Program One

8 pm, Sunday, 8 November 2009
2009 Festival of New American Music
Music Recital Hall
California State University, Sacramento

7 pm, Sunday, 15 November 2009
Vanderhoef Studio Theatre
Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts

Eric Achen, horn
Hrabba Atladottir, violin
Tod Brody, flute
Leighton Fong, cello
Matilda Hofman, conductor
Peter Josheff, clarinet
Gloria Justen, violin
Ellen Ruth Rose, viola
Karen Rosenak, piano
Carla Wilson, bassoon

music.ucdavis.edu/empyrean
Through compelling performances and diverse programming, the Empyrean Ensemble offers audiences an opportunity to hear original works by emerging and established composers alike. It has premiered more than 200 works and performed throughout California, including appearances at many prominent music festivals and concert series. Empyrean has two full-length CDs released under the Centaur and Arabesque labels and has been the featured ensemble on others. Founded by composer Ross Bauer in 1988 as the ensemble-in-residence at UC Davis, the Empyrean Ensemble now consists of a core of seven of California’s finest musicians with extensive experience in the field of contemporary music. The ensemble is co-directed by composers Mika Pelo and Kurt Rohde.
Through compelling performances and diverse programming, the Empyrean Ensemble offers audiences an opportunity to hear original works by emerging and established composers alike. It has premiered more than 200 works and performed throughout California, including appearances at many prominent music festivals and concert series. Empyrean has two full-length CDs released under the Centaur and Arabesque labels and has been the featured ensemble on others. Founded by composer Ross Bauer in 1988 as the ensemble-in-residence at UC Davis, the Empyrean Ensemble now consists of a core of seven of California’s finest musicians with extensive experience in the field of contemporary music. The ensemble is co-directed by composers Mika Pelo and Kurt Rohde.
Aaron Copland was one of the most respected American classical composers of the 20th century. By incorporating popular forms of American music such as jazz and folk into his compositions, he created pieces both exceptional and innovative. As a spokesman for the advancement of American music, Copland made great strides in liberating it from European influence. Today, Copland’s life and work continue to inspire many of America’s young composers.

Born in Brooklyn, Copland was the child of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania. He first learned to play the piano from his older sister. At age 20, he left New York for the Summer School of Music for American Students at Fontainebleau, France, where he found a musical culitiville unlike any he had known.

While in Europe, Copland met many of the important artists of the time, including the famous composer Sergei Koussevitzky. For Copland, jazz was the first genuinely American major musical movement. From jazz he hoped to draw the inspiration for a new type of symphonic music, one that could distinguish itself from music of Europe. In the late 1920s, Copland’s attention turned to popular music of other countries. He had moved away from his interest in jazz and began to concern himself with expanding the audience for American classical music. He believed that classical music could eventually be as popular as jazz in America or folk music in Mexico. He worked toward this goal with both his music and a firm commitment to organizing and producing.

Along with his friend Roger Sessions, he began the Copland-Sessions concerts, dedicated to presenting the works of young composers. It was around this time that his plans for an American music festival (similar to ones in Europe) materialized as the Yaddo Festival of American Music (1932). By the mid-1930s, Copland had become not only one of the most popular composers in the country but also a leader of the community of American classical musicians.

It was in 1935 with E! Salón México that Copland began his most productive and popular years. Copland began composing for the movies and ballet. Among his most popular compositions for film are those for Of Mice and Men (1939), Our Town (1940), and The Heiress (1949), which won him an Academy Award for best score. He composed scores for a number of ballets, including two of the most popular of the period: Agnes DeMille’s Rodeo (1942) and Martha Graham’s Appalachian Spring (1946), for which he won the Pulitzer Prize. Probably the most important and successful composition from this time was his patriotic Portrait (1942). The piece for voice and orchestra presents quotes from Lincoln’s writings narrated over Copland’s musical composition.

After the next 30 years he traveled throughout the world, conducting live performances and creating an important collection of recorded work. His generous work as a teacher at Tanglewood, Harvard, and the New School for Social Research gained him a following of devoted students. He traveled the world in an attempt to elevate the status of American music abroad, and to increase its popularity at home.

Non tropo lento is the third movement of Copland’s Piano Quartet, which was commissioned in 1930 by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Coolidge Foundation. Copland completed the score on October 20, 1930, and it was premiered nine days later by the New York Quartet at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. It is in three movements: Adagio sostenuto, Allegro grazioso, and Non troppo lento.

