



FEBRUARY 2011

CONCERT REVIEW BY AMAR CHAUDHARY / CATSYNTH | DEC 9

## Sylvano Bussotti and sfSoundGroup at SFMOMA

At the beginning of month, I attended a retrospective concert of music by the composer Sylvano Bussotti, performed by members of sfSoundGroup at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA). Bussotti is an Italian avant-garde composer whose body of work transcends into visual media and film as well. His music itself is very visual, and his graphical scores are works of art that combine standard music notation with graphical symbols, spatial positioning on the page and text instructions that inform the musicians on how to interpret and perform the piece. They are also known for being difficult to play, but sfSoundGroup is up to the challenge.

The performance took place in the museum's expansive atrium, which was bathed in red light, with the musicians in the center and the audience orbiting around them. The space was bounded by two pianos, mysteriously set apart.

In the few minutes before the concert began, I was able to check out a couple of the scores up close.

This score is for the piece *Phrase a trois* for string trio (violin, viola and cello). I also was able to view the score for *Geographie Francaise* alongside the percussion setup:



Unlike many graphical scores, which often allow for wide interpretation of visual elements and improvisation, these seemed more designed to describe precise instructions to the performer.

Bussotti himself performed in two of the pieces. For *Geographie Francaise*, he played piano and incanted stark vocal lines in French, alongside featured soloist **Laura Bohn** and percussionist **Kjell Nordeson**. I quite liked this piece for its starkness, conceptual simplicity (i.e., centering around the title itself) and the disparate texture of the instrumentation: voice, piano and percussion. One does not really hear traditional rhythms or melodies, even of the early-twentieth century "atonal" sense, but rather directly on the various sound, musical and narrative concepts, more like an abstract theater piece.

Bussotti also performed in *In Memoriam Cathy Berberian*. Here, his voice was more central to the piece, and he spoke in Italian in more expressive tones. This is not surprising, given the subject of the piece was Cathy Berberian, his longtime "friend and muse".

Different personnel from sfSoundGroup were featured in different pieces, ranging from the full nine-member cohort in *Autotono* to a solo performance by **Matt Ingalls** on clarinet in one of Bussotti's more recent pieces, *Variatione Berio* composed in honor of Luciano Berio who died in 2007. In the performance, Ingalls takes advantage of the portability of his instrument to move freely about the space. In doing so, he was able to employ spatial effects on the timbre of the clarinet within the music, which was filled with lots of empty space punctuated with occasional loud tones.

The sparseness of the music and performer's motion did in fact remind me a bit of Berio's *Sequenzas*, and also made me think of the parallels between the theatricality of Berio's music as compared to Bussotti's. They were contemporaries in Italian avant-garde music – and as another link, Cathy Berberian was Berio's wife in the 1950s and early 1960s.

The concert concluded with a performance of *Tableaux vivants avant La Passion selon*

*Sade* (1964) for two prepared pianos. This was probably my favorite of the evening (along with *Geographie Francaise*). The pianos that were separated up to now were joined together in the center of the space. The two pianists (**Christopher Jones** and **Ann Yi**) playing cooperatively on a single piano, operating both the keyboard and elements within the instrument's body. Their bodies often crossed paths and intertwined as they attempted to perform their respective parts – the motion seemed both chaotic and intimate at the same time. As the piece progressed, they spread out to both pianos – and in the final movement, they close their scores and attempt to play from memory. Throughout, the music was filled with intense, and sometimes violent energy especially when playing the interior of the piano. I contrast this to their very calm and contemplative nature of John Cage's better known prepared-piano pieces. It fun to watch, and provided for a dramatic finish to the concert.

