



35th annual  
**festival of new  
american music**  
november 1 - 10, 2012

**Festival Ensemble:**  
**David A. Wells, bassoon**  
**and Friends**

John Cozza, piano  
Thomas Derthick, double bass  
Sandra Moats McPherson, clarinet



SACRAMENTO  
STATE

**Sacramento State**  
**Music Recital Hall**  
**November 9, 2012**  
**8:00 pm**

## PROGRAM

Sonata for Bassoon and Piano (1997) . . . . . André Previn

*I. With energy*

*II. Slowly*

*III. Vivace, very rhythmic*

David A. Wells, bassoon

John Cozza, piano

Kai-'r/xhqt(i)s (2007)<sup>☆</sup> . . . . . David Dies

*I. Kai-'r*

*II. xhqt(i)s*

David A. Wells, bassoon

Low Agenda (2007) . . . . . Gernot Wolfgang

David A. Wells, bassoon

Thomas Derthick, double bass

INTERMISSION

Desert Rains (2012)★ . . . . .Stephen Blumberg

Sandra Moats McPherson, clarinet  
David A. Wells, bassoon

a firefly in the belly (2007)★ . . . . .Erik Spangler

David A. Wells, bassoon

★*World premiere*  
★*West Coast premiere*

## PROGRAM NOTES

### DAVID A. WELLS, BASSOON, AND FRIENDS NOVEMBER 9, 2012

#### ANDRÉ PREVIN: SONATA FOR BASSOON AND PIANO (1997)

ANDRÉ PREVIN began his musical studies in his native Germany at the age of six. His family emigrated to Los Angeles in 1939, having fled Nazi Germany the preceding year. From his earliest years as a professional musician, Previn has led a multifaceted career. He has performed extensively as a concert pianist, and has also appeared on dozens of jazz records, both as leader and as a sideman. Previn made his conducting debut with the Saint Louis Symphony in 1962, and since then has held principal posts with the Houston Symphony, London Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony and Royal Philharmonic orchestras. His interest in composition was kindled while working as an orchestrator for MGM Studios. Accordingly most of his early works were film scores, four of which won Academy Awards. His production of art music has increased during the last twenty years or so, coinciding with a reduction in his conducting schedule. Recent premieres include *Owls* (Boston Symphony, 2008), *Brief Encounter* (Houston Grand Opera, 2009), and a number of solo and double concertos written for violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter. Previn is the recipient of the Glenn Gould Prize and Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Kennedy Center, the London Symphony Orchestra, and The National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences.

Previn wrote his Sonata for bassoon and piano in 1997 and dedicated it to Nancy Goeres, principal bassoonist of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Previn and Goeres gave the work its premiere in April 1999 at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. The three-movement work is full of syncopation, blues scales, and other jazzy elements. The first movement ("With energy") juxtaposes driving common-time lines with bars of 3/8, 5/8, and 7/8 that throw the groove slightly off kilter. A slower, more lyrical middle section provides a brief interlude before a return to the opening material. The second movement is a beautiful song-like slow waltz. Occasional outbursts from the piano and a brief agitated section for bassoon allow darker emotions to show through the otherwise placid character. The final movement is the most overtly jazzy of the three, melodically, rhythmically, and harmonically. Like the first movement, it is fast with a slower contrasting middle section.

## **DAVID DIES: *Kai-'r/xhqt(i)s* (2007)**

The music of composer **DAVID DIES** (b. 1972) has been performed in venues around the world, including London, Lima, New York City, Chicago, Lenox MA, Ithaca NY, and Madison WI, where he has been both student and teacher. Sopranos Mimmi Fulmer and Judith Kellock, cellist Jakob Omsky, pianist Christopher Taylor and bassoonist Marc Vallon, among others, are featured on a recent recording, *agevolmente*, released on the Albany label. Other notable performances have been presented by soprano Catherine Verrilli, guitarist Lynn McGrath, percussionist Nathaniel Bartlett, soprano Denise Ritter, soprano Pam Igelsrud, the University of Chicago New Music Ensemble, and the UW-Madison Contemporary Chamber Ensemble. Recent works include a string quartet premiered in London, an unaccompanied setting of e.e. cummings, *un(bee)mo*, written for and recorded by sopranos Mimmi Fulmer and Judith Kellock, and a cello suite of “songs without words” intimately tied to Sephardic poetry, premiered at the Polish Consulate’s Residence in New York, NY. His *Sonetos* were premiered in March, 2008, by Lynn McGrath at the XIX Festival Internacional de Guitarra in Lima, Peru. Dies currently teaches music theory and composition at Lawrence University in Appleton, WI.

