



CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

TACTUS

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

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2024 | 7:30 PM
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL

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PROGRAM

CECILIA LIVINGSTON
(b. 1984)

Flay (2016)
Text by Duncan McFarlane

Piper Weldon, soprano
Tiffany Leard, piano
Grace Goss, percussion

LEAH ASHER
(b. 1986)

Travelogue (2019)

- I.
- II.
- III.

Gabe Henkin, clarinet
Mariana Clavijo Ledesma, clarinet
Ariana Varvaro, oboe
Stephen Tamas, saxophone
Lauren Galarraga, trombone
Amber Dai, horn
Leah Asher (MM '12), violin*
Joe DeAngelo, violin
Sara Gabalawi, cello
Ruben Høgh, piano
Grace Goss, percussion

NINA C. YOUNG

(b. 1984)

to hear the things we cannot see (2022)

Text by Rosie Stockton

I. Proem

II. Genre Riot

III. On city clouds

IV. Sonogram of an earthquake

V. Say mutely, the ghosts

Andrea Ábel, flute

Mariana Clavijo Ledesma, clarinet

Cole Habekost, violin

Sara Gabalawi, cello

Nhat Nguyen, electronics**

Intermission

JULIUS EASTMAN

(1944–1990)

Joy Boy (1974)

Piper Weldon, voice

Andrea Ábel, flute

Gabe Henkin, clarinet

Ariana Varvaro, oboe

Stephen Tamas, saxophone

Lauren Galarraga, trombone

Amber Dai, horn

Cole Habekost, violin

Sara Gabalawi, cello

Tiffany Leard, piano

MARCOS BALTER

(b. 1974)

meltDown Upsbot (2013)

Text by Composer

I. Credo

II. Parallel Spaces

III. Ready

IV. True/False

V. Home

VI. Cherubim

VII. Rapture

Piper Weldon, soloist

Yifan Yue, soprano**

Maya Borisov, soprano**

Stephen Tamas, saxophone

Amber Dai, french horn

Ruben Høgh, piano

Joe DeAngelo, violin

Sara Gabalawi, cello

Daniel Basilio-Fernandez, bass**

Shirley Guo, harp**

Ed Gavitt, electric guitar**

Ahhyun Noh, electric guitar**

Lauren Galarraga, electric bass

Grace Goss, drumset

Gabe Henkin, electronics

Matt Ward, Conductor*

* *Faculty*

** *Guest*

TEXT AND LYRICS

Flay (2024)

Cecilia Livingston

she sells seashells by the seashore:
shells sharp as shards of pots, broken
roofs of broken homes, and floors, and rooms
where books from ancient ships once rose;
oyster shells smoothed, shaped, sharpened through
the seas that whisper flesh from bone
like linen slipping from the skin
or smoke that slides up from the fires

ashes, ashes: sifting softly
through the seasalt, to the seafloor;
so she clothes herself with silence:
bones of coral, eyes of pearl;
nothing faded, all arranged into
something new and strange..

-Duncan McFarlane

PROGRAM NOTES

Flay

Cecilia Livingston

Cecilia Livingston's *Flay* is a delicate yet haunting setting of voice, piano, and percussion. The once silly tongue twister from childhood “she sells sea shells by the sea shore” takes a sinister twist as the text goes on. For Hypatia, a Greek philosopher from the 4th century, this text resonates deeply. She was beautiful; full of strength, and intelligent, but was the target of a male-dominated political state. Hypatia radiated fierce energy in the political and religious scene, making men fearful, and ultimately using this fear towards violence. She was kidnapped by multiple men, stripped of her clothes, and pulled by her hair through the streets. This wasn't enough in the eyes of her attackers, and looking at the church in which they arrived at, they made the decision to use the church in a disturbing and abominable way - taking shells, pottery, and roofing tiles to flay (skin) her alive. They then ripped her limbs apart, laying them on the altar of the church. Years later, she is remembered and recognized for her struggle towards freedom.

Livingston composes a cannon-like approach, never allowing the performers or the audience to feel settled. The bell-like *klangfarbenmelodie* (translating to “tone-color melody”) present throughout creates an unaligned and eerie church bell toll, possibly eluding to the place in which Hypatia's life was taken. You can see the shells that flayed Hypatia, and hear them rustling by the vocalist. Displaced triplets, pitch bends, striking of piano strings; all of these compositional elements give us something “new and strange” just as Duncan McFarlane's text ends.

