



School of Music  
University of Missouri

2020-2021 Series | Guest Ensemble

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# The [Switch~ Ensemble]

## *Virtual Recital*

Zach Sheets, flutes

Madison Greenstone, clarinets

Matt Evans, saxophones

Lauren Cauley, violin

T.J. Borden, cello

Wei-Han Wu, piano

Megan Arns, percussion

Christopher Chandler, co-founder, composer, and sound engineer

Clay Mettens, composer and sound engineer

Jason Thorpe Buchanan, co-founder, composer, and artistic director

Produced and Edited by Jason Thorpe Buchanan

May 2, 2021 | 8:30pm  
Sinquefeld Music Center

## Program

**Invisible Heritage (2021) ..... Luis Hermano Bezerra**

**Strata (2021) . ..... Christopher Chandler**

**Black Petal (2021) ..... Oswald Huynh**

*A conversation with [Switch~ Ensemble] and the composers*

**Tangram (2021) ..... Santiago Beis**

**Do Your Best Never Say Can't and Love One Another (2021) ..... Zachary James Watkins**

## Program Notes & Composer Biographies

### Invisible Heritage

Regarded as a heavy influence on the origin of many Brazilian music styles, Jongo is essentially a rural cultural dance directly associated with the African culture in Brazil. This tradition, a form of expression using singing, dancing, and singing, was brought to the country by Bantus. These people resisted the labor they were forced to endure thanks to the strength of their tradition and of a culture that the distance from their homeland was not able to erase. In the new land, the African cultural identity fits in with a new way of life. Associations and groups of Brazilian artists have begun to reconsider this expression of ancient traditions to keep Brazilian folklore alive. As time went by, some traditions gained a “popular” dimension. The Jongo—an ancient dance—was put aside. Put aside, but not extinct.

– Luis Hermano Bezerra

### Luis Hermano Bezerra

Luis Hermano Bezerra is a Brazilian composer primarily focused on mixing his Brazilian roots with the classical legacy. His compositions, which are profoundly influenced by popular dances and musical genres, present a variety of traditional musical expressions from his country of origin. He has recorded and toured with many groups and ensembles in Brazil, where he also worked as an educator at the Alberto Nepomuceno Music Conservatory, before moving to the United States. Luis is a graduate assistant with the Mizzou New Music Initiative at the University of Missouri where he has been studying for his master’s in music composition under Dr. Stefan Freund, Dr. Carolina Heredia, and Dr. Yoshiaki Onishi.

### Strata

Drawn from the field of geology and referring to layers of rock or soil, the title *Strata* alludes to the compositional process used for this work. At the beginning of our collaboration, I gave the musicians of the [Switch~ Ensemble] various prompts of sounds, techniques, and gestures to record, which I then used to construct the electronics. The musicians then recorded solo improvisations alongside these electronics, and finally, we held a telematic group improvisation session with these materials.

I find that this multi-part asynchronous collaborative process that draws on recording, listening, reflecting, and improvising, both independently and in response to others, connects in interesting ways to the geological concept of strata. The initial electronics I composed became a kind of landscape upon which external forces act through the musicians’ improvisational responses. The landscape changed, gaining new texture, features, and depth, with each successive improvisation. My role at the end of this process became like a geologist or archaeologist, sifting through various layers to uncover and highlight novel features. The end result is a composite of improvisations from different times and situations that I have arranged to be dialogue with each other. It has been a rewarding way to connect and make music together in these distanced times, and I am deeply grateful for the artistry that Madison, Lauren, Megan, and T.J. brought to this project.

– Christopher Chandler

### Christopher Chandler

Christopher Chandler is a composer, sound artist, and a co-founder of the [Switch~ Ensemble]. He serves as Assistant Professor of Music at Union College in Schenectady, NY where he teaches courses in music theory,

composition, and technology. His acoustic and electroacoustic works draw on field recordings, found sound objects, and custom generative software. His music has been performed across the United States, Canada, and France by leading ensembles including Eighth Blackbird, the American Wild Ensemble, the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, and Le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne. His music has received recognition and awards for his music including a BMI Student Composer Award, an ASCAP/SEAMUS Commission, two first prizes from the Austin Peay State University Young Composer's Award, winner of the American Modern Ensemble's Annual Composition Competition, and the Nadia Boulanger Composition Prize from the American Conservatory in Fontainebleau, France. Christopher received a Ph.D. in composition from the Eastman School of Music, an M.M. in composition from Bowling Green State University, and a B.A. in composition and theory from the University of Richmond.

