



# RENGA

Steven Schick and Kate Hatmaker, Artistic Directors

## Reed Family Concert **Olivier Messiaen's DES CANYONS AUX ÉTOILES...**

Aleck Karis, piano | Nicolee Kuester, horn | Steven Schick, conductor

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 24th @ 2PM**  
**Conrad Prebys Concert Hall**

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## The Reed Family Concert

When Joel and Ann Reed and their family endowed a Presidential Chair at the University of California, San Diego last year, they did many things. They signaled their trust in the music department and its mission of adventurous music making. They invested in faculty research well into the future. And, they provided funds to support performances and other events that might otherwise have been too large or costly for the department alone to sponsor.

I am honored to be the inaugural recipient of the Reed Family Presidential Chair. And I'm thrilled that the first fruit of the Reed's generous gift will be a performance of Olivier Messiaen's magnificent *Des Canyons aux Étoiles*. The (first annual) Reed Family Concert is the centerpiece of a week-long series of events on the theme of "Nature and Music," and will include a conversation/interview hosted by UC San Diego's Helen Edison Lecture series with author and naturalist Barry Lopez on January 20, and my performance on Friday, January 22, of John Luther Adams's evening-length work for solo percussion, *The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies*. In addition, the Reed Family Concert has inspired an undergraduate class—"Uncivilized: the Fluid Boundary Between Music and Nature"—and many students from the class will be at the performances and rehearsals this week.

It is appropriate that the Reed Family Concert is an occasion for collaboration and community. In the Messiaen work, you will hear UC San Diego graduate students, faculty, and alumni, including the percussion group red fish blue fish, now entering its third decade of existence, along with soloists Nicolee Kuester, Ryan Nestor, and Sean Dowgray. I am very happy to perform with Renga and co-artistic director Kate Hatmaker. Renga is a new initiative that features musicians of UC San Diego, the San Diego Symphony, and beyond. And I am honored to be performing with my colleague, the wonderful pianist Aleck Karis. Aleck and I met at our first faculty meeting 25 years ago and have been friends and musical partners since.

In a project of this size there are many people to thank. I am grateful to Mary Wolshok and Dan Atkinson of the Helen Edison Lecture Series for their partnership. As always I am deeply indebted to the music department and department chair Lei Liang for their support. Very special thanks to Jessica Flores and her first-rate staff, who produce all music department concerts, excellently and seemingly without breaking a sweat. Deepest thanks go to Ann and Joel Reed and their family for the gift that has made this week possible. The music department of the University of California, San Diego is an extraordinary place where excellent performance, cutting-edge research and scholarship, and committed teaching can come together under the same roof. Ann and Joel, your gift has made that nexus all the richer.

– Steven Schick

Helen Edison Lecture Series presents:  
Barry Lopez in conversation with Steven Schick

Wednesday, January 20, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.

Price Center East Ballroom

"Music and Nature"

National Book Award-Winning author and environmentalist Barry Lopez joins UC San Diego's Steven Schick, a world-renowned percussionist, to explore the intersections of music, words, and the natural world through dialogue and performance. "The contemporary naturalist," Lopez writes, is one "whose involvement in the political process, in the debates of public life, in the evolution of literature and the arts, has become crucial." The evening is a prelude to Schick's January 24 performance with the Renga Ensemble of composer Olivier Messaien's rarely heard tribute to Utah's Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks.

**BARRY LOPEZ** was born in 1945 in Port Chester, New York. He grew up in Southern California and New York City and attended college in the Midwest before moving to Oregon, where he has lived since 1968. He is an essayist, author, and short-story writer, and has traveled extensively in remote and populated parts of the world.

He is the author of *Arctic Dreams*, for which he received the National Book Award, *Of Wolves and Men*, a National Book Award finalist for which he received the John Burroughs and Christopher medals, and eight works of fiction, including *Light Action in the Caribbean*, *Field Notes*, and *Resistance*. His essays are collected in two books, *Crossing Open Ground* and *About This Life*. He contributes regularly to *Harper's*, *Granta*, *The Georgia Review*, *Orion*, *Outside*, *The Paris Review*, *Manoa* and other publications in the United States and abroad. His work has appeared in dozens of anthologies, including *Best American Essays*, *Best Spiritual Writing*, and the "best" collections from *National Geographic*, *Outside*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Paris Review*, and other periodicals.

