



Mizzou New Music Initiative
University of Missouri

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

Mizzou New Music Ensemble

Kyrsten Wehner, flute

Meghan Brown, clarinet

Emily Aponte, horn

Alexandre Negrao, violin

Dean Wibe, cello

Cheok Kai “Mon” leong, percussion

Daniel Noonan, percussion

Seda Balci, piano

Jinhong Yoo, piano

Stefan Freund, Director

Bill Kalinkos, Guest Conductor

7:30 PM, Saturday, February 22, 2025

Sheryl Crow Hall

Program

Petroushskates Joan Tower
(1980)

*Entity** Dean Wibe
(2025)

Bírria Carolyn Chen
(2021)

Intermission

Signal Christopher Dietz
(2014)

Whirlwind II Marco Alunno
(2024)

*Go Ahead and Call me a Bureaucrat,
but Let's Talk About Who Got
the Bigger Christmas Bonus** Nate Leslie
(2025)

*World Premiere

Program notes and Composers' Biographies

Joan Tower is widely regarded as one of the most important American composers living today. During a career spanning more than sixty years, she has made lasting contributions to musical life in the United States as composer, performer, conductor, and educator. Her works have been commissioned by major ensembles, soloists, and orchestras, including the Emerson, Tokyo, and Muir quartets; soloists Alisa Weilerstein, Evelyn Glennie, Carol Wincenc, David Shifrin, Paul Neubauer, and John Browning; and the orchestras of Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Nashville, Albany NY, and Washington DC among others. Her recent commissioned premieres include the cello concerto *A New Day*, the orchestral work *1920/2019*, and the chamber piece *Into the Night*.

In 2020 Chamber Music America honored her with its Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award; *Musical America* chose her to be its 2020 Composer of the Year; in 2019 the League of American Orchestras awarded her its highest honor, the Gold Baton. Tower is the first composer chosen for a Ford Made in America consortium commission of sixty-five orchestras. Leonard Slatkin and the Nashville Symphony recorded *Made in America* in 2006 (along with *Tambor* and *Concerto for Orchestra*).

In 2008 the album collected three Grammy awards: Best Contemporary Classical Composition, Best Classical Album, and Best Orchestral Performance. Nashville's latest all-Tower recording includes *Stroke*, which received a Grammy nomination for Best Contemporary Classical Composition.

In 1990 she became the first woman to win the prestigious Grawemeyer Award for *Silver Ladders*, a piece she wrote for the St. Louis Symphony where she was Composer-in-Residence from 1985-88. Other residencies with orchestras include a 10-year residency with the Orchestra of St. Luke's (1997-2007) and the Pittsburgh Symphony (2010-11). She was the Albany Symphony's Mentor Composer partner in the 2013-14 season. Tower was co-founder and pianist for the Naumburg Award-winning Da Capo Chamber Players from 1970-85. She has received honorary doctorates from Smith College, the New England Conservatory, and Illinois State University. She is Asher B. Edelman Professor in the Arts at Bard College, where she has taught since 1972.

***Petroushskates* (1980)**

The title *Petroushskates* combines two ideas that are related to this piece. One refers to Stravinsky's *Petroushka* and the opening Shrovetide Fair scene which is very similar to the opening of my piece.

The celebratory character and the busy colorful atmosphere of this fair provides one of the images for this piece. The other is associated with ice skating and the basic kind of flowing motion that is inherent to that sport. While watching the figure skating event at the recent winter Olympics, I became fascinated with the way the curving, twirling, and jumping figure are woven around a singular continuous flowing action. Combining these two ideas creates a kind of carnival on ice — a possible subtitle for this piece.

Dean Wibe is a cellist and composer from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He began playing in the public school classroom and first studied cello privately with Dianne Platte and Hannah Holman. He recently received his Bachelor of Music at the University of Iowa where he studied with Professor Anthony Arnone. Dean is an avid chamber musician and is passionate about the performance of contemporary music. As a member of the Kaizen Piano Trio, Dean has competed in the national MTNA chamber music competition and recently premiered *Forms in Waves* by Giovanni Porfirio. He is currently studying cello with Dr. Eli Lara while completing a Master of Music in Cello performance at the University of Missouri, where he performs with the Mizzou New Music Ensemble. Dean has composed for HUB New Music, the Mizzou New Music Ensemble, and studies composition with Utku Asuroglu and Stefan Freund.

