

# 21ST CENTURY MUSIC

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MARCH 2013

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# Arnold Schoenberg to 1907

MARK ALBURGER

"My music is not modern, it is merely badly played."

"I was never revolutionary. The only revolutionary in our time was Strauss!"

Triskaidekaphobia came honestly to Arnold Schoenberg from day one (b. Arnold Schönberg, September 13, 1874, Vienna, Austria), born to an Ashkenazi Jewish family in the Leopoldstadt district (in earlier times a Jewish ghetto), at Obere Donaustraße 5, and continuing to his death (July 13, 1951).

Although Schoenberg's mother Pauline (nee Nachod, 1848-1921), a native of Prague, was a piano teacher, the composer's musical instruction began at eight, with violin lessons. The year after the death of his Bratislavian shoestore-owning father Samuel (1838-1890), Arnold was obliged to take work as a bank clerk for about five years. During this time his friend, violinist Oskar Adler, continued Schoenberg's music education, and Schoenberg supplemented this by teaching himself to play the cello.

In about 1894, he composed a set of piano pieces and joined a small amateur string orchestra. The ensemble was directed by composer Alexander von Zemlinsky, two years his senior, and they became fast friends. In the ensuing years, the duo played their compositions for each other, including a collection of piano duos (1896), and Schoenberg credited Zemlinsky with being his principal teacher.

The four-movement String Quartet in D Major is Schoenberg's earliest extant work of large scale. Zemlinsky gave Schoenberg much advice and criticism during its composition, and even showed an early draft to Johannes Brahms, who gave its approval. Completed in the autumn of 1897, it was premiered privately on March 17, 1898, and publicly later that same year, with Zemlinsky's help, on December 20 in Vienna. The work was a success (one of the few for many years), and both composers felt it signified a new stage of Schoenberg's artistic development.

Schoenberg converted to Lutheranism that year and lived by orchestrating operettas. Here begins his first eight works given opus numbers, all on, or inspired by-- love texts -- beginning with the lengthy Two Songs for baritone, Op. 1 (1898), after Karl Michael von Levetzow (1871-1945), cast in sonata-influenced forms, featuring lush counterpoint and asymmetrical melodic lines.

The next works add two numbers apiece, beginning with Four Songs, Op. 2 (1899), the initial three on texts of Richard Dehmel (1863-1920), who was also soon to inspire Op. 3, No. 3 of Six Songs, *Verklärte Nacht*, Op. 4, and Op. 6, No. 2. Dehmel's eroticism (he was twice prosecuted for blasphemy and obscenity and twice exonerated) finds poignancy in Schoenberg's hands, with precious chromaticism and beautiful arpeggios, for instance, in the opening *Erwartung* (Expectation) -- a title which returns years later in Marie Pappenheim's libretto for the composer's Op. 19. Other composers to be inspired by Dehmel included Richard Strauss, Max Reger, Alexander von Zemlinsky, Anton Webern, Ignatz Waghalter, and Kurt Weill. A cascadingly erotic setting of Johannes Schlaf (1862-1941) makes for a charming conclusion.

The Six Songs, Op. 3 (1899) are on varied texts, beginning with a selection from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy's Magic Horn), the early-19th-century three-volume folk poetry collection, which inspired Weber, Loewe, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Zemlinsky, and Webern. Settings of Gottfried Keller (1819-1890, poems 2 and 5), Dehmel, Jens Peter Jacobsen (1847-1885, who also inspired Frederick Delius's *Fennimore and Gerda*, and Schoenberg's *Gurre-Lieder*), and Hermann (Ritter von) Lingg (1820-1905), follow. All the songs exhibit the tonal clarity Brahms, reflecting an interest in balanced phrases and an undisturbed hierarchy of key relationships, yet also explore unusually bold post-Wagnerian chromaticism.

The one-movement string sextet, *Verklärte Nacht* (or *Transfigured Night*), Op. 4 (1899), was composed in just three weeks (rapidity would be Schoenberg's hallmark in a number of pieces, including *Pierrot Lunaire*, Op. 21, 1912). The work was inspired by Richard Dehmel's like-named poem, along with Schoenberg's strong feelings upon meeting Mathilde von Zemlinsky, his friend's sister. *Verklärte Nacht* can be divided into five distinct sections which refer to the equivalent stanzas of the literary endeavor.

