

FACULTY RECITAL

**Leah Asher (MM '12), violin  
and viola  
Dennis Sullivan,  
percussion  
Christopher Goddard  
(MM '12), piano**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025 | 7:30 PM  
GORDON K. & HARRIET GREENFIELD HALL

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**Leah Asher (MM '12), violin and viola**  
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PROGRAM

LEWIS NIELSON  
(b. 1950)

*clang clash roar* (World Premiere)

ANAHITA ABBASI  
(b. 1985)

*Situation IV / Io e iO*

LEAH ASHER  
(b. 1986)

*A, open. Open.*  
*With texts by Gertrude Stein*

*Pause*

MICHAEL HERSCH  
(b. 1971)

*the wreckage of flowers*

# PROGRAM NOTES

## *clang clash roar*

### Lewis Nielson

*clang clash roar* takes its title from a line in the third section of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Bells." When read silently to oneself, the whole poem appears childishly absurd; almost forced and shallow in composition. When read aloud, with expression and attention to the meter and rhythm, it comes to life and, in the last two sections, manifests an atmosphere much larger than what the simplicity of the words would appear to present. The banality of the printed word contrasts in an extraordinary way to the ominous sound of the work as declaimed. A whole is created, though the grounds for this unity may not be readily apparent.

These same visual and sonic disparities are intentional and equally extreme in *clang clash roar*. Metal and wood. Ringing metal and dry wood. Stratospheric dirge and dark lullaby. Mechanical periodicity and flowing lyricism, with and without pitch. Extremes of amplitude. Concentrated virtuosity and relaxed simplicity. The path through this "dark wood" of sound is like any path of its kind: visible (audible) at times, disintegrated at times, invisible (inaudible), clearly marked, erased, suddenly lost, suddenly broad, darkly foreboding, comforting heavy sleep. The termination is inescapable, it is hoped, and, however convoluted, resolves the ambiguities of what precedes it.

While there is no direct surface, musical link between the poem and this music, the *nature* of the poem certainly influenced the structure of the music. But music is not language (although, with Adorno, it is *like* language in certain ways), and my image of darkness, while I comprehend the vision of Poe and there are points of contact, focuses not on horror but inevitability. But to write more would be to give too much direction; better to let each listener determine their own pathway through this shadowland.

*clang clash roar* was written for tonight's performers, Leah Asher and Dennis Sullivan, and is dedicated to them. I owe them more than I can ever repay for their musical commitment, spirit of adventure, sensitivity, and meticulous brilliance that they brought to this music and to everything they do.

## ***Situation IV / Io e iO*** **Anahita Abbasi**

Dialogical Self Theory weaves two concepts, self and dialogue, together in such a way that a more profound understanding of the interconnection of self and society is achieved. Usually, the concept of self refers to something “internal,” something that takes place within the mind of the individual person, while dialogue is typically associated with something “external,” that is, processes that take place between people involved in communication.

The composite concept “dialogical self” goes beyond the self-other dichotomy by infusing the external to the internal and, in reverse, to introduce the internal into the external. As functioning as a “society of mind”, the self is populated by multiplicity of “self-positions” that have the possibility to entertain dialogical relationships with each other.

Situations are series of pieces with a set of circumstances in which one finds oneself.

*Situation IV / Io e iO*, is a “Dialogical Self” of a musician with himself, a multiplicity of “self-positions”, and infusion of the external and internal dialogues in different kinds of situations.

## ***the wreckage of flowers*** **Michael Hersch**

The twenty-one movements are preceded by lines drawn from the poems and prose works of Czeslaw Milosz.

I. On the wall a painting that depicts winter.

Between the trees, smoke comes from a chimney,

And crows fly in an overcast sky.

II. A still-looking branch, both cold and living

III. ...and the sky far up above was the only element we shared with the other people on the face of the earth

IV. Over the gate of the rectory fragments of brick among weeds...

V. Now there is only the earth, sandy, trodden down,

With one leafless tree.

VI. To lay bare a monument like a nest in a thicket,

Though all you wanted was to pluck a few roses.

VII. He wakes up, rubs his eyes, and above the tossed-back scarecrows of the pines he sees a dark blue expanse in which, low on the horizon, one blood-red star is glowing.

VIII. Beyond a field, a wood and a second field,

The expanse of water, a white mirror, glitters.

IX. The din ceases.

Memory closes down its dark waters.

And those, as if behind a glass, stare out, silent.

X. From afar, from somewhere beyond the river, echoes of lingering voices.

XI. ...the wind rattling the metal sheets hanging from a cliff-like wall.

Rusting machines stood among the high weeds.

XII. The sky before sunrise is soaked with light.

Rosy color tints buildings, bridges...

And the cities on a distant plain stood intact...

I cast a spell on the city asking it to last.

XIII. And that snow will remain forever,

unredeemed, not spoken of to anyone.

XIV. ...but here there was not a tree,

or even lichens growing on the rocks,

and in the birdless sky, racing through filmy clouds

the sun went down between black concretions.

XV. Starry skies go out.

XVI. Winter, night, the frozen sky is flooded with red.

XVII. ...and the sky far up above was the only element we shared with the other people on the face of the earth

XVIII. ...Huge flocks of crows, freezing in mid-air,

exploded under the clouds...

