



Mizzou New Music Initiative
University of Missouri

University of Missouri School of Music
2024-2025 Series • Student Ensemble

Mizzou New Music Ensemble

Kyrsten Wehner, flutes
Meghan Brown, clarinets
Emily Aponte, horn
Alexandre Negrao, violin
Dean Wibe, cello
Mon leong Cheok Kai, percussion
Daniel Noonan, percussion
Seda Balci, piano
Jinhong Yoo, piano

Stefan Freund, Director
Selim Göncü, Guest Conductor
Ryan Kee, Guest Pianist

7:30 PM, Sunday, October 06, 2024
Sheryl Crow Hall

Program

FLOW Sebastian Currier
(2012) (b. 1959)

The Pale Blue Dot Seda Balci
(2024) (b. 1992)

Intermission

Dreammares Harry González
(2024) (b. 1997)

Forms in Waves Giovanni Porfirio
(2024) (b. 1996)

Autumn Thoughts Martin Smolka
(1998) (b. 1959)

Program Notes and Composers Biographies

Sebastian Currier (b. 1959)

Heralded as "music with a distinctive voice" by the *New York Times* and as "lyrical, colorful, firmly rooted in tradition, but absolutely new" by the *Washington Post*, Sebastian Currier's music has been presented at major venues worldwide by acclaimed artists and orchestras.

With works spanning across solo, chamber and orchestral genres, Currier's works have been performed by Anne-Sophie Mutter, the Berlin Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the Kronos Quartet. In November 2021, conductor Louis Langrée leads the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in the world premiere of Currier's Beethoven-inspired *Track 8. Waves*, Currier's new work for soprano, chamber ensemble, video and electronics, based on Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, is premiered by the Network for New Music in Philadelphia in February 2022, then brought to Sarasota by ensemblenewSRQ in April 2022. Other recent premieres include *Voyage Out* (2019) for piano quintet, premiered by the Seattle Chamber Music Society; his violin concerto *Aether* (2018) for violinist Baiba Skride and the Boston Symphony Orchestra with conductor Andris Nelsons (co-commissioned by the Leipzig Gewandhaus); *Ghost Trio* (2018), premiered by violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, cellist Daniel Müller-Schott, and pianist Lambert Orkis at Carnegie Hall; and *Eleven Moons* (2018), premiered by soprano Zorana Sadiq and Boston Musica Viva.

Currier's music has been enthusiastically embraced by violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter who has commissioned, premiered, and recorded several of Currier's pieces, including his "rapturously beautiful" (*New York Times*) violin concerto *Time Machines*, which was commissioned by Ms. Mutter and premiered by the New York Philharmonic in June 2011 with a recording of the performance released by Deutsche Grammophon the following September.

Currier has received many prestigious awards including the Grawemeyer Award (for the chamber piece *Static*), Berlin Prize, Rome Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, and an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and has held residencies at the Institute for Advanced Studies, as well as the MacDowell and Yaddo colonies.

FLOW (2012)

In evolutionary biology it was originally assumed that species evolved very gradually, like the physical landscape evolved. Mountains gradually formed over eons or continents drifted apart imperceptibly. It seemed logical that species were formed in a parallel way. But further discoveries pointed to a different pattern: long stretches of stasis followed by concentrated periods of intense, active change. This pattern is known as punctuated equilibrium. Since music unfolds in time and, in a more general sense, ideas within a piece "evolve," this notion caught my attention as a way to put together music in time. It also engaged with one of the primary dialogues in music of the past half decade: minimalism versus, if you will, maximalism. The idea of punctuated equilibrium seemed to me like an invitation to combine these two points of view, which are often perceived as somehow antithetical. In my piece, stable, repetitive patterns are abruptly interrupted, leading to other stable patterns, and so on. This process defines the entire opening section. As the piece unfolds, however, this structure itself becomes looser. In the last section, the materials from the opening return, but this time, instead of abrupt interruptions ushering in each successive pattern, one pattern dovetails with the next, each idea dissembled as the next gradually forms, hence the name of the piece, *Flow*.

