

ensembleFRET

Cal Poly Pomona Recital Hall
Music Department, Cal Poly Pomona
Friday, March 4, 2016 - 8:00 pm

Rondo (1925) **Paul Hindemith**

Russian Dance from *Petrushka* **Igor Stravinsky**

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Sonata op. 47 (1976) **Alberto Ginastera**

Esordio – Scherzo – Canto – Finale

Peter Yates, guitar solo

The Sky Stands Facing the Window (2016) **Buzz Gravelle**

Buzz Gravelle, guitar solo

Caprice No. 22 **Nicolo Paganini**

Buzz Gravelle, electric guitar solo

Duke Ellington Meets Beef Wellington **William Weingarden**

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Quartet no. 3 "The Microtonal" (2016, premiere performance) **Garry Eister**

Zero's Vinyl (2016 version premiere performance) **Buzz Gravelle**

ensembleFRET with guest artist JohnPaul Trotter

ensembleFRET is a performance collective founded in 2012 by Buzz Gravelle, Walter Marsh and Peter Yates. Its programs and events feature music for guitar (classical, steel string acoustic, electric), mandolin and arpeggione (bowed guitar), whether solo, in duos and trios, or in expandable combination with guest vocalists and instrumentalists. Results range from intimate art-song to massed guitars. In every event is music unheard-of, written or premiered within the past year.

Visit ensembleFRET on the internet at www.ensemblefret.com

* FRET, (Fluorescence resonance energy transfer) is a biophysical technique used to measure excitation transferred between two molecules (typically bio molecules) at the 1-10 nanometer scale. Ensemble FRET is this technique as applied to groups of molecules.

Selected Program Notes

Rondo – Paul Hindemith

Hindemith wrote his trio setting in the original version for three guitars in 1930 initially intended as the middle piece of the cantata 'Wanderlieder' and commissioned by 'Tage für Neue Musik Berlin' [Berlin Days of New Music] under the motto of 'Spiele und Lieder für Kinder' [Games and Songs for Children]. In 1938, the composer had to leave his manuscripts behind in Germany, but later remembered the little piece when making a note of unprinted pieces.

Sonata, op. 47 (1976) - Alberto Ginastera

2016 is the centennial of Ginastera's birth, and the fortieth anniversary of his only work for guitar. Others of his works, such as the first string quartet, use as a signature chord the notes of the guitar's open strings, but an actual piece for the instrument had to wait until late in his life. Like many of his compositions, the Sonata mixes an assortment of elements – tonal, atonal, bombastic, whispered – into a carefully crafted whole whose peaks and contrasts project clearly from the stage.

The Sky Stands Facing the Window – premiere (2016) – Buzz Gravelle

This piece for solo guitar, written for the guitarist Mak Grgic, was inspired by the beautiful imagery contained in the poetry of Japanese poet Sagawa Chika.

Glass wing

People carefully pass along love, held between glass wings, which the sun destroys on the street corner.
The sky stands facing the window, darkening as the ventilator turns.
Leaves are in the sky, drawing a single line, the rooftops leaning in.
Trains crawl along the bulging street, the sailor's collar rotating between the blue creases of the sky.
The dressed up lines of summer pass by and crumble into the flask.
The fruits of our hearts rain happy shadows.

Sagawa Chika (1911-1936)

Quartet #3, The Microtonal – (2016 premiere) – Garry Eister

I can't imagine that anyone reading this has not heard microtones in music. If you have heard a blues, rock or jazz guitarist bend a note, you have heard microtones, If you have heard a trombonist slide, you have heard microtones. If you have heard any of most of the indigenous musics (Arabic, Indonesian, Eastern European, etc.) of the world beyond the West, you have heard microtones.

The subtitle of my third quartet is "The Microtonal." The slide guitar employed in it is responsible for the only microtonal materials in the piece's first and third movements. However, in the slow middle movement, three of the four players are utilizing microtones. The 12-string guitar is detuned, and both slide guitarists are sliding between the notes. Only the mandolin remains faithful to the old ways.

(selected Program Notes, continued)

The word “microtonal” is generally used to describe the musical building blocks of a musical dialect that includes notes whose precise pitches are outside the usual set that is commonly employed in the classical music styles since around the time of Bach. So, what are microtones? Think of a piano. Think of two adjacent notes. One will be higher and one will be lower. Now, imagine a note in between those notes. One could, with a little practice and careful listening, sing or play this in-between note on bowed strings or trombone, or, as will be heard here, on a guitar that is played with a slide.

