



CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

TACTUS

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

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024 | 7:30 PM
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL

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PROGRAM

ANDY AKIHO (MM '09)
(b. 1979)

Portal (2023)

Adeline DeBella, flute
Grace Pressley, saxophone
Sam Friedman, trumpet

KAIJA SAARIAHO
(1952–2023)

Changing Light (2002)

Sanne Vleugels, soprano
Cole Habekost, violin

GÉRARD PESSON
(b. 1958)

La Gel, par jeu (1991)

Andrea Ábel, flute
Gabe Henkin, clarinet
Kevin Newton (MM '20), French horn
Yeji Pyun, violin
Josh Halpern, cello
Glenn Choe, marimba
Matt Ward (BM '98)*, Conductor

Intermission

MARCOS BALTER
(b. 1974)

Landscape of Fear (2014)

Steph Tamas, saxophone
Sam Friedman, trumpet

ASHKAN BEHZADI*

(b. 1983)

Abyss: Refractive (2010, rev. 2024)

Andrea Ábel, flute

Gabe Henkin, clarinet

Cole Habekost, violin

Clara Cho (BM '21, MM '23), cello

Ruben Høgh, piano

ERIN ROGERS*

(b. 1980)

Mother Earth (2014)

Adeline DeBella, flute

Erin Rogers*, soprano saxophone

Steph Tamas, alto saxophone

Grace Pressley, tenor saxophone

Kedrick Adams, baritone saxophone

*CPP Faculty



**Council on
the Arts**

Manhattan School of Music's public programs are made possible in part by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



Funded in part by a grant from the New York City Tourism Foundation.

PROGRAM NOTES

Portal

Andy Akiho

Portal was inspired by the landscapes and energy of New Mexico, particularly the towns of Santa Fe, Taos, and Angel Fire. Every drive between these eternal townships, and every hike or run through the hills and mountains felt as if there were mystical forces emitting boosts of intense energy and inspiration. The culmination of dizzying altitudes, mesmerizing landscapes, exciting musicians, and perpetual portals to other dimensions (at least in my mind) all contributed to this piece.

– *Andy Akiho*

Changing Light

Kaija Saariaho

In the composition (*Changing Light*), I follow the idea of a dialogue, suggested by the text I have chosen. The intimate nature and fragile sound world of the duo mirror the fragility of our uncertain existence.

– *Kaija Saariaho*

Changing Light

Light and darkness, night and day.
We marvel at the mystery of the stars.
Moon and sky, sand and sea.
We marvel at the mystery of the sun.
Twilight, high noon, dusk and dawn.
Though we are mortal, we are Creation's crown.
Flesh and bone, steel and stone.
We dwell in fragile, temporary shelters.
Grant steadfast love, compassion, grace.
Sustain us, Lord; our origin is dust.
Splendor, mercy, majesty, love endure.
We are but little lower than the angels.
Resplendent skies, sunset, sunrise.
The grandeur of Creation lifts our lives.
Evening darkness, morning dawn.
Renew our lives as You renew all time

– *Rabbi Jules Harlow*

Le Gel, par jeu **Gérard Pesson**

Le Gel, par jeu and *Les Cinq Poèmes de Sandro Penna* were written in Italy and are the result of two poetic discoveries, two momentous encounters: Sandro Penna, a contemporary poet who died in Rome in 1977, and Emily Dickinson, an American poet born in Massachusetts in 1830. Their work, apparently so different were it not for their shared depth and quiet gravity, is linked in my memory to the city of Rome and the gardens of the Villa Medici, which I could see from the windows of my study.

Having dispensed with the subtitle, I owe this *Gel* an explanation, just for fun. It's a danse macabre, or, to be more exact, a series of little ghostly dances, gritty, licentious tableaux.

The danse macabre is the only genre that goes so deep. I haven't renounced the little paraphernalia it imposes: the percussive wooden slats that traditionally represent the clashing of bones; but instead of the slightly "spotted" xylophone, I've opted for the more mysterious, hushed bass marimba. The *dias irae* is included, as it should be, but so cryptically that I myself have already forgotten the complex operation involved in grafting it on.