—Piper Weldon

Travelogue

Leah Asher

Travelogue was written in celebration of the Great Learning Orchestra's 20th anniversary. The creation of this piece was inspired by Cornelius Cardew's monumental work, *Treatise*, and his accompanying research on graphic notation and improvisation. The title, *Travelogue*, is a reference from the *Treatise Handbook*, a collection of Cardew's working notes and research, which has been a mainstay throughout my writing process. The ‘Working Notes’ section of the Handbook is a collection of diary-like entries in which Cardew processes his thoughts on *Treatise*: what it means, why he made it, how it could be interpreted. The question ‘What is *Treatise*?’ recurs throughout the text, seeming to torment Cardew —

sometimes to the point of silliness “11th March 65 *Treatise*: What is it? Well, it’s a vertebrate...” and yet other times more sentimentally “a travelogue of the land of composition.” His struggle to understand his own creation results in notes that are conflicting, at times hypocritical. Through the thick of his stream-of-consciousness style of writing, my takeaway from his notes comes in the form of two main ideas:

-This is not free improvisation.

-If an interpretation is made in earnest, he cannot find fault in it.

These two points have been pillars in my own music and continue to inspire me to write in open notations that feel genuinely collaborative with performers.

There is another question from the *Treatise Handbook* that has driven my own explorations in graphic notation. He writes “Can I make empty symbols significant intuitively?” The magic and mystery of intuition is what keeps me returning to open scores and experiments in notation. With an understanding of intuition, a score that appears very indeterminate on the surface can in performance be quite determinate, consistent, and identifiable.

At the end of the second movement, I make a direct reference to the 44th page of *Treatise*. In a 193-page score of mainly rigid graphics, suddenly the lines on page 44 appear wavy, as if drawn by hand. As someone who creates all of my scores by hand, I have always found the sense of human touch on this page to be captivating and inspiring.

—Leah Asher

to hear the things we cannot see

Nina Young

to hear the things we cannot see by Nina C. Young is a 5-movement work written for and commissioned by Hub New Music (flute, clarinets, violin, and cello). Both inspiration and sound material for the piece are from Rosie Stockton’s poetry book, titled *Permanent Volta*. Described as “A debut collection of love poems that resist subjection and ask how we might live together outside of capitalism, providing for each other through intimate acts of care and struggle” Stockton’s poetry is the cornerstone of the composition. Fragments of the poems read by the author are part of the electronic track. Young juxtaposes the themes of capitalism and intimacy through an array of contrasting colors and dynamics. Written instructions for the players, such as ‘playful machine’ or ‘industrial,’ and ‘blooming’ or ‘spiritual,’ prompt the players to show different characters of vulnerability and precision. The captivating humanness of Stockton’s voice is also disturbed and contrasted with audio manipulation and editing, creating a feeling of living between the natural and artificial throughout the work.

—Andrea Ábel

Joy Boy **Julius Eastman**

Joy Boy was composed in 1974 by the visionary performer Julius Eastman (1940-1990). The title is an assertion of black jubilation and ecstasy, reclaiming the legacy of the term “boy” from its history in Southern U.S. diminutive roots. Eastman expressed, “What I am trying to achieve is to be what I am to the fullest— Black to the fullest, a musician to the fullest, and a homosexual to the fullest. It is important that I learn how to be, by that I mean accept everything about me.” Written for an indeterminate arrangement of instruments, the piece is built on Eastman’s ideals of organic composition, adding layer upon layer of new information to achieve the desired effect of wholeness and unison. Smatterings of vocal giggles are found in the spirals of exuberance and delight. Eastman’s music lends itself to collective listening, freedom of self-found by relating to the larger masses.

—*Tiffany Leard*

meltDown Upshot **Marcos Balter**

Marcos Balter's seven-movement work *meltDown Upshot* was released in 2016 as the centerpiece of the album *Balter/Saunier*— a collaboration between himself, Ensemble Dal Niente, and the experimental rock band Deerhoof. It has been described as “an incredible mashup of musical genres from across the globe” (Jill Kimball) and “obliquely styled as a mass in praise of the redemptive power of music itself” (Jason Charney).

The first two movements could be classified as ambient— the dreamy opening, “Credo,” spills seamlessly into “Parallel Spaces,” still floaty but with a tinge of sinister foreshadowing. “Ready,” with its frenetic Chick Corea-like jazziness, erratic meter, and hazy lyrics (“I dream of sound in color/ I dream of light in sounds”) is a sonic outlier in this piece and seems to represent the meltdown at its manic climax. A more organized mania comes in “True-False,” a fast-paced, string-plucking homage to Philip Glass-style repetition. The piece calms down again with “Home,” a delightfully indie take on João Gilberto’s Brazilian bossa nova. The last two movements take us back to the strange, dreamy vibes of the beginning. The sixth movement, “Cherubim,” is the clear highlight of the piece, somehow gathering all of Balter’s jazz, pop, rock, and avant-garde influences together into three minutes of pure indie-rock bliss.

—*Jill Kimball and Ruben Høgh*