



School of Music  
University of Missouri

2025-2026 Series | Faculty Recital

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# **Megan Arns, percussion**

# **XUAN, visual art**

**A collaboration with the Kinds of Kings Composer Collective**

**Sunday, September 7 • 5:00 PM • Sheryl Crow Hall**

## Program

**concertina for plastic bags and marine life ..... Dylan Trần**

**These Little Teeth ..... Andrew M Rodriguez**

**voices on the surface ..... Akari Komura**

**[Minus One] ..... Maria Kaoutzani**

**Please explain it to me <3 ..... Gemma Peacocke**

*All five works on this evening's program are world premiere performances commissioned by the Curators of the University of Missouri through School of Music faculty member Megan Arns. The commissions were funded by the Mizzou New Music Initiative (MNMI) and workshops were supported by MU's Research Council and the Arts & Humanities Research and Creative Works Fellows Program.*

### **Special Thanks:**

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Digital Storytelling / Visual Studies – projectors

Xuan, Gemma, Maria, Andrew, Akari and Dylan – dream collaborators

Steven Schick – inspiration and mentorship

Bill Kalinkos – partnership and holding down the fort

## **Program Notes:**

### **concertina for plastic bags and marine life by Dylan Trần**

Trash Bags = Consumerism

We can not continue to propagate this capitalistic culture of rampant consumerism and preserve the habitability of our planet. Large corporations are leading huge marketing efforts to make their practices seem “greener,” but the truth is that just 100 of all the hundreds of thousands of companies in the world have been responsible for 71% of the global GHG emissions that cause global warming since 1998 (The Carbon Majors Database).

The dissonant hypocrisy of “green marketing” is conveyed in two different ways in this piece:

1. The use of trash bags as an instrument — the idea that corporations committing climate catastrophes have a place in art. Instead of bowing out and amending their ways, they try to stay front and center, the stars of the climate crisis, for the sake of marketing.
2. Imitative and polyrhythmic writing for the trash bags — conveys the disingenuousness of “green marketing.” Though they try to present as green via aesthetic imitation of nature, ultimately their actions don’t align with that messaging.

Cascading failures = a failure in a system of interconnected parts in which the failure of one or few parts leads to the failure of other parts, growing progressively towards total system failure. Such a failure may happen in many types of systems, including power transmission, computer networking, finance, transportation systems, organisms, the human body, and ecosystems.

Cascading failures are essentially chain reactions. Thus, each natural sonic element in the piece is subject to the same chain of effects in the same order. A canon of effects:

1. Reverb — the isolation of an element as its adjacent organisms die off.
2. Distortion — an element being pushed beyond its natural capacity.
3. Bit Crusher — a more extreme form of distortion, the element literally begins to break down.
4. Low pass filter — the high frequencies are continuously removed from each element until all that’s left is a low, inaudible rumble of what once was.

### **voices on the surface by Akari Komura**

Voices on the surface of a tree inscribed with a jagged solar cycle.  
You try to swallow fresh oxygen.

Voices on the surface of fire; biting the oxygen.  
You radiate the odor of iron, vibrating with the asteroids.

Voices on the surface of the earth scented it with sulfur.  
You erode into silent layers of sediments.

Voices on the surface of an ore chanting with water.  
The dryland shudders.

Voices on the surface of water swooshed by a solar wind.  
You melt and evaporate into salty air.

### **Please explain it to me <3 by Gemma Peacocke**

Well actually, some things don’t need explaining.

## About the Composers:



**Dylan Trần** (b. 1994) is an artist based between Vietnam and the U.S. He views music as a form of world-building, poignantly evoking nuanced atmospheres in a way that is both intimately expressive and boldly energetic. His compositional practice strikes a balance between welcoming and challenging, having curated a unique musical language that is equally rewarding to performers and audiences.

Born in a rural parish hospital, one of eleven children, and raised in a double-wide trailer in central Louisiana, Dylan's first dream was to be a rockstar / actor / tennis pro / Pokémon-trainer. At 14 years old, he put those dreams on hold and joined his high school choir. Since then, he has been commissioned by HULU, the Oxford American Journal, TAAF, and more. He has conducted and coached ensembles throughout the U.S. and in Europe and has volunteered for music programs across the country and in Vietnam. His pieces have been performed all over the U.S. and his arrangements have been performed in Australia, Austria, Canada, Finland, India, and the U.K.

Prioritizing ethical, equitable community engagement and well-being, Dylan insists on leaving a positive, tangible impact wherever he works. He has developed and is constantly refining an artistic practice that involves the ongoing redistribution of funds, resources, and recognition.



