

**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. One of only a handful of conductorless ensembles in the world, New Century is comprised of local musicians and those who travel from across the U.S. and Europe to perform in the Bay Area together. Musical decisions are made collaboratively by the 19-member string ensemble, resulting in an enhanced level of commitment on the part of the musicians to concerts of remarkable precision, passion and power. World-renowned violin soloist, chamber musician, and recording artist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg was appointed Music Director and Concertmaster in January 2008, bringing with her “a new sense of vitality and determination, as well as an audacious swagger that is an unmistakable fingerprint of its leader” (*Gramophone Magazine*).

In 2011, Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg and New Century embarked on their first national tours together. The performances in the Midwest, East Coast, and Southern California garnered record-breaking audiences and national critical acclaim. In January and February 2013, New Century will undertake the ensemble’s most extensive national tour to date, with performances in Kentucky, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Illinois, and Michigan.

In addition to performing classic pieces of chamber orchestra repertoire, New Century 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 the goals of expanding chamber orchestra repertoire and providing audiences with a deeper understanding of today’s living composers. The orchestra provides insight into the breadth of the Featured Composer’s work by performing a variety of pieces by the composer throughout the season. Past composers include Clarice Assad, William Bolcom, Mark O’Connor and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich.

The Orchestra has released six compact discs. The two latest albums, *Together* (released August 2009) and *LIVE: Barber, Strauss, Mahler* (released November 2010), were recorded with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg on the NSS Music label. Other recordings include a 1996 collaborative project with Kent Nagano and the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra featuring the work of 20th century-Swiss composer Frank Martin, and *Written With the Heart’s Blood*, a 1997 Grammy Award finalist, both on the New Albion label. In 1998 the Orchestra recorded and released works of Argentine composers Alberto Williams and Alberto Ginastera on the d’Note label, and 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. The Orchestra’s first concert DVD entitled *On Our Way*, filmed by Paola di Florio, director of the 1999 Academy Award-nominated film *Speaking in Strings*, will be released in May 2012. The DVD weaves together documentary footage and a live tour concert from a February 2011 performance at the Broad Stage in Santa Monica.

As part of its dedication to the future of music, New Century has offered intimate classroom performances and interactive presentations to 3rd and 4th grade students for over ten years at two underserved schools in Marin County that cannot otherwise afford to offer music education – Bayside Elementary in Marin City and San Pedro Elementary in San Rafael’s Canal District. New Century’s Education Program aims to give students an invaluable introduction to classical music and foster a lifelong love of music and its performance.

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

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### **Music Directors**

Stuart Canin served as New Century’s first Music Director from 1992–1999. Mr. Canin has held the title of Concertmaster at the San Francisco Symphony, the San Francisco Opera, the Los Angeles Opera, and numerous Hollywood studio orchestras, performing on such films as *Schindler’s List*, *Titanic* and *Forrest Gump*. From the beginning, Mr. Canin set such a high musical standard that New Century immediately won the respect of audiences, musicians, and critics.

A native of Menlo Park, CA, Krista Bennion Feeney succeeded Mr. Canin 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. During her tenure as Music Director, New Century earned a reputation for musical imagination and versatility.

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### **Special Projects**

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 von Stade.

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.