



Mizzou New Music Initiative
University of Missouri

University of Missouri School of Music
2025-2026 Series

Mizzou New Music Ensemble

Hanna Noh, *Flutes*

Sophie Browning-Brodack, *Clarinets*

Emily Aponte, *Horn*

Juliana Felipe Vieira, *Violin*

Mason Murphy, *Cello*

Cheek Kai “Mon” Jeong, *Percussion*

Daniel Noonan, *Percussion*

Ryan Kee, *Piano*

Jinhong Yoo, *Piano*

Stefan Freund, *Director*

Bill Kalinkos, *Guest Conductor and Clarinet*

John Orfe, *Guest Composer and Piano*

Wes Warnhoff, *Clarinet*

7:30 PM, Sunday, December 7, 2025
Sheryl Crow Hall

Program

Near Distance Chen Yi

Piezas Características Roberto Sierra

I. *Segundas Menores*

II. *Segundas Mayores*

III. *Breve Interludio en Curatas*

IV. *Terceras Mayores*

V. *Terceras Menores*

*Anchor** Henry Rusten

Leviathan John Orfe

*Four Ozark Fable Sketches** John Orfe

I. *Monarch's Theme*

II. *Monster the First: MoMo*

III. *Monster the Second: Spooklights*

IV. *Monster the Third: Ozark Howler*

*World Premiere

Program Notes

***Near Distance* (1988)**

Near Distance is a sextet, subtitled “lost in thought about ancient culture and modern civilization.” It expresses my thinking about the parallels and contrasts between the East and the West. *Near Distance* takes us through a journey that covers thousands of miles and thousands of years. Contrasting moments of dense, busy activity with sparse, haunting lines, I try to bridge the gap between the timeless history of my homeland and the ever-changing, energetic life in the modern society.

The work was originally written under the request of professor Jacob Druckman, for a composition workshop at the Aspen Music Festival. It is dedicated to his memory with admiration and respect.

—Chen Yi

***Piezas Características* (1996)**

The ambitious *Piezas Características* from 1992 gathers together bongos and congas with bass clarinet, trumpet, percussion, piano, violin and cello. Even if it recalls Amadeo Roldan's “Ritmicas” experiments of another era, or even Leonard Bernstein's multicultural accessibility in “Fancy Free,” these five marvelous pieces taken together form perhaps Sierra's most distinctive chamber work. “I confess that I don't know Roldan,” says Sierra, “but I suspect the we all draw from the same sources - same with Bernstein. Latin American and especially Caribbean music has been a major force in American concert music as well as in popular music.” Each of the five *Piezas Características* explores a different interval which provides the basic material for the harmonic and melodic structures.

The first, "*Segundas Menores*," deals with minor seconds; the next, "*Segundas Mayores*," with major seconds "*Breve Interludio en Curatas*" offers a perfect fourth, if briefly, and serves as a breaking point. "*Terceras Mayores*" and "*Terceras Menores*" deal with the major and minor thirds respectively. The augmented fourth is used in all pieces as a common denominator. All five have in common Sierra's gift for capturing the listener's attention through a sense of arrhythmic vitality that is impossible to ignore.

***Anchor* (2025)**

During the composition process for my piece *Anchor*, my main focus was to emphasize the drum set part throughout the piece. Oftentimes, new music pieces for chamber ensembles with percussion, such as the Mizzou New Music Ensemble, contain more atmospheric and textural percussion rather than more driving and rhythmic percussive sounds. I wanted to defy these norms by utilizing a drum set to create a driving groove and rhythmic force throughout the piece. These drum set figures are accompanied by thunderous harmonic and melodic figures to create a dense tumultuous texture which is interspersed with more thin and whispery textures with some improvisatory figures. The melodic and harmonic themes throughout the piece are developed and showcased in numerous different ways through the use of these varying textures. The differing sections melded with the driving force of the drum set create a result that explores a multitude of contrasting musical worlds.

—Henry Rusten

***Leviathan* (2011)**

Leviathan, a concert allegro for two clarinets and piano, takes its title from the sea monster described in the Book of Job, Chapter 41. The immense and fearsome power of the beast is depicted through serpentine figures in the clarinets, percussive thrashings in the piano, and musical figures that is melodically and rhythmically mighty, mercurial, and wild.

Leviathan, of course, is also the famous political tract by Thomas Hobbes written in 1651 during the English Civil War. Hobbes advocated a strong central government as a necessary prevention against social chaos — what he called "the war of all against all." There is no political link between my piece and Hobbes' tract; there is a looser connection insofar as aspects of my current harmonic practice resemble aspects of Hobbes' social contract under a sovereign.