This music is spectral in its own way, as ghosts parade through it. It's all vertebrae of chromaticism (the bones of our poor scales), rushed, shot through with draughts and scrapings. Sicilian dances, waltzes, springtime auguries in headbands, the dances gradually freeze and congeal.

This music is my first experiment in the strictly continuous, in what used to be called the *concitato* style.

The work's title is a free translation (Guy Jean Forgue) of a line by Emily Dickinson, the Massachusetts provincial angel who spent her life following funerals, a barely embodied dazzling genius who more than a century ago transcended the two subjects of every danse macabre - and of this one (panic and irony): The Frost beheads it at its play.

– *Gérard Pesson*

Landscape of Fear **Marcos Balter**

A "landscape of fear," in ecological terms, describes the awareness prey have of their own risk of predation in relation to their physical surroundings. In Balter's music, the performers find themselves in a treacherous cognitive map, with seemingly unending streams of notes and intricate rhythms blocking the way. They learn this landscape through constant repetition, adapting to their

surroundings through improvisation. Ornaments and quasi-melodic motives break the homogeneous texture as the musicians weave in and out of each other's sounds. Their journey is only invigorated by their commitment to the predator, and they are unable to break free. The listeners themselves are simultaneously the predators and the subjects of predation, expecting to enjoy the performance, but getting wrapped up in the exhaustion displayed by the performers.

In short, this one's a blow, folks.

– Sam Friedman

Abyss: Refractive **Ashkan Behzadi**

Composed in 2009 and revised in 2023, *Abyss: Refractive* seeks to encapsulate our contemporary state – trapped in the tension between a looking sense of threat, and a fragmented, shattered dim light of another possibility.

– Ashkan Behzadi

Mother Earth **Erin Rogers**

Mother Earth for flute, saxophone quartet, and electronics was inspired by the Isaac Asimov short story of the same name. Asimov is known for creating a highly detailed version of the future within his extensive body of work and has received attention for the accuracy of his predictions as they relate to technology, socio-economics and politics. In *Mother Earth*, the battle wages between an overpopulated Earth, the mother planet, and Aurora, the outer world – a metaphoric suburban paradise. The flutist assumes the role of Aurora, at times in lockstep with the earthly ensemble, but constantly working toward a better, shinier version. This work reflects Asimov's description of our planetary de-civilization through decades of overcrowding, system failure, and overreach.

Mother Earth is divided into 4 main sections (A, B, C, & D). Section A is a series of rising gestures in the upper voices, over a thick and muddled foundation of bass multiphonics, with complementary electronic bursts during the ensemble silences. This section symbolizes an uprising of sorts. Section B is a blend between the upper and lower voices as the ensemble works to find stability within its structure. Section C is a bombastic war-like passage, reaching extremes in range and volume, and section D is a series of falling instrumental lines from the saxophone altissimo register into a quiet end.

– Erin Rogers

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

Curtis Macomber, violin

Tara Helen O'Connor, flute

John Pickford-Richards, viola

Todd Reynolds, electronics

Brandon Ridenour, trumpet

Erin Rogers, saxophone

Lucy Shelton, voice

Fred Sherry, cello

ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its more than 1,000 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from more than 50 countries and nearly all 50 states; its innovative curricula and world-renowned artist-teacher faculty that includes musicians from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Orchestra, and the top ranks of the jazz and Broadway communities; and a distinguished community of accomplished, award-winning alumni working at the highest levels of the musical, educational, cultural, and professional worlds.

The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege Division is a professionally oriented Saturday music program, dedicated to the musical and personal growth of talented young musicians ages 5 to 18. The School also serves some 2,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed Distance Learning Program.

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Land Acknowledgment

We want to acknowledge that we gather as Manhattan School of Music on the traditional land of the Lenape and Wappinger past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit as well.



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