

Mizzou New Music Initiative

Tuesday, January 20, 2026, 7:30 PM

Sinquefield Music Center 130

Alarm Will Sound

Sanaya Ardeshir

*Tower of Silence (2026)**

World Premiere

20'

Salvatore Sciarrino

Le voci sottovetro (1999)

16'

John Fitz Rogers

*Respiration (2021)**

30'

*Written for Alarm Will Sound

Personnel

Erin Lesser, Flutes

Toyin Spellman-Diaz, Oboe and English Horn

Bill Kalinkos, Clarinets

Elisabeth Stimpert, Clarinets

Michael Harley, Bassoon

Laura Weiner, Horn

Tim Leopold, Trumpet

Michael Clayville, Trombone

Chris P. Thompson, Percussion

Matt Smallcomb, Percussion

John Orfe, Piano and Keyboard

Courtney Orlando, Violin and Voice

Josh Henderson, Violin

Andrew Griffin, Viola

Stefan Freund, Cello

Miles Brown, Bass

Gideon Crevoshay, Voice

Benjamin Grow, Conductor

Alan Pierson, *Artistic Director*

Gavin Chuck, *Executive Director*

Peter Ferry, *Assistant Director of Artistic Planning*

Jason Varvaro, *Production Manager*

Cory Brodack, *Audio Engineer*

Tracy Mendez, *Development Manager*

Michael Clayville, *Director Of Marketing*

Bill Kalinkos, *Librarian*

Uday Singh, *Operations Manager*

Parker Johnson, *Audio Engineer*

Tower of Silence

The Dakhma refers to structures used for decomposition of the dead where vultures consume the flesh of cadavers during the funerary ritual customs of the Parsis. There are less than 200,000 Parsi community members remaining worldwide. They descended from Persian refugees who migrated to the Indian subcontinent during and after the Arab-Islamic conquest of Iran in the 7th century.

In many ways, vultures were intermediaries between life and death through this community practice - Parsis depended on the vultures for their last ritual on earth. However, the late 90s saw the sharpest decline of any bird species ever recorded. Owing to the widespread veterinary use of the painkiller diclofenac across the Indian subcontinent, cattle carcasses were poisoning the bird species. This species, who wait for the inevitable, for whom the source of sustenance has always been a given, have been on the verge of disappearance since the 1990s. This piece reimagines the Towers as portals where ancestors can be called, on not only to guide the souls of the deceased, but also to care for the spirit of the birds whose loss has come at an immense ecological cost.

— [*Sanaya Ardeshir*](#)

Le voci sottovetro

Transcribed from Gesualdo's vocal and instrumental works, this collection, [*Le voci sottovetro*](#) ("voices behind glass") rescores sixteenth century madrigals with the voice treated as though it is one of the instruments. The purpose of these transcriptions is to illustrate the belief that "old music is changing and can be filled with new life when touched by the spirit of modernity."

Respiration

In reflecting on the challenges posed by the year 2020, I was struck by how the idea of breath seemed to permeate so much: from a global respiratory pandemic, to the suffocation of George Floyd, to the ways in which democracy and our entire planet struggle to breathe. In addition to the common meaning of respiration, older meanings of respire include "to oppose or object to," "to recover hope, courage, or strength," and to "rest from toil or exertion." All these meanings seem appropriate to the time and find echoes in the piece. Performers play breath-like motives and phrases, and longer sections flow and ebb like deep inhalations and exhalations. The work also relies on the creativity and spontaneity of the performers and the conductor, and includes improvised solos and duos in which individuals can breathe more freely.

— [*John Fitz Rogers*](#)

Michael Harley, Alarm Will Sound bassoonist and Artistic Director of Southern Exposure New Music Series, interviewed John Fitz Rogers for [*Classical Post*](#). The two discuss the inspiration for the piece as well as the difficulties Rogers faced composing a work meant to be played over the internet, a situation where traditional forms of musical communication like visual cueing are challenging if not impossible.