***Entity* (2025)**

Entity is my first piece for an ensemble of this size, and my first time writing for many of these instruments. In this piece I have experimented with the timbral possibilities of our ensemble, often through extended techniques. The primary element I began composing with is a flute technique that I, with the help of our talented flautist, Kyrsten, have adapted from Salvatore Sciarrino's *L'opera per flauto - Canzona di ringraziamento* (1985). The colorful effect of this technique is imitated in various ways across the ensemble. The title *Entity* evokes the nature of the music itself; an ambiguous being that comes in and out of focus, an uncanny presence we feel and hear. It is something unsettling but entrancing, once you see it you cannot look away.

Carolyn Chen has made music for supermarket, demolition district, and the dark. Her work reconfigures the everyday to retune habits of our ears through sound, text, light, and movement. Her studies of the guqin, a Chinese zither traditionally played for private meditation in nature, have informed her thinking on listening in social spaces.

Recent projects include an audio essay on a scream and commissions for AMOC, Klangforum Wien and the LA Phil New Music Group.

Chen's work has been presented in 25 countries and supported by the American Academy in Berlin, the Fulbright Program, ASCAP Foundation's Fred Ho Award for work that "defies boundaries and genres", Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans, Stanford University Sudler Prize, and commissions from Green Umbrella, MATA Festival, and impuls Festival. Her pieces have been performed at venues including Carnegie Hall, the Kitchen, Disney Hall (Los Angeles), Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Guggenheim Bilbao, and the Institute for Provocation (Beijing). Chen has been fortunate to work with ensembles including SurPlus, Southland, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Aperture, andPlay, loadbang, koan, Dog Star Orchestra, The Reader's Chorus, Pamplermousse, Chamber Cartel, orkest de ereprijs, S.E.M., red fish blue fish, Wild Rumpus, and The Syndicate for New Arts.

Writings and recordings are available in *MusikTexte*, *Experimental Music Yearbook*, *New Centennial Review*, *Leonardo Music Journal*, *Quakebasket*, and *the wulf*. Chen earned a Ph.D. in music from UC San Diego, and an M.A. in Modern Thought and Literature and B.A. in music from Stanford University. She lives in Los Angeles.

***Bírria* (2021)**

In considering how to make an Angeleno companion piece to the Capricorn movement of Stockhausen's *Tierkreis*, I thought about how goats intersect with life in L.A. I live in Highland Park, a largely Mexican-American neighborhood since the white flight of the mid-1960s, following the completion of the Arroyo Seco parkway in 1940.

Despite the rapid gentrification of the 2000s, this neighborhood is still home to numerous purveyors of Mexican cuisine, which can include *bírria*, a stew from Jalisco traditionally made with chili-pepper-based goat meat adobo. In Spanish, “*bírria*” describes things without value or quality. The dish's name originates with the Conquistadors who, facing an overpopulation of tough and odiferous goats that they did not know how to eat, gave them to the native people, who marinated the meat in indigenous styles and cooked it underground, with delicious results.

This piece takes inspiration from this origin story and the cooking process of *bírria* – measuring dry ingredients, blending the salsa, marinating, and pressure-cooking. I imagined the gradually unwinding music box spinning into the whirling of a blender.

I also had in mind 'La Negra' and other examples of son jalisciense, and songs by Lila Downs, Natalia LaFourcade, and Mexican Institute of Sound. Though the setting and ensemble here is of course very different, I tried to capture the same sense of joy in this music.

Christopher Dietz composes music inspired by a wide variety of sources, both real and conceptual. Poetry, sound as sculpture and color, how toddlers play, deep time and the cosmos, rhythm as geometry, religion and politics, animal behavior, and the music of others are a few of the subjects that have informed his musical imagination. A similarly diverse approach to the creation of each new piece has resulted in a collection of works distinct in their surface features yet bound together by a common vitality, nuanced palette, and a commitment to engaging with others.

His music has been performed by contemporary music ensembles including Alarm Will Sound, Decoda, Ensemble Échappé, NODUS, The Orchestra of the League of Composers, Ogni Suono, Duo Scorpio, The East Coast Contemporary Ensemble, and Trio Kavak as well as traditional ensembles such as L'Orchestre de la Francophonie, The San Jose Chamber Orchestra, The Orange County Symphony, The Toledo Symphony, and many university ensembles.