His most recent books are *Home Ground: Language for an American Landscape*, a reader's dictionary of regional landscape terms, which he edited with Debra Gwartney, and *Outside*, a collection of six stories with engravings by Barry Moser.

Friday, January 22, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Music Center Experimental Theater

**The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies (2002)**

John Luther Adams

burst  
rumble  
shimmer  
roar  
thunder  
wail  
crash  
stutter

Steven Schick, percussion

*The duration of this work is approximately 80 minutes.*

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I flew to Alaska one December to ask John Luther Adams to compose a modest piece for solo percussion. What happened there changed my life.

John caught my elbow as I slipped in the ice parking lot at the airport. “What kind of boots are those, anyway?” he asked in a tone that could only be called ironic. He laughed softly as my response. “*Costume National*,” he intoned mimicking my French accent. “We don’t see many of those around here!”

People often laugh when I insist that we have winter in Southern California. Really, we do! December here rolls out in long halcyon stretches of cool, sunny days. And, if we are lucky, the rain clouds patrolling just beyond the pewter line of the horizon eventually materialize as the soaking storms of January. However, the suspended poetic hush of solstice in La Jolla does little to prepare you for the brutal sincerity of the Alaskan winter.

For four days John and I sat together in the small cabin in the boreal forest near Fairbanks that doubled as his composition studio. We shared observations about the music we loved. We detoured, rewardingly, into the virtues of fine single malt whiskey and the sanctity of National League baseball. We became friends. Mostly we talked about how notated percussion music in its bumbling adolescence routinely failed to live up to the promise of its birthright. How could an art form founded on a million spellbinding noises be represented in the arena of contemporary concert music by a couple of dozen recital pieces and a handful of show-stopper concertos?

Every afternoon a long silence came over us as the weak mid-afternoon sun faded into

dusk. The shifting light on the broad rolling foothills in front of the cabin played out as a sober dress rehearsal for the breathtaking drama unfolding on the scarlet-rimmed ridges of Denali and her sisters a hundred miles or so to the south. After one of those silences John observed that new percussion music simply wasn't daring enough. Pointing to the unfolding panorama he averred that we rarely think big enough. Nor, he added softly, do we think small enough.

The piece that came out of those conversations, *The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies*, is both much bigger and much smaller than any solo percussion music ever written. At 80 minutes in eight large sections, the sweep of material, gesture, and structure is immense! And yet most of the real action takes place on the microscopic level, in the chattering of snare drum “nonuplets” or among the faint voices that emerge from the decay of a tam-tam roll. In a way John simply transcribed the receding mountain ranges in front of his cabin—each successive set smaller to the eye and less distinct—into a sonic overlay of resonant halos that radiate through musical space.

The resonant layering in *Mathematics* reaches beyond the realm of live sounds and into the electro-sphere. Each section is accompanied by an electronic “aura,” which John derived from recordings I made of the notated materials. In performance the aura is tightly synchronized with the live playing and acts as a denatured, electronic avatar of the flesh-and-blood performer. For four days John and I talked, and we listened. Two essential observations emerged. I saw that he was greatly indebted to and profoundly in love with Alaska. And, equally, that Alaska was nearly irrelevant to a deep understanding of his music. By that I mean that he had so internalized the lessons of that extraordinary place that although his music was about place, it was not about *a place*. At the distance of nearly 14 years from its premiere I can say that *The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies* was a breakthrough piece for John. With this piece he began creating music that was not only about place; it was a place onto itself.

The geography—the “place-ness”—of *Mathematics* is partly a result of physical architecture. Seven distinct instrumental set-ups, each consisting of a primary percussive color, are arrayed on stage. It's large. But, this music also occupies a generous spiritual space. Its formal scale, its sheer sonic power, the topographical whorls of its rhythms and densities create, in and of themselves a tableau worthy of Barnett Newman. It is upon this terrain that a single performer roams, a solitary vertical zip on a tundra of noise.