Ed Jacobs began playing violin at age 8 but abandoned it at 11 in favor of the saxophone. Work at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in composition and jazz performance was followed by study in composition (with Imbens, Wilson, and Grisey) at UC Berkeley and at Columbia University (with Choi, Davidovsky, Boykan, and Edwards). In the citation accompanying his 2005 Charles Ives Award, the American Academy of Arts and Letters noted: “Jacobs’ music masters the orchestral and small ensemble idioms and embeds them into a unified and consistent single space with great orchestral imagination, and expressive and imagination.”

Jacobs teaches at East Carolina University, where he is the founding director of the NewMusic@ECU Festival. He also works in local public schools, collaborating since 2009 with general music teachers in his Young Composers Project, which strives to make the creation of music a fundamental part of children’s education.

In my home, as books also lacked hard bound, there were clothes. Passed from the eldest of five children down to the youngest (me), books gained new marks from each reader. Sometimes, in words, other times in drawings, these marginalia not only recorded our personal interactions with the story, but generated new lines of thought. It seems to me that music also presents such commentaries—not necessarily on a storyline, but on a medium itself. Each new piano piece is a remark about piano music and its broad and deep tradition, each symphonic work engages with the orchestra and its history of sound and organization. In that sense, Marginalia is such a reflection with the long and storied medium of the string quartet, a small ensemble with, arguably, the richest repertoire of any musical medium. The musical materials of Marginalia are drawn from a single all-interval chord, fragmented into component parts both harmonically and melodically. This single all-interval chord employs these materials through modes, both reflective-expansive, quiet and hard to identify, dance-like in its most peculiar fashion, and energetic and driving. Marginalia was completed on August 30, 2009, in Surf City, N.C. —E.J.

Praised as “Oh, a name to remember...” in the Volksblad (the Netherlands). Seung-Ah Oh, a native of Korea, has received the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition, the Goddard Lieberson Fellowship award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, third prize of the Lutoslawski Award, and both first and audience prizes of the Seoul International Competition for Composers. She has also received scholarships, fellowships, and grants, including a residency at the MacDowell Colony at Tanglewood, and commissions from Fonds voor de Schepende Toekomst, Nederlands Fonds voor de PvdA, and Orkest de Volharding.

Many artists have been awarded grants, fellowships, and commissions, including both the NAND Award and the Tanglewood Fellowship. Copland’s life and work continue to inspire many of America’s young composers.

Blumberg was an accomplished and prolific composer who wrote in a variety of genres, including film, ballet, and chamber music. His music was often characterized by a sense of place and a focus on the American landscape. Blumberg was also interested in sonic phenomena, such as sundogs, which he used as inspiration for his piece The Sunchild.

The piece consists of five short suite-like movements, all together forming a kind of rondino form. The odd-numbered movements are fast in tempo and light and the even-numbered movements are slower and more meditative.

The Sunchild is a part of a larger project that Copland was working on at the time of his death. The piece was completed posthumously by his colleague and protégé, James Paulikas.

Blumberg was born in 1938 in Brooklyn, New York, and grew up in the nearby town of Great Neck. He studied composition with Samuel Adler at the Juilliard School and later with Gunter Schuller at the University of California, Los Angeles. His music was widely performed by ensembles such as the Arditti String Quartet, the New York New Music Ensemble, and the Ensemble Intercontemporain.

Blumberg’s music was inspired by a variety of sources, including the natural world, American folklore, and the works of other composers. He was particularly interested in the phenomenon of sundogs, which are formed when light refracts through ice crystals in the atmosphere. Blumberg’s piece, The Sunchild, is a reflection of this phenomenon and explores the poetic and musical possibilities of sundogs.

The piece consists of five short movements, with each movement exploring a different aspect of the phenomenon. The first movement, “The Sunchild,” is a slow, lilting melody that evokes the beauty of the natural world. The second movement, “Sundogs,” is a more energetic and driving piece that explores the idea of light refracting through ice crystals. The third movement, “Sundog Lullaby,” is a soft and lyrical piece that evokes the gentle movements of sundogs. The fourth movement, “Sundog Suite,” is a series of short movements that explore the different shapes and sizes of sundogs. The fifth and final movement, “The Sunchild Revisited,” is a reflection of the piece as a whole and a sense of closure.