*Kai-'r and xhqt(i)s* are a pair of pieces written for Marc Vallon, professor of bassoon at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The composer writes of them: “These are a diptych of pieces, a pairing of irrational and rational, conceptually drawing on baroque practice of pairing free pieces with tightly conceived pieces, like a toccata and fugue. *Kai-'r* was written ‘irrationally,’ meaning that all the decisions in the piece were made ‘intuitively.’ When it was time for a title, my ‘intuition’ was to give it this title. It rhymes with ‘tire.’ *xhqt(i)s* was written rationally, that is with a great deal of constraint and fairly systematically. The central constraint is a repeated five pitch cell, with one (or two) ‘interloping’ pitches added per repetition. The pitches of the cell are eventually replaced with pitches a tritone away. The title is pronounced ZAHK-tees, with a very breathy ‘ah.’ They can be played in either order, though the *tessitura* of *xhqt(i)s* makes it likely it will usually follow *Kai-'r*.”

## **GERNOT WOLFGANG: *LOW AGENDA* (2007)**

Born in Bad Gastein, Austria in 1957, **GERNOT WOLFGANG** currently resides in Los Angeles. He has received commissions from the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Verdehr Trio and Michigan State University, Martha’s Vineyard Chamber Music Society, CSU Northridge, Music from Salem (NY), Oesterreichische Kammer-symphoniker (Austria), Jazz

Bigband Graz (Austria), and the Los Angeles based chamber music series Pacific Serenades and Chamber Music Palisades. As a guitarist with the Austrian jazz ensemble “The QuARTet” he has recorded two critically acclaimed CDs and toured extensively throughout Europe.

From 1990-93 Gernot was a lecturer for Jazz Composition and Harmony at the University of Music in Graz. He has guest lectured and held masterclasses at UCLA, the University of Music in Vienna, the festival Instrumenta Verano in Oaxaca, Mexico and the Garth Newel Music Center in Warm Springs, VA. Gernot has received awards, grants and scholarships from the American Composers Forum, American Music Center, the Austrian Ministry for Education and the Arts, the Austrian Ministry for Science and Research, Austro Mechana, Berklee College of Music, Billboard Magazine, BMI, the Fulbright Commission and the State of Tyrol, Austria.

Gernot is a graduate of the program “Scoring for Motion Pictures and TV” at USC, and holds degrees from Berklee College of Music in Boston and the University of Music in Graz, Austria. He is active in the film and TV music industry as a composer, arranger and orchestrator. From 2005-2008 he was composer in residence with the Beverly Hills International Music Festival, curating the concert series “Voices of Hollywood” (featuring the chamber music of film/TV composers) and “Music of Austria”. He currently co-produces the concert series “Improvisatory Minds: Chamber Music composed by Jazz Musicians” at Vitello’s in Studio City, CA.

*Low Agenda* is part of a set of four duets by Gernot Wolfgang, each pairing the bassoon with a different stringed instrument. They are part of a subset of his works that he calls “groove-oriented chamber music,” and were written for his wife, bassoonist Judith Farmer. The theme of *Low Agenda*, which appears at both the beginning and end of the work, is split into three parts. In the first, the two instruments largely play together in octave unisons. The second consists of a soaring bassoon melody with a bass groove played mostly using harmonics. The final section is a more rock-oriented groove with slapped *pizzicato* in the bass. Between the statements of the theme are written-out solos for each instrument. The bassoon solo shows the influence of late saxophonist Michael Brecker.