—John Orfe

Four Ozark Fable Sketches (2025)

Written expressly for the Mizzou New Music Ensemble, these movements are part of an original story in the manner of a folk tale whose characters hail from Missouri folk legends and jazz history. Imagine a *Bildungsroman* or Joseph Campbell's *Hero with 1000 Faces* by way of the Ozarks. The now-standard Pierrot sextet instrumentation of flute/piccolo, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, cello, piano and percussion newly expands to include a second pianist playing four-hand with the first, a second percussionist on drumset, and a trumpet soloist doubling on flugelhorn.

In this nonet, the trumpet represents our protagonist, named Monarch (after the Negro Leagues baseball team, the Kansas City Monarchs.) Monarch must travel alone from the Big City to the Bigger City, accompanied only by his horn. Before departing, the Wise One has counseled him to never surrender his instrument... for if he does, he will lose his very self. The way is fraught with dangers that take the form of three bona fide Missouri folk monsters: first the hulking, temperamental Bigfoot-like MoMo (short for "Missouri Monster") challenges Monarch to a game of riddles; next, a maze of colorful, psychedelic, siren-like Spooklights threatens to lull Monarch into a permanent drowsy stupor; and third, the feral, malevolent, mountain lion-like Ozark Howler gives Monarch the chase of his life.

For younger audiences, the monsters may be entertaining in themselves; for older ones, they may represent dangers that can separate any of us from our “horn.”

Monarch and his journey are my invention but the monsters he must outwit actually exist in Missouri folklore. It has been no small pleasure (or work!) to musically represent all of these characters. Monarch’s theme is intended to be noble and aspirant while those of his adversaries are riddled with threat and deception.

The music of each monster is inspired by a jazz standard subjected to levels of deconstruction and thematic / harmonic / rhythmic development — listeners are invited to guess any or all! There are a number of nods to classic jazz trumpet licks (except for “the lick”) that jazz aficionados will instantly recognize. The two Missouri-associated jazz legends with greatest influence on this piece are Count Basie and Clark Terry, representing Kansas City and St. Louis, respectively. Various jazz idioms are readily apparent throughout the sketches ranging from a Kansas City big band feel to a tiger rag.

My deep and profound thanks go to Dr. Stefan Freund, the talented players of the Mizzou NME, and the dedicated staff of Mizzou’s Composition program, all of whom have been wonderful collaborators every step of the way.

—John Orfe

About the Composers

Chen Yi (b. 1953) is a highly respected Chinese-American composer known for her innovative fusion of Chinese and Western musical traditions. Currently the Lorena Cravens/Millsap/Missouri Distinguished Professor at the UMKC Conservatory, she has held this role since 1998 and was recently named an Honorary Member of the International Society for Contemporary Music (2024). She is also a member of both the American Academy of Arts & Sciences and the American Academy of Arts & Letters.

Born in China, Dr. Chen earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Central Conservatory in Beijing before completing her Doctor of Musical Arts at Columbia University. Her composition mentors include Wu Zu-qiang, Chou Wen-chung, and Mario Davidovsky.

She has held positions as Composer-in-Residence and faculty member at major institutions including the Peabody Conservatory and continues to serve as a Visiting Professor in China.

Dr. Chen has received numerous awards, including fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, Fromm Foundation, and National Endowment for the Arts, as well as composition prizes from ASCAP, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and international competitions. Her works have been performed worldwide by prominent musicians and orchestras and appear on over 150 recordings.

She is deeply committed to cultural exchange through music, believing it to be a universal language for peace and understanding. Her recent commissions include premieres with Interlochen Arts Academy, the Juilliard Pre-College Program, Harvard's Radcliffe Choral Society, and the New Jersey Symphony, among others.

Roberto Sierra (b. 1953) is an internationally acclaimed composer whose music has been performed by many of the world's leading orchestras and ensembles over more than four decades. His works have appeared in the repertoire of prestigious groups such as the Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Houston, Minnesota, Dallas, Detroit, and New Mexico Symphonies, as well as major ensembles including the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Tonhalle-Orchestra Zürich, and numerous Spanish orchestras.

One of the milestones in his career occurred in 2002 when his orchestral piece *Fandangos* was performed at the inaugural concert of the world-renowned Proms in London by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, a broadcast heard across the UK and Europe. Over the years he has received major commissions for works including: his *Centennial Concert for Orchestra* written for The Philadelphia Orchestra; a Saxophone Concerto commissioned by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra for saxophonist James Carter; and other concertos, chamber works, and large-scale pieces such as *Sinfonía No. 3 – La Salsa*.

