

M Manhattan
School of Music

CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

*Contemporary
Composer/Performer
Project*

Eight Premieres

Erin Rogers, Curator

Written in Collaboration with the 2026 CPP Graduates

Erin Rogers & Matt Ward, CPP Co-Artistic Advisors and Co-Chairs

THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026 | 7:30 PM
GORDON K. AND HARRIET GREENFIELD HALL

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PROGRAM

BENJAMIN NICHOLAS

Precipice (2026)

Tiffany Leard, piano

KEVIN CROMER

Song of Circles (2026)

Piper Weldon, voice + electronics

YUQING ZHANG

-Pulse- (2026)

Amber Dai, French horn + electronics

SAMUEL MUTTER

Four Syllables Later (2026)

Joe DeAngelo, violin

Amber Dai and **Maya Mueller**, soprano recorder

Holden Meier, alto recorder

Ealaph Tabbaa, tenor recorder

Intermission

SEBASTIAN BLOCK

BeatBreak (2026)

Grace Goss, drum set + electronics

YU-PIN LAI

--- thread --- (2026)

Ariana Varvaro, oboe

JIANING SONG

Duet (2026)

Lauren Galarraga, trombone

ANGELA TSE

Collapse (2026)

Mariana Clavijo Ledesma, bass clarinet + electronics

PROGRAM NOTES

Benjamin Nicholas, *Precipice* (2026)

It was such an honor and a pleasure to have the opportunity to write for Tiffany, a musician who I greatly respect and admire. Tiffany and I have a lot of overlapping musical tastes and interests, and it was such a fun challenge to attempt to incorporate those varied influences into this piece.

I want to extend my gratitude to the Contemporary Performance department for helping to facilitate all the exciting collaborations being showcased tonight!

Kevin Cromer, *Song of Circles* (2026)

Song of Circles is a work largely inspired by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, with a focus on various facets (both concrete and philosophical) of the work. During a particularly harsh winter, Mary Shelley and some friends hosted a casual "competition" for the best scary story, which led to the creation of *Frankenstein*. However, Mary Shelley struggled quite a bit with creating what is arguably her best-known and most revered work. She felt immense pressure to rise to the task, and actually got to a point of dreading even being asked about her progress. In Mary Shelley's own words found in the preface of *Frankenstein*: "I felt that blank incapability of invention which is the greatest misery of authorship, when dull Nothing replies to our anxious invocations. Have you thought of a story? I was asked each morning, and each morning I was forced to reply with a mortifying negative." She describes this process lasting days and days, seemingly living in a loop, with her only anchor for orientation being the approaching deadline. It's unclear at what point in this process she found the pieces she needed, but I feel that somewhere in the loop, somewhere in those circles of routine, Mary Shelley saw the outlines of her novel hidden among the interference and overlap. *Song of Circles* is ultimately a work based on the idea of something new coming from something old. A temporary routine becomes a novel. A man becomes a monster. A collection of slaughter-house supplies becomes a creature. A creature becomes a man. A loop, a cycle, a circle becomes a song.

Yuqing Zhang, *-Pulse-* (2026)

-Pulse- reveals the quiet intensity of internal motion, where vibration becomes a trace of life in constant transformation.

Yu-Pin Lai, - - - *thread* - - - (2026)

---*thread*--- is inspired by the contour of sewing with thread. The interpretation is flexible, suggesting any idea that is continuously woven into a larger, macroscale structure.

Jianing Song, *Duet* (2026)

What is seen?

What is heard?

Angela Tse, *Collapse* (2026)

Amidst the chaotic uncertainty, as I hesitated over whether to open my eyes and resolutely let it all become the 'doom', yet the wave function collapsed before I could... taking on the shape of a...

a bass clarinet...?

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

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

Sarah Pedlar

Decorah, Iowa

Ethan Burke

Flagler Beach, Florida

Ariana Varvaro

Lake Worth, Florida

Mariana Clavijo Ledesma

Popayán, Colombia

Lauren Galarraga

Virginia Beach, Virginia

Amber Dai

Beijing, China

Joe DeAngelo

Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Zheng Liu

Nanchang, China

Tiffany Leard

Las Vegas, Nevada

Mihail Babus

Munster, Indiana

Grace Goss

New York, New York

Leo Martinez

West Park, Florida

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.



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