**Andrew Rodriguez's** (b. 1989) interest in music began with stints as the guitarist for various metal/hardcore bands as a teenager. This path culminated with three full-length albums as one of the main songwriters for the hardcore/punk band Close Your Eyes on Chicago-based label, Victory Records.

Rodriguez's history as a performer sculpts the core of his musical identity. Having spent over three years touring the country, Andrew's passion for the DIY scene continues to guide his creativity. The embedded experiences of performing intense and passionate music night after night have led to a musical language that is both raw and dramatically expressive. His music combines a personal history and love of indie rock with a traditional education in composition, and is often expanded upon with the use of live electronics.

Andrew also regularly works collaboratively on projects as a music producer. Having been familiar with the techniques and processes of a studio production during his time in Close Your Eyes, he began offering collaborative guidance to other artists as they prepared to record their own studio projects. As a producer, Andrew's primary goal is to help the artist achieve their ideal vision for their project. Andrew's inspirations vary widely, ranging from jazz, hip hop, and rock

to contemporary and traditional classical genres. This wide spectrum of influences pushes him to explore truly unique and engaging approaches to songwriting and production.

Having built his career on writing and performing music with close friends and collaborators, Andrew intends to continue this practice by developing long-lasting relationships with artists and musicians that share the same vision of collaboration. He is an alum of the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music and a former Bouman Fellow for Kinds of Kings' 2019-20 residency at National Sawdust. Andrew holds degrees from Hardin-Simmons University and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.



**Akari Komura** (b.1996) is a Japanese composer-vocalist. She grew up in Tokyo and spent her teenage years in Jakarta, Indonesia. From an early age, Akari has been involved in performing arts through playing the piano, singing, and dancing modern ballet. Her interest in somatic practice and embodied consciousness is central to her creative process. Akari imagines her score as an invitation for the performers to contemplatively engage with listening and soundmaking. She is interested in curating a participatory performance space that invites a community of performers and audience for a collective and ritualistic act of listening and

soundmaking. Akari's artistic exploration is oriented towards heightening awareness and transforming our perception of the sonic environment.

Her breadth of work spans chamber ensemble, multimedia electronics, and interdisciplinary collaborations with dancers, visual artists, and architects. The integration of visual-text elements has been important for her to cultivate a multi-sensorial experience with sound. Akari's works have been presented at the Atlantic Music Festival, Composers Conference, International Composition Institute of Thailand, New Music Gathering, Nief-Norf, MATA Festival, Montreal Contemporary Music Lab (Canada), Penn State New Music Festival, soundSCAPE (Italy), soundpedro, and VU Symposium.

Recent highlights include receiving a commission by the Kinds of Kings as a 2020 Bouman Composer Fellow and premiered by the Rubiks Collective. In 2023 spring, Akari was selected by American Composers Orchestra EarShot Reading to work with The Next Festival of Emerging Artists on a new string orchestra piece, *Inhabited by air*. Akari holds an M.M. in Composition from the University of Michigan and a B.A. in Vocal Arts from the University of California, Irvine. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Composition at the University of California San Diego.



**Maria Kaoutzani** is an Oklahoma-based composer from Limassol, Cyprus. Recent projects include a concerto for the Grammy-winning ensemble Eighth Blackbird and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, a residency at Hartford Women Composers Festival in 2023, a National Sawdust residency in the 2019-20 season, Pomegranate Institute and UCLA's Notes on Napkins, Hocket ensemble's #What2020SoundsLike, and residencies at Anderson Center for the Arts and Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild, among others. Past collaborators include Kyle Grimm, Megan Arns, Nois saxophone quartet, Imani Winds, Chartreuse, Rubiks Collective and Longleash trio.

Maria teaches composition at Oklahoma University. She holds a PhD in music composition at the University of Chicago, a master's degree from New York University and a bachelor's degree from the University of York. She is a founding member of composer collective Kinds of Kings.



**Gemma Peacocke** is a New Zealand-born, New Jersey-based composer whose music transcends boundaries between chamber, orchestral, art-pop, and electronic forms. Raised in Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand, she studied at Victoria University of Wellington and the New Zealand School of Music before moving to the United States.

Peacocke's music frequently explores themes of identity, haunting, folklore, and feminism, combining contemporary classical elements with electronics and experimental techniques. Her debut album, *Waves & Lines* (2019, New Amsterdam Records), interweaves landays—Afghan female folk poems—from Eliza Griswold's *I Am the Beggar of the World* into a haunting song cycle performed widely across venues such as New York's Roulette Intermedium and National Sawdust, the Kennedy Center, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, and Melbourne Recital Centre.

Peacocke is a vocal advocate for under-heard voices. She co-founded the Kinds of Kings composer collective with Shelley Washington and Maria Kaoutzani in 2017, an ensemble praised by *The New Yorker* for their bold representation of diverse composers and immersive performances; they premiered their *Nine Mothers* concerto with the Cincinnati Symphony and eighth blackbird in 2022.