Respiration premiered on February 19, 2021 as part of a livestream event presented by the University of South Carolina's Southern Exposure New Music Series. — [AWS](#)

Acknowledgments

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Sanaya Ardeshir's *Tower of Silence* is supported by the Matt Marks Impact Fund, an initiative that champions bold artistic vision and supports projects that challenge convention, embrace experimentation, and expand the boundaries of new music. Additional support provided by the Cheswatyr Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Alarm Will Sound

Alarm Will Sound is a 20-member band committed to innovative performances and recordings of today's music. They have established a reputation for performing demanding music with energetic skill. Their performances have been described as "equal parts exuberance, nonchalance, and virtuosity" by the *Financial Times of London* and as "a triumph of ensemble playing" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The *New York Times* says that Alarm Will Sound is "one of the most vital and original ensembles on the American music scene."

With classical skill and unlimited curiosity, Alarm Will Sound takes on music from a wide variety of styles. Its repertoire ranges from European to American works, from the arch-modernist to the pop-influenced. Alarm Will Sound has been associated since its inception with composers at the forefront of contemporary music, premiering pieces by Steve Reich, Meredith Monk, Tyshawn Sorey, David Lang, John Adams, Mary Kouyoumdjian, John Luther Adams, Marcos Balter, and Augusta Read Thomas among others. The group itself includes many composer-performers, which allows for an unusual degree of insight into the creation and performance of new work.

Alarm Will Sound collaborates with artists who work beyond the bounds of classical music. Alarm System and the Matt Marks Impact Fund are initiatives that have created cross-genre music with electronica artists Eartheater, Jlin, King Britt, and Rashad Becker; jazz composer-performer Dave Douglas; multimedia artists Mira Calix, Bakudi Scream, and Damon Davis; soundtrack composers Brian Reitzell and JG Thirlwell; producer Valgeir Sigurðsson, and singer-songwriter Alyssa Pyper.

Alarm Will Sound is the resident ensemble at the **Mizzou International Composers Festival**. Held each July at the **University of Missouri in Columbia**, the festival features eight world premieres by early-career composers. During the weeklong festival, these composers work closely with Alarm Will Sound and two established guest composers to perform and record their new work.

Alarm Will Sound may be heard on nineteen recordings, including *Land of Winter*, their most recent release featuring music of Donnacha Dennehy; *Omnisphere*, with jazz trio Medeski Martin & Wood; *For George Lewis | Autoschediasms*, one of The New Yorker's Notable Recordings of 2021; and the premiere recording of Steve Reich's *Radio Rewrite*. Their

genre-bending, critically acclaimed *Acoustica* features live-performance arrangements of music by electronica guru Aphex Twin. This unique project taps the diverse talents within the group, from the many composers who made arrangements of the original tracks, to the experimental approaches developed by the performers.

Alarm Will Sound has been presented by Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Miller Theatre, Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Bang on a Can's Long Play Festival, Disney Hall, Kimmel Center, Library of Congress, Annenberg Center, the Clarice, CAP UCLA, Caramoor, and the Warhol Museum. International tours include the Beijing Modern Festival, the Holland Festival, Sacrum Profanum, Moscow's Art November, St. Petersburg's Pro Arte Festival, and the Barbican.

The members of the ensemble have also demonstrated our commitment to the education of young performers and composers through residency performances and activities at Princeton University, the University of Michigan, University of Maryland, Shenandoah University, the Community Music School of Webster University, Cleveland State University, University of Colorado at Boulder, University of Missouri, Eastman School of Music, Dickinson College, Duke University, the Manhattan School of Music, Harvard University, New York University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

For more information and to join the mailing list, visit Alarm Will Sound's website at www.alarmwillsound.com.

Benjamin Grow

I'm a conductor based in New York, working at the intersection of classical music, community engagement, and whatever happens when you put ambitious performers in reverberant spaces. I'm the Principal Conductor of Chelsea Opera and Co-Director/Conductor of Ensemble Échappé, which lives happily in residence at the American Academy of Arts and Letters. I also lead the Southern Tier Symphony, where I get to conduct the big, loud orchestral classics I loved as a kid.

