



March 30, 2020

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Dear CMNC Enthusiast,

**Due to the uncertainty of this perilous time and the many preparations which would need to begin soon, CMNC deeply regrets that it will cancel its workshop at College of Marin in May 2020.**

We all hope that the global pandemic subsides soon, so we can leave our shelters, join our friends and play chamber music. We will let you know as soon as the next workshop date and location are confirmed.

The latest issue of *The Chamber Musician* is now available at [cmnc.org](http://cmnc.org). We are offering this issue to all, whether you have a paid membership or not. Note that the information about the workshop at College of Marin is no longer valid. We hope to invite Sqwonk, the bass clarinet duo who would have been our performing coaches, to join us at a future workshop.

CMNC plans to offer some financial help to our much-loved coaches, who have now lost the revenue of two canceled workshops. If your finances allow, we invite you to donate to a dedicated fund which we will share among our regular coaches. All donations through May 31, 2020 will be directed to this fund. [This link](#) will take you to CMNC's donation form. We appreciate any help you can give.

Until our next workshop together, stay safe and healthy.

The CMNC Board of Directors

# The Chamber Musician

Published by Chamber Musicians of Northern California

MARCH 2020

## OUR NEXT WORKSHOP

### College of Marin May 30–31, 2020



A not to be missed concert by the one and only SQWONK, bass clarinetists extraordinaire.

**The application and payment deadline is Saturday, April 18, 2020.**

**Current full members: click anywhere on this page to read the newsletter.**

**Go to [www.cmnc.org](http://www.cmnc.org) for details of the workshop. To apply, or to update your membership and then read the newsletter, log in and go to your Member Account.**

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### The Bass Clarinet

Elizabeth Morrison gives us the scoops on the bass clarinet.

### Hooray for the Woodwinds

Karen Wright on bassoon and Corey Weinstein on clarinet share their original poems.

### Women Composers

Elizabeth Morrison celebrates the continued engagement with women composers, now at the SoCal Workshop.

## REGULAR COLUMNS

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Harriet Spiegel explores uncertainties.

### Our Next Workshop

Carolyn Lowenthal invites you all to our College of Marin Workshop, May 30–31.

### President's Report

Alan Kingsley looks ahead to the possible locations for our fall and winter workshops.

# The Chamber Musician

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## FROM THE EDITOR

by Harriet Spiegel, spring editor

This spring newsletter is, alas, missing one regular feature: a report on our winter workshop, because for the first time in over 30 years, we had to cancel a workshop. We tried valiantly to work out a financial arrangement with SFSU, but finally had to accept that the sums that they needed, more than double our earlier amount, were not possible for us. No one is sadder than your Board about this, for we have had many years of wonderful workshops at SFSU and a long, productive, and treasured relationship with SFSU's fabulous resident string quartet. We hope that the Alexander Quartet members can continue to be CMNC coaches and friends.

But when one door closes, others open. You can read the CMNC president's article in this newsletter and learn about exciting progress we are making in our search for new sites for our Fall and Winter workshops. We hope that losing SFSU will become just a small hiccup and that our new sites will provide more opportunities for even greater chamber music times.

This edition of *The Chamber Musician* introduces a new column: Note-Worthy. Members are invited to submit any chamber music related article that they would like to share. Hats off to Karen Wright and Corey Weinstein for the first entries in this column!

Also in this edition you will learn why you should love the bass clarinet, featured in our coaches' concert, and why we have therefore dedicated this workshop to the bass clarinet as we offer a special welcome to all bass clarinet players.

We also acknowledge that we live in an age of uncertainty. We thought we had paid our uncertainty dues with our long and unsuccessful negotiations with SFSU. But now we share broader uncertainties with the world-wide spread of the COVID-19 virus. We are optimistically planning for our spring workshop at our beloved College of Marin, but we remain watchful and cautious. 🐼

## NEXT WORKSHOP

### College of Marin, May 30–31

by Carolyn Lowenthal, workshop director

Our CMNC Directors are busy planning our next chamber music weekend, to be held at College of Marin in Kentfield on the weekend of May 30–31, 2020.