## **Black Petal**

*Black Petal* is inspired a poem of the same title by Li-Young Lee from his book, *Book of My Nights*. My aim was to translate the poem into music and to interpret the emotion and themes into a meditative soundscape. For the purposes of this composition, I divide the poem into three sections that align with the work's three movements.

The poem begins with a character who reminisces about their dead brother, "I keep him under my pillow, a dear wish / that colors my laughing and crying." In this first section, the persona speaks of the absence that their brother's passing has left in their life. It acts as a reminder of the inevitability of death and, in a larger scope, the brevity of life: "He died too young to learn his name. / Now he answers to Vacant Boat, / Burning Wing, My Black Petal."

The second section is a dialogue between the two in which the brother answers the persona's questions. This acts as a continuation of the first movement's themes of death, but the replies lay a foundation for acceptance and reconciliation. "Does someone want to know the way to spring? /" the character asks. "He'll remind you / the flower was never meant to survive / the fruit's triumph."

The final section begins with a sentiment of memory: "He says an apple's most secret cargo / is the enduring odor of a human childhood." So long as we allow people to live on in our memories, they are never truly absent; the past, in essence, gives comfort and hope to the present. The character also learns to recognize the cycle of generations that is inherent to existence, which provides a reason to look towards the future. "His voice / weighs nothing / but the far years between / stars in their massive dying, / and I grow quiet hearing / how many of both of our tomorrows / lie waiting inside it to be born."

In the last few years, I have become comfortable with the idea of death, and I do not desire a legacy or memoir. Knowing I will live on in the memories of the people I care about has always been enough. In writing *Black Petal*, perhaps I am counteracting this philosophy, but I hope that this piece offers an introspective experience.

– Oswald Huynh

## **Oswald Huynh**

Oswald Huynh is a composer from Portland, Oregon. His music explores narratives and concepts from the nature of Oregon, introspection, and his Vietnamese heritage. Huynh often blends traditional Vietnamese aesthetics with Western techniques to compose music that reflects his multicultural upbringing. He has collaborated with ensembles such as the [Switch~ Ensemble], Deaf Rabbit Duo, Akropolis Reed Quintet, Alexander String Quartet, h2 quartet, and The City of Tomorrow. In the past, he has participated in the Wintergreen Music Festival, Mostly Modern Festival, and the Atlantic Music Festival. Huynh has had the opportunity to study with composers such as George Lewis, Daron Hagen, Gilda Lyons, and Zhou Long. In

addition to composition, Huynh is an avid bassoonist and chamber musician. Huynh holds a B.A. in music and computer science from Lewis & Clark College and is pursuing a M.M. in Composition at the University of Missouri. His principal teachers include Michael Johanson, Texu Kim, and Carolina Heredia.

## **Tangram**

This is the first piece in an ongoing series that seeks to unify computer-assisted composition, improvisation, and remote communication. I've designed custom software that transmits (via the internet) a musical score to each musician's screen, which they will use as a basis for creating sound textures and transformations during the performance. The open scoring of the piece makes its sonority variable depending on the instrumental forces and the software's capabilities. In smaller instrumentations, the sound takes on a "constructivist" character, comparable to paintings by Mondrian or Kandinsky. In larger ensembles, the sound is perceived as a slow-moving mass, similar to natural phenomena such as flocks of migratory birds or massive schools of fish.

Thus, the flute, vibraphone, and violoncello shape the sonority of a central harmony. Their individual interjections and phrases serve as constituent aspects of a larger harmonic picture. This is analogous to the original Tangram game, in which the players shift geometric pieces that seem disordered, yet suggest a coherent whole when arranged correctly.

– Santiago Beis

## **Santiago Beis**

Santiago Beis is an Uru-Brazilian composer, pianist, audio designer, arranger, and artistic researcher. He holds a bachelor's degree in composition with Maurício Dottori, Harry Crawl, Márcio Steuernagel, and Felipe de Almeida Ribeiro at Escola de Música e Belas Artes do Paraná – UNESPAR. During this period, he worked with new music ensembles such as Orquestra de Câmara da Cidade de Curitiba, Ensemble Nova Camerata, Ensemble Móbile, Quarteto Brasiliana, UM2UO Percussion, Orquestra filarmônica da UFPR, Orquestra de Câmara da Cidade de Curitiba, Orquestra à Base de Sopro de Curitiba, Orquestra à Base de Cordas de Curitiba, and Quinteto Sopro5.

