



School of Music
University of Missouri

2020-2021 Series | Student Ensemble

Mizzou New Music Ensemble

George Lewis's *Les Exercices Spirituels*

Tâmila Freitas de Souza, flutes

Andrew Wiele, bass clarinet

Johanny Veiga Barbosa, violin

Andy Lewis, cello

Stephen Landy, percussion

Jordan Nielsen, percussion

Eve Werger, piano

Yoshiaki Onishi, bass clarinet and conductor

Stefan Freund, director

with special guests

William Lenihan, guitar

Daniel Vega, electronics

April 14, 2021 | 7:00pm
Sinquefield Music Center

Program

**Les Exercices Spirituels (2010, rev. 2021)..... George Lewis
(b. 1952)**

Les Exercices Spirituels was written for and premiered in Paris by Ensemble Erik Satie, under the direction of Arnaud Petit. The work is dedicated to the philosopher Arnold I. Davidson, whom I met at a conference in Berlin in 2007. Arnold’s work on exemplarity, moral perfectionism, and counter-conduct, in dialogue with the ideas of Stanley Cavell and Michel Foucault, led to his close association with Pierre Hadot, who devoted much of his life to understanding the ancient philosophy of the Stoics and the Epicureans.

Arnold’s close collaboration with Hadot, and his prefacing of such Hadot works as *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, had a direct impact on *Les Exercices Spirituels*. Hadot’s and Arnold’s work, as with the ancient philosophers, deal with “spiritual exercises,” a set of disciplines in which, as Hadot writes, “we must let ourselves be changed, in our point of view, attitudes, and convictions. This means that we must dialogue with ourselves, and hence we must do battle with ourselves.” This phrase succinctly summarizes the journey of self-revelation being depicted in the four movements of *Les Exercices Spirituels*: “Du jour a la nuit,” “Espaces,” “Solos,” and the concluding “Meditations,” which despite its title is not particularly calming.

Les Exercices Spirituels was the first of my works to incorporate live, computer-controlled digital delays, sound spatialization, and timbre transformation. Since that time, I have completed a series of such works, including the *Recombinant Trilogy* of compositions for solo instrument and electronics: *Emergent* (2013) for flute, *Not Alone* (2014) for cello, and *Seismologic* (2017), for bassoon, as well as *Memory/Mutation* (2019), for two violins, and *Soundlines: A Dreaming Track* (2019), for speaking percussionist and ensemble. The software for these works was created by Damon Holzborn, using the Max programming platform.

In the period around the composition of this work, Arnold and I were giving numerous public presentations on his transformation of “*La philosophie comme maniere de vivre*” to “improvisation as a way of life,” a subject that has everything to do, not only with Arnold’s encyclopedic knowledge and ardent love of music, but also with the structure of *Les Exercices Spirituels*, which provides an optional grid of improvisation tasks that can be invoked at various points in the work. These improvisative journeys also provide opportunities for self-revelation that I hope audiences for this work can take up for themselves.

Biographies

George Lewis

George E. Lewis is the Edwin H. Case Professor of American Music at Columbia University, where he serves as Area Chair in Composition and Faculty in Historical Musicology. A Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy, Lewis's other honors include a MacArthur Fellowship (2002) and a Guggenheim Fellowship (2015), a Doris Duke Artist Award (2019), a United States Artists Walker Fellowship (2011), an Alpert Award in the Arts (1999), and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Lewis studied composition with Muhal Richard Abrams at the AACM School of Music, and trombone with Dean Hey. A member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) since 1971, Lewis's work in electronic and computer music, computer-based multimedia installations, and notated and improvisative forms is documented on more than 150 recordings. His work has been presented by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonia Orchestra, Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart, Mivos Quartet, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, London Sinfonietta, Spektral Quartet, Talea Ensemble, Dinosaur Annex, Ensemble Dal Niente, Ensemble Pamplemousse, Wet Ink, Ensemble Erik Satie, Eco Ensemble, and others, with commissions from American Composers Orchestra, International Contemporary Ensemble, Harvestworks, Ensemble Either/Or, Orkestra Futura, Turning Point Ensemble, Studio Dan, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, 2010 Vancouver Cultural Olympiad, IRCAM, Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra, and others. Lewis's music is published by Edition Peters.

Lewis has served as Fromm Visiting Professor of Music, Harvard University; Ernest Bloch Visiting Professor of Music, University of California, Berkeley; Paul Fromm Composer in Residence, American Academy in Rome; Resident Scholar, Center for Disciplinary Innovation, University of Chicago; and CAC Fitt Artist in Residence, Brown University. Lewis received the 2012 SEAMUS Award from the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States, and his book, *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (University of Chicago Press, 2008) received the American Book Award and the American Musicological Society's Music in American Culture Award; Lewis was elected to Honorary Membership in the Society in 2016. Lewis is the co-editor of the two-volume *Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies* (2016), and his opera *Afterword* (2015), commissioned by the Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago, has been performed in the United States, United Kingdom, and the Czech Republic.

In 2015, Lewis received the degree of Doctor of Music (DMus, *honoris causa*) from the University of Edinburgh. In 2017, Lewis received the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters (PhD, *honoris causa*) from New College of Florida. In 2017 Lewis received the degree of Doctor of Music from Harvard University.

Professor Lewis came to Columbia in 2004, having previously taught at the University of California, San Diego, Mills College, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Koninklijke Conservatorium Den Haag, and Simon Fraser University's Contemporary Arts Summer Institute.

Mizzou New Music Ensemble

The Mizzou New Music Ensemble is dedicated to promoting new music at Mizzou through performances on and off campus. The Ensemble is the repertory group for the Mizzou New Music Initiative, working with faculty, students, and visiting composers, and giving public performances on campus and in the community. The Ensemble is comprised of seven University of Missouri graduate students under the direction of Stefan Freund, a cellist, composer, conductor, professor of composition, and artistic director of the Mizzou New Music Initiative.

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.