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## New directions: Carlsbad Music Festival returns with largest-ever slate of world premieres

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PATRICIA MORRIS BUCKLEY - For the North County Times | Posted: Wednesday, September 23, 2009 9:15 am | No Comments Posted

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The Calder Quartet performs at the 2009 Carlsbad Music Festival. (Courtesy Photo)





What happens when three boys from Carlsbad start studying the violin together at a very young age, attend college together at University of Southern California and then graduate to professional careers? In the case of Matt McBane, Benjamin Jacobson and Peter Jacobson, they start the Carlsbad Music Festival.

"We wanted to share with the community what we're doing," said McBane, the festival's artistic director, who now splits his time between L.A. and New York City. "We wanted the festival to be a platform for emerging alternative contemporary classical music artists and championing new works."

The festival has grown exponentially during the past six years. It's now a nonprofit organization, and four years ago it added a composing competition, which attracts more than 100 applicants every year from all over the world (competing for a \$3,000 prize). This year, the festival feature six premieres, prompting McBane, a composer himself, to joke that for next year's seventh outing, there needs to be seven premieres.

While the festival centers around chamber music, with ensembles of four to eight musicians, music from other genres is presented as well. For example, one of the pieces Friday night is for a string quartet and electronics.

"Musically, the festival is really about how music can reach people on different levels," he said. "There's the intellectual and emotional appeal of chamber music but all the more visceral appeal. Many of the pieces are high energy. The program is constructed to flow from number to number so that it has an accessible feel to it."

Anchoring the festival, as it has every year since its creation, is the L.A.-based Calder Quartet, a nationally acclaimed ensemble that includes Benjamin Jacobson (his brother Peter, a cellist, has also played at the festival in the past). Its program on Saturday will feature several world premiere compositions.

A highlight this year is the inclusion of Fred Frith, a composer and multi-instrumentalist and co-founder of the British art-rock band Henry Cow. In the '80s, he began writing alternative classical works and is

now the professor of composition at Mill College in Oakland.

"Having Fred Frith is a step up for us," he said. "It's wonderful that he should come be part of this. The caliber of the performances is getting higher and higher."

Also on the bill is the California E.A.R. Unit, an L.A.-based contemporary chamber group that performs only new music. Founded in 1981, the ensemble has premiered more than 500 new works, including works for musical theater, electro-acoustic compositions and live interactive computer music. It is the ensemble-in-residence at the REDCAT Theater at L.A.'s Disney Hall.

A few years ago, the festival added a kick-off performance in Los Angeles since so many of the featured performers live there (this year's event took place on Wednesday at L.A.'s Zipper Hall). Performing there were the Calder Quartet, the California E.A.R. Unit and McBane. The festival continues with performances on Friday and Saturday evenings, a matinee performance on Sunday, and a demonstration performance on Saturday afternoon, all at Carlsbad's Schulman Auditorium.

We want to provide many different ways to get into the music and appreciate it," said McBane. "Over the years, we've had an enthusiastic response. People have grown to love the music, even if they didn't know about it beforehand. It's quite exciting."

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## **Carlsbad Music Festival 2009**

**When:** Friday through Sunday

**Where:** Schulman Auditorium, Dove Library, 1775 Dove Lane, Carlsbad (unless otherwise noted)

**Tickets:** \$25, priority seating; \$15, general; \$8, students; \$10, suggestion donation for lecture/demonstration with Frith

**Info:** [www.carlsbadmusicfestival.org](http://www.carlsbadmusicfestival.org)

### **Concert schedule:**

#### **8 p.m. Friday: California E.A.R. Unit**

World premieres by composers John Luther Adams, Matt McBane, Fabian Svennson and Keeril Makan

#### **2 p.m. Saturday: Fred Frith**

Free lecture/demonstration (at Museum of Making Music, 5790 Armada Drive, Carlsbad)

#### **8 p.m. Saturday: Calder Quartet**

World premieres by composers Daniel Wohl and the team of Charles Punctatz, Ted Hearne and Jason Treuting

## 2 p.m. Sunday: Fred Frith, Calder Quartet and California E.A.R. Unit

Various works

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