Here Schoenberg succeeds in combining Brahms's structural logic with Wagner's harmonic innovations. The work was turned down by the Vienna Music Society for an initial performance in its year of composition, due to a single "nonexistent" (uncategorized and unpermitted) inverted ninth chord.

The composer remarked "and thus [the work] cannot be performed since one cannot perform that which does not exist." The work indeed employs a rich chromatic language far from its home key of D minor. Several distinctive "leitmotif"-like themes are introduced, each subsuming the previous. There is perpetual dissolution, variety, and recombination, that Schoenberg characterized as "developing variation," again simultaneously evoking Brahms and Wagner.

*Gurre-Lieder* (w/o Op.) -- Schoenberg's massive cantata for five vocal soloists, narrator, chorus and large orchestra -- is based on poems by the Danish novelist Jens Peter Jacobsen, translated by Robert Franz Arnold). It began, in 1900, as a song cycle for soprano, tenor and piano for a competition run by the Vienna Composers' Association, but was according to the composer, "finished . . . half a week too late for the contest, and this decided the fate of the work." Later that year, he radically expanded his original conception, composing links between the first nine songs as well as adding a prelude, The Wood Dove's Song, and the whole of Parts Two and Three.

Schoenbergian controversy continued the next year, as protests broke out when songs from Op. 1-3 were sung at a concert in December.

In October 1901, he married Mathilde Zemlinsky, the sister of Zemlinsky. They moved to Berlin that December, where Schoenberg obtained work at the *Urbrettl* cabaret, writing at least one such song -- *Nachwandler* -- that was subsequently performed once. Their daughter, Gertrud (1902–1947), was born the next year.

*Transfigured Night* was controversial when it finally was premiere by the Rose Quartet, on March 18, 1902, in the Vienna Musikverein, due to the harmony and Dehmel's explicit sexual references.

The symphonic poem *Pelleas und Melisande*, Op. 5 (February 1903), is Schoenberg's first numbered non-vocal work, yet still based on a literary source -- that of Maurice Maeterlinck as suggested by Richard Strauss. When Schoenberg began the composition, he was unaware that Claude Debussy's opera was about to premiere in Paris. The work is, like *Transfigured Night*, in a D minor of one continuous movement with inter-related sections. It makes the first notated use of a trombone glissando in the section where Golaud leads Pelleas to the underground tombs. Theme groups, similar to the leitmotif, which are associated with individual scenes or people, form the building-blocks of a symphonic development.

Fellow older post-romantics Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler recognized Schoenberg's significance as a composer -- Strauss when he encountered the continually-evolving *Gurre-Lieder*, and Mahler after hearing several early works. The former was sufficiently impressed to obtain for Schoenberg a teaching post at the Stern Academy.

In *Gurre-Leider*, Schoenberg utilizes *sprechstimme* (song-speech) -- his first use of the effect so tellingly utilized in such works as *Pierrot Lunaire* and *A Survivor from Warsaw*, Op. 46 (1947). This combination of semi-spoken text with instrumental accompaniment stems from melodrama, a genre much in vogue at the end of the 19th Century. By 1903, Schoenberg abandoned the mammoth task of orchestrating *Gurre-Leider* and moved on to other projects.

One of these included the relatively more straightforward *Eight Songs for soprano*, Op. 6 (1903), based on texts by Julius Hart (1859-1930), Paul Remer (1867-1943), Hermann Conradi (1862-1890), Keller, John Henry Mackay (1864-1933), Kurt Aram (1869-1934), and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900).

Schoenberg began teaching harmony, counterpoint and composition in 1904. His first students were Paul Pisk, Anton Webern, and Alban Berg, the latter two ultimately constituting with their teacher a Second or New Viennese School.

*Pelleas und Melisande* was premiered on January 25, 1905, at the Musikverein in Vienna under the composer's direction in a concert that also included the first performance of Alexander von Zemlinsky's *Die Seejungfrau*. Reception of Schoenberg's work was cool and the orchestra ill at ease.

