

## ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

**The California E.A.R. Unit** was founded in 1981. In its twenty-eight year history, the ensemble has presented concerts of electroacoustic and live interactive computer music, music theater, and local and world premieres of over 500 works. The E.A.R. Unit seeks to serve its home base of Los Angeles, reflecting the region's unique cultural diversity, and to represent Los Angeles and Southern California as new music ambassadors to the world.

The ensemble has earned critical acclaim, garnering awards for its contributions to the field of contemporary American music such as the *L.A. Weekly's* Best Classical Ensemble 1999 and 2003, as well receiving the prestigious Letter of Distinction from the American Music Center in 1999.

The Unit has performed at major venues such as the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C, and Queen Elizabeth Hall in London. They have toured throughout the world: Brussels, Aspen, Kiev, Paris, Cologne, Tanglewood, New York, Boston, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Amsterdam, Reykjavik, as well as to other domestic and international hot spots for new music. The ensemble has been featured in documentaries for the BBC and Japanese television, American and National Public Radio, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Danish National Radio, and WGBH's "Art of the States".

From 1987 to 2004 the E.A.R. Unit was Ensemble-in-Residence at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Since then, they have been in residence at the Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater (REDCAT) housed in the Walt Disney Hall Complex. The Unit has collaborated with such artists as Elliott Carter, Steve Reich, Morton Feldman, Julia Wolfe, Louis Andriessen, John Cage, Michael Gordon, Charles Wuorinen, Morton Subotnick, and Alison Knowles, among others, and performed numerous works by little-known young American composers. In addition, the E.A.R. Unit continues to present workshops to children in the Los Angeles area, particularly in at-risk and underserved areas, and reaches close to 3,000 children annually.

The E.A.R. Unit has recorded for the Nonesuch, Crystal, New Albion, New World, Tzadik, O.O. Discs, Bridge, and Cambria labels. Recent CDs include a three-CD series of E.A.R. Unit repertoire on the Echograph label, chamber works of Pulitzer Prize-winning Los Angeles composer Mel Powell, and chamber works of Stephen "Lucky" Mosko. Hot off the press is a three-hour recording of Morton Feldman's *For Christian Wolff*.

## UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

**March 22–23:** Studio: Winter 2009

**March 27–28:** Cryptonights

**April 4–5:** Gamelan Burat Wangi

**April 8–12:** Caden Manson/Big Art Group: SOS

For more information visit [www.redcat.org](http://www.redcat.org).

# THE CALIFORNIA E.A.R. UNIT YOUNG AMERICANS

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March 21, 2009  
8:30pm

presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

CALARTS

REDCAT

# THE CALIFORNIA E.A.R. UNIT

## YOUNG AMERICANS

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Saturday, March 21, 2009 | 8:30pm

### PROGRAM

**our friend adam** (2005, rev. 2007/2008)

**Ryan Brown**

**3 Bagatelles for solo simplified violin** (2007)

**Harris Wulfson**

- i. Tahsim
- ii. Horo
- iii. Rebec

**Rememories** (2009)

**Clay Chaplin**

In chromadepth 3D

**+ou-** (2007)

**Daniel Wohl**

*Intermission*

**Anchor** (2009)

**Matt McBane**

**Jamu** (2008)

**Christine Southworth**

**Gauze Vespers** (2007)

**Oscar Bettison**

**California E.A.R. Unit:** Phil O'Connor, clarinet; Vicki Ray, piano; Amy Knoles, percussion; Eric km Clark, violin; Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, cello

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### PROGRAM NOTES

**our friend adam** (2005, rev. 2007/2008)

**Ryan Brown**

*Our Friend Adam* grew out of scraps of material, especially rhythmic and harmonic ideas, left over from my guitar ensemble piece *Banksy*, which was written for the San Francisco Conservatory Guitar Ensemble. The title comes from Walt Disney's classic 1956 indoctrination tool "Our Friend the Atom," which "sought to present the cheerful, non-destructive side of the atom in entertaining and, in hindsight, absurdly naive ways" ([www.conelrad.com](http://www.conelrad.com)). Though I'm too young to have

of the Bang on a Can All-Stars and was named "Pick of the Week" by WNYC's prestigious "Soundcheck" program in August 2008. She is currently composing a new work for string quartet and Tesla Coils as well as songs for a just intonation gamelan, computer voice and rock band.