I flew to Alaska one December and what happened there changed my life. There was that embarrassing lesson about appropriate footwear and then four days of extraordinary conversation. From those four days came a great piece of music and a life-long friendship.

– Steven Schick

Sunday, January 24, 2016 – 2:00 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

*Pierre Boulez*  
*In Memory and With Gratitude*

**Des Canyons aux Étoiles...** (1974)

Olivier Messiaen

Aleck Karis, Piano  
Nicolee Kuester, Horn  
red fish blue fish  
Renga  
Steven Schick, conductor

**Première Partie**

- I. Le Désert
- II. Les Orioles
- III. Ce qui est écrit dans les étoiles...
- IV. Le Cossyphe d'Heuglin
- V. Cedar Breaks et la Don de Crainte

**Deuxième Partie**

- VI. Appel interstellaire
- VII. Bryce Canyon et les rochers rouge-orange

– *Intermission* –

**Troisième Partie**

- VIII. Les ressuscités et la chant de l'étoile Aldébaran
- IX. Le Moqueur polyglotte
- X. La Grive des bois
- XI. Omao, Leiothrix, Elepaio, Shama
- XII. Zion Park et la Cité céleste

*The duration of this work will be approximately 2 hours including intermission.*

# RENGA

## VIOLIN

Kate Hatmaker  
Erik Carlson  
Pei-Chun Tsai  
Igor Pandurski  
Anna Skalova  
Tricia Chen

## VIOLA

Ethan Pernela  
Catie Longhi  
Batya MacAdam-Somer

## CELLO

Alex Greenbaum  
Abe Liebhaber  
Tyler Borden

## BASS

Matthew Kline

## PICCOLO

Michael Matsuno

## FLUTE

Rose Lombardo  
Erica Peel

## ALTO FLUTE

Diana Morgan

## OBOE

Sarah Skuster  
Jason Sudduth

## ENGLISH HORN

Andrea Overturf

## E-FLAT CLARINET

Terri Tunnicliff

## CLARINET

Curt Miller  
Madison Greenstone

## BASS CLARINET

Michiko Ogawa

## BASSOON

Ryan Simmons  
David Savage

## CONTRABASSOON

Leyla Zamora

## PICCOLO TRUMPET

Ray Nowak

## TRUMPET

Stephanie Richards  
Rachel Allen

## TROMBONE

Eric Starr  
Logan Chopyk

## HORN

Darby Hinshaw  
Tricia Skye

## BASS TROMBONE

Kyle Mendiguchia

**red fish blue fish**

James Beauton – Leah Bowden – Christopher Clarino – Fiona Digney – Jason Ginter

Overcoming his initial reservations, American arts doyenne Alice Tully prevailed upon the great French composer Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) to compose a piece in celebration of the Bicentennial of the United States. As he contemplated a suitable theme, Messiaen discovered photographs of Bryce Canyon in an art book and decided that its combination of sheer physical beauty, the colors of the landscape, the presence of fascinating bird and animal life, and a true connection with indigenous people would be the basis for a grand work.

In 1973 he toured the Utah National Parks with his wife, the great pianist Yvonne Loriot, and observed,

“I’d seen the canyons from two different perspectives. I’d seen them from on high, with the vertigo of the abyss, that’s important, one sees vast black holes against the red of the cliffs. Afterwards, my wife and I went down the trails...we made our way to the very depths of the abyss, we could see the path circling very high above us, and that is what inspired the title of the work, *Des Canyons aux Étoiles*; one progresses from the deepest bowels of the earth and ascends toward the stars.”

The piece, premiered at Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center in 1974, is a culmination of Messiaen’s life-long concerns. There is the “intellectual” side of Messiaen’s language with mature statements of non-retrogradable rhythms and a harmony powered by his “modes of limited transposition.” And there is also Messiaen the spiritualist: ornithologist, devout Roman Catholic, traveler. Taken together these aspects paint a portrait of Messiaen as a “rational mystic,” an artist who exploits seemingly contradictory artistic impulses to create an electric and constantly shifting musical texture.