XIX. Layers of white clouds on a fragment of sky between the brightness of the birches.

XX. Farther, under the arch of ancient ruins

You see a few tiny walking figures.

XXI. A still-looking branch, both cold and living.

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **Leah Asher** (MM '12), violin and viola

Violinist/violist, composer, and visual artist Leah Asher is an avid performer of contemporary music and creator of new artistic works. Leah has been a member of The Rhythm Method string quartet, an innovative ensemble of composer-performers, since 2016. A sought-after performer and collaborator, Leah frequently performs as a regular guest with New York-based ensembles such as the International Contemporary Ensemble, Talea Ensemble, and S.E.M. Ensemble. She is also the co-creator of *Meaningless Work*, an interdisciplinary performance collaboration with Nicolee Kuester, and half of the violin-piano duo *Aether Eos* with Christopher Goddard.

Leah maintains an international career with performances at the Lucerne Festival, Lake George Music Festival, Omaha One Festival, MATA Festival, TriBeCA New Music, Festspillene i Nord Norge, Music Mondays, and Codes d'accès. Leah formerly served as solo violist of the Arctic Philharmonic Sinfonietta and co-principal viola of the Arctic Philharmonic.

As a guest artist and educator, Leah has given performances and worked with students at universities including Rice University, New York University, Bowling Green State University, Zurich University for Art and Music, Arkansas State University, Tulane University, Peabody Conservatory, Hunter College, Brown University, and Youngstown State University.

As a composer, Leah has been commissioned by several ensembles, including *andPlay*, *Chartreuse*, *Periapsis*, *NorthArc Percussion Group*, *The Great Learning Orchestra*, *Du.o.*, and solo artists such as Meaghan Burke, Tristan McKay, and Jennifer Torrence. Recent releases include Leah's solo album *Retreat into Afters* (SCRIPTS Records) and *The Rhythm Method's* self-titled debut album (Gold Bolus Recordings). Leah joined the faculty of Manhattan School of Music in 2022.

Leah completed her undergraduate degrees at Oberlin College and Conservatory, studying violin with Gregory Fulkerson, and her Master's in Contemporary Performance at Manhattan School of Music under the tutelage of Curtis Macomber.

## **Dennis Sullivan**, percussion

Based in New York City, Dennis K. Sullivan II is a percussionist, composer, and electronicist, focusing on new and contemporary music. His music has been performed across the globe by the International Contemporary Ensemble, yarn/wire, New Thread Quartet, DECODER, Ensemble Adapter, Hypercube, and Dal Niente in venues such as the Elbphilharmonie (Hamburg), The Stone (NYC), Nymusikk Bergen (Norway), Omaha Under the Radar, Splendor (Amsterdam), and the Edmonton Fringe Festival (Canada). He is a founding member and core performer in Radical 2, a classification-defying duo that explores the use of theatrical, vocal, percussive, and prototype electronic mediums, and Popebama, an experimental duo that applies text, electronics, and high-energy performances to non-traditional sounds.

An active chamber and orchestral percussionist, Sullivan has shared the stage with leading contemporary music ensembles such as The Argento New Music Project, Either/Or, The International Contemporary Ensemble, ECCE Ensemble, Ensemble Court Circuit (Paris), Ensemble Pamplemousse, Wavefield Ensemble, Newband, Mivos Quartet, The Darmstadt Preisträger Forum, and Ensemble Modern Academy, among others. He has performed in notable NYC venues such as BAM, Roulette, Merkin Hall, Miller Theater, Symphony Space, Le Poisson Rouge, The Shed, and The Stone. Equally at home in the world of improvisation, he has shared the stage with luminaries such as Brandon Lopez, Erin Rogers, Peter Evans, Tom Rainey, and Dana Jessen. An advocate for the new music community, Sullivan successfully curated an annual series of theatrically driven new music, bringing together classical music, theater, rock, heavy metal, and film at Jack (Brooklyn) from 2015-17.

Sullivan holds a Bachelor of Music (BM) from the Hartt School of Music and a Master of Music (MM) / Doctorate of Musical Arts (DMA) from SUNY Stony Brook University (New York). Sullivan currently serves as an instructor of percussion and music tech as well as director of the wind ensemble at Adelphi University.

## **Christopher Goddard** (MM '12), piano

Christopher Goddard is a Florida-based Canadian composer, pianist, organist, and music theorist. As a composer, Christopher Goddard has been commissioned by NYO Canada, Esprit Orchestra, Quatuor Molinari, No Exit New Music Ensemble, and others. His work has been recognized by the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards, the Canadian League of Composers, and the Macdowell Foundation, and has been broadcast by BBC Radio 3 and CBC Radio 2. As a pianist, he has premiered several new solo and chamber works, performing internationally at the Samos Young Artist Festival and the Lucerne Festival, and collaborating with groups such as Wet Ink Ensemble, Columbia Composers, and the Penn Composers Guild. He is also active as a music researcher, having presented at regional, national, and international conferences and published in Music Theory Online. He currently serves as an adjunct professor of music at the University of Florida and Santa Fe College.