

The Mills College Music Department and the
Center for Contemporary Music present

Mills Music Now 2021–2022

Sarah Cahill
The Future is Female

Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Concert Hall
October 30, 2021 8:00 pm

Sarah Cahill, pianist

Janice Giteck (b. 1946):

Tara's Love Will Melt the Sword (2002)

1. Light suspended
2. Tear drops
3. Rocking, blue interior
4. Affectionately outward

Elinor Armer (b. 1939):

Thaw (1975)

Maggi Payne (b. 1945):

Holding Pattern (2001)

Mary Watkins (b. 1939):

Summer Days (2020)

Meredith Monk (b. 1942):

St. Petersburg Waltz (1997)

Betsy Jolas (b. 1926):

Tango Si (1984)

Pauline Oliveros (1932-2016):

Quintuplets Playpen (2001)

Annea Lockwood (b. 1939):

RCSC (2001)

Theresa Wong (b.1976):

She Dances Naked Under Palm Trees (2019)

Please turn off cell phones, electronic pagers, and alarm watches. No unauthorized recording or photography.

Seating only during breaks in the performance. Please take a moment to look
around for the nearest available emergency exit.

Sarah Cahill, pianist

Sarah Cahill, recently called “a brilliant and charismatic advocate for modern and contemporary composers” by *Time Out New York*, has commissioned and premiered over sixty compositions for solo piano. Composers who have dedicated works to Cahill include John Adams, Terry Riley, Pauline Oliveros, Frederic Rzewski, Roscoe Mitchell, Mary Watkins, and Annea Lockwood. She was named a 2018 Champion of New Music, awarded by the American Composers Forum (ACF). Recent and upcoming appearances include the Barbican Centre in London, Interlochen Arts Festival, BAM/PFA, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Boston Institute for Contemporary Art, and the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. Her latest release is Lou Harrison’s Concerto for Piano with Javanese Gamelan recorded with Gamelan Galak Tika, released by the Cleveland Museum of Art in 2021. Cahill’s radio show, *Revolutions Per Minute*, can be heard every Sunday evening from 6 to 8 pm on KALW, 91.7 FM in San Francisco. She is on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and gives pre-concert talks for the San Francisco Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Program notes:

Tara's Love Will Melt the Sword: Janice Giteck

The piece is dedicated to and addresses two female manifestations of Buddha, in particular the Blue Tara-healing Buddha and White Tara-compassionate Buddha.

What a mess we are in, in the world now. I believe that possibly the only way out of all this primitive violence is to fully surrender to the place of the heart/mind which "draws us closer to the face we long to love." (Isa Upanishad). This place in the human psyche is universally available and known to all on some level of personal, incarnate, experience. We are all responsible to find this place within us, as there is no external fix-it, God, no magical way out of the acceleration toward human annihilation.

I think of each of the four movements of the piece as purposefully modest and intimate meditations:

- 1) Light suspended: gamelan style, bitter-sweet, static, modality, available light, but in suspension, potential state. A view of the possible beauty, serenity, but we're not quite there.
- 2) Tear "drops": as in the Baroque Doctrine of Affects, a repeated musical gesture of tears, weeping, softening response to grief, broken-heartedness, hoping for a humanizing result. "Drops", in the Buddhist sense of potency.

3) Rocking, blue interior: I was thinking about the mandala experience of walking the interior of a Buddhist palace, ie. one of Blue Tara. This allusion is my fantasy of practicing the tradition of utilizing a mandala in this way. There is a rich, quiet, passion to this movement. It hovers close to the bone, near hopelessness, no pretense of how difficult it is to turn this madness around. The piece nudges on the human spirit, unrelenting in its rocking meters and minor modality.

4) Affectionately outward: the most tonal (bitonal, polytonal, in any case there's modulation!), far reaching, nearly a promenade in spirit! Almost jaunty and frenchy at times. This one is a release from the introversion of the other movements. Although this music is the most recently composed, I know the least about it consciously. But I think it will balance the first one pretty well. Where the first used a huge range on the piano with lots of open octave doublings as the harmonic palette, this one uses its large range with kind of matter-of-fact pianisms.

Janice Giteck grew up in Hicksville, Long Island and moved to Arizona when she was twelve years old. She attended Mills College, completing her Master's in 1969 and studying under Darius Milhaud. She later studied under Olivier Messiaen, and following this she studied Indonesian gamelan music with Daniel Schmidt and percussion with Obo Addy. Her works came into wide circulation in the 1970s and 1980s, with a style heavily influenced by world music and the music of American Indians. Awards for her music include the National Endowment for the Arts Composer's award for *Breathing Songs from a Turning Sky*, and the Norman Fromm Composers Award for *Thunder, Like a White Bear Dancing*. Giteck returned to school and received a Master's in psychology in 1986, and worked in the mental health field from 1986 to 1991. She has taught at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle since 1979. Her 1992 recording collection *Home (Revisited)*, released on New Albion, is dedicated to AIDS patients. Her music has been described as influenced by world and ritual music.