Christopher holds degrees from the University of Michigan, the Manhattan School of Music, and the University of Wisconsin. He was previously on the faculty at the Oberlin Conservatory and is currently an associate professor of composition at Bowling Green State University in Ohio.

***Signal* (2014)**

Signal was commissioned by Andrew Pelletier and premiered at the 46th International Horn Symposium in August 2014 (Imperial College, London). The piece explores the horn's broad range of expression, from its origins as a utilitarian signaling device to its refined capacity for sonic color and nuance. Throughout the piece, the horn is supported with drums and cymbals, with which it shares a similar evolutionary path.

Marco Alunno was born in Italy. In his country, he earned a diploma both in piano and composition and a university degree in Italian Literature (specialization in History and Aesthetic of Cinema). Afterwards, he completed his Ph.D. in Composition at the Eastman School of Music (Rochester, NY) where he served as an instructor in composition and Italian cinema. At the present he is professor of Composition and Theory at the Universidad EAFIT (Medellín, Colombia) where he works also as a researcher in music and new technologies.

He is author of several articles in Italian, English, and Spanish on film music, composition, and subjects related to sound and technology published, among others, in the *Journal of New Music Research*, *Leonardo*, *Applied Acoustics*, *Computer Music Journal*, etc. He is also a passionate programmer, especially of music applications for Android.

***Whirlwind II* (2024)**

Whirlwind II is the orchestration and sound expansion of a previous piece, *Whirlwind*, for flute and electronics. Both pieces stem from the narrative development of a seminal Colombian novel (*The Vortex*) whose 100th anniversary of its publication was celebrated in 2024. However, the derivation is so loose that any reference to the novel is merely anecdotal, and no knowledge of it is needed for a better understanding of the music. In the ensemble version, most of the original flute part persists throughout the short five sections of the piece, but the whole electronics is redistributed and reinterpreted in terms of acoustic instruments and their sound possibilities. Also, several aspects of the music have been released from their attachment to a somewhat stricter rhythmic grid of the pre-recorded tracks, making the music more flexible and... *windy*.

Nate Leslie is a composer, educator, and saxophonist whose work challenges traditional notions of “art music.” With a focus on breaking down the barriers of prestige often associated with classical music, Leslie seeks to create music that is thought-provoking yet approachable, inviting listeners to engage without pretense.

His compositions explore the interplay between humor, drama, and energy, presenting fresh perspectives that question convention while celebrating accessibility. As an undergraduate at the University of Missouri, Leslie studies composition with Stefan Freund, Utku Asuroglu, and Bonnie McLarty. His catalog spans works for a variety of ensembles, including solo instruments, chamber groups, and larger configurations, reflecting his dedication to crafting meaningful connections between performers and audiences.

An active performer, Leslie serves as principal saxophonist in the University’s Wind Ensemble and regularly collaborates with peers in chamber settings. His dual role as composer and performer informs his work, fostering a deep understanding of both the technical and expressive aspects of music-making.

Through his music, Leslie aspires to bridge the gap between the intellectual and the accessible, redefining the ways we experience and appreciate classical music in contemporary contexts.

His evolving artistry reflects a commitment to innovation and inclusivity, ensuring his music resonates with a wide and diverse audience.

Go Ahead and Call me a Bureaucrat, but Let's Talk About Who Got the Bigger Christmas Bonus (2025)

Bureaucrat blends elements of funk, jazz, electronic, and contemporary music to create an extreme dramatization of a day in a mundane workplace.

7:30 a.m. - “don't talk to me until i've finished this coffee”

9:30 a.m. - “daydream”

10:30 a.m. - “incoming call”

11:45 a.m. - “printer jam”

12:30 p.m. - “my wonderful husband Jorge who i am so incredibly thankful for”

1:30 p.m. - “afternoon meeting”

2:15 p.m. - “do you think Todd could eat those sour cream & onion chips a little louder?”

3:30 p.m. - “clocking out”

As I am reaching the latter half of my undergraduate education, many of my peers are getting office jobs. This piece acts as a regaling of the humorous stories and complaints shared by my friends about their work lives, as well as an homage to the workplace comedy.

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

Henry Rusten Sheldon Commission Premiere, St. Louis

7:30 PM, Thursday, March 6, Sheldon Concert Hall

Premiere of MU Student Works by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis

7:30 PM, Wednesday, March 26, Touhill

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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