His work has been recognized with numerous honors. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2010 and to the American Academy of Arts & Letters in 2021. He has received major awards including the Tomás Luis de Victoria Prize (Spain's highest honor for a composer of Spanish or Latin American origin), the Academy Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts & Letters, and the Kenneth Davenport Prize for Orchestral Works. His recording of *Sinfonía No. 3 – La Salsa* received the Koussevitzky International Recording Award (KIRA) through Albany Records.

In addition, his compositions have been nominated multiple times for Grammys and Latin Grammys, and in 2021 he won the Latin Grammy for Best Classical Contemporary Composition for his *Sonata para Guitarra*.

Sierra's music is widely recorded and available on many respected labels, including Naxos, EMI, Albany, New World Records, Koch, New Albion, and others. His works range across genres, combining Latin American rhythmic vitality with classical sophistication and modern orchestral technique. Recordings of his works continue to be programmed and celebrated, reflecting his enduring impact on contemporary classical music globally.

Henry Rusten (b. 2004) is a junior undergraduate music composition and statistics double major student at the University of Missouri. He began playing music from an early age, starting piano lessons at age 5. He participated in choir, jazz band as a pianist, and orchestra as a violist at the high school and college level. He has had music commissioned and performed by multiple chamber ensembles, including the Mizzou New Music Ensemble and members of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra. He also has a future commission for the JACK quartet. His other composition achievements include winning the University of Missouri Composers Project Orchestra High School Division, which included a performance by the Columbia Civic Orchestra, winning 1st Place in the University of Missouri COMP Contest Jazz Category, and winning the Missouri Association for Jazz Education Jazz Band Composition Contest. Rusten's main goal in his composition is to develop complex musical concepts, like intricate rhythms and textures or complex harmonic structures, utilizing them in a way that appeals to a wide range of listeners. His composition instructors include University of Missouri faculty members Dr. Utku Asuroglu and Dr. Selim Göncü.

John Orfe (b. 1976) has fulfilled commissions from choirs, orchestras, and chamber ensembles including Alarm Will Sound, the American Guild of Organists, Illinois Wesleyan University, Two Rivers Chorale, Present Music, Ludovico, Duo Montagnard, Dez Cordas, the Music Institute of Chicago, the University of Ohio School of Music, the Diocese of Peoria, Illinois, and the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra. Ensembles that have performed his music include the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Spokane Symphony Orchestra, Mannes American Composers Ensemble, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, Dinosaur Annex, Firebird Ensemble, Holographic Ensemble, Altgeld Chamber Players, John Alexander Singers, the Bergamot Quartet, and new music ensembles at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, North Carolina School of the Arts, and Bowling Green State University.

He is a winner of a Jacob K. Javits Fellowship, the Heckscher Prize from Ithaca College, a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Otto Eckstein Family Fellowship from the Tanglewood Music Center, the William Schuman and Boudleaux Bryant Prizes from BMI, the Morton Gould Award from ASCAP, and first prizes in competitions held by NACUSA, the Pacific Chorale, Choral Arts Ensemble, Eastern Trombone Workshop, and New Music Delaware. His music has been performed on five continents and at national and regional conventions of such organizations as the American Choral Directors Association, North American Saxophone Alliance, Society of Composers, Inc., and Music at the Anthology. His original works and arrangements appear on the Centaur, Delos, and Nonesuch labels and his setting of Langston Hughes' *Fire!* has received three recordings and performances by dozens of choirs.

As pianist, Orfe has earned critical acclaim for his interpretations of five centuries of keyboard repertoire ranging from the canonic to the arcane. The core pianist and a founding member of the Grammy-Nominated new music ensemble Alarm Will Sound, Orfe is also pianist for Present Music in Milwaukee, WI, where he premiered and recorded the organ part of Raven Chacon's *Voiceless Mass*, which won the 2022 Pulitzer Prize in Music. Orfe has performed in Carnegie Hall, the Miller Theatre, Roulette, the World Financial Center, and Symphony Space in New York; Disney Hall, Mondavi Hall, and Hertz Hall in California; the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; and venues in Beijing, Nanning, Seoul, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Krakow, Amsterdam, Berlin, Bremen, Bolzano, Cork, Hamburg, London, Lima, San Jose, Quito, and São Paulo. His solo piano transcription of John Adams' *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* was hailed as "a knockout" by the Boston Globe and "breathtaking" by the San Francisco Chronicle, which also praised his "hypervirtuosic" performances of Conlon Nancarrow. He has recorded for over thirty albums on the Cantaloupe, Nonesuch, Kairos, Parma, and Albany Records labels. He serves as Organist at First United Methodist Church in downtown Peoria, IL, where he was appointed the Peoria Symphony Orchestra's first Composer-in-Residence. In addition, he began an appointment in 2025 as Music Director of the McDonough Choral Society in Macomb, IL.

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.

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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