The concert was preceded by a screening of Bussotti's 1967 silent *Rara* that included live piano accompaniment by Bussotti himself. The music, which was based on live interpretation of a graphical score in which he moved about at will, did not strictly follow the events and actions on the screen, but rather provided more of a backdrop and a counterpoint to images that would have otherwise been rather jarring to watch to watch in silence. [However, the music as performed did have a narrative structure of its own, moving between very abstract discrete tones and more idiomatic and even tonal sections.] The film itself consisted mostly of "film portraits" of figures from the Italian avant-garde – mostly images of men (though Cathy Berberian is also featured) in a variety of sexual and emotionally uncomfortable poses, including countless shots of tear-streaked male faces. As such, the film did not really hold my attention, although I did like the abstract imagery and close-ups of the musical score, as well as the play on the letters of the title R-A-R-A itself, that were used alongside the more homoerotic portraits. And certainly it was interesting to see the composer and filmmaker respond musically to his own work after so many years. ●

# February 2011

## About this thing

The Transbay Creative Music Calendar is a volunteer-produced free monthly journal for non-commercial creative new music in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to our comprehensive listing of upcoming events, we publish articles and reviews about local music and the people who create it. We talk about a wide range of modern music, including: experimental, improvised, noise, electronic, free-jazz, outrock, 21st century compositions, and sonic art. Each month, 1,000 copies of the Transbay are mailed to individuals and hand-delivered to over 45 performance venues and public locations throughout the Bay Area. Contact us for a free subscription.

## Volunteers needed right away!

The Transbay needs editorial and production staff, perhaps combined in the same person. If you have writing and digital print skills, please contact us at [mail@transbaycalendar.org](mailto:mail@transbaycalendar.org).

## Please support this work!

Your kind donations help keep the Transbay alive and growing. Please send checks [payable to "Transbay Music Calendar"] to:

Transbay Accounting  
106 Fairmount Avenue  
Oakland, CA 94610

Information about subscription, submissions, advertising and archives is at [transbaycalendar.org](http://transbaycalendar.org).

## BE MOST WELL-ROUNDED UNTO EACHOTHER

## dude see also

[anouman.net/sfshows/](http://anouman.net/sfshows/) [scraper site]  
[creepsville.com/cal](http://creepsville.com/cal) [noise and weird music]  
[dardardar.org](http://dardardar.org) [shows under \$12]  
[jon.luini.com/thelist/](http://jon.luini.com/thelist/) [still!]  
[theiroldershitwasbetter.com](http://theiroldershitwasbetter.com) [it's true]  
[zumonline.org](http://zumonline.org) [from the mind of geo. chen]

[www.boh-design.com](http://www.boh-design.com)  
**GRAPHIC DESIGN**  
CD PACKAGING • POSTERS • FLYERS

# the transbay Creative Music Calendar

## Wednesday February 2

Kingman's Ivy Room • 9pm donation  
Light A Fire: Don't Forget Your Towel Quartet (Tom Djill/Karl Evangelista/Phillip Greenleaf/Tim Perkis), Lost Planet (Steve Clarke/Len Paterson/Mark Weinstein/Dave Slusser), Pink Canoes (Travis Johns/Noah Phillips/Aram Shelton/Zachary Watkins)

## Thursday February 3

Luggage Store New Music Series • 8pm \$6-10  
8pm Aloonaluna - electronics/looping  
9pm Nihil Communication

## Friday February 4

Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAM/PFA) • 7:30pm \$7  
Acclaimed composer Paul Drescher and his frequent collaborator Joel Davel bring invented instruments—works of art in themselves—to Gallery B for an evening of original music ranging from raucous to meditative. Drescher's inventions include the brand new Hurdy Grande, a giant motorized hurdy gurdy, and the visually stunning Quadrachord.