**Daniel Wohl** (b. 1980) is a Paris-born composer based in Brooklyn who writes for a variety of instruments that range from computers and slide whistles to orchestras, chamber ensembles and string quartets. He has worked with groups such as the California E.A.R Unit, the St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble, as well as the American Symphony Orchestra, and his music has been played at venues such as Carnegie Hall, Symphony Space, and the Dia Beacon.

Daniel is committed to the music of today's young composers, and as co-founder of the TRANSIT ensemble he has commissioned and presented pieces by emerging composers from around the world. Also active as an educator, Daniel teaches courses in composition, orchestration, and theory at Sarah Lawrence College. Upcoming events include the premiere of a New York Youth Symphony commission at Carnegie Hall, a new work for the Calder string quartet as part of the Carlsbad Music Festival commission, and performances by pianist Vicki Ray at REDCAT and TRANSIT for the MATA Interval Series. Most recently, he was a featured composer in Da Capo's Sonic Youth at Symphony Space concert, and St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble 2nd Helpings series at the Chelsea Art Museum and DIA, Beacon. In 2008 Daniel was granted an ASCAP Young Composer Award for his orchestra piece *Helium*. Other awards and grants have come from Meet the Composer, ASCAP Plus, the Definiens Project, NY Youth Symphony First Music, and the Brooklyn Arts Council among others. Daniel is also actively involved in writing for independent film, and his scores have been heard in theaters across Europe and on PBS. Daniel holds degrees from the University of Michigan School of Music (M.M.), studying with Bright Sheng and William Bolcom, and from Bard College (B.M.) where he studied with Joan Tower. In 2007 he received a fellowship to attend the Bang on a Can Summer Institute where he worked with Julia Wolfe, David Lang, and Michael Gordon.

**Harris Wulfson** (1974–2008) was a Jewish composer, instrumentalist and software engineer living in Brooklyn, New York. The majority of his mature work employs algorithmic processes and gestural controllers to explore the boundary where humans encounter their machines. He was involved in the creation of various custom software tools called Automatic Notation Generators (ANGs) developed to aid in the creation of algorithmic instrumental compositions. His writing on live generated music notation has been presented at the New Interfaces for Musical Expression conference, and in August 2007, he spoke on the topic of ANGs at the International Computer Music Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. For the 2006 Look and Listen Festival in New York City, Harris presented his SensorBall, a small electronic device, slightly larger than a baseball, with pressure-sensitive controls, all wired to a laptop computer and the results channeled through loudspeakers. When pressed and rotated, the ball produces sounds that erupt apparently without pattern.

Harris graduated from Amherst College and later received an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. His teachers included Stephen "Lucky" Mosko, Morton Subotnick, James Tenney and Lew Spratlan. Harris was also an accomplished violinist, accordionist, and mandolin player, an active performer of experimental music, and an avid folk musician. He was a member of the Object Collection ensemble and the Society of Automatic Music Notators, and has performed with the World on a String band, King Wilkie, Metropolitan Klezmer, Golem, and Margot Leverett. You can find samples of Wulfson's compositions at [www.wulfson.com](http://www.wulfson.com). Harris passed away in July of 2008.

**Matt McBane** (b. 1979) is a composer whose music ranges from visceral, hard-driving rhythms and complex grooves to delicate, rich textures, freely and intuitively incorporating a wide array of influences including: minimalism, experimentalism, European classical music, art rock, jazz, film music, and electronic music. He has been described as “a natural composer, a fresh voice and, from the evidence of his festival, a first-rate organizer with a broad range of musical interests” by Mark Swed in the *Los Angeles Times* and has been included on Alex Ross’s list of “notable younger composers” in *The Rest is Noise*. Kyle Gann noted his music’s “fanatically detailed sense of slow textural transformation” and Sequenza21 stated: “McBane has a fantastic intuitive sense that is backed up by a serious amount of compositional craft”

Matt is the Founder and Director of the Carlsbad Music Festival, an acclaimed alternative classical music festival featuring the next generation of world-class musicians and cutting-edge new music since 2004. The Festival has been praised by the *Los Angeles Times* as “marvelously enlightening” and the 2009 season marks the Festival’s sixth anniversary with concerts in Carlsbad, San Diego and Los Angeles.