### **STEPHEN BLUMBERG: DESERT RAINS (2012)**

**STEPHEN BLUMBERG** is a composer of music primarily for acoustic instruments who has also collaborated with visual artists to create soundtracks for video and installation work, sometimes including digital electronics. His

music is vivid and colorful, with multilayered textures and intricate rhythmic structures, driven by an underlying instinct for emotion and drama, and shaped by an intuitive sense of form.

Blumberg has received numerous awards including the Walter Hinrichsen Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2004), the UC Berkeley Music Department's George Ladd Prix de Paris Fellowship (1991-93), two Nicola De Lorenzo Prizes for Composition (1990 and 1994), and a BMI Student Composer Award (1987). He has also been the recipient of a MetLife Creative Connections grant from the Meet The Composer Foundation (2009), and a Subito Grant from the American Composers Forum (2005).

Music by Stephen Blumberg has been performed in Italy, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Brazil, as well as throughout the United States, by ensembles such as the Arditti String Quartet, the Cassatt String Quartet, Earplay, the Empyrean Ensemble, Octagon, Music Now, Tanosaki-Richards Duo, Ensemble Chiaroscuro, and Citywater, and soloists including pianist Sarah Cahill, harpsichordist Jory Vinikour, flutist Laurel Zucker and percussionist Daniel Kennedy. In 2011 he was commissioned to compose a new work for the California Youth Symphony, *Subterranean River*, which was premiered in November 2011 at the Mondavi Center for the Arts at UC Davis.

Blumberg is an Associate Professor of composition and music theory at California State University, Sacramento, where he also co-directs the Festival of New American Music.

"*Desert Rains*," writes Blumberg, "was written after a road trip through desert regions in the American southwest. Sometimes driving through the desert we wouldn't see another car for hours and were struck by the sheer scale of the landscape and our comparative insignificance.

"The melancholy opening section of the work—a slow melody in solo clarinet echoed over a wide interval by the bassoon, in canon—depicts the barren, timeless expanse of the Nevada high desert, the Great Basin, once an ancient inland sea. Though now largely absent, water has formed these desert plains.

"The trip took us through Yosemite on Tioga Pass, emerging on the eastern side of the Sierra to Mono Lake, which Mark Twain, in *Roughing*

*It*, a chronicle of his travels in the West, described as a 'solemn, silent, sailless sea . . . lonely tenant of the loneliest spot on earth . . . so off the usual routes of travel, so difficult to get at that only men content to endure the roughest life will consent to take upon themselves the discomforts of such a trip.'

"The middle section of the work, in quicker tempo, evokes a dramatic and sudden downpour experienced in the eastern Sierra heading south on U.S. 395 to Bishop. The pounding torrent stopped just as suddenly as it began, giving way to a magnificent double rainbow. The final section returns to the opening melody, this time in the bassoon shadowed by clarinet, suggesting the vast emptiness fading off toward the distant horizon.

"In appreciation of the strange and primordial beauty of the southwestern deserts I've composed *Desert Rains* as part of the campus-wide One World Initiative, under the theme of water. Despite its seeming emptiness, the desert is a varied and evolving ecosystem, bursting with life, and dependent upon natural strategies for storage of sparse water. The storm in *Desert Rains* is a metaphor for the fragility of life and the preciousness of water in all environments.

*Desert Rains* was composed for, and is dedicated to, clarinetist Sandra McPherson and bassoonist David A. Wells."

### **ERIK SPANGLER: A FIREFLY IN THE BELLY (2007)**

**ERIK SPANGLER** (a.k.a. DJ Dubble8) is a composer and electronic musician living in Baltimore, Maryland. Engaged equally with ensemble improvisation, live sample-based mixing, guerrilla community sound art, hybrid electronica production, and notated chamber music, Spangler aims to dissolve cultural boundaries while drawing all corners of inspiration into cohesive sound images. Autobiographical audio artifacts, field recordings and found sounds share equal space with newly composed material. He is co-founder of Mobtown Modern music series and Baltimore Boom Bap Society, a series focusing on collaborative improvisation and genre-bending within the framework of hip hop.

