

UC SANTA BARBARA
Department of Music

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UC SANTA BARBARA FACULTY PRESENT MUSIC BY COMPOSER ELENA RUEHR

String and piano faculty members present works, including two world premieres, by critically-acclaimed composer and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Professor Elena Ruehr

Santa Barbara, CA (January 7, 2020)—UCSB Music faculty members will present works by composer Elena Ruehr, including two world premieres, on Friday, January 24, 2020 at 7:30 pm in Lotte Lehmann Concert Hall. Featured artists include violinist Ertan Torgul, violist Jonathan Moerschel, cellist Jennifer Kloetzel, and pianists Paul Berkowitz, Natasha Kislenko, and Robert Koenig. The program will include *Lift* (solo cello), *Errinerung* (solo piano/world premiere), and *Red* (solo violin), as well as Ruehr's Viola Sonata and Piano Quartet (world premiere). Ruehr will be in residence at UC Santa Barbara from January 23-24, and will also work with UC Santa Barbara College of Creative Studies Composition students.

Ruehr, who teaches music theory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, is known for her lyrical and rhythmically vibrant compositions, which have been praised as “sumptuously scored and full of soaring melodies” (*The New York Times*), as well as “unspeakably gorgeous” (*Gramophone*). A former Guggenheim Fellow and composer-in-residence with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Ruehr is well-known for her numerous collaborations and projects with many of today's leading artists and ensembles, including the Cypress, Borromeo, Lark, and Shanghai string quartets. Her collected works include compositions for chamber ensemble, orchestra, chorus, wind ensemble, instrumental solo, opera, dance, and silent film.

Ruehr has worked closely with UC Santa Barbara Assistant Professor Jennifer Kloetzel, having received three commissions from Kloetzel's former chamber ensemble, the Cypress String Quartet. Kloetzel also commissioned or premiered three other cello works by Ruehr: *Cloud Atlas* (concerto for cello and chamber orchestra), her Cello Sonata, and a work for solo cello. “It is special to have a close relationship with a composer and to have a front-row seat for the creative process,” noted Kloetzel, who organized Ruehr's residency and concert at UC Santa Barbara. “Elena is a brilliant composer who writes lyrical music with a complex rhythmic framework. I love spending time in her world.”

The first half of the program will open with Kloetzel's performance of Ruehr's *Lift* for solo cello. The work, written in 2013, was Ruehr's first piece for solo cello and was inspired by Nobel Prize-winner Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani school pupil and education activist. Next up, Paul Berkowitz, Professor of Piano at UC Santa Barbara, will give the world premiere of Ruehr's *Errinerung* (“*Remembrance*”) for solo piano. Reminiscent of Schubert's writing, especially his Piano Sonata in A Major D959, *Errinerung* evokes “the dreamy sense of time that occurs while sleeping” (composer's program notes). Violist Jonathan Moerschel and pianist Dr. Natasha Kislenko will perform Ruehr's Viola Sonata, which received its world premiere in 2017 at the University of Toronto with violist Ethan Filner (formerly of the Cypress String Quartet) and pianist Jamie Parker. Violinist Ertan Torgul will play Ruehr's *Red* for solo violin, written in 2007 for violinist Cecily Ward, also a former member of the Cypress String Quartet. The program will close with the world premiere performance of Ruehr's Piano Quartet, presented by violinist Ertan Torgul, violist Jonathan Moerschel, cellist Jennifer Kloetzel, and pianist Robert Koenig.

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“ELENA RUEHR” 2-2-2

PROGRAM

Lift for solo cello (2013)

Jennifer Kloetzel, cello

Errinerung for solo piano (2019) *World Premiere

Paul Berkowitz, piano

Viola Sonata for viola and piano (2017)

Jonathan Moerschel, viola

Natasha Kislenko, piano

Red for solo violin (2007)

Ertan Torgul, violin

Piano Quartet for violin, viola, cello and piano (2019) *World Premiere

Ertan Torgul, violin

Jonathan Moerschel, viola

Jennifer Kloetzel, cello

Robert Koenig, piano

MORE INFORMATION

Artist biographies can be found at music.ucsb.edu/news/event/1980.

ADMISSION

Tickets: \$10 general admission; \$5 non-UCSB students; free for UCSB students and children under 12.

Tickets are available at music.ucsb.edu/news/purchase-tickets or by calling **(805) 893-2064**.