Seda Balci (b. 1992)

Balci began her musical journey at the age of 11, studying piano. During her middle and high school years at the Anadolu University State Conservatory (Eskişehir) from 2004 to 2010, she performed actively as both a pianist and composer in various concerts. In 2009, she won the "Best Turkish Composition Interpretation Award" at the Eskişehir National Young Talents Piano Competition and gave a recital at Osmangazi University in 2010 as part of the "Today's Youth, Tomorrow's Artists" project. That same year, she composed a score for a short film at the 12th Eskişehir Film Festival, performed live during the screening.

In 2010, Balci pursued a double major in Piano and Composition at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (Istanbul). From 2010 to 2016, she gave numerous performances as a pianist and composer in Istanbul and Eskişehir, including solo appearances with the Mimar Sinan Symphony Orchestra and the Anadolu University Symphony Orchestra. Balci generally composes for smaller ensembles, with her works performed by contemporary music groups such as Garage Ensemble and Diskant Ensemble. In 2020, she wrote a piano concerto commissioned by the Hacettepe Symphony Orchestra.

After completing her undergraduate studies, Balci focused on her piano career, earning her master's and doctoral degrees at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. In 2023, she relocated to the United States to continue her composition studies and was accepted into the Composition program at the University of Missouri. In the same year, she was commissioned to write an orchestral piece for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, which premiered in 2024. She also won the 2024 Sinquefield Composition Prize and currently performs as a pianist with the New Music Ensemble.

The Pale Blue Dot (2024)

I. Big Bang

II. Cosmos

III. Milky Way

"That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every 'superstar,' every 'supreme leader,' every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there – on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam."

This is how Carl Sagan describes our planet, Earth, when reflecting on the photograph taken by the Voyager 1 space probe in 1990 from 3.7 billion miles away. From such a distance, our world, filled with turmoil, appears as nothing more than a pale blue dot. My piece, *Pale Blue Dot*, takes its name and inspiration from both this photograph and Sagan's words.

In this composition, fixed media, synth, live electronics, and acoustic instruments come together to present an auditory reflection of the chaotic universe we inhabit. The piece is divided into three sections. In the first, titled *Big Bang*, we experience the birth of the universe, its rapid expansion faster than the speed of light, and the formation of new stars and galaxies. In the second section, *Cosmos*, we find ourselves in the vast darkness of space, hearing the planets shine through live electronics as they settle into their orbits.

This journey eventually brings us to our galaxy in the third section, *Milky Way*. In this final part, motifs reminiscent of Earth are introduced through the piano, with a rhythmic ostinato based on the note E shared between the instruments in dialogue. Eventually, we return to Earth, to the very spot from which the photograph was taken. The piece concludes with an improvisation by piano, synth, and live electronics, where we listen to our world from afar.

Harry González (b. 1997)

González is a Colombian composer, violinist, pianist, and conductor. His music reflects his interpretation and feelings on existential human issues, personal experiences, and personal adventures by constantly seeking new sounds and techniques in his compositional process. He constantly plays with contradictory ideas to create ambiguous sonorities and sensations and defy listeners' expectations.

Organizations like The Sheldon Arts Foundation, the Mizzou New Music Ensemble, the Mizzou New Music Initiative, the Medellín Philharmonic Orchestra, and the new music ensemble Periscopio of Universidad EAFIT have commissioned his music. It has been performed in musical events in Colombia, such as the XIV Cartagena Music Festival, Concurso Nacional Violinissimo in Medellín, and Colombia se Compone in Bogotá, and internationally, at Contemporáneos III in San Ramón, San José, Cartago and Turrialba, Costa Rica, Mizzou Student Composers Recitals, Missouri Composers Project, Del Mar International Composers Symposium, Odyssey Chambers Music Series with Mizzou faculty performers and The Sheldon Concert Hall in collaboration with St. Louis Symphony Orchestra players and the 2024 New Music on the Bayou.