Bassoonist Dana Jessen commissioned *a firefly in the belly* in 2007 as a piece for bassoon and DJ. She and Erik Spangler (DJ Dubble8) premiered the piece that year at Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire. When, like tonight, the composer/DJ is not present, the piece can be performed with a recorded version of the electronics. The bassoon part uses conventional



notation for roughly the first half of the piece. Following this, the performer begins a three-stage improvisation within a framework dictated by the composer. Among other things, the performer is to gradually introduce new sounds through extended techniques, recapitulate elements from the first few pages of the score, and to embellish key notes in those phrases through the use of microtones.

## **PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES**

**DAVID A. WELLS** earned the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he studied with Marc Vallon; his dissertation is an expansive history and discography of the bassoon in jazz. He also holds degrees in bassoon performance from Arizona State University and Florida State University. In addition to his students at California State University, Sacramento, Dr. Wells teaches at CSU Stanislaus and San Joaquin Delta College. He is also the Operations Director of the Meg Quigley Vivaldi Competition, a biennial competition for young women bassoonists from the Americas, and co-hosted the 2012 competition at the University of the Pacific.

Dr. Wells serves as principal bassoonist of the Townsend Opera Players and the Merced Symphony, and performs often with other orchestras around Northern California. He can also be heard playing bassoon and clarinet in the gypsy swing quintet Hot Club Faux Gitane. His past performance activities have been widely varied, ranging from renaissance and baroque music on period instruments (shawms, recorders, baroque bassoons and oboes) and avant-garde music on electric bassoon with Downbeat Means Attack. In addition to his career as a bassoonist, Wells also devotes time to music scholarship. He earned an M.A. in Historical Musicology from UW-Madison, and contributed nearly a dozen articles to the forthcoming second edition of *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*.

**JOHN COZZA** is in demand throughout California as teacher, coach/accompanist, chamber musician, adjudicator and clinician; he teaches accompanying and piano in the Conservatory of Music at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, as well as holding the position of Staff Accompanist at Sacramento State University.

Collaborating with singers and instrumentalists throughout the United States, Dr. Cozza's international engagements have included performances as soloist, accompanist and chamber musician in such European cities as Vienna, Bologna, Milan, Cologne, and Budapest.

Dr. Cozza holds a DM degree in piano performance, vocal accompanying and chamber music from Northwestern University. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at USC, where he was named valedictorian of the School of Music. He originally attended the Hochschule für Musik as a Rotary Foundation Scholar in 1986-87, then returned for further study from 1988-1991 when he received the coveted Diplom in both Piano Performance and Chamber Music.

Principal bassist of the Sacramento Symphony for 14 years, **THOMAS DERTHICK** now enjoys a diverse career of performing, teaching, and conducting. Derthick is principal bassist of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music and the Sacramento Philharmonic. Other performances include the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, Chamber Music Society of Sacramento, and the Empyrean Ensemble. Formerly associate conductor of the Sierra Symphony and assistant conductor of the California Youth Symphony, Derthick has been music director of the Central Valley Youth Symphony since 2000. Derthick teaches at three colleges in the region: California State University, Sacramento; UC Davis; and the University of the Pacific Conservatory of Music in Stockton, where he has appeared as a guest conductor. He also maintains a large private studio in Sacramento.

**SANDRA MOATS McPHERSON** is in wide demand as a clarinetist and educator. She performs frequently as principal clarinetist and bass clarinetist in numerous Northern California orchestras, including the Sacramento Philharmonic, Opera, and Choral Society Orchestras. She also has extensive experience as a chamber music performer and coach. As a member of the Harmonic Winds, she performs educational concerts throughout the region. She has performed with numerous other chamber music ensembles at the Crocker Art Museum Sunday Series, Sacramento State's Festival of New American Music, Chamber Music Alive!, and the Capital Chamber Players Series. Ms. McPherson is conductor of clarinet ensembles, rehearsal coach and chamber music instructor for the Sacramento Youth Symphony's orchestras and Chamber Music Workshops. She maintains an active private teaching studio, is on the faculties of CSU Sacramento and American River College, and has previously served as clarinet and chamber music instructor at UC Davis. Ms. McPherson received degrees from CSU Fresno and UC Santa Barbara in music education, clarinet performance, and musicology, and has published articles on early-American clarinet literature.