Blumberg’s music was often characterized by a sense of place and a focus on the American landscape. He was particularly interested in the natural world, and his works often explore the beauty and wonder of the world around us. The Sunchild is a reflection of this interest and a celebration of the natural beauty of the world. Blumberg’s work continues to be performed and studied today, and his legacy lives on through his music and the inspiration he has provided to other composers.
Aaron Copland was one of the most respected American classical composers of the 20th century. By incorporating popular forms of American music such as jazz and folk into his compositions, he created pieces both exceptional and innovative. As a spokesman for the advancement of American music, Copland made great strides in elevating it from European influence. Today, Copland's life and work continue to inspire many of America's young composers.

Born in Brooklyn, Copland was the child of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania. He first learned to play the piano from his older sister. At age 20, he left New York for the Summer School of Music for American Students at Fountainebleau, France, where he found a musical community unlike any he had known.

While in France, Copland met many of the important artists of the time, including the famous composer Sergei Koussevitzky. For Copland, jazz was the first genuine American major musical movement. From jazz he hoped to draw the inspiration for a new type of symphonic music, one that could distinguish itself from the music of Europe.

In the late 1920s, Copland's attention turned to popular music of other countries. He had moved away from his interest in jazz and began to concern himself with the audience for American classical music. He believed that classical music could eventually be as popular as jazz in America or folk music in Mexico. He worked toward this goal with both his music and his firm commitment to organizing and producing.

Along with his friend Roger Sessions, he began the Copland-Sessions concerts, dedicated to presenting the works of young composers. It was around this same time that his plans for an American music festival (similar to ones in Europe) materialized as the Yaddo Festival of American Music (1932). By the mid-1930s, Copland had become not only one of the most popular composers in the country but also a leader of the community of American classical musicians.

It was in 1935 with El Salon Mexicá that Copland began his most productive and popular years. Copland began composing for the movies and ballet. Among his most popular compositions for film are those for Of Mice and Men (1939), Our Town (1940), and The Heiress (1949), which won him an Academy Award for best score. He composed scores for a number of ballets, including two of the most popular of the time: Agnes DeMille's Rodeo (1942) and Martha Graham's Appalachian Spring (1944), for which he won the Pulitzer Prize. Probably the most important and successful composition from this time was his patriotic A Lincoln Portrait (1942). The piece for voice and orchestra presents quotes from Lincoln's writings narrated over Copland's musical composition.

Over the next 30 years he traveled throughout the world, conducting live performances and creating an important collection of recorded work. His generous work as a teacher at Tanglewood, Harvard, and the New School for Social Research gained him a following of devoted students. He traveled the world in an attempt to elevate the status of American music abroad, and to increase its popularity at home.

Copland's work continue to inspire many of America's young composers. He composed a vast quantity of music in a variety of genres and for many different ways of playing. His music has been performed and recorded by countless ensembles throughout the United States, by ensembles such as the Arditti String Quartet, the Cassatt String Quartet, Earplay, Octagon, Music Now, Tanosaki-Richards Duo, Ensemble Chiaroscuro, and the Empyrean Ensemble, and by soloists such as pianist Sarah Cahill, flutist Laurel Zucker, and percussionist Daniel Kennedy.

Stephen Blumberg is associate professor of composition and music theory at California State University, Sacramento, where he is the artistic director of the American Microski Music and Direct Sound. He received his B.M. and M.M. in composition from the University of Illinois, his D.M.A. in composition from UC Berkeley and his B.A. in mathematics. Blumberg has received awards, including the Walter Hinrichsen Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2004), the UC Berkeley Music Department's George Ladd Fête de Paris Fellowship (1991–93), two Nicola De Lorenzo Prizes for Composition (1990 and 1994), and a BM STUDENT COMPOSER AWARD (1987). His music has been performed in France, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and Brazil, as well as throughout the United States, by ensembles such as the Arditti String Quartet, Earplay, Octagon, Music Now, Tanosaki-Richards Duo, Ensemble Chiaroscuro, and the Empyrean Ensemble, and by soloists such as pianist Sarah Cahill, flutist Laurel Zucker, and percussionist Daniel Kennedy.