The application deadline is April 18, so be sure to apply soon at [cmnc.org](http://cmnc.org). College of Marin is a small campus, easy to get around, with plenty of nearby parking, and great staff support. All participants will be coached on both Saturday and Sunday. You may come in a preformed group either or both days if you wish. On Saturday, coaching will be followed by performance samplers at which each group will play a brief selection of the piece they have been working on during the day. Plan to stay until at least 5:30. The performance samplers will be followed by a coaches' concert by the bass clarinet duo Sqwonk from 5:45 to 6:30, then dinner and optional freelancing. Sunday's coaching session will be followed by an optional performance sampler. All are welcome to perform, listen, or to go home at 4:00.

We are excited about having a bass clarinet duo as performing coaches for the first time ever. You can read more about Sqwonk and the bass clarinet on page 3, and at their [website](#).

With coaching both days, the workshop committee especially wants you to enjoy your music assignment. Are there pieces you have always wanted to be assigned? Please go to the [CMNC library](#) and check for [recent additions](#). Are you a string player eager to play with winds or vice versa, or a pianist with a particular combination in mind? Would you like to get coached on a piece by Beethoven for his 250th birthday? Would you like a piece with bass clarinet? We can't absolutely guarantee to assign you your wish, because it depends on having the other players needed to make the group, but we will definitely do our best. So, use the

Continues on page 2.

Next Workshop, continued from page 1.

“Request” box on your application and let us know what you would most like to play.

Advance assignment notifications, including contact information for your group members, will be sent to all players. You are strongly encouraged to contact others in your group and start working on your pieces. Want to build up calluses, toughen your embouchure, and tone up those playing muscles for summer workshops? This is the place to do it. We hope you will join us for a pleasurable weekend.

We also must add a note of caution as we look ahead. We do not know how serious and disruptive the COVID-19 virus will be in the coming weeks. We hope to hold the workshop as planned, but we certainly don't want our workshop to make anyone sick! Just a heads up for now. We are keeping watch, and we will keep in touch and hopeful. ☺

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## President's Report

by Alan Kingsley

I am writing this on what could have been the weekend of our February workshop, which in recent years was held at San Francisco State University. Sadly, economic forces compelled the University to raise their fees to use the facilities well beyond which we could afford, and we didn't bring sufficient quid pro quo to continue being sponsored by OLLI. The process of putting on a workshop is time consuming and requires the selfless contributions of many board members and other volunteers. The board didn't feel that we could locate a new venue and navigate all the challenges posed by using a new venue in the short time before a February workshop, so we reluctantly decided to skip the February 2020 workshop and place our energies on developing new locations.

Although we are only in the early stages of evaluating and negotiating with UC Berkeley, we are hopeful to hold our October 2020 workshop there. Berkeley does not have quite as many rooms available to us as did SFSU, but they have more and better pianos available. Using Berkeley would give us a long sought after East Bay location for one of our workshops, and it would be near BART and other public transportation. In order to succeed, each of us will need to be open to differences in how we execute the weekend. Notably, parking around Berkeley is less available or convenient as it has been at other venues, which will argue for the use of transit and carpooling whenever possible. We are hopeful that our early start to the weekend days will give us a leg up on parking availability. It is also unclear how food service will be accomplished—early thoughts include having a lunch break during which folks descend upon the many fine eatery choices in the nearby neighborhood. Another option may be to have box lunches delivered.

For our February 2021 workshop, Bob Goldstein has been talking with faculty and administrators at Cal State East Bay. For that workshop we may welcome some of the music students from CSUEB to our workshop. Negotiations are still in the early stages, but we are hopeful that acceptable conditions and pricing can be achieved.

As I mentioned early on, a lot of careful planning and work goes into each workshop, and this is particularly true

**A lot of careful planning and work goes into each workshop, and this is especially true of staging a new workshop at a new venue.**

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President's Report, continued from page 2.

of staging a new workshop at a new venue. Please consider helping your community with the myriad of details that must be addressed by contacting me or any board member to offer your help. ☺

## Sqwonk, the Bass Clarinet, and Beethoven

by Elizabeth Morrison

In a historic first for CMNC, the performing group at College of Marin will be Sqwonk, the bass clarinet duo of Jeff Anderle and Jonathan Russell. Their name alone hints at delights to come. Those of us who attended COM in May 2015 will recall the brilliant playing and coaching of Jeff Anderle, who, with pianist Jeffrey Sykes and cellist Jean-Michel Fonteneau, performed Beethoven's Clarinet Trio opus 38 and an arrangement of his greatest hit, the Sextet opus 20.