## Saturday February 5

Community Music Center • 7pm \$5  
Bottesini Presents: The Paul Riola Quintet (Paul Riola: Saxophones, Glen Whitehead: Trumpet, Mark Clifford: Vibes, Scott Walton: Bass, Garth Powell: Drums) With: Moe! Staiano and Janet Scanlon

CNMAT • 8pm free  
Composer, Neil Rolnick and Pianist, Kathleen Supove: Program includes Faith (2009) for piano and computer [25min], Digits (2005) for piano, computer and video projection [11 min], MONO Prelude (2009) for laptop computer and speaking voice [11 min] and other works selected by Ms. Supove TBA

Mills College Concert Hall • 8pm \$15/10  
Mills Performing Group: HOMAGE TO THE MUSIC OF ROBERT ERICKSON. With Christine Abraham, soprano; Gloria Justen, violin; William Winant, percussion; Steed Cowart, conductor.

## Monday February 7

Mills College Ensemble Room • 7:30pm free  
Mills Music Now Songlines Series: Trombonist Jen Baker performs a set of pieces that highlight the trombone as a versatile musical voice. Ms. Baker has performed internationally in ensembles ranging from orchestras to free jazz groups. Her solo multiphonic project, "Lyrical Vibrations," has been performed around the country and can be heard on a solo album entitled BLUE DREAMS.

Makeout Room • 8pm free  
Zaharako-Perney-Levis Trio: (Sarah Jo Zaharako-violin / Eric Perney - bass / Jason Levis - drums); Vijay Anderson's Touch and Go Sextet: (Aaron Bennett - saxophone / Sheldon Brown - saxophone / Ben Goldberg - clarinet / Darren Johnston - trumpet / Lisa Mezzacappa - bass / Vijay Anderson - drums); Anteater: (Jacob Zimmerman - alto Sax / Kim Cass - bass / Sam Ospovat - drums)

Kingman's Ivy Room • 9pm donation  
David Boyce - Phillip Greenleaf tenor saxophone duo; Ross Hammond - Noah Phillips guitar duo

## Tuesday February 8

Tuesdays at Tom's Place • 7:30pm Donations Accepted  
Tuesdays at Tom's Place Presents Fred Frith - guitar; Phillip Greenleaf - tenor saxophone; Gino Robair - percussion

Uptown • 9pm free  
The OAO presents: Daniel Popsicle, Jen Baker Group, & Rob Ewing Group

## Wednesday February 9

Meridian Gallery • 7:30pm \$10/5  
Meridian Music: Composers in Performance presents Natural History, a new piece created and performed by dancer Heloise Gold and Gusto Winds May Exist, a duo featuring Tom Bickley (recorder) and Nancy Beckman (shakuhachi). Natural History is inspired from Pliny the Elder's 1st century text de Natura Historia, and his comments about birds and insects. Woven throughout the piece will be movement and sound connected with traditions of Qi Gong, Tai Chi and Deep Listening, using vocal, instrumental and electronic sounds, surprising costumes, lighting effects, and a range of celebratory effects from solemn to humorous and back and forth.

Mama Buzz Cafe • 8pm \$5  
Evander Music Presents Jen Baker - trombone; Phillip Greenleaf - saxophones; Ava Mendoza - guitar; Lisa Mezzacappa - bass, in various duo, trio formations and quartet

## Thursday February 10

Luggage Store New Music Series • 8pm \$6-10 general; \$5 students/seniors  
An evening of healing music featuring Jen Baker  
8:15 pm: Jen Baker solo set  
8:45 pm: Ensemble(s) arranged by Jen

## Friday February 11

Meridian Gallery • 8pm \$10/5  
Meridian presents a performance by koto trio

Lantana featuring Shoko Hikage, Kanoko Nishi, and Noriko Tsuboi. Pieces will include a traditional koto duo and new compositions by Hyo-sni Na and Tadao Sawai. Koto ensemble Lantana is an exciting new performance group with a fresh approach to the Japanese koto and sangen (three-string).

