

# COMPOSING IN THE TIME OF THE PANDEMIC

## THE SECOND CONCERT

### New Music for String Quartet

Broadcast from the Center for New Music  
55 Taylor Street, San Francisco  
Saturday, October 2, 2021, 7:30 pm

#### P R O G R A M

MARK ALFENITO	<b>Guilty Pleasures</b>
ALLAN CROSSMAN	<b>Caprice</b>
JACOB E GOODMAN	<b>String Quartet No.1</b>
KYLE HOVATTER	<b>April 2020</b>
STEVE MOBIA	<b>Proximities</b>
MARTHA STODDARD	<b>Prelude, Fugato and Tarantella for String Quartet</b>
DAVIDE VEROTTA	<b>String Quartet No.6 (straight arrow)</b>

The Friction Quartet: *Kevin Rogers, violin, Otis Harriel, violin, Rachyl Martinez, viola, Doug Machiz, cello.* Guest Artist: *Jessie Nucho, flute.*

A long time in the making this is the second of two concerts dedicated to new music for String Quartet that we planned back in winter 2019. Last year, due to Covid-19, musicians could not rehearse in person, and so we wrote pieces that could be rehearsed and performed remotely (visit the C4NM YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUCTrUFLIXE>). Fast forward a year and the situation is a bit better: musicians can now rehearse together, and we are able to present a second collection of works. Hopefully next year we will present a live concert to honor the fantastic musicianship of the Friction Quartet and the guest musicians who have taken part in this series.

### **The Friction Quartet and Guest Artist**

**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.

**Rachyl Martinez.** Throughout her career, Rachyl Martinez has sought out every possible chamber music opportunity - attending selective chamber music festivals such as Kneisel Hall and Norfolk, founding Ensemble Elevate in New York, playing at the Colburn Chamber Music Society with Scott St. John and Augustin Hadelich, and becoming a member of Mimesis Ensemble. As a soloist, Rachyl has earned top prizes at the International Hugo Kauder Competition for Viola, the Pasadena Showcase House Instrumental Competition, and the concerto competitions at Wilmington Symphony Orchestra and University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) - where she earned her bachelor's degree on full scholarship with Sheila Browne. Rachyl was also a member of the San Diego Symphony from 2016-17, having earned the position while still attending the Colburn Conservatory for her master's degree with Paul Coletti.

**Jessie Nucho.** San Francisco-based flutist Jessie Nucho is passionate about sharing both traditional and contemporary music as a chamber musician, soloist, and educator. She performs regularly with the new music ensembles [After Everything](#) and [Ninth Planet](#), where she also serves as Co-Artistic Director. She is a founding member of Siroko Duo, a flute duo dedicated to commissioning and presenting new works in creative spaces. As a soloist, Jessie has performed at San Francisco's Center for New Music, the Berkeley Arts Festival, the Hot Air Music Festival, and the Legion of Honor. Jessie holds an MM from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Tim Day. Previous instructors include Alberto Almarza and Jeanne Baxtresser at Carnegie Mellon University.

## The Composers

**Mark R. Alfenito** has a Ph.D. in molecular biology and biochemistry, having gotten his training at Cornell Univ., Harvard Univ., and Stanford Univ. He makes his living starting, growing and running biotech companies, with his main focus being the discovery and development of drugs that combat various inflammatory and infectious diseases, and cancer. Mark also loves music and is an avid, amateur piano and organ player. While in high school and at Cornell, he studied music composition and organ improvisation, and continues to compose as the mood strikes.

**Guilty Pleasures.** I periodically write pieces only to please myself, -Guilty Pleasures, if you will. Here are three I pulled together into a small string quartet. The first movement is maybe love in the summer? There is a short, agitated viola/cello duet that acts as a bridge to the second movement. This slow movement is burning, bittersweet love. The subject for the third movement is taken from the viola/cello bridge between movements one and two. This movement evolves from agitated unrest to unfettered happiness.

