

## Faculty Showcase

Sunday, October 24, 2021

8:00 PM

Memorial Chapel

*In Honor of Mary Dropkin*

### Performers

Sara Andon, flute	Jillian Risigari-Gai Lopez, harp
Kathryn Nevin, clarinet	Stephanie Lovell, piano
David Scott, trumpet	Angelica Prodan, piano
Kira Blumberg, viola	Lara Urrutia, piano
Yuri Inoo, percussion	William Schlitt, percussion



**Mary Dropkin**

December 16, 1950 - January 8, 2021

Mary was born in Green Bay, Wisconsin, but early in her life her family moved to Pomona in Southern California. As a girl, her dream was to become an archaeologist, but her mother had other ideas; as a fifth-grader, Mary started harp lessons at her mother's insistence. Her teachers include Grace Follett, Tony Robinson, and Dorothy Remsen. She studied with Susann McDonald at the University of Southern California for undergraduate and graduate performance studies.

Mary's professional career spanned over fifty years as Principal Harp for the San Bernardino Symphony, the San Bernardino Civic Light Opera, as well as decades with the Redlands Symphony, Indian Wells Desert Symphony, The California Philharmonic, and other regional orchestras. Mary was also a regular sub for the Pacific Symphony in Orange County. She performed with many artists such as Johnny Mathis, Ray Charles, John Williams, Glen Campbell, and many others, and her most favorite, The Texas Tenors, with whom she had an ongoing friendship. Once she performed for President Gerald Ford, and often joked about the secret service wanting to check her harp for explosives. She said that she told the officer that she wasn't about to blow up her harp, not even for the president! She was known to musicians across Los Angeles, Orange, and San Bernardino counties for her musicianship as an orchestral and chamber artist and her friendly, sweet demeanor. In November of 2020, as a gift for her neighbors, Mary organized a "Concert on the Cul-de-Sac," with violist Kira Blumberg and cellist Kyle Champion, where they played for her neighbors and friends on her neighbor's driveway. Attended by

more than 40 Claremont neighbors and friends, one neighbor said that the concert was so uplifting, and it brought hope to those isolated due to COVID. “It was just what the doctor ordered,” the neighbors said.

Mary was devoted to teaching students of all ages and abilities. At one point she had so many students, her husband describes them coming to the house from morning to night. She was on the faculty of the University of Redlands and Pomona College, and she was always willing to give of her time, knowledge, and experience to help young student musicians and composers with their work, sometimes accompanying them on their student recitals. Many of her students have gone on to professional harp careers. Her interest and dedication to pedagogy led her to start an annual summer camp at the University of Redlands, where she was Artist Teacher of Harp. Students came from all over the United States for a week of study with nationally and internationally known harpists and clinicians, including Lynne Aspnes, Kathy Bundock Moore, Ray Pool, and Paul Baker.

It was her connection to the University of Redlands that made it possible to host the American Harp Society, Inc. 43<sup>rd</sup> National Conference there in 2018. Mary Dropkin joined forces with Co-Chair Lynne Aspnes, enjoying the opportunity to feature a number of harp ensembles, Mary’s favorite instrumentation.

After many years of forming and conducting student ensembles, Mary’s life-long dream of a professional harp quartet was realized with the formation of “LA Harptette” with Paul Baker, Laura Casey, and Jillian Lopez. The quartet performed their first concert in February of 2016. The group is devoted to playing music written specifically for harp quartet, spot-lighting new works by contemporary composers. Most recently, LA Harptette produced a holiday program that premiered on youtube.com on Christmas Day, 2020. This would be Mary’s last public performance.

Mary loved “learning for the sake of learning, knowledge for the sake of knowledge.” She was a voracious reader; her library is voluminous. She loved her cats, Max and Kassie. Her interest in archaeology never waned. She had a special interest in the ancient Egyptian civilization and Egyptology, even though it never became her career. Most recently she was studying how to read hieroglyphics.

John Gann, Mary’s beloved husband of thirty years, describes her best: “She had a listening heart and ear, but she could also be a Mama Bear! She

loved unconditionally.” To her students and family, she was a devoted, loving mentor and friend. To her colleagues on the San Bernardino Symphony and Desert Symphony players’ committees, she was a loyal ally. But if there was injustice, she was quick to defend the side of good, always negotiating for equity and fairness. Mary Dropkin is survived by her husband John, her sons Brian and Scott, and grandchildren Cash, Mason, Brielle, and Lexi, and her cousins Mara and Kent. She leaves a legacy of love, kindness, and devotion to her many students, colleagues, and friends.

