, she neglected piano for nearly a decade to work as a principal software engineer on security and privacy at Mozilla and Google after receiving her Master of Music from SF Conservatory of Music and a PhD in computer science from UC Berkeley. She lives in Oakland with her husband, an 1899 Steinway B, a clavichord, and a disused violin. In spring and summer of 2020 she gave free twice-weekly live concerts on her Facebook and YouTube channels.

During this pandemic, communication and its attendant issues have been on my mind. Recently I had the experience of playing Frederic Rzewski’s *Les Moutons de Panurge* with remote players. The bassoonist summed it up best: “As soon as we started, there were five different tempos” — which I thought would make a fun constraint for this piece. Two memories inform the title, **Delayed Send**. Long ago, I read of a movie where two lovers are separated by time and space, as one travels to a distant planet while the other stays on Earth. They are able to send and receive messages, but with ever-increasing delays and loss of fidelity. This rather poetic plot device also reminds me of my time working on Gmail, where Undo Send, Delayed Send, and their accidental companion, Delayed Delivery, were all plagues upon the engineering team. This piece quotes Elena Kats-Chernin’s darkness and Aaron Copland’s *Violin Sonata*.

**Allan Crossman.** I’ve had the great pleasure of writing for many soloists and ensembles. *Millennium Overture Dance* appears on the eponymous GRAMMY-nominated album from North/South Consonance; *Music for Human Choir* shared Top Honors at Oregon’s Waging Peace Through Singing Festival; *Sonata fLux*, with pianist Keisuke

Nakagoshi, appears on Navona Records; *Icarus*, for Trio Foss, was just released on Centaur Records. *The Log of the Skipper's Wife*, a musical, was produced by the Royal Shakespeare Co. at Stratford and the Kennedy Center, with my music drawn from Irish/Scottish shanties. Studies were with George Rochberg and George Crumb at the Univ. of Penn., and teaching at Concordia University (Montreal), SF Conservatory, Wheaton College (MA), The Crowden School. [www.acrossman.com](http://www.acrossman.com)

**Two Dances.** *Rondo à Pollock* is inspired by the swirling, dripping fluidity of Jackson Pollock's "action" painting - all motion and color. Composing it actually gave a sensation of borrowing that style – wide leaps, lines cutting through the sprays, momentum. Our players bring those sweeping rhythms to their fine performance. *City Dance* is like some country dances we hear from around the world, but this one comes from downtown – a few moments of bustle, congeniality, and how strange city life feels these days. The Quartet found a route to make it all quite touching.