The again one-movement String Quartet No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 7 (1905) lasts longer than 45 minutes. Begun in the summer of 1904 and completed in September 1905, it is remarkable for its density and intensity of orchestration. The extended tonality includes quartal harmony, and carries a small collection of themes which recur in many different guises. Additionally, Schoenberg makes use of "musical prose," favoring asymmetrical phrases that build into larger cohesive "sentences." The first performance was given in Vienna on February 5, 1907 by the Rose Quartet after extensive rehearsal. According to Schoenberg, when he showed the score to Gustav Mahler, the elder composer exclaimed: "I have conducted the most difficult scores of Wagner; I have written complicated music myself in scores of up to thirty staves and more; yet here is a score of not more than four staves, and I am unable to read them."

Typical of Schoenberg's vocal collections, the Six Orchestral Songs, Op. 8 (1905), are variously based on Hart, Des Knaben Wunderhorn, but unusually on Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374, in translations by Karl August Förster, 1784-1841). The pieces are intense and lush miniatures, written close to the time of the birth of the composer's son, Georg (1906–1974).

The single-movement (surprise) Kammer-symphonie (Chamber Symphony) No. 1 in E Major, Op. 9 (1906), for 15 instruments (Flute/Piccolo, Oboe, English Horn, Eb Clarinet, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, Contrabassoon, 2 Horns, 2 Violins, Viola, Cello, and

Double Bass), lasts approximately 20 minutes and is a well-known example of the use of quartal harmony. The two opening themes are based respectively on superimposed perfect fourths and the whole-tone scale -- the distinction between melodic and harmonic dimensions becoming blurred. The work was premiered on February 8, 1907 in Vienna by the Rose Quartet together with a wind ensemble from the Vienna Philharmonic, under the composer's baton.

In that year, the composer began to win public acceptance, with Pelleas und Melisande receiving acclaim at a Berlin performance. But it was not to last...

#### MELISANDE 1



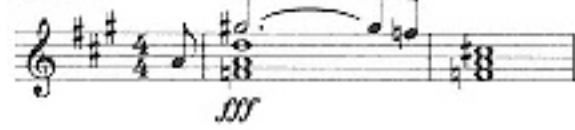
#### MELISANDE 2



#### GOLAUD



#### FATE



#### PELLEAS 1



#### PELLEAS 2



#### MELISANDE 3



#### MELISANDE 4



# Joan Jeanrenaud and Company

MICHAEL MCDONAGH

Sometimes a phone interview is the way to go, even if you live in the same town. And so it was on a rainy Friday afternoon this past December that San Francisco-based composer and cellist Joan Jeanrenaud and I "sat down" for a chat about her latest music theatre collaboration, *Your Body Is Not A Shark* (January 11-13, San Francisco; 17-20, Santa Cruz). The celebrated and much-sought-after musician was the Kronos Quartet's cellist from 1978 until 1999, when she "retired" due to having been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, which she's been successfully battling ever since. With such a broad musical history behind her, plus a solo career as a composing and performing cellist and music theatre collaborator before her, it's hard to know how to begin. But how did it feel to play and record the second cello part in Vladimir Martynov's Schubert-Quintet ("Unfinished") after Schubert's *Quintet in C*, D.956, with Kronos two years ago? "We had so much fun. I really enjoyed playing with them again. It was like I'd never left," she recalls in a voice which still has a tinge of her Memphis, Tennessee roots. "And I've always loved the cello because it's such an expressive instrument, and composing -- though I'd never thought of being a composer before -- became a way of being really involved in music and playing."

