



M Manhattan
School of Music

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**PERFORMANCE
SEASON**

M Manhattan
School of Music

MSM JAZZ COMPOSERS' ORCHESTRA

Christopher Zuar (MM '13), Director

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2026 | 7:30 PM
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL**

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PROGRAM

Sofia Will

Zerdrückt

Ethan Dymit

Yes!

Scott Robert

Hypnos

Will Tucker

Gone So Fast

Shiyu Fang

The Nut, The Obsédé

Simon Wiksell

People Perspective

Samyog Regmi

Pāñla

Cameron Sewell-Snyder

From Ashes

Hana Uwai

Rock Dove

MSM JAZZ COMPOSERS' ORCHESTRA

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SOLOISTS

Marit Buffington, voice
San Diego, California

Mariana Menezes, voice
Lisbon, Portugal

Aaron Ouellette, trumpet
Hebron, Connecticut

WOODWINDS

Alvaro Correia Pinto, alto saxophone
Lisbon, Portugal

Nicolo Boselli, alto saxophone
Dallas, Texas

Duke Baur, tenor saxophone
Glencoe, Illinois

Luca Savarino, tenor saxophone
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Gabriel Proctor, baritone saxophone
Winnetka, Illinois

TRUMPET

William Xu
Shanghai, China

Owen Chow
Victoria, Canada

Seowon Kwak
Seoul, South Korea

Charlie Klein
Beacon, New York

TROMBONE

Theodore Stone, trombone
Houston, Texas

Bruno Tzinas, trombone
Miami, Florida

William Tucker, trombone
Larchmont, New York

Zachary Andrews, bass trombone
St. Louis, Missouri

RHYTHM

Aiden Moroney, guitar
Bunbury, Australia

Dylan Smith, vibraphone
Augusta, Georgia

Derek Lewis, piano
Buffalo, New York

Brenda Greggio, piano
San Diego, California

Lucy Southan, bass
Sydney, Australia

Emile Berlinerblau, bass
Washington, DC

Drew Hoschar, drums
Cleveland, Ohio

Guojun Yu, drums
Shanghai, China

PROGRAM NOTES

Sofia Will, *Zerdrückt*

Zerdrückt is German and means “crushed”—but the verb it comes from (*drücken*), is much softer than crushing something; it’s more like “pressing.” *Drücken* can also mean “hugging.” If you think about it, hugging is slightly crushing someone between your arms.

But there is more! Being “crushed” can also mean that you’re sad. And “a crush” is something nice—most of the time. So, this piece is about all of these things: it’s a theme song for having a crush. It can be exciting, it warms your heart, but sometimes it’s not reciprocated, and then you’re crushed about that! Luckily, in the end you’re just slightly *zerdrückt*, like a hug that was too tight, and the next crush might just be around the corner...

Ethan Dymit, *Yes!*

One thing that I’ve always struggled with when writing large pieces is form. Coming up with melodies and harmonies can be a struggle, sure, but creating the underlying structure of a piece in a way that feels natural (and in the best cases, inevitable) without resorting to standard forms is much more difficult. The writing process for *Yes!* began with building this structure. For inspiration, I looked to the genre of progressive rock, which I feel does a great job of making virtuosic, complex material accessible through song structure. The piece became somewhat of a tribute to that genre, and in particular to the namesake of the piece, British prog-rock band Yes.

Scott Robert, *Hypnos*

Hypnos is a dear piece to my heart, dedicated to two of the greatest trumpet players of our time: Ingrid Jensen and Kenny Wheeler. Hypnos is a Greek god of sleep, thus the title is a reference to the almost dreamlike quality their playing evokes, drawing the listener in. The solo part is being covered by Aaron Ouellette, an incredibly promising new voice in trumpet today.

Will Tucker, *Gone So Fast*

My typical process for writing large-ensemble pieces involves selecting a story to act as a framework for the composition. Whether the story is from visual media, history, or a play, I approach the composition as if I’m scoring a nonexistent film that follows the story. *Gone So Fast* is a rare exception to this process. I leaned into the abstract nature of instrumental music as an untranslatable (yet

emotionally tangible) art form, letting the natural emotional arcs of time-based art take the wheel in shaping this composition. The title is taken from the lyrics of *Here Today* by The Beach Boys, who I consider to be one of my biggest influences on this composition, at least in terms of harmony.

Shiyu Fang, *The Nut, The Obsédé*

This piece is the first movement of my ongoing suite, *The Writer*, inspired by Susan Sontag's assertion that a writer must embody four personas: the nut, the moron, the stylist, and the critic. Sontag describes the "nut" as the source of raw material—the obsessive, impulsive force that generates ideas before they are shaped by craft or judgment. Titled *The Nut, The Obsédé* (obsédé meaning "the obsessed" in French), this movement focuses on that compulsive creative energy, portraying a mind driven by fixation, intensity, and the irrepressible urge to produce.

Simon Wiksell, *People Perspective*

This piece's original title was "Purple Perspective." But when I mentioned it for my friend, he misheard me, thinking I said "People Perspective." We both agreed it was a much cooler title, and it happens to be an apt way to encompass the spirit of the piece's featured soloist, Duke Baur.