Matt has been commissioned by and worked closely with some of the country’s most exciting ensembles including the Calder Quartet, NOW Ensemble, Real Quiet and the California E.A.R. Unit, and he has performed or had his music played at venues including Carnegie Hall, the Bang on a Can Marathon (NYC), Disney Hall’s REDCAT (LA), Grand Canyon Music Festival, Viana do Castelo International Music Festival (Portugal), Zipper Hall (LA), the Whitney Museum of Art, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, MOMA’s PS-1 (NYC), LA Design Center, Joe’s Pub (NYC), Yale, CalArts, University of Cincinnati, USC, and many others. [www.mattmcbane.com](http://www.mattmcbane.com)

**Christine Southworth** (b. 1978), through her work with robots and automated music systems as co-founder and Director of Ensemble Robot, is making groundbreaking music based on the interaction between technology and creativity. Compared to Thurston Moore (*Boston Phoenix*) and Laurie Anderson (*Boston Globe*), Southworth is introducing a brand new genre of music to Boston, born out of the area’s complex community of scientists and artists. Her 2005 and 2007 performances of *Zap!* overfilled the Boston Museum of Science’s Theater of Electricity with energized crowds of students, professors, artists, children, and adults. The *Boston Phoenix* called the show “truly electrifying,” describing that “Ever since Bob Dylan, ‘going electric’ has had many connotations, but this was something different: though *Zap!* utilized the talents of a flutist, two keyboardists, a cellist, a guitarist, a bassist, a drummer, a vocalist, a double-helix-shaped robotic xylophone, sound engineers, and computer programmers, the centerpiece of Southworth’s performance was electricity itself, as millions of volts buzzed, fizzled, and sparked in deafening cracks that punctuated her music.” (Will Spitz, *Boston Phoenix*)

Southworth received a B.S. from MIT in 2002 in mathematics and music and M.A. in Computer Music & Multimedia Composition from Brown University in 2006. She composes for Western ensembles, Balinese gamelan, and mixed ensembles of gamelan, western instruments, electronics, and robots. Her compositions draw from her interests in modern American and European music, jazz, Balinese music, and rock and roll, and have received awards and recognition from the LEF Foundation, American Composers Forum, Meet the Composer, New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA), the MIT Eloranta Fellowship, and the Bang on a Can Summer Institute of Music. Her music has been played throughout the U.S., Europe, and Indonesia by ensembles including Gamelan Galak Tika, the Calder Quartet, and Ensemble Robot.

Southworth recently released her debut recording *Zap!*, which features several members

encountered it in its initial presentation, I do remember seeing the cartoon on trips to Disneyland as a kid. I really had no idea what it was all about, though I was mildly entertained by the funny little cartoon atom bouncing about proclaiming the joys of nuclear energy in a high-pitched, Mickey Mouse-like voice. Confused, I thought that little atom was actually a character named “Adam,” and that the film’s title was in fact “Our Friend, Adam.”

### **3 Bagatelles for solo simplified violin** (2007)

**Harris Wulfson**

Harris wrote this piece for me in October of 2007. It’s in three movements: “Tahsim”, which is a beautifully thoughtful episode, exploring various intricacies of the simplified violin; “Horo”, which is purely rhythmic; and “Rebec”, a fiddle tune in a completely different tuning from the previous 2 movements.

I have extremely fond memories of when Harris was writing this piece for me in Brooklyn, and am ever so grateful to have been his friend. I miss him dearly, and forever will. —Eric km Clark

### **Rememories** (2009)

**Clay Chaplin**

Rememories is a structured improvisation using chromadepth 3D video as a meta-structure for the ensemble based on the relationship of time and memory. Each player responds to a particular color in the video and uses loop points, color density, and color definition as a basic score for improvisation. Put on your 3D glasses.