Her current music theatre adventure seems to have as many texts and sub-texts as music itself. The focus of the project, which involves three other women -- Cid Pearlman, choreographer; Denise Leto, poet; and Maya Barsacq, who conducts seven string members of the chamber orchestra, Cadenza, in Jeanrenaud's score -- is human fragility, in both body and spirit. That should be something everyone can relate to, or as the composer puts it "all of us have issues to deal with and the interesting thing is how you take that and make it your own," which in her case means living with MS, which felled conductor-pianist Daniel Barenboim's cellist wife Jacqueline Du Pre, but also involves Leto, who's disabled, and whose words will be projected as she writes. The piece casts the net even further by using a dance company of six, which ranges in age from 18 to 62, and Jeanrenaud says that the navigation of Pearlman's moves will naturally be more effortful for the 62-year-old. The ten-section piece, which the composer calls "a collage of interesting elements," will also feature ace new music percussionist William Winant, "and there are a couple of sections of just me and Willy which are quite rhythmic."

There's a strong visual look as well. "One piece has the orchestra creating a bed of sound, and there are staging elements like a bed platform that moves around. Stairs and chairs are used, and there's a desk where Denise will be seated while the audience watches her." Jeanrenaud has also added sound files to her score, which though not a visual element, will likely add both space and sonic weight to this intensely collaborative whole. It's an ambitious and hopefully pertinent work for our increasingly fragile time where everybody either puts on a tough face or gets in touch with what's really happening around and in them. But one thing's certain: the composer-cellist is one of the most gifted musicians of her generation, and like any true artist, or human being for that matter, she's here to learn. She put it this way in a firming up e-mail regarding her time with the great French cellist Pierre Fournier who was renowned for the elegance and depth of his playing. "Working with Fournier was a great transition from being a student to becoming a professional musician. My lessons were very clarifying regarding technical issues I would be uncertain of in my own practice. It was wonderful working with him! "





# Calendar

March 3

Hot Air Music Festival. Loren Jones's *Dancing on the Brink of the World*, conducted by John Kendall Bailey. Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, San Francisco, CA.

Joe Lasquo's Laptop/Piano in fête-concert with Drone Church's Evelyn Davis and Persian-tuned pianist Ramin Zoufonoun. Eliane Lust's Le Piano Studio, San Francisco, CA.

March 8

Kitka presents New Folksongs from Within, featuring the world premieres of Janet Kutulas's *Iron Shoes* and Elizabeth Setzer's *Apple Blossoms and Brine*. Piedmont Piano Company, Oakland, CA. Through March 10.

March 20

Ecstatic Music Festival: Steven Mackey and Rinde Eckert with Big Farm and JACK Quartet. Merkin Concert Hall, Kaufman Music Center, New York, NY.

March 22

Vexations [Re-Vex'd] improv marathon. Berkeley Arts Festival, Berkeley, CA. Continuing March 23.

March 30

The Opus Project presents Opus 3, in repertory drawn from Arnold Schoenberg's *Six Songs*, Bela Bartok's *Orchestral Suite No. 1*, Igor Stravinsky's *Scherzo Fantastique*, Anton Webern's *Five Songs from "The Seventh Ring"*, Alban Berg's *String Quartet*, Sergei Prokofiev's *Four Pieces for Piano*, Darius Milhaud's *Violin Sonata No. 1*, Paul Hindemith's *Cello Concerto*, Dmitri Shostakovich's *Theme and Variations in B-Flat Major*, Samuel Barber's *Dover Beach*, Alan Hovhaness's *Piano Trio No. 1 in E Minor*, Benjamin Britten's *A Boy Was Born*, Don Howe's *The Recurring Dream*, Alan Kingsley's *CityCorpCrap*, Mark Alburger's *Ecclesiastes, or The Preacher*, Michael Stubblefield's *Distant Worlds*, and Omri-Shir Dalal's *Piano Piece*. Berkeley Arts Festival, Berkeley, CA.

## THE OPUS PROJECT

*Celebrating the Creative Spirit Chronologically*



*Opus 3*

8pm, Saturday

March 30, 2013

Berkeley Arts Festival

2133 University Avenue

Berkeley, CA

A Multi-Media Event, with Harriet March Page, Melissa Smith, Carolyn Lowenthal, and The Opus Project Ensemble