We are so excited to have Sqwonk at the workshop that we are declaring bass clarinet the workshop theme. It is interesting to read up on the history of the instrument, which emerged in the mid-18th century following the invention of the B flat clarinet by Johann Christoph Denner a few decades before. Wikipedia can instruct you about earlier prototypes like the basse-tube, the bass chalumeau and the glicibarifono, before it was finally taken in hand by Adolfe Saxe in 1838 and given essentially its modern form.

The bass clarinet is a transposing instrument in B flat. Its lowest note is the B flat below the cello C string (at least that is how I think of it), and this is also the lowest note of the bassoon. Its highest notes are very high indeed; how high you can go depends on your skill and your instrument, but it's up there. It has a similar range to the cello, and bass clarinetists like to play the Bach cello suites, which sound amazing. You can also listen to a [YouTube](#) of the Flight of the Bumblebee, or as the performer calls it, The Flight of the f\*#!^@% Bumblebee, played on bass clarinet, and I recommend that you do so.

Until now CMNC participants have mostly enjoyed the bass clarinet in clarinet quartets, many (but not all) of which include the instrument. CMNC has several such pieces, including ones by Paul Harvey, Kenneth Lowman, Claude Debussy, Alfred Uhl and Mike Curtis. We assign them when clarinets are thick on the rolls and we can find a bass clarinetist. There is also the popular Mladi for wind

quintet and bass clarinet by Leos Janacek, the Sextet for Winds by Jean Francaix, and a new addition to our library, Three Pieces for Three Woodwinds by Robert Washburn, the three in question being flute, B flat clarinet and a bass clarinet.

Now, Sqwonk will open our eyes to the full range of the instrument. Jeff and Jonathan are true devotees; they are also half of a quartet of bass clarinets called [Edmund Welles](#). This is an amazing group, erudite and adventurous. When I read on their website, "Edmund Welles has the distinction of being the world's only original, composing band of four bass clarinetists. They invent and perform heavy chamber music... Since 1996, Cornelius Boots has led and composed for Edmund Welles, which received a Chamber Music America Grant in 2004 for the creation of Agrippa's 3 Books, a multi-movement work inspired by occult philosophy and heavy metal music," I instantly became a fan.

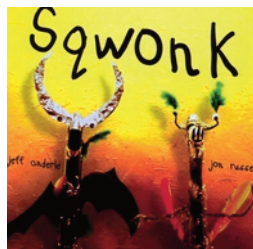
Bass clarinetists seem to be strangely free of ego. I combed Sqwonk's website and never found the names of the players, even on their press photo. Edmund Welles does mention their founder, Cornelius Boots, but I am still in the dark as to the fourth member of the quartet.

Which brings us to Chris Farrell, one of CMNC's most adventurous participants. Chris always brings something interesting to the workshop; he helped facilitate bringing the saxophone quartet that played Phillip Glass at San Francisco State in 2018, for example. He has been promising to come with a reed quintet, and at COM, inspired by the presence of Sqwonk, he will do so.

What, you may ask, is a reed quintet? It is a different kind of woodwind quintet; instead of flute, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon, it consists of oboe, alto saxophone, clarinet, bassoon and bass clarinet—all reed instruments. The reed quintet was invented in 1985 by a group of Dutch musicians called [Calefax](#). Their aim, they say, is to make the reed quintet as popular as the saxophone or string quartet, and while maybe it's not yet at string quartet level, there are now many reed quintets in the world. Imagine inventing a whole new genre! It's how Haydn must have felt. I can't wait to hear Chris's group. I have been teetering on attending COM in May (the Eureka Symphony has a concert the same weekend), but this could push me over the edge.

It almost goes without saying that Jeff Anderle is also a member of a reed quintet. It is called [Splinter Reeds](#), and

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Please join in our celebration of the bass clarinet. Wind players, mention bass clarinet on your application and we will try to find you a piece.