## Program

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|---|---------------------|
| Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp (1915)               | Claude Debussy      |
| I. Pastorale: Lento, dolce rubato                     | (1862-1918)         |
| II. Interlude: Tempo di minuetto                      |                     |
| III. Final: Allegro moderato ma risoluto              |                     |
| Sara Andon, flute                                     |                     |
| Kira Blumberg, viola                                  |                     |
| Jillian Risigari-Gai Lopez, harp                      |                     |
| Danse macabre, Op. 40, for Two Pianos                 | Camille Saint-Saëns |
|   | (1835-1921)         |
| Stephanie Lovell and Lara Urrutia, piano              |                     |
| Eight Pieces, Op. 83, for Clarinet, Viola and Piano   | Max Bruch           |
| II. Allegro con moto                                  | (1838-1920)         |
| VI. Nocturne: Andante                                 |                     |
| IV. Allegro agitato                                   |                     |
| Kathryn Nevin, clarinet                               |                     |
| Kira Blumberg, viola                                  |                     |
| Lara Urrutia, piano                                   |                     |
| Andante and Variations, Op. 83a, for Piano Four Hands | Felix Mendelssohn   |
|   | (1809-1847)         |
| Stephanie Lovell and Angelica Prodan, piano           |                     |

Sonata for Trumpet and Piano (1997)

II. Allegretto

III. Allegro con fuoco

David Scott, trumpet  
Stephanie Lovell, piano

Eric Ewazen

(b.1954)

Ritmo Jondo (*Flamenco*) (1952)

I. Bulerias

II. Saeta

III. Garrotin

Kathryn Nevin, clarinet  
David Scott, trumpet

Yuri Inoo and William Schlitt, percussion

Kira Blumberg, Lara Urrutia, Joseph Modica, hand clappers

Carlos Surinach

(1915-1997)



## University of Redlands School of Music Land Acknowledgement

We are gathered on the land of the Serrano and Cahuilla peoples, and we acknowledge the important contributions of this community, their elders both past and present, as well as future generations. The University of Redlands School of Music is committed to continuing to learn about the land we inhabit, the people who have been displaced from this land, and building community with its original caretakers.

## Program Notes

Claude Debussy's *Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp* dates from the last years of Debussy's life. It was written in 1915 as part of a planned set of six sonatas for various instrumental combinations; Debussy's final illness and death in 1918 prevented the completion of the project. Of the completed three late sonatas, the one for flute, viola, and harp, stands out as the most "Debussian." Its ambiguity of harmony and form, fragmented, halting phrases, and vast array of colors bear striking resemblance to earlier orchestral works such as *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and *La Mer*. The *Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp* is a fascinating and touching work of great subtlety, a masterpiece of the chamber music literature from the early 20th century.

The first movement features six themes whose repetitions are freely varied as the movement proceeds. The free and fantasia-like first section is followed by three more straightforward sections with dotted rhythms, tremolos in the viola and a general quickening of the tempo, but throughout there is a fluid unfolding of musical ideas and melodies passed between the instruments. Similarly, the second movement, is a minuet in tempo only. Its pastoral dance-like character continues to manipulate material heard in the previous movement. Within this classic dance form, Debussy continues to create further tension within the listener featuring conflict between the written triple meter and the contrasting and conflicting duple meter superimposed on it, as well as themes which overlap. The finale contrasts sections with dramatic bite and those with more languid flowing themes, never losing its forward motion and rhythmic drive as it uses the momentum of the plucked strings of the viola and harp together to propel us along toward a breathless finish.

As he wrote this work in 1915, France was amid World War I, and Debussy was already suffering from the cancer that would take his life. He signs each sonata manuscript "Claude Debussy, Musicien Francaise." In a letter to Igor Stravinsky, he says: "New beauty should fill the air when the cannons fall silent." And he clearly recognized his pending demise when he revealed in a letter on December 11, 1916, his sense of loss and a nostalgia for the past, saying of this Sonate-Trio: "It is the music of a Debussy whom I no longer know. It is frightfully mournful, and I don't know whether one should laugh or cry? perhaps both?"

A morbid music-master, gruesome ghosts, ecclesiastical echoes—*Danse Macabre* exhibits a peerless trifecta for a Halloween-month musicale. It

began as an art song for voice and piano with French text based on an old superstition of fiddle-wielding Death summoning the non-living from their graves. The ensuing dreadful dance continues until the rooster crows at dawn, sending the participants scurrying back to their crypts until the next All Hallows' Eve.

Two years after its inception, Saint-Saëns reworked the aria into an orchestral tone poem with solo violin taking over the vocal line. In 1877, he wrote a version for two pianos-- the version performed today. Piano Secondo begins with twelve iterations of middle D, denoting a bell tolling midnight. (These strokes are played by harp in the orchestral version—no doubt a solo which our friend and colleague Mary Dropkin played numerous times!) Piano Primo interrupts the tolling with one of the chilling signature sounds of the piece—the diabolical “tritone” interval. The ensuing maleficent mayhem includes quotations from the *Dies Irae* Gregorian chant (“day of judgment; day of wrath) as well as creepy chromatic scales entwined in the original theme. The Secondo player finally interrupts the chaos with a sustained E-flat octave imitating the dawn of the new day, and the apparitions disappear in a whisper of ragged flurry. Record has it that the premiere in 1875 caused rampant feelings of anxiety; today it is considered one of Saint-Saëns masterpieces.