### **+ou-** (2007)

**Daniel Wohl**

+ou- (plus ou moins). The initial impulse for this piece was to compose music that would be heard through a veil of noise. The idea came from waking up in the middle of the night with the television set turned to a “non-channel”. The screen was mostly filled with black and white static, except for a faded image of what looked like an old couple dancing. The image would come in strongly and then recede into the static.

### **Anchor** (2009)

**Matt McBane**

Anchor was written in February 2009 for the California Ear Unit. It is one in a series of pieces and slow movements of longer pieces with a certain approach to form and musical materials that includes *Granular Memory*, *Synthetic Night*, *Build’s Imagining Winter*, and the slow movement of *Swelter* amongst others. What these pieces have in common is a kind of dream-like treatment of the materials where they fade in and out of the listeners’ consciousness, are recalled in manipulated forms at different parts of the piece like a memory, made vaguely surreal through different types of layering, and arranged in an overall form that lacks a strong sense of directionality or clear narrative. Lots of the sonic ideas I’ve had for these pieces have come from my odd interpretations of record production techniques. From hearing an evocative use of a filter or manipulation of a sample, and thinking of ways to create a similar effect with acoustic instruments in live performance through unusual techniques, voicings, or combinations of instruments.

Although it is hard to describe exactly what a piece is about as there is not really a one-to-one correlation to words, *Anchor* is in lots of ways a response to major unsettling changes in my life over the past year. I thought of the title as corresponding to the special role of the bass drum.

### **Jamu** (2008)

Throughout southeast Asia, particularly Java and Bali, a “jamu” is a medicinal elixir, a mysterious concoction made of herbs, spices, roots, spirits, and other esoteric ingredients. Only gifted *balian*s (traditional doctors) can properly make a *jamu*, which are then sold at night markets in clear plastic bags, much like goldfish.

The traditional Balinese attitude toward medicine is a combination of “whatever works” with “don’t ask don’t tell.” Many of the *jamu* formulae are no doubt venerable and ancient; but a good *balian* would not think twice about adding newer ingredients from any number of sources: sugar, opium, Sprite, Viagra, etc. So in fact this “traditional” medicine—like much of any traditional culture—is in fact a sensibility applied to any number of elements from a wide variety of cultural origins.

My *Jamu* has undergone an analogous process. I composed its original, unperformed incarnation for gamelan and a small chamber ensemble in 2002, combining gamelan rhythms and sonorities with minimalism, jazz, and rock. I hung up my little plastic bag and that was that: it was never performed. In 2006, Eric Gunther added elements of electronica and did a remix for a dance performance at the Boston Cyberarts Festival. This latest version, written in 2008 for the E.A.R. Unit, incorporates parts of both of these in combination with new elements, thrown in the blender to produce, I hope, a tasty new concoction. I hope you enjoy!

### **Christine Southworth**

### **Gauze Vespers** (2007)

Every society is founded in rituals of birth, life and death. The question that was in my mind when I wrote *Gauze Vespers* was if it would be possible to tell what kind of a ritual was taking place, if one were an observer from a completely alien culture. Thus I think of *Gauze Vespers* as a strange ritual, seen from afar.

### **Oscar Bettison**

—OB

## **ABOUT THE COMPOSERS**

**Oscar Bettison**’s work demonstrates a willingness to work within and outside the confines of concert music. Often, he likes to work with what he calls “Cinderella Instruments” (i.e., instruments that for one reason or another are “off-the-beaten-path”), either by making percussion instruments (in the case of the percussion set-up for *Junk*, a double concerto for soprano sax and junk percussion) or by re-imagining unconventional instruments (such as the berimbau in *Cibola* and the use of power-tools in *Junk*) as well as writing for instruments more common in rock music. More recent pieces have featured some electroacoustic elements. His evening-long work for the six-piece Ensemble Klang, *O Death* featuring detuned electric guitars, harmonicas, jews-harps and banjo as well as samples and delay-lines, is concerned with bringing all these strands together.