Santiago has earned Prizes in several composition festivals: First Prize in XXII Funarte Prémio de Composição Clássica, (2017), and First prize in IV Bienal *Música Hoje* (2017). Played his compositions in MadeinNY JazzGala jazz competition at the Tribeca Center of Performing Arts in New York (2017). From 2014-2017, as a producer with Composteira casa de Criação and Círculo de Invenção Musical, he organized workshops for composers in residence such as Marcos Balter, Paulo Rios Filho, Alex Buck, Alexandre Torres Porres, Flora Holderbaum, Marin Herraiz, Guilherme Pelucci and Daniela Veronesi, Mariana Carvalho, Fernando Riederer, Mossa Bildner, and Jorge Antunes, among other Brazilian Artists.

Currently, Santiago is a graduate student for the M.M. in Composition program at The School of Music of the University of Missouri, under the mentorship of Carolina Heredia, Yoshiaki Onishi, and Stefan Freund. He is taking part in new music festivals and residences in collaboration with ensembles such as Left Coast Chamber Ensemble through the 2021 RedNote New Music Festival, the MU University Philharmonic for the Sinquefield Composition Prize, and by the Sheldon Concert Hall & Art Galleries in St. Louis, MO.

## **Do Your Best Never Say Can't and Love One Another**

*Do Your Best Never Say Can't and Love One Another* is a mantra my father would have my sister Tighe and I recite every morning when dropping us off at Elementary School. During the pandemic, I found myself remembering these words and feeling overwhelmed with love. I have written a piece that attempts to resonate my understanding of these words in this specific moment in history. This piece continues to explore a 20 note

just intonation tuning that I have been developing for over 10 years. Here, I juxtapose these intervals with the Western Equal Temperament with the intended goal of creating a new sonic tapestry. Tension and release.

– Zachary James Watkins

## **Zachary James Watkins**

[Zachary James Watkins](#) studied composition with Janice Giteck, Jarrad Powell, Robin Holcomb and Jovino Santos Neto at Cornish College. In 2006, Zachary received an MFA in Electronic Music and Recording Media from Mills College where he studied with Chris Brown, Fred Frith, Alvin Curran and Pauline Oliveros. Zachary has received commissions from Cornish College of The Arts, The Microscores Project, the Beam Foundation, sfsound, The Living Earth Show, Kronos Quartet and the Seattle Chamber Players among others. His 2006 composition Suite for String Quartet was awarded the Paul Merritt Henry Prize for Composition and has subsequently been performed at the Labs 25th Anniversary Celebration, the Labor Sonor Series at Kule in Berlin Germany and in Seattle, as part of the 2nd Annual Town Hall New Music Marathon featuring violist Eyvind Kang. Zachary has performed in numerous festivals across the United States, Mexico and Europe. Zachary releases music on the labels Sige, Cassauna, Confront (UK), The Tapeworm and Touch (UK). Novembre Magazine (DE), ITCH (ZA), Walrus Press and the New York Miniature Ensemble have published his writings and scores. Zachary has been an artist in residence at the Espy Foundation, Djerassi and the Headlands Center for The Arts.

## ***The [Switch~ Ensemble]***

A new music ensemble for the 21st Century, the [Switch~ Ensemble] is dedicated to the creation of new works for chamber ensemble: we bring bold new acoustic, electroacoustic, and multimedia projects to life. We believe that working directly with composers—in a medium where the score is a point of departure rather than a finish line—allows for new and thrilling musical possibilities.

Recent engagements include performances and residencies at Harvard, Cornell, Bard College, University of Chicago, Ithaca College, UC Berkeley, and University of Miami, as well as concerts at the Image/Sound Festival, San Francisco Center for New Music, VIPA Festival, MATA Interval Series, the Queens New Music Festival, and more. Upcoming projects include a broadcast series of new telematic works rehearsed and performed in quarantine, as well as performances in Fall 2021 at the DiMenna Center in NYC and the SinusTon Festival in Germany.

Commissioning projects include upcoming or recent premieres with Katharina Rosenberger, Zachary James Watkins, Leilehua (Anne) Lanzilotti, Anna-Louise Walton, Kelley Sheehan, and more. [Switch~] projects are generously supported by the Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung, Pro Helvetia, New Music USA, MidAtlantic Arts Foundation US Artists International, the MAP Fund, and the Amphion, Ditson, and Copland Foundations.

## ***Mizzou New Music Initiative***

The Mizzou New Music Initiative brings together an array of programs intended to position the University of Missouri School of Music as a leading center in the areas of composition and new music. The Initiative is the direct result of the generous support of Dr. Jeanne and Mr. Rex Sinquefield, and the Sinquefield Charitable Foundation. The Sinquefields' vision is to create an incubator for the composition and performance of new music, and to position Missouri as a major center for the music of tomorrow.