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)	<i>Song, Op. 3, No. 1</i> (1899)
Bela Bartok (1881-1945)	<i>Orchestral Suite No. 1, Op. 3</i> (1905)
Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)	<i>Scherzo Fantastique, Op. 3</i> , (1908)
Anton Webern (1883-1945)	<i>Song from "The Seventh Ring", Op. 3, No. 1</i> (1909)
Alban Berg (1885-1935)	<i>String Quartet, Op. 3</i> (1910)
Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)	<i>Piece for Piano, Op. 3, No. 1</i> (1911)
Darius Milhaud (1892-1975)	<i>Violin Sonata No. 1, Op. 3</i> (1911)
Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)	<i>Cello Concerto, Op. 3</i> (1916)
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)	<i>Theme and Variations in B-flat Major, Op. 3</i> (1922)
Samuel Barber (1910-1981)	<i>Dover Beach, Op. 3</i> (1931)
Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000)	<i>Piano Trio No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 3</i> (1935)
Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)	<i>A Boy Was Born, Op. 3</i> (1933)
Don Howe (b. 1944)	<i>The Recurring Dream</i> (2006)
Alan Kingsley (b. 1953)	<i>CityCorpCrap</i> (2009)
Mark Alburger (b. 1957)	<i>Ecclesiastes, or The Preacher, Op. 3</i> (1975)
Michael Stubblefield (b. 1989)	<i>Distant Worlds, Op. 3</i> (1989)
Omri-Shir Dalal (b. 1994)	<i>Piano Piece</i> (2013)

# Chronicle

January 6

San Jose Chamber Orchestra presents a Lou Harrison Tribute. Le Petit Trianon, San Jose, CA. "Besides a work of Harrison's own, the concert featured memorial elegies to him by two composers who were Harrison's associates at the university, plus an additional piece that has no direct connection to Harrison that I am aware of, which nevertheless fitted seamlessly into the same ethos. . . . Harrison (1917-2003) is . . . [a] quintessential Northern California composer. His style of contemplative meditation that doesn't entirely conceal a hard, even caustic backbone; his technical obsession with scales, temperament, and intonation; and his trans-Pacific interest in mixing Western classical music with East Asian traditions, especially the Javanese gamelan, are all characteristic of our local compositional culture. . . . He wrote several works with titles similar to that of Sunday's offering, Suite for Violin with String Orchestra. This one turns out to be the Suite for Violin and American Gamelan, composed in 1974 in collaboration with Richard Dee . . . as transcribed by Harrison's student Kerry Lewis in 1977 for the more easily available string orchestra . . . . In either form, the suite is a long . . . work of seven movements, some slow and melodic, others rough dances, all named for and evoking venerable Western or Eastern musical forms, from the dithyramb to the chaconne. One movement is for orchestra alone. The rest of the time, soloist Cynthia Baehr, SJCO's regular concertmaster . . . played almost constantly, carrying nearly the entire flow of the music. She played tirelessly in a dry, heavy tone, with extended double-stops and drones, appropriately for the casually wandering, often modal, ancient-sounding melodic line. In a few places the orchestral violins and violas joined in with Baehr. Mostly the orchestra served for rhythm, punctuation, and held chords. Despite the title, this was not just default strings. Besides a prominent part for harp, often used to add a crisp attack to string chords, a piano and a celesta lurked percussively deep in the background. Especially at the end, where the keyboards spiced up large grand chords, the sonic resemblance to at least the spirit of the gamelan was pervasive. Bow tapping and knuckle rapping on the sides of the cellos and basses, heroically rendered . . . . Lewis . . . was on the program for an Elegy for Lou Harrison, commissioned by the [ensemble] in 2005 . . . . Written in a deliberate echo of Harrison's style, it began in a slightly dissonant anguish of grief -- more astringent than anything in the Suite . . . though not as harsh as Harrison could get -- and passed through a slow melodic section before concluding with a gently primitive modal dance . . . . EKTA II by Brent Heisinger . . . [is] something of a piano concerto, and something just as much of a percussion concerto, requiring four performers to handle its . . . blocks, chimes, tapped cymbals, and . . . tam-tam. . . . Western classical is mixed with Chinese -- and, in the homage to Harrison that closes the work, a bit of gamelan (The first EKTA . . . used musical material from India). Like Harrison's . . . it's a succession of movements of alternating relaxed and lively temperament, in this case blended together without pause. . . . The concert opened with the brief Pizzicato by Vivian Fung for the string orchestra. . . .