Stephen Blumberg is associate professor of composition and music theory at California State University, Sacramento, where he is the artistic director of the American Microski Music and Direct Sound. He received his B.M. and M.M. in composition from the University of Illinois, his D.M.A. in composition from UC Berkeley and his B.A. in mathematics. Blumberg has received awards, including the Walter Hinrichsen Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2004), the UC Berkeley Music Department's George Ladd Fête de Paris Fellowship (1991–93), two Nicola De Lorenzo Prizes for Composition (1990 and 1994), and a BM STUDENT COMPOSER AWARD (1987). His music has been performed in France, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and Brazil, as well as throughout the United States, by ensembles such as the Arditti String Quartet, Earplay, Octagon, Music Now, Tanosaki-Richards Duo, Ensemble Chiaroscuro, and the Empyrean Ensemble, and by soloists such as pianist Sarah Cahill, flutist Laurel Zucker, and percussionist Daniel Kennedy.

Sundags scored for clarinet, bassoon, horn, violin, viola, and cello was written for the Empyrean Ensemble. Sundags, or mock sats, are part of a broader category of unusual optical effects known as "parhelia"—derived from the Latin roots "par" ("part") and "hel" ("the sun")—caused by ice crystals in the atmosphere that act like tiny prisms, refraction the light that passes through them. Most commonly occurring in pairs, sundogs usually appear equidistant on either side of the sun and are most easily observed when the sun is low. Though not particularly rare, sundogs always have been regarded with awe. In planning for this piece, I came across a reference to this strange optical phenomenon and imagined an analogous sonic texture with the horn and bassoon as unsung rays being sung as sungody. Thus, the birdies represents the atmosphere. This {	extit{aural}} and the ominous mood associated with this spectacle became my point of departure.

Ross Roy's music has been performed and recorded by the Radio Orchestras of Hilversum and Slovakia, the Alexander and Arianna Quartets, Speculum Musicae, the New York New Music Ensemble, Segregat, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Sobo, Susan Delgach, Paul Hillier, and other ensembles. Much of his work is recorded on the GM, Centaur, New World, and Albany labels. He has earned recognition from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in the form of a 2005 Academy Award in Music and the Walter Hinrichsen Award. Other honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship, two Fromm Foundation commissions, Barlow-Koussevitzky commissions, and a Composition Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Bauer teaches composition and theory at UC Davis and has also taught at Stanford and Brandeis Universities. He attended the New England Conservatory and Brandeis, studying composition with John Heiss, Martin Boykan, Arthur Berger, and Luciano Bello (at Tanglewood).

Symbiosis, for clarinet doubling bass clarinet, bassoon, horn, violin, viola, and cello, was composed during the spring of 2009 for the Empyrean Ensemble. It was a pleasure writing it with the sound of Empyrean's wonderful players firmly in mind.

Webster's dictionary defines the "as the close union of two dissimilar organisms." These organisms, in this case musical ideas, morph at varying rates of speed and form new alliances. So alliances arise, flourish for a while, and shift.

As Symbiosis unfurls, musical continuities become more complex—phrases and internal sections get longer and transitions are blurred or entirely absent. Although there are clear sectional divisions discerned marked by changes in density, the story of this 12-minute piece can be likened to the continuous but not steady traversal of a large arch. I mean this as it pertains to large-scale form, rather than in terms of any long-range registral arc. The high, bright, annunciate music near the end of the piece is foregrounded by earlier tonal resonances. Symbiosis ends with the apogee moment, but the way that it comes to find itself there is not straightforward.
Eric Achen currently is principal horn with California Musical Theatre and the Sacramento Philharmonic, Opera, Ballet, and Choral Society orchestras. He also performs with the San Francisco Opera, Symphony, and Ballet orchestras, as well as with other local area groups. Achen is a member of the Empyrean Conservatory of Music, studied with Arunas Zahlus, and studied contemporary music with John Adams. Along with playing the horn, cycling, skiing, and cooking are favorite activities.

Icelandic violinist Hrabba Atladottir studied in Berlin, Germany, with Axel Gerhardt and in Klagenfurt, Austria, with Helfried Fister. After finishing her studies, she worked as a freelancing violinist in Berlin for five years, regularly playing with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie Orchester, and Deutsche Oper Berlin. She also participated in a festival tour with pop star Björk and German tour with violinist Négity Kennedy. In 2004, she moved to New York and continued to freelance, performing on a regular basis with the Metropolitan Opera, the New York City Opera, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, among other groups. She plays a great deal of new music, most recently with the Either/Ore ensemble in New York in connection with their Helmut Lachenmann festival.