Holding Pattern: Maggi Payne

When Sarah Cahill approached me with the prospect of composing a work for piano in tribute to Ruth Crawford Seeger, particularly in reference to the Nine Preludes which Sarah had just recorded, I was intrigued. Ruth Crawford Seeger's interest in timbre, particularly as represented in Prelude 6 and 9, spurred this brief work. This delicate timbral exploration's last sustained notes are those that begin Prelude 6. The *Mystico* marking of Prelude 6 and the *Tranquillo* of Prelude 9 are reflected in the character of Holding Pattern.

Maggi Payne is a composer primarily of electronic and electroacoustic music, a video artist, and flutist. She taught composition, electronic music, and recording engineering at Mills College from the 1970s to 2018, and was Co-Director, with Chris Brown, of the Center for

Contemporary Music at Mills College (1992-2018). In addition to composing for multi-channel electronic/electroacoustic presentation, she composes music for dance and video, including the music for Jordon Belson's video *Bardo*. She collaborated for several years with video artist Ed Tannenbaum in his *Technological Feets* performances. Her works have been presented in the Americas, Europe, Japan, Hong Kong and Australasia. She received Composer's Grants and an Interdisciplinary Arts Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and video grants from the Mellon Foundation and the Western States Regional Media Arts Fellowships Program, and received five honorary mentions from Bourges and one from Prix Ars Electronica. Excerpts of her videos are available on Vimeo at www.maggipayne.com.

Thaw: Elinor Armer

Thaw was written for pianist Lois Brandwynne, who premiered it in a concert presented by the U. C. Berkeley Music Department, where I was teaching as a lecturer in the early 1970's. Modern music history tells us that composers are often more abstract and 'contemporary' in their early work; indeed, *Thaw* uses piano techniques for which I needed to invent my own notations—clusters released note by note to give the impression of melting, resonating overtones of struck notes resulting from silently depressed keys below them, occasional use of the middle pedal, etc. I sought also to employ the entire scope of sounds possible from the magnificent instrument I had grown up with, short of using hands directly on strings, and to traverse the entire keyboard at some point. The images evoked are of icy frozen-ness, gradual melting, breaking apart, flowing from trickles to torrents, and ultimately evaporating. As these phenomena in nature have their counterparts in human emotions, there are subjective, expressive components in the piece as well, which may vary from listener to listener as to how they are perceived or felt.

Composer **Elinor Armer** comes from a family of writers, artists, and inventors. Born in Oakland, California in 1939, raised in Davis, and educated in the San Francisco Bay Area, she has spent her life on the West Coast and closely identifies with Northern California. Armer earned a BA at Mills College, studying composition with Darius Milhaud and piano with Alexander Libermann, and an MA in composition from San Francisco State University, working with Roger Nixon. For the 2014-15 concert season, Armer mounted nine retrospectives of her music, including four one-woman shows and four world premieres, celebrating her 75th birthday in a Diamond Jubilee series. Among her best-known works for a variety of forces is 'Uses of Music in Uttermost Parts', an eight-part fantasy series created over a ten-year period with writer Ursula K. Le Guin. For all of her adult life, Armer has taught piano, theory, composition, and music history at every level, in schools and universities and at her home in Berkeley, California. She has also given master classes in the U.S. and abroad, including China's Shanghai Conservatory. For the last 50 years she has been affiliated with the San

Francisco Conservatory of Music, where in 1985 she established the composition department, and where she continues to teach composition.

Summer Days: Mary Watkins

Summer Days, explains Watkins, “makes me think of children on a hot summer day freely playing in the water of a sprinkler, bouncing, running, wrestling, yelling, laughing, and screaming with delight.”

Trained in classical music at Howard University, **Mary D. Watkins** has composed three operas and has written for symphony orchestras, chamber and jazz ensembles, film, theatre, dance, and choral groups, in addition to being a popular recording artist for Olivia Records in the 1970s. Her work has been performed by the Berkeley Symphony Chamber Orchestra, Richmond (VA) Chamber Orchestra, The Women’s Philharmonic Orchestra, Camellia Symphony Orchestra, The New Black Music Repertory Ensemble of Chicago, and many more. Watkins’ recent recordings include *Prayer for Peace*, a meditational CD, and *Recorded Music of the African Diaspora* (Albany Records, 2010: Center For Black Music Research; department of Columbia College in Chicago, IL). Her new opera, *Emmett Till*, will be premiered in New York in March.