Tapping and knocking on the bodies of the instruments tied the piece to the Harrison-Dee suite, offsetting a penchant for syncopation, intricate unexpected triplets, and cross-rhythms reflecting Fung's own choppy and more glittery style" [David Bratman, San Francisco Classical Voice, 1/6/13].

January 9

Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony in a belated celebration of the 150th anniversary of Claude Debussy's birth, featuring *Jeux* and *La Mer*. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through January 13. "[The] subject of Debussy's 1913 score for the Ballet Russes -- a love triangle on a tennis court -- hardly prepares the listener for the energy and endless invention of this densely textured seventeen minutes of [*Jeux*]; from the first bars of its silken introduction, Tilson Thomas elicited its beauties, its turbulence, and its astonishing moments of clarity in a splendid performance. Everything -- the swelling string parts, the subtle shadings from woodwinds and brass, the radical dissonances and remarkably forward-thinking rhythms -- registered in abundant detail. From the first bars of its silken introduction, Tilson Thomas elicited its beauties, its turbulence, and its astonishing moments of clarity in a splendid performance. . . . The conductor savors the [*La Mer*]'s formal structure, summoning each section of the score in massive blocks of sound; the shimmering violins seemed to breathe organically, and the cellos played with magnificent poise and weight. The alert brass statements, and the silvery contributions from the woodwinds, were exemplary' [Georgia Rowe, San Francisco Classical Voice, 1/9/13].

January 11

Gala opening of Bing Concert Hall. Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony in Claude Debussy's *La Mer*, John Adams's *A Short Ride in a Fast Machine*, and music from Leonard Bernstein's *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, with Frederica von Stade; Stanford Chamber Chorale in Jonathan Berger's *A Place of Concert*. Stanford University, CA. "[A] delicate, rather orientalist performance [of *La Mer* was paired with] John Adams's manic *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* . . . . The San Francisco Symphony's sound was amazingly vivid, so much so that it could become too large. In many halls, if the volume of an orchestra overwhelms the space's carrying capacity, the sound breaks up and goes fuzzy. This doesn't happen at Bing. Instead, it remains piercingly clear . . . . Beauty was also on display in Frederica von Stade's rendition of *Take Care of This House*, an appropriately-titled song for opening a new hall, from Leonard Bernstein's *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*. . . . There was true magic in the caressing effect that the acoustics gave to the 25-strong chorus as it sang Jonathan Berger's specially-composed *A Place of Concert*, a lyrical setting of phrases from philanthropist Peter Bing's remarks at the hall's groundbreaking ceremony two and a half years ago.

Smooth lines and held notes reverberated perfectly" [David Bratman, San Francisco Classical Voice, 1/11/13].

David T. Little's Soldier Songs. Michael Schimmel Center, New York, NY.

January 16

Quiet Rhythms: Works by William Susman and Demetrius Spaneas. Spectrum, New York, NY.

January 19

Linda Bouchard: New Works, including Unspoken, 2013; Sonic Forecast, 2009; Black Ice; and Low Wind. 119B East Pender Street, Vancouver, BC.