Sqwonk, continued from page 3.

the names of the players actually appear on the website.

Please join in our celebration of the bass clarinet at College of Marin. Wind players, mention bass clarinet on your application and we will try to find you a piece. String players, come prepared to enjoy new and invigorating sounds.

And finally, what about Beethoven, who also appears in the title of this article? We have not forgotten that this year marks the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth. Beethoven is therefore the workshop's sub-theme, or co-theme, or underlying theme. Chris has not located any pieces where Beethoven and bass clarinet actually intersect, but he did mention that Beethoven's Opus 18 #1 arranges very well for clarinet quartet, and has a fun bass clarinet/cello part. Just saying. ♪



### NoteWorthy #1

#### playing around observations old and recent

by Karen Wright

a bassoon is wonderful to play  
 a person needs lots of patience to play the bassoon  
 the patience is rewarded by a feeling of warmth and  
 satisfaction  
 not everyone is suited to play the bassoon  
 it takes time and endless heartfelt dedication  
 this dedication is not a sacrifice to the bassoonist  
 however  
 it is a lovefest  
 others may feel the connection is a bit much  
 only other bassoonists understand  
 playing the bassoon requires much dexterity  
 playing the bassoon uses lots of wind power and air  
 there are many fingerings to learn  
 lots of forked fingerings  
 lots of thumb fingerings  
 bassoonists possess an infinite collection of reeds  
 a bassoon has infinite character  
 most bassoonists are infinite characters ♪



### NoteWorthy #2

#### Clarinets Have Names

by Corey Weinstein

From start to last,  
 each one a sweet consort,  
 Like bone, like gut and heart,  
 like sweat, my groin, and warts.

Oh Hondo Rose the best and first,  
 My heart strings vibrate when she sounds,  
 So sweet, so clear, each note with zest,  
 Found to mime Paquito's style.

Her cuz Negrita plays in C  
 and doubles for fiddle and flute,  
 with Klezmer geschrei, open toned,  
 her playful piercing soprano way.

Urim and Thumim in formal black dress,  
 Cast as my classical muse,  
 With Beethoven, Milhaud and Bruch,  
 Magic runes thrown for orchestral tunes.

The Golem is made from the dust  
 of blackwood swept from the floor,  
 With fiber, resin, my airy thrust,  
 His grist safe for travel or fight.

For marching the Dazzler plays it right,  
 Light and white and plastic tough ,  
 Soft fingers ply her holes and keys,  
 My lips, quick tongue , hot breath, the song.

I thank the craftsmen when I play,  
 Rossi, LeBlanc, Selmer, Buffet. ♪

## Women Composers at the SoCal Workshop

by Elizabeth Morrison

Imagine my delight at hearing that the SoCal Chamber Music Workshop plans to have 50% music by women composers at their 2020 workshop. How cool is that! Ingrid Burger, chair of the committee, reached out to me in October for input, and I jumped on the chance to take part in the planning. Carol Mukhopadhyay and I both contributed lists of music by women that we have enjoyed at CMNC.

There is now a “Curated List” of women composers on the SoCal website, many of whom you will recognize from CMNC workshops. It includes works with piano by Amy Beach, Rebecca Clarke, and Clara Schumann; Ellen Taaffe Zwilich’s string trio; many string quartets by old friends like Ethel Smyth, Grazyna Bacewicz and Lucie Vellere; names new to me like Julia Smith and Tanya French; Sally Beamish’s viola quintet; and one wind quintet, by Ellen Zwilich. (SoCal is mainly for string and piano players, but usually includes a few wind players as well.) The purpose of the list is to point participants to interesting works; they are of course free to look elsewhere as well.

I plan to attend SoCal this summer; it sounds too good to miss! I have only been a few times, and it has been a while. But I do know that the workshop, held now at Scripps College in Claremont, stands a bit apart from CMNC’s parent workshop, Humboldt, and its other offspring, Ashland and CalCap. These workshops are all about sight-reading, and the adrenalin rush that comes from preparing a piece from scratch each day, sometimes with virtual strangers, and performing it in front of the whole workshop that very afternoon.