Meredith Monk: St. Petersburg Waltz

St. Petersburg Waltz was written after I returned from a long journey through Asia. Oddly enough, being in Asia made me think more than ever about my blood roots—my parents’ Russian/Polish Jewish background. This Eastern lineage is something I share with pianist Nurit Tilles, whose parents were Polish Jews. I wrote this piece especially for Nurit. As I worked on it, I sensed my Russian grandfather in a very strong way. *St. Petersburg Waltz* was inspired by the idea of a place rather than the place itself.

Meredith Monk is a composer, singer, director/choreographer and creator of new opera, music-theater works, films and installations. Recognized as one of the most unique and influential artists of our time, she is a pioneer in what is now called “extended vocal technique” and “interdisciplinary performance.” Celebrated internationally, Ms. Monk’s work has been presented at major venues throughout the world. Among her many honors and awards are a MacArthur Fellowship and a 2015 National Medal of Arts from President Barack Obama. Among the many highlights of Monk’s performances from the last twenty-five years is her *Vocal Offering for His Holiness the Dalai Lama* as part of the World Festival of Sacred Music in Los Angeles in October, 1999. In 1968 she founded The House, a company dedicated to an interdisciplinary approach to performance, and in 1978 she founded Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble to expand her musical textures and forms. Currently Monk is

developing *Indra's Net*, the third part of a trilogy of music-theater works exploring our interdependent relationship with nature, following the highly acclaimed *On Behalf of Nature* (2013) and *Cellular Songs* (2018). *Indra's Net* will premiere at Mills College next month with support from the Hewlett 50 Arts Commission.

Tango Si: Betsy Jolas

The score to *Tango Si* says that it should last for one minute and 25 seconds. It playfully subverts the traditional rhythm and pulse of the tango form, while still evoking recognizable elements of the true tango.

Betsy Jolas, born in Paris, settled in the USA. in 1940, where she studied composition with Paul Boepple, piano with Helen Schnabel and organ with Carl Weinrich. After graduating from Bennington College, she returned to Paris in 1946 to continue her studies with Darius Milhaud, Simone Plé-Caussade and Olivier Messiaen at the Paris Conservatory. She has won many awards, including those of the Copley Foundation of Chicago, the American Academy of Arts and the Koussevitsky Foundation, becoming a member of the American Institute of Arts and Letters in 1983. Jolas was appointed to the faculty of the Paris Conservatory in 1975, and has also taught at several American universities including Yale, Berkeley, USC, San Diego and Mills College. Her works, written for a great variety of combinations, have been premiered notably by the Domaine Musical, at the festivals of Tanglewood and Royan, and have been widely performed throughout the world. Her works have been recorded by EMI, Erato, CRI, Adès among others and have received various important awards.

Quintuplets Play Pen: Pauline Oliveros

Quintuplets Play Pen was written especially for Sarah Cahill after listening to her recording of pieces by Ruth Crawford. The piece was conceived mathematically using a 10 x 10 matrix of choices (- = half step or rest and + = whole step or play). The patterns derived remind me of Crawford's music — both her early work and her work with folk music.

Pauline Oliveros' life as a composer, performer, and humanitarian was about opening her own and others' sensibilities to the universe and facets of sounds. Her career spanned fifty years of boundary-dissolving music making. In the 1950s she was part of a circle of iconoclastic composers, artists, and poets gathered together in San Francisco. In the 1960s she influenced American music profoundly through her work with improvisation, meditation, electronic music, myth, and ritual. Oliveros was Darius Milhaud Artist-in-Residence at Mills College and Distinguished Research Professor of Music at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. She founded "Deep Listening," which came from her childhood fascination with sounds and from her works in concert music with composition, improvisation, and

electroacoustics. She described Deep Listening as a way of listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear no matter what you are doing. Such intense listening includes the sounds of daily life, of nature, of one's own thoughts as well as musical sounds.

RCSC: Annea Lockwood

RCSC refers to the near palindrome formed by Ruth Crawford Seeger and Sarah Cahill's names and the piece is dedicated to both, a composer I've long admired and a pianist whose dedication to American music enriches us. For its pitch content the piece draws on Crawford's ten-note row from the final movement of her second string quartet. RCSC was written during a residency at the Djerassi Resident Artists Program, California in September and October 2001; my thanks to DRAP for that support.

Born in New Zealand and living in the US since 1973, **Annea Lockwood** is known for her explorations of the rich world of natural acoustic sounds and environments, in works ranging from sound art and installations, through text-sound and performance art, to concert music. Her music has been performed in many venues and festivals, including the Possibility of Action exhibiton at MACBA Barcelona, De Ijsbreker, the Other Minds Festival, the Walker Art Center, Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Asia-Pacific Festival, the Whitney Museum, and more. Her sound installation, *A Sound Map of the Danube*, has been presented in Germany, Austria, and the USA. This is a surround "sound map" of the entire Danube River, incorporating a wide variety of water, animal, and underwater insect sounds, rocks from the riverbed, and the voices of those whose lives are intimately connected to the river. She was a recipient of the 2007 Henry Cowell Award.