Alexander String Quartet presents The String Quartet at a Time of War: Their Finest Hour. including Bela Bartok's String Quartet No. 6 and Benjamin Britten's String Quartet No. 1. Herbst Theatre, San Francisco, CA. "Britten, a pacifist, left England in 1939, while Bartók, an anti-Fascist, fled Hungary in 1940 as it moved increasingly rightward, eventually becoming an ally of Nazi Germany. Desperately homesick, Britten returned to England in 1942; Bartók died in 1945, still an exile in the U.S. The two quartets differ greatly, both in mood and in the circumstances of their composition. Bartók composed his quartet during his mother's final illness, at a time when he was already contemplating leaving his native land. The resulting quartet is somber, ironic, and perhaps bitter; some commentators associate its second movement, an exaggerated military march, with the war and Hungary's militarization. The work is knit together with a theme, marked Mesto (sad), that recurs in varied form as the introduction to the first three movements and the substance of the last, perhaps a reflection of Bartók's deep (and deepening) sadness as the war approached. In any event, the Alexander Quartet gave the Bartók a restrained and poised, even introverted, performance, without in any way neglecting the work's varying moods. The march had the appropriate swagger, the Burletta (burlesque) a dry wit and a hint of the grotesque. The Mesto introductions provide each member of the quartet with a solo, and each played his beautifully. . . . As for the Britten quartet . . . Expansive, joyous, even exalted, it feels like a young man flexing his compositional muscles . . . [and was] written while the composer and his companion, Peter Pears, spent a summer in Escondido . . . . The quartet's sound positively glowed in the eerie still of Britten's first movement opening, as well as in the gorgeously intense third movement. Despite that familiar style, the quartet contains many novel features. In the first movement, alternating and contrasting sections hide a sonata-form structure, and in both the first and third movements Britten miraculously suspends time through harmonic stasis, though the music never loses its forward momentum. And the instrumental textures are varied, stimulating, beautiful" [Lisa Hirsch, San Francisco Classical Voice, 1/19/13].

Marnie Breckenridge. San Francisco Conservatory of Music, San Francisco, CA. "Breckenridge launched a program whose first songs, An die Nacht (To the Night) and Amor (Love) from Richard Strauss's Brentano Lieder (1918), were both the oldest compositions on the program and the only ones in a language other than English. From there, it was to songs by the Bay Area's Henry Mollicone, Kurt Erickson, Jake Heggie, David Conte, David Garner, and Gordon Getty, with . . . the longest work on the program, Samuel Barber's . . . Knoxville: Summer of 1915. . . . [H]er two encores [were] Barber's Sure on This Shining Night and Heggie's I Will Not Have Lived in Vain . . . [The] Mollicone's setting[s were of] Walter de la Mare's The Snowflake . . . [and] Emily Dickinson's I Never Saw a Moor and If You Were Coming in the Fall . . . . [Other works included] Heggie's settings of Edna St. Vincent Millay's Not in a Silver Casket and Gini Savage's Joy Alone (Connection), Garner's Star Light, Star Bright, and Getty's setting of Dickinson's The Going from a World We Know . . . Mollicone's The Front Pane, Conte's . . . Sexton Songs, and Getty's . . . Dickinson songs from The White Election. The final bouquet came with . . . [a] perfect, and perfectly touching, encore . . . : Barber's setting of James Agee's Sure on this Shining Night" [Jason Serinus, San Francisco Classical Voice, 1/19/13].

January 20

Cremaschi/Goodheart/Ingalls Trio. Berkeley Arts Festival, Berkeley, CA.

David First presents Live Drone Performance w/Acupuncture. Worksong Chinese Medicine, New York, NY.

Ars Futura presents works of Cleveland composers. Ethical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

January 24

Pamela Z and Marty Walker. Art Share - LA, Los Angeles, CA.

January 25

Oakland East Bay Symphony in Richard Danielpour's A Woman's Life (Maya Angelou). Paramount Theatre, Oakland, CA. "Danielpour tracks the heart-on-the-sleeve directness of Angelou's lines with his open-hearted, colorful and sometimes frankly sentimental settings. His melodies unfold from the lush, spacious innocence of childhood through the calypso agitation of dawning sexuality to the woozy, jazzy fever-dream of barrooms and those big cars. . . . The orchestra, under Music Director Michael Morgan's sensitive hand, played with tenderness, verve and expressive grace throughout. Danielpour composed the piece in 2007 for soprano Angela Brown, who performed at the Paramount with dramatic . . . flair" [Steven Winn, San Francisco Classical Voice, 1/25/13].

The San Francisco Tape Music Festival 2013. ODC Theater, San Francisco, CA. Through January 27.

ZOFO Duet in Keisuke Nakagoshi's Synæsthesia, Allen Shawn's Fantasy, Stefan Cwik's Acrobats (Etude-Variations), Nicholas Pavkovic's Chimaera, and Gabriela Lena Frank's Sonata Serrana No.1. Old First Church, San Francisco, CA.

