



CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

TACTUS

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

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2025 | 7:30 PM
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL

This year's performance season has been inspired by a unifying theme: ***Humanity in Harmony: Rituals, Resistance, and Resilience***. We hope during this election year, the biggest in human history with over half the world's population having the opportunity to vote in 72 countries, that this theme reflects the power of the arts to unite us even in moments of discord and differences. The collective experience of collaboration – creating together – reminds us that even in our differences we can find common ground, stand up to tyranny and oppression, and elevate our work as artists to fulfill the hope and promise of a better tomorrow.

James Gandre, President

Joyce Griggs, Executive Vice President and Provost

Faculty and Administration of the Artistic Planning Committee



**Council on
the Arts**

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PROGRAM

STEPHEN RUSH
(b. 1958)

Rebellion (1998) 6 min

Lauren Galarraga, trombone
Tiffany Leard, piano
Grace Goss, percussion

ERIC WUBBELS
(b. 1980)

This is This is This is (2010) 24 min

Steph Tamas, alto saxophone
Ruben Høgh, piano

HANNAH KENDALL
(b. 1984)

Tan-Tan (2020) 15 min

Text by Tessa McWatt

Piper Weldon, voice
Andrea Ábel, flute
Mariana Clavijo Ledesma, B-flat clarinet
Joe DeAngelo, violin
Grace Goss, percussion
Matt Ward, conductor

Intermission

IGOR SANTOS
(b. 1985)

murmurations II (2016) 7 min

Andrea Ábel, flute
Ariana Varvaro, oboe
Mariana Clavijo Ledesma, B-flat clarinet
Amber Dai, horn
Hunter Lorelli (MM '21, PS '22), bassoon

OSVALDO GOLIJOV
(b. 1960)

The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind (1994) 33 min

Prelude

I.

II.

III. *K'vakarat*

Postlude

Gabe Henkin, clarinet

Cole Habekost, violin

Joe DeAngelo, violin

Carrie Frey (MM '16), viola

Sara Gabalawi, cello

PROGRAM NOTES

Rebellion

Stephen Rush

Stephen Rush is a Professor of Music at the University of Michigan, where he founded the Digital Music Ensemble (DME) which he has directed for 25 years, working with composers such as Pauline Oliveros, and premiering works by John Cage, Philip Glass, and La Monte Young. Rush also tours and records with his electronic psychedelic improvisation band, “Crystal Monotone”, and is deeply invested in “installation Art”, with current works in collaboration with Henry Pollack (Nobel Prize-winning physicist). “*Rebellion* is about an urge, not a cause. It is a small portrait of energy, a capsule of the feeling portrayed in the final bombast of the piece,” he writes, “The early 1980s proved to be a time when many composers had a change of heart, and the ‘one-planet’ style (sometimes called eclecticism) was the order of the day. This explains the criss-cross influences found in *Rebellion*, that of Ghanaian Drumming and George Crumb. In this way, my music could be easily likened to the Hindu Faith, which openly accepts many approaches to God, while carefully trying to strive for ultimate perfection.” Written for trombone, piano, and percussion, *Rebellion* is an energetic feast of ideas, combining aggressive attacks, piano scratching, glissandos, screams, a lyrical breakthrough, and ending in rhythmic unison.

—Tiffany Leard

This is This is This is

Eric Wubbels

Writer David Wallace committed suicide in late 2008. In addition to the love and admiration I feel for his work, a number of other coincidences of biography and personal history had made me feel quite close to him, and his death was not only a shock but also just an incredibly sad thing. For me and many of my friends, it seemed like confirmation of some of our darkest thoughts about... well, everything.

In his later writings, Wallace outlines the struggle for a type of consciousness—a moment-to-moment vigilance of mind—that transforms the repetitious business of daily life into something sacred. He describes this kind of attention as both a path outward from habitual self-focused thought patterns and a stay against “the constant gnawing sense of having had and lost some infinite thing” that those patterns eventually produce. In addition, his conviction that art should be both moral and practical, that “fiction’s about what it is to be a fucking human being,” has become something of a guiding principle for me.

So—this is for David Foster Wallace. This is unison, concentration, and attention. This is extended repetition as a force against habit. (“This is a Bronx-bound 2 express train.”) This is the constant gnawing sense of having had and lost some infinite thing. This is the connection between attention and ecstasy—ecstasy of physical gesture, ecstasy of sound, ecstasy of repetition.