Microtonality is enjoying something of a vogue right now in the world of modern concert music. There is more than one way into this world. One can take the rigorous mathematically delineated path that is exemplified by some of microtonalism’s more famous practitioners, for example, Harry Partch and Lou Harrison, both of whom understood musical pitch ratios and built this aspect of their musical languages using math. Or like blues, jazz and rock players, one can take a more hedonistic approach. If it feels good, we do it. At any rate, I do hope that there is enough in the drama and feelings depicted in this piece, that you will be too busy following those things to notice whether the piece uses any microtones or not. Finally, there seems to be a growing vogue for mixed plucked string ensembles. The ensembleFRET is, in my opinion, one of the world’s best such ensembles, and I am honored that they agreed to take on this piece. Whenever I send them some music, I know that it’s in the best of hands. – Garry Eister

Zero’s Vinyl -(2014) *premiere of version for electric quartet* – **Buzz Gravelle**

This piece was inspired by a few measures of a Charlie Christian proto-bebop guitar solo from the song “Seven Come Eleven” with the Benny Goodman Sextet, taken from a 1939 recording. I then, subjected this theme to a post-minimalist process of deconstruction and re-assembly.

Those who have attended ensembleFret shows over the past few years have heard this piece evolve. Originally written as a trio for mandolin, guitar, and arpeggione, I then arranged it for two electric guitars and mandolin. This, in turn, inspired me to create a “string quartet” version of the piece for three electric guitars and electric bass. It’s a fun piece to play as it contains a lot kinetic energy and is somewhat unrelenting in its propulsive obsessiveness. The electric quartet version seems to highlight these qualities to create a musical equivalent of a fast ride in a speedy car. –Buzz Gravelle

Performer Biographies

Peter Yates is a composer and a guitarist. His work has included sixteen tours of Europe with the Elgart/Yates Duo, over one hundred premieres, and a book on prepared guitar. He also builds and plays versions of the *arpeggione*, a bowed guitar invented in 1823 and rarely seen since. His compositions include numerous PopArt songs, a puppet opera about the Watts Towers and a DVD ghost-town opera in which historic photographs come to life and sing. His works have been performed on Italian National Radio (RAI), microfest, The Living Arts Festival, NOW Festival, Festival of American Music, in Mexico, Europe and across the United States. He is on the faculties of music at UCLA and at the California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

“A particularly lucid fretboard dreamer. An unreconstructed modernist, he is also sensitive to vernacular and popular styles.” – The Los Angeles Times

Buzz Gravelle – composer, multi-instrumentalist and music educator—has been involved with new music for plucked strings for over twenty years. Buzz was a founding member of the Modern Arts Guitar Quartet (1991-1995), an ensemble of guitarists/composers that explored the leading edges of new music for classical guitar—prepared guitar, serialism, minimalism, aleatoric, and electro-acoustic music. As a solo recitalist he is known for creative programming and has extended the repertoire of the classical guitar and classical mandolin through his own compositions, transcriptions, and the premiering of new works written for him. He has performed throughout the western United States, in addition to Canada, Mexico, Italy, Austria, and Germany. Buzz holds both M.F.A. and D.M.A. degrees in Music from UCLA. Buzz serves on the faculty of California Polytechnic University at Pomona and is the founder and director of the Santa Monica Academy of Music. See www.buzzgravelle.com for more information on his professional activities.

Walter Marsh studied with Theodore Norman at UCLA, where he earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in guitar performance in 1995. He was a member of the Modern Arts Guitar Quartet from 1991 to 1995, performing on the west coast of the US, Europe and Mexico. Walter has had a particular focus on modern music. Since 2012, with Peter Yates and Buzz Gravelle, he has been a member of ensembleFRET, an ensemble performing music for mandolin, guitar and arpeggione (bowed guitar). He is also a composer, with new music for ensembleFRET. See www.waltermarsh.com for more information on his professional activities.

Guest Artist

JohnPaul Trotter is a graduate of Cal Poly Pomona with a Bachelor of Arts in Guitar Performance, studying under Peter Yates. He is a founding member of Los Angeles Electric 8, a chamber ensemble that has pioneered chamber music written and arranged for electric guitars ranging from Italian Renaissance pieces to Microtonal music written specifically for the group. JohnPaul is the musical director for Tang Gang, a funk/soul collective in Santa Monica and is a founding member of JEFA, an electric guitar quartet focusing on original music.