January 26

The Opus Project presents Opus 1: Claude Debussy's Symphonie, Arnold Schoenberg's Danke, Op. 1, No. 1; Bela Bartok's Rhapsody for Piano, Op. 1; Igor Stravinsky's Symphony in Eb, Op. 1; Anton Webern's Passacaglia, Op. 1; Alban Berg's Piano Sonata, Op. 1; Sergei Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, Op. 1; Dmitri Shostakovich's Scherzo in F-Sharp Minor for Orchestra, Op. 1; Samuel Barber's Serenade for String Quartet, Op. 1; Alan Hovhaness's Oror (Lullaby), Op. 1; Benjamin Britten's Sinfonietta, Op. 1; Allan Crossman's Song, Op. 1; Don Howe's Samurai Geese, Op. 1, No. 3; Harry Bernstein's Flute Duet, Ric Louchard's Waltz; Mark Alburger's Psalm 6, Op. 1; and Rachel Condry's For BART Train and Performers. Berkeley Arts Festival, Berkeley, CA.

Eco Ensemble's in Harrison Birtwistle's Secret Theater and Ivan Fedele's La Chute de la Maison Usher (The Fall of the House of Usher). Hertz Hall, The University of California, Berkeley, CA. "Fedele, an Italian academic reportedly much admired by . . . Pierre Boulez, was there . . . What was it about the music that was so effective in troubling listeners and developing an atmosphere of foreboding? With Birtwistle, it was the contrast of one group of instruments (mostly woodwinds) continually playing characteristic melodies on one side of the stage -- angular, not especially happy ones -- while another group of instruments (primarily strings, brass, and percussion) played mostly gruesome rhythmic gestures. The figures sounded at seemingly unpredictable and instrumentally independent intervals, only rarely related to any beat in the melodic line, but with just enough relation to the line to keep you poised in anticipation of the occasional concurrence. Then instruments would come up and join the melodic group from time to time, abandoning their previous roles in the 'gesture' group and take up another weird melody. Strong punctuations from percussionists would gradually increase in frequency, like madmen trying to get out of their asylum, leading to periodic climaxes every five minutes or so. And there was no relief from the delicious agony, for the brief respites would only lead to a subsequent, stronger buildup of instrumental density and beat intensity. Like the torturer who keeps victims conscious by throwing water in their face, Birtwistle's fiendish variety, with just enough predictability to make you want to keep anticipating what might happen next, kept you so absorbed in the project there was no hope for escape. Fedele's music did just what it was supposed to do -- give me an hour of the creeps. Semipredictable blows and anguished semi-tunes, conjured by genius, made for an unforgettable new-music experience. Never have I so craved being disturbed again after the nearly 30-minute masterpiece subsided away.

The foreboding in Fedele's music was not as structural or rhythmic as Birtwistle's. Rather, it was focused on tone color and hollow dissonances. It was more subdued, underpinning Epstein's striking images in the best possible way" [Jeff Dunn, San Francisco Classical Voice, 1/26/13].

12 Nights: Sonic Rollercoaster. GAB Gallery, Miami, FL.

Ecstatic Music Festival: Carla Kihlstedt's At Night We Walk in Circles and Are Consumed by Fire, with ICE, Causing a Tiger, and Face the Music. Merkin Concert Hall, Kaufman Music Center, New York, NY.

January 27

Joe Lasqo's SP/piano: The Mirror of Non-Existence, on a double bill also featuring Gestaltish, with Gretchen Jude, Jacob Peck, Jennifer Wilsey, and Rachel Condry. Berkeley Arts Festival, Berkeley, CA.

January 28

Culturemart 2013. Soomi Kim's Chang(e) and Yvan Greenberg's Genet Porno. Here, New York, NY.

January 31

counter)induction presents Etudes and Studies. Claude Debussy's Etudes: Book I (excerpts), Sergei Rachmaninoff's Etudes-tableaux, Luciano Berio's Study for String Quartet, Luigi Dallapiccola's Two Studies, George Benjamin's Viola Viola, Toshio Hosokawa's Vertical Time Study I, and the world premieres of Douglas Boyce's Book and Ryan Streber's Etude for Viola and Clarinet. Bruno Walter Auditorium, Lincoln Center, New York, NY.