**Allan Crossman.** I've had the great pleasure of writing for many soloists and ensembles. *Millennium Overture Dance* is on the eponymous GRAMMY-nominated album from North/South Consonance; *Sonata fLux*, with pianist Keisuke Nakagoshi, appears on Navona Records; *Icarus Rising*, for chamber ensembles/orchestra, came out recently on Centaur Records. The musical, *The Log of the Skipper's Wife*, was produced by the Royal Shakespeare Co. at Stratford and the Kennedy Center, with my score drawn from Irish/Scottish shanties. Teaching has included Concordia University (Montreal), SF Conservatory, Wheaton College (MA), and the Crowden Community Program. [www.acrossman.com](http://www.acrossman.com)

**Caprice** is a good-natured frolic, an entertainment piece - quite a pleasure to come up with. The beginning theme persists throughout, sprouting variations along the way, including a number of sudden changes in volume and mood. Gigantic thanks to Friction for their remarkable playing and getting the spirit of the piece! Much appreciation to C4NM, Davide Verotta, and Zach Miley for organizing and recording the event.

**Jacob E. Goodman**, founder of the New York Composers Circle in 2002, is Professor Emeritus of mathematics at City College of New York. He studied composition with, among others, Ezra Laderman and David Del Tredici. His music has been performed in California, New York, Nebraska, Delaware, Toronto, Buenos Aires, Croatia, and Japan. Recent compositions include three song cycles; a set of six intermezzi for piano; a quintet for flute, piano, and strings; a set of variations for flute, violin, cello, and piano; a prelude for saxophone and piano; a duo for cello and piano; a set of nocturnes for violin and piano; three bagatelles for piano; a string quartet; a set of variations for orchestra; two more for piano; and a piano fantasy; as well as the score for the documentary film *Meet Me at the Canoe*, produced for the American Museum of Natural History by his daughter Naomi Goodman-Broom.

The string quartet by Jacob E. Goodman that you will hear -- his first -- was written over a period of six years. Originally conceived as simply an Adagio for String Quartet, and performed at a New York Composers Circle concert about six years ago, he decided that the piece would make an ideal slow movement for a full three-movement work. His move to California, then the COVID pandemic, interfered with his plans; but we are happy to present, finally, the Friction Quartet performing Jacob E. Goodman's String Quartet No. 1.

Championed by players across Europe and the United States, San Francisco based composer **Kyle Hovatter** (b.1986) designs music for classical and unusual instruments. He has been recently commissioned by large ensembles including Blueprint Ensemble and San Francisco Renaissance Voices as well as more personal collaborations with soloists like theorboist Adam Cockerham. In addition to his composing, Kyle regularly performs at the piano and organ as Director of Music at Zion Lutheran Church in San Francisco. As curator of the refugee support series "Benefit Concerts at Zion", Mr. Hovatter fosters collaboration between artists and Interfaith Refugee Welcome.

Shortly after the California lockdown in Spring 2020, my little brother became very ill. Though he lived alone, we could not visit him for fear of spreading the disease and his local unprepared hospital would not take him as they "needed to focus on those more at risk". His fever was very high, and he was often not able to respond to phone calls to check on him. In this time I, like many musicians, had an enormous amount of unwanted free time. I sat in an isolated room listening to the hum of appliances, fumbling my way through a mandolin beginners book, imitating those hums with this new instrument, and becoming more and more fixated on the fiddle tune "Devil's Dream". Eventually I focused my energy onto this piece for the Friction Quartet as self therapy and as a diversion. Thankfully, after two gruelling weeks my brother did recover.