*Des Canyons aux Étoiles...* consists of twelve separate movements, divided into three large parts, each of which culminates with a landscape from one of the Utah sites. The composer offers brief descriptions of the movements:

- I) “Le désert” (The Desert), an empty, spiritualized desert, symbol of the soul. The theme played on the horn evokes a peaceful state; birds and desert wind (performed on the Éoliphone) define the vast silence of Creation.
- II) “Les orioles” (The Orioles) This movement consists almost entirely of birdsong sounded in the solo piano and orchestra.
- III) “Ce qui est écrit sur les étoiles...” (What is written in the stars...) is the first direct reference to the astronomical plane. However, Messiaen turned to the Book of Daniel, inscribing the three words etched on the wall of Belshazzar’s palace: mene, teke, l peres, that is, “numbered, weighed, divided.” For Messiaen these words describe the order of the placement and movement of the stars in the universe.
- IV) “Le cossyphe d’Heuglin” (The White-Browed Robin) is a piano solo based on the song of this African bird.



- V) “Cedar Breaks et le don de crainté” (Cedar Breaks and the Gift of Awe) In his preface to the score, Messiaen refers to Cedar Breaks as “a vast amphitheatre, sliding down toward a deep abyss,” evoking a sense of awe at the overwhelming beauty in unspoiled nature and a symbol of the Divine Presence. This ends Part I.
- VI) “Appel interstellaire” (Interstellar Call) Part II opens with a horn solo that symbolizes both humanity’s suffering and redemption. Two texts, one from the Psalms: “He (God) heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars and gives to all of them their names.” The other is from the Book of Job: “O earth, cover not my blood, and let my cry find no resting place.”
- VII) “Bryce Canyon et les rochers rouge-orange” (Bryce Canyon and the Red-Orange Rocks) This is the central movement of the work. Messiaen indulges in E major, emphasizing the color red-orange. This movement ends Part II.
- VIII) “Les ressuscités et le chant de L’étoile Aldébaran” (The Resurrected and the Song of the Star Aldebaran) Again, the book of Job furnished the inspiration: “the stars sing,” they possess their own natural sonority. The stars sing, the resurrected revolve around the stars.
- IX) “Le maquer polyglotte” (The Mockingbird) In the second long piano solo, Messiaen utilized silently pressed keys to stress particular harmonics from tone-clusters.
- X) “La grive de bois” (The Wood-Thrush) The song of this bird is portrayed as arpeggios for piccolo, high-tuned percussion, and violin harmonics.
- XI) “Omao, Leiiothrix, Elepaio, Shama” These birds from the Hawaiian Islands, China, and India form the nucleus of this ‘long symphony of birds.’
- XII) “Zion Park et la cité céleste” (Zion Park and the Celestial City) Nature and the Divine fuse in this vision of paradise. We have risen from the depths of the earthly canyon to the celestial city of Jerusalem.

We offer this work now in celebration of the 2016 centennial of the National Parks System, the greatest protection of wilderness in the history of the world and what author Wallace Stegner called, “America’s best idea.” We also offer it as a reminder not to forget our ears as we encounter the world. *Des Canyons aux Étoiles...* evokes the sounds of the American West: in the stillness of our great spaces and the frenetic eloquence of the birds; in the slow rhythms of geology and the too-often forgotten voices of the original stewards of the land. Ultimately *Des Canyons aux Étoiles...* is the music of devotion, in the composer’s words, “a religious work of praise and contemplation.” And despite the importance of musical color and the complex songs of birds, fascinating innovations in rhythm and harmony and masterful orchestrations, this is music about the earth and humankind’s place on it. It is an anthem, a song of devotion, to our beautiful blue planet and a plea to treat it with love.