## Monday February 14

Kingman's Ivy Room • 9pm donations  
The Lost Trio Plays For Lovers - Celebrate Valentine's Day with your sweetie and The Lost Trio: Phillip Greenleaf - tenor saxophone; Dan Seamans - bass; Tom Hassett - Drums

## Thursday February 17

Luggage Store New Music Series • 8pm \$6-10  
Full Moon Concerts: Quickening Moon  
8pm Pryzm - Xahnee G solo guitar/bass  
9pm Heftpistole Chamber Ensemble

## Friday February 18

Jazzschool • 8pm \$12  
This adventurous quartet "The Deconstruction Of What You Know" creates new and striking collisions of sound through spontaneous composition. Tenor saxophonist Josh Allen has worked with Donald Bailey, Jeff Chambers and Cecil Taylor among others; his Deconstruction Orchestra has had a residency at the Flux 53 theater since 2009. Guitarist Henry Kaiser is a modern guitar icon, known for his collaboration with the Grateful Dead, among many others, as well as his own prolific and inventive compositions. Drummers Timothy Orr and William Winant bring a wide range of stylistic influences; the former equally adept in jazz, punk and zydeco, the latter a classically trained percussionist who has collaborated with Iannis Xanakis and Morton Feldman. The evening begins with a solo set by guitarist John Schott.

## Saturday February 19

Trinity Chapel • 8pm \$15/10  
Entirely freely improvised, RTD3's music relies on a rapport seasoned over the many years the three musicians have performed together in various groups. RTD3 continually explores new sonic possibilities, but with a refined sense of interaction and phrasing, often utilizing quiet and subtle nuances.

## Sunday February 20

Studio 1510 • 8pm \$6-10  
Robert W. Getz from Philly! - solo Piano + Scott R. Looney and guests

**the persistent caveat**  
Schedules are subject to change, and the reasons can be totally appalling, flying in the face of human reason.  
Please confirm details provided in this publication  
by visiting [transbaycalendar.org](http://transbaycalendar.org).

## Monday February 21

Kingman's Ivy Room • 9pm donations  
The Ivy Room and Evander Music Presents the Monday Night Living Jazz Series - 9 PM: Phillip Greenleaf - tenor saxophone; John Shiurba - guitar; Spirit - drums - 10 PM: Darren Johnston - trumpet; Karl Evangelista - guitar; Doug Stuart - bass; Shaun Lowecki - drums

## Wednesday February 23

Kingman's Ivy Room • 9pm donations  
Active Music Series at the Ivy Room: Blip Band: Will Northlich Redmond, electric kalimba, udu drum, and ghaita, Charles Gorczynski, soprano saxophone; Karl Evangelista, guitar; Marco Saenz, bass; Jordan Glenn, drums. Quintet: Aaron Bennett, Aram Shelton, saxophones; Doug Stuart & Scott Brown, basses; Shawn Lowecki, drums. Quartet: Josh Smith, saxophone; Michael Coleman, keyboard; Kurt Kotheimer, bass; Hamir Atwal, drums.

## Thursday February 24

Studio 1510 • 8pm \$6-10  
Robert W. Getz from Philly! - solo Piano + Scott R. Looney and guests

## Sunday February 27

SIMM Series • 7:30pm \$10/8  
7:30 PM Tri-Cornered Tent Show  
8:30 PM "Polarity Emmo" Motoko Honda & with flutist, vocalist Emily Hay

## Monday February 28

Mills College Ensemble Room • 7:30pm free  
Mills Music Now Songlines Series: An evening of solo piano compositions and improvisations presented by Canadian born pianist, composer and improviser Dana Reason. Ms. Reason is a Ph.D and scholarship recipient at the University of California San Diego where she studied with George E. Lewis and Anthony Davis. She currently teaches at Oregon State University in Corvallis.