Oscar Bettison was born in Jersey, U.K. After studying in London with Simon Bainbridge and Robert Saxton he went to the Koninklijk Conservatorium in The Hague where he studied with Louis Andriessen. He holds a PhD from Princeton University when his advisor was Steve Mackey. Has received fellowships from both the Tanglewood and Aspen Music Festivals.

He has had works premiered on three continents (Europe, North America and Australia) and has received commissions from, among others, The BBC and the London Sinfonietta. He is the recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society Prize. Upcoming projects include a new work for the

combined forces of the Percussion Group of The Hague and the Aurelia Saxophone Quartet and a solo piece for pianist/percussionist Danny Holt. For more info please visit [www.oscarbettison.com](http://www.oscarbettison.com) or [www.boosey.com/bettison](http://www.boosey.com/bettison).

**Ryan Brown** draws heavily on his omnivorous musical tastes while maintaining a unique sound all his own. His works are often noted for their energy and off-kilter, foot-tapping rhythms and have been called “modern composed music at its best: nimble, expressive, ear-turning, and strange in an accessible way, highly virtuosic but never pretentious.” (*Washington City Paper*)

Ryan’s music has been performed by many notable groups, performers, and presenters, including pianist Lisa Moore, the California E.A.R. Unit, NOW Ensemble, Gaudeamus Music Week (Netherlands), and the MATA Festival. Radio features have included NPR’s Forum with Michael Krasney and Richard Friedman’s “Music from Other Minds.” In 2007 French record label trAce released *Banksy* on the album “Post-Minimalism.”

Ryan has received an Emerging Composer Award from the Gerbode and Hewlett Foundations, and a Morton Gould Young Composer Award from ASCAP. He is currently a fellow in the Brooklyn Philharmonic’s Composer Mentoring Program. Upcoming premieres and commissions include music for janus, the Paul Dresner Ensemble, and the Brooklyn Philharmonic. In 2006, along with composer Jonathan Russell and clarinetist Jeff Anderle, Ryan co-founded San Francisco’s annual Switchboard Music Festival, a 10-day music festival on bringing together composers and performers who are challenging traditional genre lines. He himself is active as both an electric guitarist and electric bassist, and has been a featured performer in works by Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and John Adams, as well as the premiere performance and recording of Steve Mackey’s *Measures of Turbulence*. Ryan is a graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and California State University, Long Beach, and is currently a graduate fellow at Princeton University. [www.ryanbrownmusic.com](http://www.ryanbrownmusic.com).

**Clay Chaplin** is a composer, improviser, curator, and audio engineer from Los Angeles who explores the realms of audio-visual improvisation, sound synthesis, field recording, electronics, and computer processing for creative sonic expression. Throughout his career he has worked on many projects involving experimental music, video, audio recording, and interactive computer systems. Clay’s works have been performed internationally including performances at the San Francisco Electronic Music Festival, the Bent Festival, the Pusan International Computer Music Festival, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Elektroakustische Musik (DEGEM) studios, the Studio for Electro-Instrumental Music (STEIM), the New Interfaces for Musical Expression (NIME) conferences, the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College (CCM), the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival, the Olympia Experimental Music Festival, the Korean Electro-Acoustic Society Festival, the Sonic Circuits Festivals, the Santa Fe Electronic Music Festival and many others. Clay has been composer in residence at STEIM and the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College. He has given talks about experimental sound practices for the American Composer’s Forum, the Machine Project gallery, the Sea and Space Explorations gallery, the Telic gallery, Otis College, and the Center for Research in the Computing Arts (CRCA) at UCSD. He currently serves on the board of directors for The Society for the Activation of Social Space through Art and Sound (SASSAS) and The Sea and Space Explorations Gallery. Clay is currently the Director of the Computer Music and Experimental Media studios at the Herb Alpert School of Music at CalArts. He is also a member of the composition/experimental sound practices faculty. [www.claychaplin.com](http://www.claychaplin.com)