Tan-Tan

Hannah Kendall

Known for her immersive world-building, Hannah Kendall’s work bridges gaps between different musical cultures, both honoring and questioning the contemporary tradition while telling new stories through it. Kendall’s recent work has provided a meeting point for different types of music, carrying with it the weight of connected but unharmonized histories. Recently, she’s achieved this by looking beyond the typical tools of composition and using auxiliary instruments that exist outside of the concert hall. Her Tuxedo series is named after an artwork by American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat. His eponymous piece provides one of many graphic scores that Kendall has used as inspiration throughout her career. Rather than create ‘representations’ of these images, she uses them to spark her writing process. Building pieces from a place of intuition, her compositions are just as likely to become abstracted, turned inside out by surprises she finds along the way, as they are to have a firm narrative. Kendall has created pieces such as *Disillusioned Dreamer* (2018), which the *San Francisco Chronicle* praised for having a “rich inner life,” as well as *The Knife of Dawn* (2016). This chamber opera received critical acclaim for its involving and claustrophobic representation of the incarceration of Guyanese political activist Martin Carter. She has worked with ensembles including London Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, The Hallé, Ensemble Modern, and London Sinfonietta as well as collaborated with choreographers, poets, and art galleries. She is currently composing an Afrofuturist opera for experimental vocalist and movement artist Elaine Mitchener, and is the recipient of the 2022 Hindemith Prize for music composition. Born in London in 1984, Kendall is based in New York City as a Doctoral Fellow in composition at Columbia University.

The composer writes: “This scene is based on an extract from Nalo Hopkinson’s short story *Tan-Tan and Dry Bone*, and set in Tan-Tan’s hut in the forest, just outside Duppy Dead Town, a place ‘where people go when life boof them, when hope left them and happiness cut she eye ‘pon them and strut away.’ Worn down by guilt, sorrow, and pain, it’s where she meets Dry Bone, who appears to be starving and too weak to stand. Goodhearted Tan-Tan helps him despite warnings from the townsfolk and is trapped by him.”

-Lucy Shelton

Text and Lyrics

***Tan-Tan*, Hannah Kendall**

An animal shelters, something flies between the branches.

Two figures make their way through the dense forest. Tan-Tan is carrying Dry Bone. She struggles to keep him from sliding from her arms.

She has to throw his arm around her neck, but it gets entangled with a jungle vine and both the arm and the vine encircle her neck so that they nearly choke her.

Doux...

We hear the sound of her breath, struggling. We see her tussling with the vine, his arm, to release her neck.

Doux, Darling

She frees herself and takes a deep breath.

She begins to walk again and sees ahead of her a clearing. Familiar. Her home.

She makes a final push towards it, still lugging the figure of Dry Bone, but with more energy now.

Doux

Tan-Tan arrives at her hut carrying Dry Bone. Sad pained, she seems exhausted. She puts him down at the foot of the steps of the verandah.

I take he inside. He wants to be out of the air.

She looks at him, her pain deepens.

She lifts him up and climbs the stairs with him.

He's so light and yet it hurts to lift this skin and bone man.

They enter the hut. She holds him still, her pain visible in her weary arms as they tremble.

It's as though she and Dry Bone now see the hut as one. She has entered not only her hut but her mind.

worthless..A worthless woman lives here. Nobody ever visit you, girl.

He places his hand on her head and turns it, forcing her eyes to scan the room, making her look at what she has been ignoring. Tan-Tan struggles to hold him.

I have a chair.

They continue to look in tandem.

The seat is break up. Mattress full of ticks. Rancid oil in my lamp, a bucket of stale water with a dead spider in it. I put he on the mattress. He go stay there from now on.

She puts him down on the mattress.

(Yes Dry Bone.)

She stands and stares at him for a moment and then looks around her but again.

Worthless. I put him down but

She looks down into her arms.

He is heavier now. Yes. (Yes Dry Bone.) When I pick he up I
pick up trouble. His voice in my head is like hands on my neck.

*She begins to prepare the food. The voices from the market are heard again She
looks around her but.*

Doux Darlin'.

She cooks.

Gwan make dumpling, like my daddy loved. (Yes Dry Bone.) If
you take one life, you must give back two. All people know this
to be true.

She works harder, faster.

Fresh fowl, Topitambo root, Breadfruit, Jonny cake.

She cooks.

Fowl to roast Topitambo root to boil Breadfruit to bake Jonny
cake to fry.

