

# New Century Chamber Orchestra

NADJA SALERNO-SONNENBERG, MUSIC DIRECTOR

The New Century Chamber Orchestra, founded in 1992, looks for fresh, exciting ways to present classical music in the San Francisco Bay Area by combining performances of extraordinary quality with innovative programming. World-renowned violin soloist, chamber musician and recording artist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg joined the ensemble as Music Director and Concertmaster in January 2008, bringing “a new sense of vitality and determination, as well as an audacious swagger that is an unmistakable fingerprint of its leader,” according to Gramophone Magazine.

New Century, comprised of local musicians and those who travel from across the U.S. and Europe to perform in the Bay Area together, performs without a conductor. Musical decisions are made collaboratively, resulting in an enhanced level of commitment on the part of the musicians to concerts of remarkable precision, passion and power.

In addition to performing classic pieces of chamber orchestra repertoire, New Century commissions important new works, breathes life into rarely heard jewels of the past, performs world premieres and brings pieces from other genres such as jazz and rock into the chamber orchestra setting. The New Century Chamber Orchestra Featured Composer Program commissions composers to write new works, with Music Director Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg as concertmaster, soloist and muse. Nadja and the orchestra established this program expand the chamber orchestra repertoire.

Uniquely gifted and creative violin virtuoso Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg continues to bring joy to audiences whether from the stage, the TV screen, or the internet. Innovative, sharp and witty, she is truly an artist whose impact on the world of classical music is as deep as her love for the art.

An internationally-acclaimed soloist and chamber musician for more than 25 years, Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg was named Music Director and Concertmaster of the New Century Chamber Orchestra in January 2008. Nadja’s first two seasons as Music Director were hailed as a tremendous success by audiences and critics alike – “a marriage that works,” in her words, and renewing enthusiasm for “one of the most burnished and exciting ensembles in the Bay Area,” according to Rich Scheinin of the San Jose Mercury News.

A powerful and innovative presence on the recording scene, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg continues to enrich the collection of her record label NSS Music, which she started in 2005. This year (2009) features the release of *Originis*, recorded by Nadja and the Assad brothers, Sergio and Odair, and, in August, her first CD with the New Century Chamber Orchestra, featuring Astor Piazzolla’s *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*. An ever-evolving and creative project, NSS Music will continue to bring forth unique performances from many musical genres.

Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg's professional career began in 1981 when she won the Walter W. Naumburg International Violin Competition. In 1983 she was recognized with an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and in 1999, she was honored with the prestigious Avery Fisher Prize. Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg was born in Rome and emigrated to the United States at the age of eight to study at The Curtis Institute of Music. She later studied with Dorothy DeLay at The Juilliard School.

Stuart Canin served as New Century's first Music Director from 1992–1999. A former Concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony and the San Francisco Opera, Mr. Canin currently serves as Concertmaster of the Los Angeles Opera under Music Director James Conlon and General Director Plácido Domingo. He served as Concertmaster in Hollywood for studio orchestras, performing on such films as *Schindler's List*, *Titanic* and *Forrest Gump*.

A native of Menlo Park, CA, Krista Bennion Feeney served as New Century's Music Director and Concertmaster from 1999–2006. She is currently Concertmaster of the Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center during the summer and Co-Concertmaster of the Orchestra of St. Luke's year-round at Carnegie Hall and throughout the summer at the Caramoor Festival in Katonah, New York. She was a student of Isadore Tinkelman and Stuart Canin at the San Francisco Conservatory, and later studied with Jaime Laredo and Felix Galimer at the Curtis Institute of Music.

New Century released two compact discs on the New Albion label in 1996, the first a collaborative project with Kent Nagano and the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra featuring the work of 20th century-Swiss composer Frank Martin, and the second featuring works by Dmitri Shostakovich. The Shostakovich, entitled *Written With the Heart's Blood*, was a 1997 Grammy Award finalist. A year later, the orchestra recorded and released works of Argentine composers Alberto Williams and Alberto Ginastera on the d'Note label. In 2004, the orchestra recorded and released *Oculus*, a CD of Kurt Rohde's compositions on the Mondovibe label. All of the recordings have been distributed both internationally and in the United States.

In December 1996, mezzo soprano Frederica von Stade performed at the group's season opening with a new piece by composer Jake Heggie, entitled *On the Road to Christmas*, written specifically for Ms. von Stade.

During the 1999–2000 season, the orchestra traveled to Tucson, San Diego, San Bernardino, Phoenix, Orange County, Redding and Portland. Earlier tours took the Orchestra to Phoenix, New Orleans, Arcata and Santa Barbara.

In 2000, New Century performed in a multimedia multi-ethnic collaboration with Chinese composer Gang Situ entitled *Strings Calligraphy*. The composition examines the parallels between string music and calligraphy, the control of the erhu bow and calligraphy paintbrush and musical renderings and the flow of calligraphy on paper. The uses of shape and line—dance, string instruments and visual imagery—were interwoven as elements of the performance. Chinese characters were projected on downstage screens, as dancers on a platform imitated the shape of the characters.

Sir Simon Rattle conducted the New Century Chamber Orchestra's 10th Anniversary Celebration concert in June 2002 in a co-presentation with Marin Academy. He led the orchestra in music by Elgar,

Schoenberg and Mozart. This was only the second time that Rattle had conducted in the Bay Area since 1980.

In January 2008, the New Century Chamber Orchestra performed REWIND at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, a sold out special event conceived of and conducted by Paul Haas. The concert traced music backwards in time from the 20th century to the Baroque and featured violinist Anne Akiko Meyers, DJ Mason Bates, and kinetic installation artist Reuben Margolin.

New Century musicians are active members of the San Francisco Bay Area community and have made quartet appearances at San Francisco's City Hall and at the San Francisco Giants' AT&T Park.

New Century is committed to educational outreach in the communities where it performs. The orchestra provides musical education to 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students in an intensive program at schools in Marin City and San Rafael's Canal District. In addition to several annual classroom visits by a string quartet, selected students are offered free instrumental music instruction with a goal of having the students on as close of an educational equivalency as possible with their suburban peers.