My conducting of Tom Cipullo's *Glory Denied* at Philadelphia's Prince Theater was called "expertly coached" and "ferociously powerful," and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* declared it the "most unforgettable opera" of the year — which I assume is good, because no one has clarified otherwise. I've worked with Opera Philadelphia, including a workshop with Frederica von Stade, led performances with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and appeared at Carnegie Hall with Ensemble Connect and at Trinity Wall Street, where the building is as old as some of the music played there.

I teach at The Juilliard School, guest conduct at places like the Manhattan School of Music and the Longy School of Music in Boston, and work with Project Music Heals Us, teaching composition to incarcerated students — a consistently inspiring experience. I've also given pre-concert talks and lectures at the 92nd Street Y and the Museum of Biblical Art, occasionally convincing audiences that physics and music theory are actually interesting.

I hold degrees from the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University and the Manhattan School of Music, which means I've spent many years explaining to relatives that, yes, conducting is a real job.

Alan Pierson

Alan Pierson has been praised as "a dynamic conductor and musical visionary" by *The New York Times*, a "conductor of monstrous skill" by *Newsday*, "gifted and electrifying" by the *Boston Globe*, and "one of the most exciting figures in new music today" by *Fanfare*. In addition to his work as artistic director of **Alarm Will Sound**, he has served as Artistic Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic, and guest conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra, L.A. Opera, Nationaltheater Mannheim, the London Sinfonietta, the Steve

Reich Ensemble, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the New World Symphony, and the Silk Road Project, among others. He is co-director of the Northwestern University Contemporary Music Ensemble, and has been a visiting faculty conductor at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, the Eastman School of Music, and at the Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity.

Passionate about using storytelling to bring listeners inside of contemporary music, he has led the creation of innovative musical experiences, like Alarm Will Sound's *1969* and *Soundbites* video series, and the Brooklyn Philharmonic's *Brooklyn Village* project. Mr. Pierson has collaborated with major composers and performers, including Yo Yo Ma, Steve Reich, Dawn Upshaw, Osvaldo Golijov, John Adams, John Luther Adams, Augusta Read Thomas, David Lang, Michael Gordon, La Monte Young, and choreographers Mark Morris, Christopher Wheeldon, Akram Khan, and Eliot Feld. Mr. Pierson received bachelor degrees in physics and music from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a doctorate in conducting from the Eastman School of Music. He has recorded for Nonesuch Records, Cantaloupe Music, Sony Classical, Oehms Classics, and Sweetspot DVD

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, February 5, 7:30pm

Sheldon Concert Series | \$\$

Sheldon Concert Hall, St. Louis, MO

Premiere of Trent Fitzsimmons' String Quartet

Sunday, March 8, 7:30pm

Missouri Composer's Project (MOCOP) | Free

Broadway Christian Church, Columbia, MO

Annual concert of award-winning compositions

Saturday, February 28, 7:30pm

New Music Ensemble Concert | Free

Sheryl Crow Hall, Sinequefield Music Center

MICF Alumnus Stephanie Berg Residency

Wednesday, April 8, 7:30pm

JACK Quartet Residency Concert | Free

Sheryl Crow Hall, Sinequefield Music Center

Premiere of student works, performed by the JACK Quartet

**NEW
MUSIC
CIRCLE**

**UPCOMING
EVENTS**

**DOORS 7PM
CONCERTS 8PM**

**67
SEASON
67**



**SARAH RUTH ALEXANDER
COPPICE
THE LUMINARY
SATURDAY, MARCH 28**



**MARCIA BASSETT &
SAMARA LUBELSKI
SCHLAFLY TAP ROOM (UPSTAIRS)
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7**



**JAMES BRANDON LEWIS TRIO
560 MUSIC CENTER
FRIDAY, APRIL 10**

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University of Missouri Department of Music (**Brian A. Silvey**, *Interim Director*)

MU College of Arts and Sciences (**Cooper Drury**, *Dean*)



STAFF

Stefan Freund, *Artistic Director*

Tiffany M. Skidmore, *Associate Director*

Jonathan Rainous, *Production Coordinator*

Lucy Urlacher, *Piano Technician*

*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.*

MICF

Join us for the [Mizzou International Composers Festival \(MICF\)](#) for more new music performances and world premieres, July 20-25, 2026.