Todd Brody, flute, has enjoyed a career of great variety. He was a member of the Sacramento Symphony for many years, where he was a frequent soloist on both flute and piccolo. He currently teaches flute and chamber music at UC Davis, where he performs with the Empyrean Ensemble. As a member of Empyrean, Earplay, and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Brody has participated in many world premieres and has been recorded on the Arabesque, Capstone, Centaur, CRG, Magnon, and New World labels. When not performing contemporary music, he often can be found in the orchestras of the San Francisco Opera and the San Francisco Ballet, and in other chamber and orchestral settings throughout Northern California. In addition to his activities as a performer and teacher, Brody is the director of the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of the American Composers Forum, an organization dedicated to linking communities, composers and performers. His passions include the making, playing, and enjoying of music.

Leighton Fong is a lifelong member of the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble and also serves as principal cello with the California Symphony. He plays regularly with the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players and the Empyrean Ensemble and is an active freelance in the Bay Area. He has taught at UC Berkeley since 1997. Fong studied at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the New England Conservatory, the Bern Conservatory in Switzerland, and the Royal Danish Conservatory in Copenhagen. He has joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 2006.

Conductor Matilda Hofman studied at Cambridge University, the Royal Academy of Music and the Eastman School of Music. She has worked in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom and was recently invited to conduct the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra at its New Music Festival, which was broadcast on CBC radio. In England, she is music director of the dynamic contemporary group Kreisler Ensemble. She has also worked with the BBC Philharmonic, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the Nash Ensemble, and Southbank Sinfonia, among others. Hofman is passionate about bringing music to underprivileged communities. While studying at Eastman, she was music director of the Eastman Outreach Orchestra. During her tenure, she developed a long-term program with the inner-city School of the Arts, which involved regular mentoring, education concerts, and side-by-sides. Her conducting mentors include David Zinman, Sir Colin Davis, Leonard Slatkin, Kurt Masur.

Peter Josheff, clarinet, has premiered hundreds of solo and chamber works by a wide range of composers, and has had numerous pieces composed for him. He has appeared on many recordings, concert series, and festivals, both nationally and internationally. He has performed with the Empyrean Ensemble, the Berkeley Symphony, the San Francisco Symphony, and San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Also as a composer, Josheff has been in residence at the MacDowell Colony and has been the recipient of grants from the American Composers Forum, Meet the Composer, and the Zellerbach Family Fund. His most recent commissions have grown out of a decade of collaboration with Bay Area poet Jaime Robles, including Memento (2003), Diary (2002), 3 Hands (2003), and House and Garden Tales (2003). The latter was premiered by Earplay at the Herbst Theater in San Francisco and featured bass-baritone Jeremy Galyn. Viola and Malles (2007) was commissioned by the Empyrean Ensemble and premiered by them in April 2007. Josheff’s most recent work, Inferno (2008), a chamber opera, was produced by the San Francisco Cabaret Opera in June 2009.

Composer and violist Gloria Justus is both a passionate performer of the classics and an innovative artist trying new approaches to music. She grew up in Houston, and from 1984–90 she attended the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Her principal violin teachers were Felice Jovich and Ruggiero Ricci, who has played with the Chamber Orchestra of Pittsburgh since 2004. From 1998 to 2008 she performed and toured internationally with the Philadelphia Orchestra as a substitute violinist. She is associated with groups in both Philadelphia and San Francisco, including Network for New Music, Orchestra 2001, the Relache Ensemble, the San Francisco Symphony, the Empyrean Ensemble, and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. She has recorded with many works by living composers. Justus has enjoyed collaborations with musicians from diverse backgrounds, modern dancers, and visual artists. Improvisation in various genres spurred her to create her own compositions. Some of these are written in the traditional manner for acoustic instruments, and others are digital sound collages incorporating electronics, field recordings, and surround sound concepts. Her first CD of original music, Four-Stringed Voice, is a collection of pieces for solo violin. Currently residing in San Francisco, Justus divides her time between San Francisco and Los Angeles, performing internationally with the Philip Glass Ensemble and Earplay, and performs regularly with other California ensembles, including the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the Left Coast Ensemble, Santa Cruz New Music Works, and the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players. She has worked extensively throughout Europe with Franklin’s Ensemble Modern and the Cologne experimental ensembles Musik Fabrik and Thorshaugen Ensemble.
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Eric Achen currently is principal horn with California Musical Theatre and the Sacramento Philharmonic, Opera, Ballet, and Choral Society orchestras. He also performs with the San Francisco Opera, Symphony, and Ballet orchestras, as well as with other local area groups. Achen is a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Conservatory of Music, studied with Ari Goldbergh, Xyriel, and studied contemporary music with John Adams. Along with playing the horn, cycling, skiing, and cooking are favorite activities.

