



CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

# TACTUS

**Erin Rogers** and **Matt Ward** (BM '98), Co-Artistic  
and Administrative Advisors

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2024 | 7:30 PM  
THE GORDON K. AND HARRIET GREENFIELD HALL

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## PROGRAM

ELIJAH DANIEL SMITH  
(b. 1995)

*The Violence of Air* (2023)

**Piper Weldon**, soprano

**Andrea Ábel**, flute

**Mariana Clavijo Ledesma**, bass clarinet

**Joe DeAngelo**, violin

**Grace Goss**, percussion

REBECCA SAUNDERS  
(b. 1967)

*To and Fro* (2010)

**Ariana Varvaro**, oboe

**Cole Habekost**, violin

BRITTA BYSTRÖM  
(b. 1977)

*Kinderszenen* (2011)

**Amber Dai**, horn

**Joe DeAngelo**, violin

**Ruben Høgh**, piano

MORTON FELDMAN  
(1926-1987)

*Durations I* (1960)

**Andrea Ábel**, flute

**Cole Habekost**, violin

**Sara Gabalawi**, cello

**Tiffany Leard**, piano

*Intermission*

HEATHER STEBBINS  
(b. 1987)

*from these old skins* (2013)

**Lauren Galarraga**, trombone  
**Grace Goss**, percussion

KARIN REHNQVIST  
(b. 1957)

*Rescue me from sinking in the mire* (1994)

**Piper Weldon**, soprano  
**Stephen Tamas**, saxophone

ANUJ BHUTANI  
(b. 1993)

*After the Freeze* (2021)

**Piper Weldon**, soprano  
**Ariana Varvaro**, oboe  
**Gabe Henkin**, clarinet  
**Mariana Clavijo Ledesma**, bass clarinet  
**Stephen Tamas**, saxophone  
**Amber Dai**, horn  
**Lauren Galarraga**, trombone  
**Ruben Høgh**, piano

STEPHANIE ANN BOYD  
(b. 1990)

*Auctumnus* (2013)

**Gabe Henkin**, clarinet  
**Sara Gabalawi**, cello  
**Tiffany Leard**, piano

# PROGRAM NOTES

## ***The Violence of Air* (2023)** **Elijah Daniel Smith**

*The Violence of Air* aims to capture the discomforts of flight anxiety as turbulence constantly interrupts any semblance of calmness.

– *Elijah Daniel Smith*

*Premiered on February 19, 2024 at Princeton University by the TAK Ensemble*

## ***To and Fro* (2010)** **Rebecca Saunders**

The piece explores sounds, murmurs, of noise and silence.

A dialogue, an interaction of two planes. Exploring a palette of fragile sounds that surface from, and disappear into, silence, the two voices trace a single line at the border to silence and noise.

The violin and oboe are specially separated, and pass an elongated melodic thread back and forwards between them.

– *Rebecca Saunders*

## ***Kinderszenen* (2011)** **Britta Byström**

Swedish composer Britta Byström's *Kinderszenen* borrows its title from Schumann's famous piano work and its scoring from Brahms's Horn Trio, but the music is entirely original in colour and substance. Byström says that before starting a composition she always has a clear picture in her mind of the musical world she wants to create, and this is apparent from the first notes of *Kinderszenen* where fragmentary themes on violin and horn are set against repeated notes on the piano, suggesting perhaps that Byström's childhood scenes are those of a Swedish winter. The form of this single movement and its contrasting episodes seem to evolve naturally: a fast section is notable for its rhythmic energy but fizzles out on a sustained horn note, giving way to a passage of eerie calm with the violin playing pizzicato against piano trills. A brief return to the vigour of the fast music leads to a recollection of the opening before *Kinderszenen* dissolves into silence.

– *Nigel Simeone*

## ***Durations I* (1960)**

### **Morton Feldman**

The first piece in a series of five works, *Durations I* is a quintessential example of the compositional style of indeterminacy. Feldman takes a radical, yet incredibly simple approach to rhythm and structure, leaving timings, textures, colors, and dynamics up to the performer, and the final outcome, thus to chance. There is no time signature or tempo, and while parts are loosely related, each player will end up moving through the piece in their own sphere, creating a product that is both independent and interdependent.

The “durations” of the notes provided by Feldman are chosen or felt by the musicians. The loose structure he indicated results in a wide range of possibilities and variations in performance, each one being totally unique in length, coincidence, interaction, volume, and character.

Preparing a work of this nature forces the players to make certain decisions within a realm of stochasticity. Some choices, such as deciding to coordinate or meet at specified points, could be made during rehearsals, while others, like aligning explicit notes or sections with another instrument, can be made spontaneously or even secretly, to allow for hidden moments of coalesce within the seeming randomness.

Inspired by abstract-expressionist painters like Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock, Morton Feldman experimented with the absence of a clear form to illuminate and reveal the relationships between sound and silence, order and chaos.

“My obsession is with the interval between one sound and another—the existence of a particular silence that it engenders.” – Morton Feldman (from *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*)

– Sara Gabalawi

## ***from these old skins* (2013)**

### **Heather Stebbins**

Heather Stebbins is a composer, performer, and educator based in Washington, D.C., Stebbins works with sounds created by instruments, found objects, nature, and voltage to create sound worlds that are kinetic, resonate and provoking. *from these old skins*, was commissioned by Riverrun ensemble for trombone and frame drum. Stebbins uses the unique sounds of the frame drum as well as many extended techniques of the trombone to create a cave-like soundscape.