Professionally, González has gained important experience conducting his works with Medellín Philharmonic Orchestra and St. Louis Symphony Orchestra players; playing violin with Medellín Philharmonic Orchestra and popular music ensembles; premiering his pieces that include violin or piano; working as a teaching assistant for the Mizzou New Music Initiative with production tasks, programs, teaching and grading undergraduate courses; and working as production assistant for the MICEF and the Missouri Summer Composition Institute. Recently, González won first place in the Humanities division of the Research and Creative Activities Forum at Mizzou with his research on how music can be used to convey climate change. Currently, González is pursuing his Master of Music degree in Composition at the University of Missouri with the guidance of Stefan Freund and Utku Asuroglu.

Dreammares (2024)

Dreammares is a journey through the blurred edges of consciousness, where the boundaries between dreams and nightmares dissolve. Each movement in this piece reflects a different vivid and enigmatic dreamscape, blending the familiar with the surreal in unpredictable ways. The piece explores the tension between beauty and unease, familiarity and strangeness, danger, and playfulness, all while inviting the listener to experience the shifting dreamworld with the dreamer.

I. Unearthed Dreammare: Unpleasantly Pleasant

The dream begins in a place where beauty and discomfort meet. Beneath serene surfaces, an underlying tension lingers, yet the dreamer is drawn in, captivated by something not fully revealed.

II. Familiar Strangers at the Shores and a Horse: Bewildered

The scene shifts to a shoreline, where familiar faces appear, though strange to one another. A horse's head swims through the sand, amplifying the dream's surrealism and leaving the dreamer suspended in bewilderment.

III. Hidden Play: Ironic

The final dreammare transforms danger into a whimsical game. What once felt threatening now becomes playful, filled with irony and mischief. The dreamer embraces absurdity, fully immersed in the twists of a dreamworld laced with humor and surprise.

Dreammares reflect the fluid and unpredictable nature of dreams, where the comforting and the disturbing coexist. Each unexpected twist leads to new, uncharted realms, mirroring a night spent in a world where logic fades, and imagination takes control.

Giovanni Porfirio (b.1996)

Porfirio is a composer hailing from São Paulo, Brazil. He has a bachelor's degree in instrumental and electroacoustic composition from UNESP (Sao Paulo State University), where he studied with Flo Menezes (Ph.D. from Université de Liège) and Alexandre Lunsqui (DMA from Columbia University). His unwavering commitment to improvement led him to participate in masterclasses, workshops and private lessons with notable figures such as Alexandros Markeas (Conservatoire of Paris), Chaya Czernowin (Harvard University), Claire-Méline Sinnhuber, Felipe Lara (Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University), Frédéric Durieux (Conservatoire of Paris), Hans Tutschku (Harvard University),

Philippe Manoury, Marcos Balter (Columbia University), Marin Alsop, Miller Puckette (University of California San Diego), Willy Correa de Oliveira (University of São Paulo), and others in the world of music.

He received the Ravel Prize in the Jury Prize category, promoted by the Ravel Foundation and the Festival Musique au Chateau: Écoles d'Art Américaines de Fontainebleau (France). Porfirio received the first prize in the Brazilian Percussion Composition Contest (2022), where his piece *ma non troppo* for vibraphone solo was performed. In 2023, he was commissioned to compose an operetta (20 minutes long) named *Entre-Veias* for the Orquestra do Theatro São Pedro, which premiered in October 2023.

His works have been performed at prestigious festivals, including the Oficina de Música de Curitiba, São Paulo Contemporary Composers Festival, Musique au Château de Fontainebleau, and Gaudeamus Festival. Furthermore, he conceived the innovative "Véspera Profana" project, dedicated to contemporary music, which garnered attention with a concert at FUNARTE/SP (an organization affiliated with the Brazilian Ministry of Culture).

He is pursuing his master's degree at the University of Missouri, where he studies with Dr. Freund and Dr. Asuroglu.

Forms in Waves (2024)

FORMS IN WAVES is a Sinquefield Student Commission, performed by the Kaizen Piano Trio (Ryan Kee on the Piano, Alexandre da Silva Negrão on the Violin, and Dean Wibe on the Cello).