Icelandic violinist Hábra Atlaðottir studied in Berlin, Germany, with Axel Gerhard and in Klagenfurt, Austria, with Helfried Fister. After finishing her studies, she worked as a freelancing violinist in Berlin for five years, regularly playing with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Deutsche Oper, and Deutsche Symphonie Orchester. Atlaðottir participated in a world tour with pop artist Björk and a German tour with violinist Nélig Kennedy. In 2004, she moved to New York and continued to freelance, performing on a regular basis with the Metropolitan Opera, the New York City Opera, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, among other groups. She performs a great deal of new music, most recently with the Either/Or ensemble in New York in connection with their Helmut Lachenmann festival.

Todd Brody, flute, has enjoyed a career of great variety: He was a member of the Sacramento Symphony for many years, where he was a frequent soloist on both flute and piccolo. He currently teaches flute and chamber music at UC Davis, where he performs with the Empyrean Ensemble. As a member of Empyrean, Earplay, and the San Francisco Contemporary Chamber Players, Brody has participated in many world premieres and has been recorded on the Arabesque, Capstone, CRI, Magnon, and New World labels. When not performing contemporary music, he can often be found in the orchestras of the San Francisco Opera and the San Francisco Ballet, and in other chamber and orchestral settings throughout Northern California. In addition to his activities as a performer and teacher, Brody is the director of the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of the American Composers Forum, an organization dedicated to linking communities, composers, performers, and audiences. He enjoys the making, playing, and enjoying music with colleagues and students.

Leighton Fong is a longtime member of the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble and also serves as principal cello with the California Symphony. He plays regularly with the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players and the Empyrean Ensemble and is an active freelancer in the Bay Area. He has taught at UC Berkeley since 1997. Fong studied at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the New England Conservatory, the Bern Conservatory of Music, Switzerland, and the Royal Danish Conservatory in Copenhagen. He joined the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 2006.

Conductor Matilda Hofman studied at Cambridge University, the Royal Academy of Music and the Eastman School of Music. She has worked in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom and was recently invited to conduct the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra at its New Music Festival, which was broadcast on CBC radio. In England, she is music director of the contemporary group Kreisler Ensemble. She has also worked with the BBC Philharmonic, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the Nash Ensemble, and Southbank Sinfonia, among others. Hofman is passionate about bringing music to underprivileged communities. While studying at Eastman, she was music director of the New Eastman Outreach Orchestra. During her tenure, she developed a long-term program with the inner-city School of the Arts, which involved regular mentoring, education concerts, and side-by-side conducting. Her conducting mentors have included David Zinman, St. Caidin Davis, Marzander, and Kurt Masur.

Peter Josheff, clarinet, has premiered hundreds of solo and chamber works by a wide range of composers, and has had numerous pieces composed for him. He has appeared on many recordings, concert series, and festivals, both nationally and internationally. He currently is a member of the Empyrean Ensemble, the Berkeley Contemporary Ensemble, the California Contemporary Orchestra, and San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Also active as a composer, Josheff has been in residence at the MacDowell Colony and has been the recipient of grants from the American Composers Forum, Meet the Composer, and the Zellerbach Family Fund. His most recent compositions have grown out of a decade of collaboration with Bay Area poet Jaime Robles, including Memento (2003), Diary (2002), 3 Hands (2003), and House and Garden Taps (2005). The latter was premiered by Earplay at the Herbst Theater in San Francisco and featured bass-baritone Jeremy Galyon. Violin and Maltese (2007) was commissioned by the Empyrean Ensemble and premiered by them in April 2007. Josheff’s most recent work, Infloro (2008), a chamber opera, was produced by the San Francisco Cabaret Opera in June 2009.