– Steven Schick

## PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES

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The New York Times calls **red fish blue fish** a “dynamic percussion ensemble from the University of California.” Founded twenty years ago by Steven Schick, the San Diego-based ensemble performs, records, and premieres works from the last 85 years of the rich history of western percussion. The group works regularly with living composers from every continent. Recent projects include a world premiere of a Roger Reynolds’ Sanctuary and the American premiere of James Dillon’s epic Nine Rivers cycle with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE). red fish blue fish has collaborated with George Crumb, Dawn Upshaw, and Peter Sellars to premiere the staged version of The Winds of Destiny at the Ojai Music Festival. In 2015, red fish blue fish won two important recording awards: the 2015 Deutscheschall-plattenkritikpreis for Best New Music release for the collected early percussion works of Karlheinz Stockhausen, and the “Diapason d’Or” for its recording of Iannis Xenakis’s Zythos.

**RENGA** is an ensemble of friends and colleagues from UC San Diego, the San Diego Symphony and beyond. Led by Artistic Directors Kate Hatmaker and Steven Schick, Renga unites the most recent and provocative contemporary music with established classical repertoire in settings ranging from solos and small ensembles to full chamber orchestra. Recent highlights include collaborations with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) and Wu Man, as well as performances at the Ojai Music Festival, TEDx San Diego, UCSD and the Carlsbad Music Festival. Taking its name from a thousand-year-old Japanese tradition of “shared writing,” Renga seeks to create a progressive forum of shared artistic vision, community outreach and reflection on the impact of art on our lives. [www.rengasd.com](http://www.rengasd.com)

**ALECK KARIS** has performed recitals, chamber music, and concertos across the Americas, Europe and in China. As the pianist of the new music ensemble Speculum Musicae he has participated in over a hundred premieres and performed at major American and European festivals. His appearances with orchestra have ranged from concertos by Mozart, Beethoven and Chopin to those of Stravinsky, Messiaen and Carter. His five solo discs on Bridge Records include Chopin/Carter/Schumann, Mozart, Stravinsky, Cage and Feldman/Webern/Wolpe. His two discs on Roméo Records are Music of Philip Glass, and Late Chopin. His recent recording of Feldman’s last work, “Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello” was listed as one of the top 25 classical releases of 2015 in the New York Times and one of the 10 best contemporary releases of 2015 in the Sunday Times of London. Last month, Bridge released his most recent disc, Piano Music of Francis Poulenc. He has studied with William Daghlian, Artur Balsam and Beveridge Webster. He is a distinguished professor of music at the University of California, San Diego.

As a performer, horn player **NICOLEE KUESTER** divides her time between experimental music and works from the past three centuries of Western art music. She holds the principal horn position of the La Jolla Symphony, where she recently appeared as a concerto soloist, and is the former principal horn of the Orquesta de Baja California. Kuester has also performed with the San Diego Symphony and San Diego Opera orchestras as well as the Canton Symphony and Orchestra Nova. In 2011 she appeared with the Ensemble Intercontemporain conducted by Pierre Boulez in a concert tour of his work *Pli Selon Pli*. Her own work as a collaborative experimental musician has recently been featured at festivals in Norway, Switzerland, and on both coasts of the United States. As an avid chamber musician, Kuester has recently performed at the Marlboro Music Festival and in concerts throughout San Diego with UCSD's Palimpsest, San Diego New Music, Renga, and other ensembles. She holds undergraduate degrees in Music Performance and Creative Writing from Oberlin College and Conservatory and earned her MA at UC San Diego, where she is also pursuing her DMA in Contemporary Horn Performance.

Percussionist, conductor, and author **STEVEN SCHICK** was born in Iowa and raised in a farming family. For forty years he has championed contemporary music by commissioning or premiering more than one hundred-fifty new works. Schick is music director of the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus and artistic director of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. He was music director of the 2015 Ojai Festival. He maintains a lively schedule of guest conducting including recent appearances with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Ensemble Modern and the Asko/Schönberg Ensemble. Among his acclaimed publications include a book, "The Percussionist's Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams," and numerous recordings of contemporary percussion music including a 3 CD set of the complete percussion music of Iannis Xenakis (Mode) and a companion recording of the early percussion music of Karlheinz Stockhausen in 2014 (Mode). Steven Schick is Distinguished Professor of Music and holds the Reed Family Presidential Chair at the University of California, San Diego.

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