She Dances Naked Under Palm Trees: Theresa Wong

This piece begins with an incantation of the song *Images*, by Nina Simone, with pitches of its melody embedded within an amalgam of glissandi and counter-melodies. Rendering the song austerely in a cappella, Simone sings the text of *No Images* (1926), a poem by the Harlem Renaissance poet William Waring Cuney. In this piece, the notes of the melody are sounded by way of silently pressed keys which are allowed to ring with the use of the sostenuto pedal. When a glissando sweep is played across the depressed keys, all pitches of the sweep are immediately dampened, but the tones of the melody continue to resonate. The melody of the last stanza of the poem, however, is not intoned. What follows instead is the interruption of Cuney's depiction of oppression with the music of a dance in 13/8 meter. I have been drawn to this meter because of its lilt and instability - an uneven alternating between 7 and 6 beats which propels forward motion. After I began to first compose with this meter, I learned how the now 'unlucky' number originated in many ancient cultures as a symbol of the divine

feminine. For example, there are 13 cycles of the moon and menstrual cycles a year, and Friday (from the Norse goddess Freya or in Neo-latin languages, Venerdi from Venus) the 13th represented the day of the Goddess - a day to celebrate the cycles of creation, death and rebirth. The dance is an evocation of movement into self-knowledge and worth for those who have not felt themselves duly reflected in the world.

Theresa Wong is a composer, cellist, and vocalist active at the intersection of music, experimentation, improvisation, and the synergy of multiple disciplines. Her works include *As We Breathe*, an installed song commissioned by Long Beach Opera for the 2020 Songbook, *She Dances Naked Under Palm Trees* commissioned by pianist Sarah Cahill for *The Future Is Female* project, and *Harbors*, co-composed with Long String Instrument inventor Ellen Fullman and chosen as one of *Wire Magazine's* top 50 releases of 2020. Her work, *The Unlearning (Tzadik)*, twenty-one songs inspired by Goya's *Disasters of War* etchings, premiered in 2013 at Roulette in Brooklyn and was also presented at the 2016 New Frequencies Festival at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco. Current and past commissions include works for Splinter Reeds, San Francisco Girls Chorus, Vajra Voices, and Del Sol String Quartet. Wong has shared her work internationally at venues including Fondation Cartier, Paris; Cafe Oto, London; Festival de Arte y Ópera Contemporánea, Morelia, Mexico; and The Stone, New York. Wong holds an MFA in Music Performance & Literature from Mills College and is currently based in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Upcoming Concerts

Meredith Monk (Hewlett50 Arts Commission)

Friday November 12, 2021

Saturday, November 13, 2021

Mendi and Keith Obadike

(David Tudor Composers-in-Residence - Virtual)

Saturday, November 20. 2021

X Sound

Saturday, December 11. 2021

Nicole Mitchell

(Jean Macduff Vaux Composer-in-Residence)

Saturday, February 5, 2022

Paul Flight and Ensemble — Music By Barbara Strozzi

Sunday, February, 23, 2022

Signal Flow Festival

March 11-12, 2022

Samantha Ege

(Dewing Piano Recital)

Sunday, April 3, 2022

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To purchase tickets online, please visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/>

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ABOUT MILLS COLLEGE

Mills College was founded in 1852 in Benicia, California, as a Young Ladies Seminary. Cyrus and Susan Mills purchased the site of the present 127-acre campus and built Mills Hall in 1871. Mills became a chartered college for women in 1885. Mills offers a bachelor's degree in music with emphasis on Performance, Composition, Electronic Media, or History/Theory as well as master's degrees in Composition, Electronic Music and Recording Media, and Performance and Literature. The Music Department includes the world-renowned Center for Contemporary Music. At Mills students can study traditional and contemporary music in a creative environment that fosters experimentalism. The Department's faculty includes composers Tomeka Reid, James Fei, Zeena Parkins, Laetitia Sonami, Steed Cowart; scholars David Bernstein and Nalini Ghuman; and performers including William Winant, Jennifer Ellis, Kate Campbell, Molly Holm, Robert Schwartz, Hrafnhildur Atladottir, Hank Dutt, Kala Ramnath, and Gianna Abondolo. For information on studying music at Mills, phone (510) 430-2135 (Undergraduate Admission) or (510) 430-3309 (Graduate Studies), or contact the Music Department Administrative Assistant, Kristian Dahlbom, at (510) 430-2171. Brendan Glasson (510) 430-2336 is Technical Director of the Center for Contemporary Music. The Concert Coordinator is Steed Cowart, (510) 430-2334.