Peacocke lives in an old farmhouse in a tiny town in central New Jersey with her family and a gnarly, gnashy standard poodle named Mila, who remains her most devoted (and opinionated) fan.

## About the Performers:



**Xuan** is a new media artist, filmmaker, and pianist working at the intersection of music, visual art, and technology. A trained classical pianist with a passion for visual music, she actively develops innovative, cross-disciplinary projects that broaden the scope of music and performance. Driven by themes such as femininity, power, alienation and multicultural identity, her work encompasses abstract scenography, experimental animation, music videos, narrative documentaries, interactive installations, and large scale projection mapping.

She has collaborated with Glenn Kotche, Pierre Jodlowski, Nina Shekhar, Annika Socolofsky, Ben Wendel, Alexi Kenney, Bec Plexus, Eunbi Kim, and GRAMMY® Award-winning ensembles Eighth Blackbird, Third Coast Percussion, and Akropolis Reed Quintet among others — which have led to performances at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Smithsonian Museum of Art, Constellation, SFJAZZ, Le Poisson Rouge, Zürich Design Biennale 2019, Ad Astra Music Festival 2020, Sound Forms Hong Kong 2021, the Mizzou International Composers Festival 2021, CAP UCLA's Tune In Festival 2021, the MATA Festival x Found Sound Nation 2023.

In recent seasons, her close partnership with composers and performers have produced feature-length multimedia concerts including *High Heart* in 2023 with GRAMMY-nominated jazz saxophonist Ben Wendel which premiered at the Logan Center for the Arts in Chicago, *it feels like a dream* in 2022 with pianist Eunbi Kim at the Baryshnikov Art Center (BAC) in New York, *Ex Machina* in 2023-25 with pianist Clara Yang at the Process Series at UNC Chapel Hill, and *Shifting Ground* in 2024 with violinist Alexi Kenney at BAC and the 2024 The Ojai Music Festival.

Of the belief that art is for everyone, Xuan's evolving practice explores collective experiences through art in public spaces. In 2021, she was invited by Art on the MART to create projections in collaboration with Eighth Blackbird and composer Michael Gordon for the 2.5-acre façade of the Merchandise Mart, the largest permanent digital installation in the world. Each night from July to September, *The Light of the Dark* lit up the riverwalk to the delight of thousands of locals and tourists alike, including those passing by on kayaks, bikes or catching a glimpse from the "L" train.

A passionate educator, she has held workshops at The New School and given lectures at Carnegie Mellon University, CU Boulder, USC, Rochester Institute of Technology, ASU, ESM, and OSU. Xuan is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music under the tutelage of Dr. Nelita True, and has studied Media Spaces at the BTK University of Art and Design in Berlin, DE. She is honored to be a fellow of OneBeat 9 and the Blackbird Creative Lab 2018.





**Megan Arns** is a percussionist, ethnomusicologist, and educator with a diverse set of skills and a driven passion for her craft. She is an Associate Professor and has served as Director of Percussion Studies at the University of Missouri-Columbia since 2014 and is a recent recipient of the Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Research and Creative Activity. Before coming to Mizzou, Megan held faculty positions at Mansfield University and at the National Music Conservatory in Amman, Jordan, where she was also principal percussionist and timpanist of the Amman Symphony Orchestra. During the summers, she is a section member of the New Hampshire Music Festival and regularly performs as a substitute with the St. Louis Symphony.

Megan is an advocate for the creation of new music, co-commissioning and premiering over 100 works both as a soloist and as a member of two contemporary chamber groups: the [Switch~ Ensemble] – an electroacoustic ensemble based out of New York City, and DRAX – a saxophone and percussion duo in residence at Mizzou. DRAX's debut CD *chaos+contemplation* was released on Ravello Records in 2022 and features four commissions of electroacoustic works. Her current solo project features five new commissions in collaboration with the Kinds of Kings Composer Collective. Megan has performed on four continents at venues such as the Kennedy Center, Millennium Park, Smithsonian Institution, and the Percussive Arts Society International Convention.

Megan received her D.M.A. in Percussion Performance & Literature and M.A. in Ethnomusicology at the Eastman School of Music, M.M. in Percussion Performance and Certificate in World Music from Florida State University, and B.M in Percussion Performance at Truman State University where she was recognized as a Presser Scholar. She currently serves on the Board of Directors and as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President on the Executive Committee of the Percussive Arts Society. Megan endorses Vic Firth Sticks & Mallets, Pearl/Adams Musical Instruments, Black Swamp Percussion, Remo Drumheads, and Zildjian Cymbals.