She serves up the dishes.

She looks at the pathetic state of her wares.

Worthless woman. Nobody ever visit you.

*Tan-Tan goes inside and outside to fill the plate, comes back in and serves it to
him. Each time she serves it to Dry Bone he devours its contents. She serves one
dish at a time and returns to get the next one. After each she stops and watches him.*

He swallows every last jonny cake whole, chews up the
topitambo, skin and all. Doesn't wait for me to peel the
breadfruit, tears the meat from the chicken bone, then
crunches up the bone and all.

*She turns towards her small hut, examining it again. She touches a wall as though
looking for a window in it.*

Time is a hollow bell. Nothing lives in me. Oh nothing but the
shadow of the one I killed lurking next to the thing he tore
from me, time and again. Oh, little girl, time and again. Empty.
Oh, little girl, tra la la, torn from me, time and again.

mumurations II

Igor Santos

murmurations II is directly inspired by the synchronized movement of flocks of starlings. In this piece, larger gestures are always led by singular smaller ones, offering multiple ways of tableaux, wherein instruments constantly play independently, but all share similar directions and materials such as melodic lines (i.e. articulated through micropolyphony or heterophony), focal pitches, ornamentation, etc.

- Igor Santos

The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind

Oswaldo Golijov

Eight centuries ago Isaac The Blind, the great kabbalist rabbi of Provence, dictated a manuscript in which he asserted that all things and events in the universe are the product of combinations of the Hebrew alphabet's letters: 'Their root is in a name, for the letters are like branches, which appear in the manner of flickering flames, mobile, and nevertheless linked to the coal.' His conviction still resonates today: don't we have scientists who believe that the clue to our life and fate is hidden in other codes?

Isaac's lifelong devotion to his art is as striking as that of string quartets and klezmer musicians. In their search for something that arises from tangible elements but transcends them, they are all reaching a state of communion. Gershom Scholem, the preeminent scholar of Jewish mysticism, says that 'Isaac and his disciples do not speak of ecstasy, of a unique act of stepping outside oneself in which human consciousness abolishes itself. *Debbequth* (communion) is a constant state, nurtured and renewed through meditation.' If communion is not the reason, how else would one explain the strange life that Isaac led or the decades during which groups of four souls dissolve their individuality into single, higher organisms, called string quartets? How would one explain the chain of klezmer generations that, while blessing births, weddings, and burials, were trying to discover the melody that could be set free from itself and become only air, spirit, *ruakh*?

The movements of this work sound to me as if written in three of the different languages spoken by the Jewish people throughout our history. This somehow reflects the composition's epic nature. I hear the prelude and the first movement, the most ancient, in Aramaic; the second movement is in Yiddish, the rich and fragile language of a long exile; the third movement and postlude are in sacred Hebrew.

The prelude and the first movement simultaneously explore two prayers in different ways: The quartet plays the first part of the central prayer of the High Holidays, 'We will observe the mighty holiness of this day...', while the clarinet dreams the motifs from 'Our Father, Our King.' The second movement is based on 'The Old Klezmer Band,' a traditional dance tune, which is surrounded here by contrasting manifestations of its own halo. The third movement was written before all the others. It is an instrumental version of *K'vakarot*, a work that I wrote a few years ago for Kronos and Cantor Misha Alexandrovich. The meaning of the word klezmer: instrument of song, becomes clear when one hears David Krakauer's interpretation of the cantor's line. This movement, together with the postlude, bring to conclusion the prayer left open in the first movement: '...Thou pass and record, count and visit, every living soul, appointing the measure of every creature's life and decreeing its destiny.'

But blindness is as important in this work as dreaming and praying. I had always the intuition that, in order to achieve the highest possible intensity in a performance, musicians should play, metaphorically speaking, 'blind.' That is why, I think, all legendary bards in cultures around the world, starting with Homer, are said to be blind. 'Blindness' is probably the secret of great string quartets, those who don't need their eyes to communicate among them, with the music, or the audience. My homage to all of them and Isaac of Provence is this work for blind musicians, so they can play it by heart. Blindness, then, reminded me of how to compose music as it was in the beginning: An art that springs from and relies on our ability to sing and hear, with the power to build castles of sound in our memories.

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.

Erin Rogers, Co-Artistic & Administrative Advisor

Matt Ward, Co-Artistic & Administrative Advisor

CPP 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

ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its 1,025 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from 54 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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