Samyog Regmi, *Pāila*

I wrote *Pāila*, which translates to "footsteps," as a way of paying homage to some of the writers of this music who have been here before me, inspired me, and on whose footsteps I aspire to walk.

Cameron Sewell-Snyder, *From Ashes*

While being mostly regarded as an instrumentalist and someone who writes for small ensembles, Cameron is reimagining himself as a composer. Pushing his boundaries, tonight he will be world premiering his first composition written for Big band. Cameron aims to evoke feelings of mystery, dispiritedness, and eventual hope throughout the story of the piece. He gains much musical influence from film, inviting the listener to come along to visualize a cinematic journey of their own.

Hana Uwai, *Rock Dove*

There are many pigeons living in New York.

I spent two years in New York surrounded by them, and I wrote a piece about them.

And this piece is performed for them—and by them.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Christopher Zuar (MM '13), Director

Christopher Zuar's music has been performed internationally by the WDR Big Band, Danish Radio Big Band, hr Big Band, and the Brussels Jazz Orchestra. He has written arrangements for such notable artists as saxophonists Immanuel Wilkins and Ben Wendel, vibraphonist Joel Ross, and vocalist Theo Bleckmann.

In 2025, Zuar was nominated for a GRAMMY for Best Instrumental Composition for *Communion*, from *Exuberance*, his second full-length studio album. The 60-minute song cycle consists of seven interwoven compositions performed by the Christopher Zuar Orchestra and featured guest soloists. The album was conceived in collaboration with animation filmmaker Anne Beal, whose hand-painted animations accompany the music. Jazz pianist Fred Hersch describes *Exuberance* as "...a mature statement by a great composer in his prime, performed by a stellar ensemble with passion and care."

Zuar has garnered numerous awards and commissions. He is the recipient of the 2021 Symphonic Jazz Orchestra Commissioning Prize, the 2020 Copland House Residency Award, the 2020 Airmen of Note Sammy Nestico Award, the 2020 SCI Jazz Composition Award, the 2016 ASCAP Foundation Johnny Mandel Prize, the 2015 First Music Commission from the New York Youth Symphony, and is the five-time recipient of the ASCAP Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer's Award. Zuar is a two-time MacDowell fellow and 2018 Corporation of Yaddo Guest.

Zuar holds a Master of Music degree from Manhattan School of Music and a Bachelor of Music degree from the New England Conservatory of Music, both in jazz composition. His debut album, *Musings*, a collection of seven original compositions for large ensemble, was released on Sunnyside Records in 2016. The record has received broad critical acclaim, including a spot on *DownBeat* magazine's "Best Albums of 2016" and runner-up "Debut of The Year" in the NPR Jazz Critics Poll.

ABOUT THE MSM JAZZ ARTS PROGRAM

Manhattan School of Music was one of the first conservatories in the United States to acknowledge the importance of jazz as an art form by establishing undergraduate and graduate degree programs in jazz. The program, which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2024–25, is one of the richest of its kind, combining systematic and rigorous conservatory training with a myriad of performance and networking opportunities in New York City. In addition to a wide variety of more than 20 small combos, student ensembles include the Jazz Orchestra, the Jazz Composers' Big Band, and the Studio Orchestra. The program is under the leadership of Dean of Jazz Arts Jim Saltzman (DMA '18).

Students study with a faculty drawn from the highest ranks of the jazz world and are provided opportunities to play for and observe world-renowned guest artists. Master classes in recent years have been presented by Terence Blanchard (trumpet), Billy Childs (piano, composition), Buster Williams (bass), Ron Carter (bass), Christian Scott (trumpet), Barry Harris (piano), Stefon Harris (BM '95, MM '97) (vibraphone), Maria Schneider (composition), Vijay Iyer (piano), Jason Moran (MM '97) (piano), Christian McBride (bass), Jimmy Heath (tenor saxophone), Gary Burton (vibraphone), and Wycliffe Gordon (trombone).

Every concert season, prominent guest artists are featured with our large ensembles, providing enriched performance experiences for students. Guest artists have included Omar Thomas, Jim McNeely, Jane Monheit (BM '99), Candido, Dave Liebman, Randy Weston, Joe Lovano, Bob Mintzer, Randy Brecker, Paquito D'Rivera, and Miguel Zenón (MM '01).

Jim Saltzman, Dean of Jazz Arts

Edward Gavitt, Assistant Dean for Artistic Operations

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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 8 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.



MSMNYC.EDU

What Will Your Legacy Be?

Through a bequest or other planned gift, you can help to ensure that Manhattan School of Music will provide a music education of the highest quality to exceptionally talented young artists for generations to come while also strengthening the School's long-term financial health.

Bequests are one of the easiest ways to create a living legacy and to help MSM meet important priorities, including increasing our scholarship endowment and supporting our world-class faculty.

For further information and to join our Galaxy Society, which honors those who have committed to making a planned gift to the School, **please contact Susan Madden, Vice President for Philanthropy**, at 917-493-4115, or visit: msmnyc.edu/galaxy-society.

Help a young artist reach for the stars!