SoCal was founded, by violinist Ron Goldman and his wife Wynnona, in 1977. Initially they had a similar format of sight-reading a new piece each day. But over the years they have moved away from reading and toward preparation. They now accept preformed groups, and ask pianists to provide a list of repertoire they are prepared to play. There are lectures, directed group readings, coach concerts, and master classes rather than performance sam-

plers. (Old-timers may recall that CMNC’s master classes were inspired by the “pods” at what was then called the San Diego Workshop. And CMNC too, from its Humboldtian beginnings, has been moving for years towards less reading and more preparation.) The atmosphere at SoCal is noticeably different from that of other summer workshops, and perhaps appeals to a different style of player than the Humboldt-goer, although it is certainly possible to enjoy both.

Now that SoCal’s website has the details up, I was interested to see how, given their format, they planned to get to 50-50. I especially wondered about their preformed groups, which are a 2-1 majority; out of 120 participants, 80 are normally in preformed groups, with 40 in the “pool.” Would music by women be assigned only to the pool players, or would the preformed groups be required to select their own?

It turns out that preformed groups are “requested,” but not required, to include at least one piece by a woman in their repertoire for the week. But preformed players are required to spend at least one day in the pool. So we can roughly calculate that each day the coaches will be making assignments to perhaps 12 or 13 groups, out of about 28-30 total. If they assign mostly music by women, and if at least some of the preformed groups chose music by a woman that day, they might indeed get to 50%. Of course, with their system of master classes, you only hear three pieces each day besides your own, which might or might not include women composers. Still, even if 50% is a bit aspirational, it’s a terrific goal.

Another unique feature at SoCal is the “assigned piece.” Even when not attending myself I was always quite aware of the assigned piece, normally an ambitious quartet like a late Beethoven or a Bartok, because attending friends would want to practice it. This year the assigned piece will be Ethel Smyth’s String Quartet in e minor. This is the later and more demanding of the two Smyth quartets we have done at CMNC, and I think it’s an excellent choice. Preparing the assigned piece is optional, but both preformed and pool players are encouraged to do so, and those who do will be assigned it for coaching one day dur-

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### Woman Composers, continued from page 5.

ing the week. Dame Ethel's presence throughout the workshop will be enlivening, good for their numbers, and have a ripple effect throughout the chamber music world. I would love to hear it in a professional performance sometime soon!

I wondered if our women-composers advocacy at CMNC had contributed to SoCal's plan. Perhaps, a bit, I was told, but not directly. Ingrid Burger said that the idea originally came from another SoCal board member, pianist Leo Marcus, and Leo in turn told me that it came from a professor of music at Scripps named Anne Harley. She was inspired by "50-50 for 2020," a widespread effort to correct underrepresentation of women in the arts, politics and media, in recognition of the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage. So we are all part of a great wave of women stepping to the fore everywhere.

The dates for SoCal are July 19–25, and I would love to see lots of CMNC friends in Claremont this summer, as well as at Humboldt Week 2. Leo mentioned that they are actively seeking more upper strings in particular. But cellists, don't let that stop you from applying. As I told him, there are at least three wonderful cello quintets by women: Ethel Smyth, Marie Dare and Imogen Holst, plus the Curated List includes a cello quartet, new to me, by Shirl Jae Atwell. If you remember the thrilling all-women-composers workshop we held at Mills in October 2015, think what a joy it will be to meet some of these old friends again, and find new, wonderful pieces. Frankly, I think of 50-50 as just a good start! 🌀

**If you remember the thrilling all-women-composers workshop we held at Mills in October 2015, think what a joy it will be to meet some of these old friends again, and find new, wonderful pieces.**

*The Chamber Musician* is a publication of Chamber Musicians of Northern California (CMNC). Membership in CMNC includes a subscription to *The Chamber Musician* and the annual *CMNC Membership Directory*.

Harriet Spiegel, spring editor; Roy LeDuc, photographer; Susan Wilson, graphic designer.

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## Some Previous Workshop Pictures



Mimi Braverman (kneeling) and Suzanne Kirk catch up on the latest news at registration.



Bill Horne waits to turn the page while Diane Hie, Judy Quinn, and Keith Sklower play on.



Nana Kurosawa, Joselyn Bartlett, Tony Miksak, Randy Fisher, and Milton Wong play well together.