Composer and violinist Gloria Justen is both a passionate performer of the classics and an innovative artist trying new approaches to music. She grew up in Houston, and from 1984–90 she attended the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Her principal violin teachers were Fine and Janos Starker, with whom she played with the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Orchestra under Starker. From 1990 to 1998 she performed and toured internationally with the Philadelphia Orchestra as a substitute violinist. She is associated with groups in both Philadelphia and San Francisco, including Network for New Music, Orchestra 2001, the Relâche Ensemble, San Francisco Contemporary Chamber Players, and Earplay, and the Empyrean Ensemble and San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Justen has recorded many works by living composers. Justen has enjoyed collaborations with musicians from diverse backgrounds, modern dancers, and visual artists. Imprisonment in various genres spurred her to create her own compositions. Some of these are written in the traditional manner for acoustic instruments, and others are digital sound collages incorporating electronics, field recordings, and surround sound concepts. Her first CD of original music, Four-Stringed Voice, is a collection of pieces for solo violin. Currently residing in San Francisco, Justen divides her time between the Bay Area and touring internationally.

A champion of contemporary music in the United States and abroad, violinist Ellen Ruth Rose is currently a member of the Empyrean Ensemble and Earplay, and performs regularly with other California ensembles, including the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the Left Coast Ensemble, Santa Cruz New Music Works, and the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players. She has worked extensively throughout Europe with Frankfurt’s Ensemble Modern and the Cologne experimental ensembles Musik Fabrik and Thürmchen Ensemble.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Swedish composer Mika Pelo writes music for soloists, chamber ensembles, and orchestras—both with and without electronics. After finishing studies at Eastman, Pelo moved to New York to produce a doctoral degree in composition at Columbia University under the supervision of French composer Tristan Mural. Last fall, Pelo joined the music faculty at UC Davis and is co-directing the Empyrean Ensemble with fellow faculty member and composer Kurt Rohde. Pelo gained international attention with the string orchestra piece Appariz, which was nominated for the Gaidauna Prizes in Holland in 2005 and performed by the Dutch Radio Chamber Orchestra under the supervision of Peter Eotvos. Pelo’s music is performed on both sides of the Atlantic, including recent performances by the Swedish Radio Orchestra and the Manhattan Sinfonietta in May 2009. His new string quartet will be performed in Prague and then released on CD with the Swedish string quartet Nya Stenhallmarkvartetten. Pelo’s music is published by Peters Edition (Germany).

Composer and violist Kurt Rohde lives in San Francisco with his partner Tim Allen and labradoodle Ripley. Originally from New York, Kurt attended the Peabody Conservatory, the Curtis Institute, and SUNY Stony Brook. He is the recipient of the American Academy in Rome’s Elliot Carter Fellowship in Music Composition, the Berlin Prize, a Cloggenheim Fellowship, awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and commissions from the Fromm, Koussevitzky, Hansson, and Barlow Foundations and the National Endowment for the Arts. A member of the New Century Chamber Orchestra and the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, he is an associate professor of composition at UC Davis. His recent projects include a work for puppet theatre, a violin concerto for Axel Strauss, a large ensemble work for Southwest Chamber Music, a piano concerto for Sara Laimon and ensemble Sequitur, and a work for speaking pianist for Genevieve Lee (performed here by Ms. Lee in October).

ABOUT THE DIRECTORS

The Left Coast Ensemble, Santa Cruz New Music Works, and the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players. She has worked extensively throughout Europe with Frankfurt’s Ensemble Modern and the Cologne experimental ensembles Musik Fabrik and Thürmchen Ensemble.
Please consider supporting the Empyrean Ensemble. Our future performances, recording, commissions, and educational programs can be realized and expanded only through your generous contributions. Your fully tax-deductible donation is greatly appreciated. We also encourage matching grants. Please send your checks, payable to “UC Regents,” specifying “Empyrean Ensemble Fund” in the memo field, to Empyrean Ensemble Fund, Department of Music, One Shields Avenue, UC Davis, Davis, CA 95616. Thank you again for your support.

music.ucdavis.edu/empyrean

II. 24 January 2010, Studio Theatre, Mondavi Center
World premieres by John MacCallum, Pablo Ortiz, and Laurie San Martin. Also, a work by Peter Sculthorpe.

III. 18 April 2010, Studio Theatre, Mondavi Center
World premieres by Philippe Bodin, Jesper Nordin, and Eric Moe, featuring soprano Haleh Abghari, with TV, video, and chamber ensemble.

IV. 24 May 2010, Studio Theatre, Mondavi Center
World premieres by Hendel Almètus, Ching-Yi Wang, Ben Irwin, Scott Perry, Garrett Shatzer, and Liam Wade.