**Steve Mobia.** A native of California, Steve Mobia (b. 1953) expressed an early interest in music but chose instead to study filmmaking and was later involved with the SF Suicide Club, Cacophony Society and Burning Man. Having a strong fascination for nocturnal dreams, he also led exploration groups which met in unusual locations in order to re-enact dreams. His fiction writing and film work also arise out of his interest in the subconscious - often working with metaphor and non-literal situations. In an effort to conceive of more interesting music for his movie soundtracks, Steve began to study music formally in 1995 by taking night classes at San Francisco City College with Jerry Mueller and followed this in the next two decades by writing several pieces of concert music that aim to transport the listener into associative realms. In 2009, Mobia finished his documentary on the accordion, "Behind the Bellows," which is now offered for free streaming online. For more info please visit <http://stevemobia.com/>

The piece is an investigation of contrasts and how one motivic element will be altered when placed in proximity to another. Unlike some of my other pieces, there is no extended melodic theme per se. Instead, recurring motifs join to form thematic illusions when in proximity to others. There are three basic sections, quite different in emotional effect but based on the same gestures. The first explores tension and ambiguity, the second ethereal stillness, the third rhythmic drive.

**Martha Stoddard** may very well live to conduct, and has held the position of Artistic Director of the Oakland Civic Orchestra since 1997. She currently serves as conductor for Piedmont Chamber Orchestra and was a long-time Associate Conductor for the San Francisco Composers' Chamber Orchestra. She was the first Resident Conductor for Enriching Lives through Music, and held the position of Program Director for the John Adams Young Composers Program at the Crowden Music Center from 2012-2014. She was the Director of Instrumental Music at Lick-Wilmerding High School from 1991-2021. Stoddard has been named semi-finalist and finalist in American Prize competitions as both conductor and composer, and is a four-time recipient of the AscapiPlus Awards in composition. She holds music degrees from Humboldt State University and San Francisco State University. Significant musical influences include J.S. Bach, Shostakovich, and Igor Stravinsky and she has appreciated generous artistic guidance and feedback from dear friends Hilary Tann and Allan Crossman. Her music has been performed by the Sierra Ensemble, Avenue Winds, San Francisco Choral Artists, San Francisco Composers' Chamber Orchestra, *schwungvoll!*, Santa Rosa Repertory Youth Orchestra, Oakland Civic Orchestra, Womensing and Community Women's Orchestra and in the Bakersfield Symphony New Directions Series, Trinity Chamber Concert Series, the New Music Forum Festival of Contemporary Music, and in London, UK. Past commissions have come from the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, Sierra Ensemble, Community Women's Orchestra, and the Octangle Woodwind Octet. She is published by Tetractys in London, UK and Shadow Tree Music Publishing in Concord, California.

**Prelude, Fugato and Tarantella.** My string quartet was planned for a premiere by the Friction Quartet just prior to the onset of the pandemic and is my first foray into this genre. I sought to find a balance of technical and contrapuntal excursions, rhythmic buoyancy and expressive sonorous writing possible in a homogeneous string ensemble. It is structured in two movements:  
Prelude; Fugato and Tarantella.

It was exciting to write for a group for whom I knew would embrace musical and technical challenges, and I am thrilled to finally enjoy this premiere by the fabulous Friction String Quartet. I also want to express my gratitude to Davide Verotta for his persistence and dedication to realizing

this project on behalf of all the composers, and to the Center for New Music for their vision and mission.

**Daide 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. For more information please visit his web site at [www.davideverotta.com](http://www.davideverotta.com).

**String Quartet No.6 (straight arrow)**. The image that I associate with this piece is of an arrow that flies in and disrupts; what we listen to is the aftermath. This involves two main musical subjects. The first is a melodic line that is heard at the beginning of the piece, divided among the two violins. The second follows immediately after. The piece basically consists of a continuous development and contrast between the first melody and the second subject that always appears within fugal writing (a formally rather strict type of imitation among instruments). The fugue will eventually develop into a more complex double fugue followed by a dramatic *stretto*, a rhythmic shortening of the fugal subject, that climaxes just before the first subject reasserts itself. After the climax the final section revolves around the contrast between a short melodic line (played by viola and then violin and marked *pleading with hurried urgency*), and a drone like, relentless ostinato played in the background. An invocation of the first melodic line closes the piece.