This piece is inspired by the Theory of Generalized Periodicity by Henri Pousseur (Belgium composer and musicologist). As described in his text "Pour une Périodicité Généralisée" (in English, "for a Generalized Periodicity"), this theory could be used to analyze any kind and genre of music of any era, from Middle Ages to contemporary music. This analytical tool consists of analyzing music through waveforms: sine, square, triangle, and saw tooth. So, for instance, an arpeggio could be analyzed as a sine wave, while repeated notes could be a square waveform. By using this analytical method it's also possible to interpret musical forms.

Taking this into consideration, *FORMS IN WAVES* received this title to refer to and to pay homage to Henri Pousseur's text. This piece is an invitation for the audience to listen to it with an open mind, aware that this piece is aimed at the audience of the present and the future. Enjoy the piece, taking into account its gestures, movements, and the new sonic universe that the composer set out to create. Here, countless sound movements are spread throughout the audience to represent these sound waves.

Porfirio's compositional philosophy centers on the fusion of harmonicity (defined pitches) and inharmonicity (undefined pitches) sounds, influenced by his experience with electroacoustic music. He strives to make acoustic sources sound electronic, even in instrumental pieces. His electronic compositions, in particular, emphasize the pursuit of inharmonic sounds, gestures, and textural variations.

FORMS IN WAVES has a fusion of traditional Western notation and digital audio, made possible by fixed media and live electronics.

Martin Smolka (b. 1959)

Born in 1959 in Prague, is a distinguished Czech composer who emerged in the 1980s as a co-founder of the ensemble Agon, which played a crucial role in introducing avant-garde music to the Czech scene. His early influences include post-Webernism, Minimalism, American experimental music, and the Polish School.

Smolka is known for his exploration of unconventional sound sources, such as under-tuned strings and old gramophones, which he used to create what he calls "sonic photographs," capturing the sounds of nature and urban life. His music oscillates between two emotional poles: playful, often out-of-tune folk or brass band sounds, and melancholic, nostalgic echoes of those same sounds. His works often juxtapose contrasting elements—fast and slow, joyous and sad—employing micro-intervals to "detune" traditional harmonic structures and enhance their emotional impact.

In the late 90s, Smolka focused on recycling traditional musical elements in works like *Remix*, *Redream*, *Reflight* and *Blue Bells or Bell Blues*, the latter winning an award from the Foundation Prince Pierre de Monaco. Recently, he has turned to vocal music, including pieces like *Poema de balcones* and *Psalmus 114* for chorus and orchestra.

His compositions are performed widely across Europe, and he is especially known in Prague for his opera *Nagano*, which won the Alfréd Radok Award. Since 2003, Smolka has taught composition at the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno and occasionally writes film scores. He studied at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, with further private studies under Marek Kopelent.

***Autumn Thoughts* (1998)**

Autumn Thoughts has a special form of its whole: two sharply contrasting halves just lay one next to the other. The first one, fast and noisy, is a hoquetus of few elements, which jump round and round, being still slightly rearranged as to timing and order of appearance g minors. The second section is made of long soft tones, always as if initiated by an attack of percussion.

I like to imagine various pictures when I am thinking of this music: The whole I see as a fantastic animal, which has said a head and front legs of horse but the rest of a fish. Or the piece might be titled "The Fall Asleep": then the first section would be the hectic reality, while the others were a dream. Maybe the dream about 24 slaps in the face, thorough to such an extent that it rings!

Etc. Imagine what you want. You may even hear variations on the theme from *Violin Phase* by Steve Reich.

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 eight 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 at the University of Missouri School of Music.

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.

Upcoming MNMI events

Performance of Stefan Freund's Violin Duo

7:30 PM, Thursday, October 10, Sheldon Concert Hall, St. Louis

Hub New Music Residency, October 16-18

Concert 7:30 PM, Friday, October 18, SMC 132

Stefan Freund Composition Faculty Recital

7:30 PM, Saturday, November 2, SMC 132

Readings of MU Student Works by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra

1:30 - 3:30 PM, Tuesday, November 5, Touhill, St. Louis

Visit newmusic.missouri.edu for a full list of events and opportunities.

Requests for accommodations related to disability need to be made to building coordinator, Susan Worstell, 206 Sinquefield Music Center, 573-884-2604, at least seven days in advance of the event. Events are subject to change. For up-to-date information, please visit our web site: www.music.missouri.edu

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