The *Eight Pieces for Clarinet, Viola and Piano* were written in 1910 for his own son, Max, as he was beginning his career as a professional clarinetist. The combination of the two orchestral instruments of similar range and tone was so pleasing to him that the following year he composed a *Concerto for Clarinet, Viola and Orchestra*, also for his son. The eight movements of his Op. 83 afford Bruch ample opportunity to explore many forms, moods, tempi, and a variety of scoring for both viola and clarinet in their various ranges. The piano here is not merely accompaniment, however, and in many of the pieces, put in its own spotlight with soaring lyricism and dazzling virtuosity.

Today German composer Max Bruch is known primarily for his *Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor*, an engaging, exceedingly beautiful work, thoroughly embracing a style known as Romantic “classicism”. During his lifetime Bruch was regarded highly for his works for chorus, as well as his multifaceted career as a conductor, teacher and composer. Much of his music reminds us of his better-known contemporaries, Brahms and Dvorak, while still displaying a unique lyrical melodic craft that is all his own.

As in the case of other celebrated musical families, Felix and his older sister Fanny, played piano duets together. *Andante and Variations*, composed in 1841, is one of the few four-hand works he composed, and it is a wonderful example of the genre. It represents an enhancement of the two-hand version of the piece with the same title. The resources of the piano are masterfully employed, allowing both players to take turns and reverse their roles in delightful musical dialogues or together building up the grandiose finale. The theme is characterized by chordal texture, a balanced, symmetrical phrase and clear harmonic structure. Variation no.1 has a lighter texture, with the single note theme in the secondo being accompanied by the primo's playful line. Variation no.2 has the combined forces engaged in an animated chase that obscures the theme but retains the harmonic structure. Variations no. 3 and 4 mirror each other, as they exchange the fast, florid accompaniment with the theme mainly in unison, then in the other variation in the chordal texture of the original theme. Variation no.5 challenges with the rapidly alternating chords and octaves. Variation no.6 follows the classical design of the form (Theme and Variations) by using a minor key. Variation no.7 returns to Bb major and displays a contrapuntal treatment of the subject.

The final variation has several sections, beginning with the dramatic key change, restless interactions between the parts, sudden and frequent dynamic changes leading to the climactic buildup that quiets down and through several measures of the octave tremolo on the dominant, prepares the return of the theme, only to be interrupted and stopped, then followed by a sudden and surprising, exuberant final section.

Eric Ewazen is one of the most prolific composers for brass today. Born in Cleveland, Ohio and studied composition at Eastman and Julliard, his works have been performed by most of the major orchestras and principal players in the United States. His trumpet sonata at nearly 20 minutes long is one of the longest works for trumpet in the standard repertoire. Commissioned in 1993 by the International Trumpet Guild *Sonata for Trumpet and Piano* premiered at the 1995 ITG Conference by Chris Gekker on trumpet and Ewazen at the piano. Tonight's performance will feature the beautifully lilting and pastoral second movement (Allegretto, dotted quarter=48) and the much more angular and rhythmic energy of the final movement (Allegro con Fuoco, quarter =152, and beyond). Ewazen himself stated the two voices are equal in this work, yet the piano part is one of the most difficult he has composed. Enjoy the Fuoco that brings this work to a close.

The chamber work *Ritmo Jondo* was the first work written by Carlos Surinach to be performed in the US. It was programmed on a concert in May of 1952 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Having already composed two symphonies and an opera, as well as having held prominent conducting posts, Surinach emigrated from Barcelona, Spain in 1951, hoping to establish himself out from under the shadow of European composers of the previous era, whose works were being frantically republished in the wake of WWII. The performance of this very work on such a prestigious concert launched Surinach's career in the states, and not a week after the concert, notable choreographers Doris Humphrey and Jose Limon approached him with ballet commissions. He later expanded the chamber version of "Ritmo Jondo" to chamber orchestra, and Martha Graham produced a ballet with this as its score. It began a decades-long collaboration, with Graham commissioning several more award-winning scores from Surinach. The composer has included these notes about each movement, drawn from Spanish *gitano* sources:

***Bulerias:*** a gay, fast, Flamenco dance, improvisatory in character, with shifting rhythms. The dancer punctuates the guitar and vocal accompaniment with heel-stamping and finger-snapping, while onlookers interject rhythmic handclapping and shouts to spur the dancer on.

***Saeta:*** a slow ritual song of Seville, sung in the streets during the Good Friday procession. Instruments are prohibited during this season; however, muffled drums are often employed, adding the mournful mood of lamentation.

***Garrotín:*** a violent temperamental dance of Flamenco origin accompanied only by fragments of melody, sung by the dancer, and the staccato clapping rhythms of the surrounding observers. Their loud cries of "Olé!" incite the dancer to ever wilder displays of passion.