ABOUT ELENA RUEHR

Elena Ruehr (b.1963) grew up in Houghton, Michigan, was taught the piano by her mother, and began composing as a child. She studied composition formally with William Bolcom at the University of Michigan and with Vincent Persichetti and Bernard Rands at Juilliard (where she earned her doctorate), and her music reveals a wide variety of influences—particularly dance, which was a major preoccupation in her childhood, and jazz. As a performer, she also studied African drumming and was a member of the University of Michigan Gamelan. Her own work is frequently suffused with an organic sense of movement via sensual melodic lines, irregular but strongly pulsed rhythm and meter, and vibrant timbral combinations. She has written a great deal of music for voice, including several stage works, and her instrumental melodies frequently evoke vocal music. More broadly, Ruehr’s music is often inspired by natural processes and visual imagery. She has compared her approach to rhythm and meter to the fluid periodicity of waves, for example, or to the rhythms of breathing and walking. Ruehr’s pieces are often inspired by other arts, especially visual art—e.g., her orchestral triptych *O’Keeffe Images*—or literature, such as her *Cloud Atlas*, a cello concerto named for David Mitchell’s novel.

She says of her music “the idea is that the surface be simple, the structure complex.” Her work has been described as “sumptuously scored and full of soaring melodies” (*The New York Times*), and “unspeakably gorgeous” (*Gramophone*). An award winning faculty member at MIT, she has also been a Guggenheim Fellow, a fellow at Harvard’s Radcliffe Institute and composer-in-residence with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, which performed and recorded her major orchestral works (*O’Keeffe Images*, BMOP Sound) as well as the opera *Toussaint Before the Spirits* (Arsis Records). Three of her six string quartets were commissioned by the Cypress String Quartet, who have recorded *Six String Quartets by Elena Ruehr* (Avie), with the Borromeo Quartet and Stephen Salters. Her other recordings include *Averno* (Avie with the Trinity Choir, Julian Wachner, conducting), *Jane Wang considers the Dragonfly* (Albany), *Lift*

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“ELENA RUEHR” 3-3-3

(*Avie*), *Shimmer* (Metamorphosen Chamber Ensemble on Albany) and *Shadow Light* (The New Orchestra of Washington with Marcus Thompson on Acis), among others. She is currently writing a new opera, *Cosmic Cowboy*, for White Snake Projects, which will premiere in Boston in September 2020. She has taught at MIT since 1992 and lives in Boston with her husband and daughter.

ABOUT THE UC SANTA BARBARA DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

From an institution that began life dedicated to training the next generation of music educators, to what is now a multi-faceted department with a fully established research and professional graduate program with degrees in composition, ethnomusicology, musicology, music theory, and performance, the UC Santa Barbara Department of Music has produced many hundreds of graduates who have distinguished themselves both nationally and internationally. Alumni have gone on to teach on faculties of major colleges and universities in the United States and abroad, or in outstanding secondary school positions. Many graduates of the program have published extensively and become widely renowned, prize-winning scholars, while others are award-winning and frequently performed composers writing for television and film. Alumni are also establishing fine reputations as conductors of orchestras, opera, and choruses. Graduates of the instrumental programs have gone on to solo and orchestral careers with leading orchestras, and graduates of the voice program can be heard in opera companies around the world.

With over 150 events presented annually, the UC Santa Barbara Department of Music offers something for every music lover. The department boasts 26 unique performing ensembles, each with a quarterly concert calendar. Chamber music, large ensembles, opera, contemporary groups, world music, and jazz ensembles make up the department's rich performance calendar, along with lectures, master classes, and presentations from the ethnomusicology, musicology, theory, and composition programs. For a complete listing of performances and lectures for the quarter, please visit the UC Santa Barbara Department of Music website at music.ucsb.edu.

For additional information, photos, or to request an interview with an artist, please contact Adriane Hill at adrianehill@ucsb.edu or (805) 893-3230. To sign up for the Department of Music's newsletter, please visit eepurl.com/dcrvRr. Follow the Department of Music on Facebook ([@UCSBDepartmentofMusic](https://www.facebook.com/UCSBDepartmentofMusic)), Twitter ([@UCSBMusicDept](https://twitter.com/UCSBMusicDept)), and Instagram ([@ucsbmusicdept](https://www.instagram.com/ucsbmusicdept)).

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