– Lauren Galarraga

## ***Rescue me from sinking in the mire (2000)***

### **Karin Rehnqvist**

*Rescue me from sinking in the mire* is a short, highly-charged piece having to do with calling:

Outward calling – powerful, to attract attention and be heard over distances.

Inward calling – compact, almost silent, like a prayer.

The female vocalist uses a singing technique referred to in Swedish as “*kulning*” and used in the past to call the cows home in the mountain pastures and to communicate over long distances. This type of calling in conjunction with the playing of the alto saxophone gives rise to a very special, very particular sound (harmony).

I composed *Rescue me from sinking in the mire* for the inauguration of the Stockholm 1994 World Music Days. It was performed at the Vasa Museum, with the musicians standing on the deck of the Vasa, a seventeenth century man-of-war that sank in the Stockholm harbor on its maiden voyage and that has now been salvaged and reconstructed. When I wrote the piece, I had this disaster in mind, but coincidentally the cruise ship M/S Estonia sank between Estonia and Sweden just a few days before the premiere, and many passengers lost their lives. This tragedy gave the performance a terrible and different sense of topicality.

The piece is rooted in traditional Nordic folk chorales, from which it attenuates the registers: high and low, loud and soft are both taken to their extremes and tested here.

– Karin Rehnqvist

## ***After the Freeze (2021)***

### **Anuj Bhutani**

Over the course of 2020-21, I became fascinated with how variable individual responses to a single situation or piece of information can be. The nature of American political discourse on the onset of COVID-19 in the last two years created a startling situation, as we were left to determine our own amounts of risk tolerance, and how we would respond and shoe up in society. Finally, as Winter Storm Uri pushed the rolling blackouts, and lack of potable water, I decided to try and capture this experience in a piece of music...

– Anuj Bhutani

As Bhutani explored the boundaries behind collaboration, he found that oftentimes these joint efforts “place unnecessary limitations on performers, and close the door to creative possibilities” by not allowing a player to explore the vast knowledge of their own instrument, and the remarkable dynamic they can bring. Thus, Bhutani crafted a piece to do exactly that: allow musicians to craft a piece in real time according to their own thoughts, emotions, and interpretations; “blurring the line between the ‘auteur’ composer and the ‘interpreter’ performer.”

– Piper Weldon

## ***Auctumnus* (2013)**

### **Stephanie Ann Boyd**

Commissioned by Jennifer Fischer and her trio, this piece was born out of a fiery, autumnal palette of colors, of fickle October winds and mischievous, scuttling leaves. The first movement was born out of a fiery, fall palette of colors, the second movement speaking to murky harbors and foggy grey skies, and the third movement is this frenetic, exciting, vibrant space of tone and time that brings in a little of a Dvořákian furiant rhythm and ends with the way autumn usually ends... a little spooky, a little cold; darker colors seeping in where the gold and orange used to be.. these all hint at my memories of autumn in Michigan, especially of Sundays spent playing in youth orchestra on the University of Michigan School of Music campus, where this piece was premiered.

– *Stephanie Ann Boyd*

# ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

The Contemporary Performance Program (CPP) is a two-year graduate degree program at the Manhattan School of Music. The students of CPP form the core of Tactus, MSM's premier contemporary ensemble. As members of Tactus, CPP students perform works of the 20th and 21st centuries, work closely with living composers, and present works by MSM faculty and students.

## Administration

**Erin Rogers**, Co-Artistic & Administrative Advisor

**Matt Ward**, Co-Artistic & Administrative Advisor

## Faculty

**Ashkan Behzadi**,  
contemporary history survey

**Gregg August**, bass

**David Cossin**, percussion

**Anthony de Mare**, piano

**Monica Ellis**, bassoon

**Oren Fader**, guitar

**John Ferrari**, percussion

**Susan Jolles**, harp

**Margaret Kampmeier**, piano

**David Krakauer**, clarinet

**William Lang**, trombone

**Curtis Macomber**, violin

**Kevin Newton**, horn

**Tara Helen O'Connor**, flute

**John Pickford-Richards**, viola

**Todd Reynolds**, electronics

**Brandon Ridenour**, trumpet

**Erin Rogers**, saxophone

**Lucy Shelton**, voice

**Fred Sherry**, cello

**Keve Wilson**, oboe

## Tactus Ensemble

**Piper Weldon**  
*State College, Pennsylvania*

**Andrea Ábel**  
*Szolnok, Hungary*

**Gabe Henkin**  
*Virginia Beach, Virginia*

**Mariana Clavijo Ledesma**  
*Popayán, Colombia*

**Ariana Varvaro**  
*Lake Worth, Florida*

**Stephen Tamas**  
*Oakland, California*

**Lauren Galarraga**  
*Virginia Beach, Virginia*

**Amber Dai**  
*Beijing, China*

**Joe DeAngelo**  
*Carlisle, Pennsylvania*

**Cole Habekost**  
*Toledo, Ohio*

**Sara Gabalawi**  
*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

**Ruben Høgh**  
*Aarhus, Denmark*

**Tiffany Leard**  
*Las Vegas, New York*

**Grace Goss**  
*New York, New York*