



SANTA BARBARA
CONTEMPORARY ARTS FORUM

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ARTIST BIOS



Courtesy Gary David Gold

November 9 - 10, 2007: 8-10 PM

The Common Sense Composers Collective is a San Francisco/New York based collective of eight composers: Dan Becker, John Halle, Ed Harsh, Melissa Hui, Marc Mellits, Belinda Reynolds, Randolph Wolff, and Carolyn Yarnell. Although well 'pedigreed', completing music programs at Yale, Harvard, Columbia, and Cornell, the group emerged from their schooling dissatisfied and restless. The impetus for the group's creation can best be described by the slogan, coined by a West Coast radio station: "If you don't like the news, go out and make some of your own." This catchphrase, along with the name Common Sense, helps to define the spirit of our group.

Now in the midst of their eleventh year, the group continues to explore alternative ways of conceiving, developing, and presenting new musical works. Each year the eight composers of Common Sense seek out and collaborate with a different performing group. They have since gone on to complete eight such collaborations, with the following diverse ensembles: San Francisco's Alternate Currents Performing Ensemble, the acclaimed Bay Area period instrument ensemble American Baroque, the innovative NYC duo Twisted Tutu, the Meridian Arts Ensemble, Albany Symphony's chamber orchestra, Dogs of Desire, the New Millennium Ensemble, and NYC's Essential Music. Their second CD, a recording of the works written for American Baroque was released in June 2002 on the Santa Fe New Music label. It received a Chamber Music America/WQXR 2003 Record Award. A third CD, with music performed by the New Millennium Ensemble, was released in 2006.



Courtesy Jeff Lim

The Robin Cox Ensemble

Violin, cello, clarinet, percussion, live electronics, and video... The Robin Cox Ensemble is truly unique. In its first seven years, this new music group with a one-of-a-kind instrumentation has already held over one hundred performances, collaborated with many prominent choreographers, composers, and video artists, and has released two critically acclaimed recordings.



January 18 - 19, 2008: 8-10 PM

Carla Kihlstedt is a founding member of both the Tin Hat Trio, (an accordion-violin-guitar trio whose two CDs are out on Capitol's Angel/EMI Records), and of the art-rock band Sleepytime Gorilla Museum. Most recently, Kihlstedt is working on a solo project, Two Foot Yard, using both her violin and voice simultaneously.

Kihlstedt has strong roots in classical music, studying at the Peabody, the San Francisco Conservatory, and the Oberlin Conservatories of Music. Kihlstedt's voice has become a fixture in San Francisco, where she continues to explore the range of her instrument in diverse settings.

In the past year Kihlstedt has performed as a violinist along side pianist, Awadagin Pratt and clarinetist, Don Byron. She is a frequent performer with Ear Play, the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Recently, Kihlstedt was a featured soloist on the MATA Festival in New York, and was commissioned by Merkin Hall in New York City to write and perform a duo for their emerging composer series (Zoom: Composers Close-Up) for clarinetist David Krakauer. She has contributed to the recordings and toured with Tom Waits, Mr. Bungle, and the Grassy Knoll. Her solo CD on Tzadik Records was released in 2003. Kihlstedt is interested in the influence that music, theater, and movement have on one another.



Courtesy Rob Thomas

February 15 - 16, 2008: 8-10 PM

Amy X Neuburg is best known for her wildly entertaining "avant-cabaret" performances for voice and live electronics, in which she uses an electronic drumset, a Real-Time looping machine, and an array of sounds and samples to construct complex, emotionally intense songs and stories. Neuburg's songs are diversely influenced and sung in various styles -- from rock to bel canto to avant-garde -- over a nearly four-octave vocal range.

A resident of Oakland, California, Neuburg has performed at clubs, theaters, festivals, schools and museums nationally and internationally, with frequent appearances in the Bay Area and New York. A classically trained singer, Neuburg has been featured in numerous contemporary works and recordings. Neuburg received undergraduate degrees from Oberlin Conservatory (Voice) and Oberlin College (Linguistics), and an M.F.A. in Electronic Music from the Mills College CCM. Awards and honors include Phi Beta Kappa, Pi Kappa Lambda, Oberlin Conservatory Honors, the Wieland Prize for Vocal Excellence; residencies with Music Omi, Nautilus Composers & Playwrights, Djerassi Resident Artists, and the Arts Centre of Christchurch (New Zealand); and grants from Arts International, the US Embassy New Zealand, Meet the Composer, the East Bay Community Fund, the Zellerbach Family Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. In 2005 Amy was featured in the book *The Art of Digital Music: 56 Visionary Artists & Insiders Reveal their Creative Secrets* (Backbeat Books), and she has been interviewed about her recording and looping techniques in *Electronic Musician*, *Guitar Player*, and other national and international music and industry publications. Her most recent CD *Residue* (2004) is on Other Minds records. Three previous CDs were released on the Racer label.



April 25 - 26, 2008: 8-10 PM

Robert Black's interests range from traditional orchestral and chamber music to solo recitals, collaborations with actors, music with computers and MIDI, movement-based improvisations with dancers, and live action-painting performances with painters. A tireless champion and promoter of new music, to date, he has commissioned new pieces from more than 50 composers and has a special interest in working with young or emerging composers. He has also collaborated or performed with a diverse number of musicians from D.J. Spooky to Meredith Monk to Cecil Taylor.

Robert regularly presents recitals throughout North and South America, Europe, Australia, and Japan, appearing at major festivals (Takefu International Music Festival, Japan; Festival de Artes de Itu, Brazil; the Holland Festival; the Helsinki Festival; NYFD, Estonia; etc.), on radio and television broadcasts (VPRO, Holland; NPR, United States; CBC, Canada; etc.) and as artist-in-residence (American Center, Paris; the Banff Centre, Canada; Studio P.A.S.S., NYC). In addition to solo performances, Robert performs

with the Bang On A Can All Stars (New York City's hard hitting new music ensemble), Basso Bongo (an electronic duo, with percussionist Amy Knoles), Yoshiko Chuma and The School of Hard Knocks (a post-modern dance company), and Kathryn Walker and the Music Theater Group.

Robert received his formal education at the Hartt School and at the University of North Texas and cites bassist Gary Karr, composer James Sellars and pianist Yvar Mikhashoff as his biggest influences. Robert was Chair of the 2001 and 2003 International Society of Bassists (ISB) Composition Competition and joined the ISB Board of Directors in June 2001. He also serves on the Board of Directors for All Aboard, Inc., a Connecticut mass transit advocacy group.