Herbst Theatre • 8pm  
San Francisco Contemporary Music Players: Tradition, Influence, Evolution  
Music by: György Ligeti, Du Yun, Ronald Bruce Smith, and Brian Current

Kingman's Ivy Room • 9pm donations  
The Ivy Room and Evander Music Presents: The Lost Trio - Phillip Greenleaf - tenor saxophone; Dan Seamans - bass; Tom Hassett - Drums

## venue information

**Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive**  
2626 Bancroft Way, Berkeley  
**CNMAT**  
1750 Arch Street, Berkeley  
**Community Music Center**  
544 Capp Street, San Francisco  
**Herbst Theatre**  
401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco  
**Ivy Room**  
860 San Pablo Avenue, Albany  
**Jazzschool**  
2087 Addison Street, Berkeley  
**Luggage Store Gallery**  
1007 Market Street, San Francisco [at 6th]  
**Makeout Room**  
22nd Street, San Francisco [at Mission]  
**Mama Buzz Cafe**  
2318 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland [at 23rd]  
**Meridian Gallery**  
535 Powell Street, San Francisco  
**Mills College Ensemble Room**  
5000 MacArthur Blvd. Oakland  
**Musicians Union Hall**  
116 9th Street, San Francisco [at Mission]

**NOTA THE MILK BAR at The Biscuit Factory**  
81st and San Leandro, Oakland  
**Old First Church**  
1751 Sacramento Street, San Francisco  
**Red Poppy Art House**  
2698 Folsom, San Francisco  
**San Francisco Conservatory of Music**  
50 Oak Street, San Francisco  
**Southside Theater**  
Fort Mason Center, San Francisco  
**Subterranean Arthouse**  
2179 Bancroft Way, Berkeley  
**Studio 1510**  
1510 8th Street, Oakland  
**Tom's Place**  
3111 Deakin Street, Berkeley  
**Trinity Chapel**  
2320 Dana Street, Berkeley  
**Uptown**  
1928 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland [at 19th St ]  
**Yoshi's Oakland**  
510 Embarcadero, West Oakland

## Outsound Presents & Luggage Store Gallery co-curate

### LSG New Music Series

1007 Market St. 3rd Floor  
@ 6th Street  
San Francisco Ca

### February 3

8 pm: Aloonaluna - guitar/voice/looping  
9 pm: Nihil Communication - electronic mayhem

### February 10

An evening of healing music featuring Jen Baker (NY)

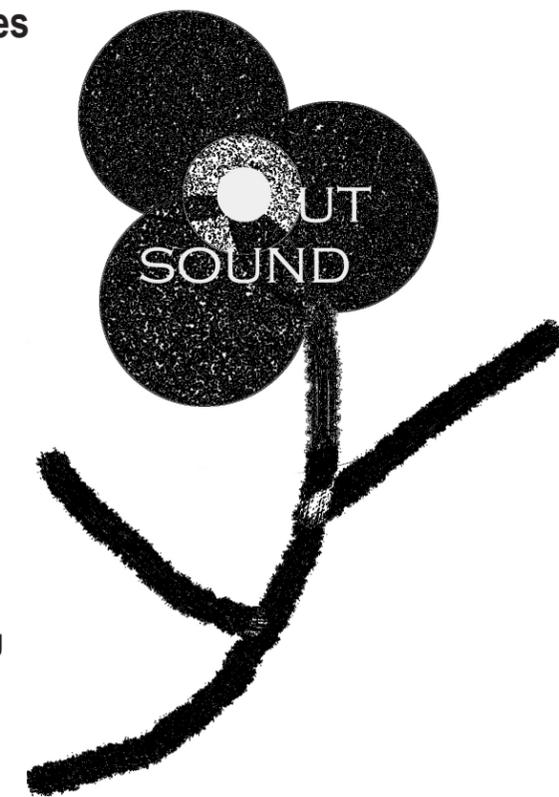
8:15pm Jen Baker solo set  
8:45 pm: Ensemble(s) arranged by Jen

### February 17

Full Moon Concerts: Quickening Moon  
8pm Pryzm  
9pm Heftpistole Chamber Ensemble

### February 24

8pm Blood Wedding Danishta Rivero, Chuck Johnson  
9pm Vertex (Petter Vågan & Tor Haugerud) Norway



[www.outsound.org](http://www.outsound.org)