



Mizzou New Music Initiative
University of Missouri

University of Missouri School of Music
2026-2027 Series

Mizzou New Music Ensemble

Hanna Noh, *Flutes*

Sophie Browning-Brodack, *Clarinets*

Emily Aponte, *Horn*

Zach Beran, *Trumpet*

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*

Stephanie Berg, *Guest Composer*

7:30 PM, Saturday, February 28, 2026
Sheryl Crow Hall

Program

Of Air Sweet and Water Deep Stephanie Berg

Arcane Fire Ethan Sanders

Interregnum Kevin Ernste

Conduit Robert Honstein

I. *Touch*

II. *Pulse*

III. *Send*

Program Notes

***Of Air Sweet and Water Deep* (2010)**

Of Air Sweet and Water Deep is written in honor of Dr. Peter Raven for his years of service to the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis. I drew inspiration for this piece from the Garden's Climatron. The moment I walked into it, I was inundated by the warm, heady air, soft sunbeams, and all-encompassing green. It was a world that was filled with bizarre plants in foreign shapes, both small and unimaginably huge, where the subtle strides proudly alongside the flamboyant. Terrestrial plants clung to rocks that surrounded murky pools with water so black that you might never find the bottom. I found the general atmosphere intoxicating and lush, and I instantly knew this would be the garden upon which I would base my piece.

The primary melody is built on a mosaic of small, independent motives that form a larger structure, just as the garden comprises many individual plants. It contains two pentatonic scales spaced one-half step apart, presenting something familiar and recognizable that is at the same time fresh and strange. The pentatonic scale is a feature of the music in many parts of Africa, which adds to the world-music feel of the piece. To symbolize the mixing of tropical plants from different continents in the Climatron, I used percussion instruments that have differing origins: South American bongos and congas, and the African balafon. As the piece progresses, the motives that make up the primary melody are separated and brought back together to develop in various ways. In the middle is a slow section, in which the long, lyrical melody and sparse instrumentation contrasts the more active and spontaneous section that precedes it. Gradually, this slow section gains energy while reintroducing the opening motives. These motives overtake the slow melody, building in intensity until the very end.

—Stephanie Berg

Arcane Fire (2024)

Arcane Fire was born one lonely night at the beginning of my second semester of college in January 2024, alone in a dorm room that was more akin to a padded cell. Unusually for my compositional process, *the first notes* I wrote became the first notes of the piece, harmonically rich, but lamenting, crying out. The piece was to originally stay in this melancholic atmosphere, but as I continued, the joys of music and sound began to exert itself in a way that challenged the piece's initial pessimism.

At the time of this piece's composition, I was deeply enchanted by the music of Charles Koechlin (1867–1950), and my piece reflected the (almost) mystical creative outpouring I was suddenly experiencing; this piece, thus, is dedicated to his memory. The free harmonic and orchestrational virtuosity of his music had proven then to be a beacon of light, allowing me to continue on my lifelong journey towards my sonic expression.

The title of the work draws on the philosophical, mystical, and alchemical symbolism of fire, which, across numerous world religions, cultures and myths, represents the way forward, progress, an interface to interact with higher powers. In Abrahamic mythology, *Yahweh* appears to Moses as a burning bush and commands him to liberate His chosen people from bondage; Prometheus, defying the classical Greek gods, steals fire from them and gifts it to humanity, to aid in their technological and cultural innovation; Zoroastrians practice holy fire (*ātar*) worship in dedicated temples (*ātashkade*), where they venerate it as the physical manifestation of *Ahura Mazda*.

I have since come to believe that my experience with the creation of *Arcane Fire* was guided by this same all-enveloping, intangible force, which allowed my creative process to bear fruit through divine intervention, as it has for many others throughout time immemorial.

—Ethan Sanders

***Interregnum* (2016)**

An “*interregnum*” is a period between successive rulers and a time of temporary authority.

My piece, *Interregnum*, was commissioned in 2016 as part of the US National Park Service's Centennial celebration. Its initial performances were within the Parks themselves: inside caves, near the ocean, in meadows, and on the mountain peaks of America's national treasures.

The piece is made up of two intersecting musics: one, a chamber piece using traditional instruments, and another made with bells and bowls of water—representing man and Nature respectively. Nature's music is timeless, and like the Parks themselves, envelops and transcends the chamber piece's humble, sometimes futile attempts at progress. The nested chamber piece layers references to the music of Chopin, Beethoven, Ives, and Paul Simon in an attempt to glorify our temporary reign.

Interregnum is therefore an invocation of humility in the face of Nature's grandeur. Man's entire existence can be roughly represented by the time needed to form a single glacier, our written culture by the life of one bristlecone pine. We are, it turns out, merely keepers at the watch and—if we can ever manage to acknowledge it—stewards of our own survival. These Parks were here long before us and they will be here still when we are gone.

—Kevin Ernste

***Conduit* (2014)**

Composed for Hand Eye, Sleeping Giant's evening length collaboration with Eighth Blackbird, *Conduit* takes its cue from an interactive sculpture by digital artists Zigelbaum and Coelho.

In their *640 by 480* the human body merges with computational process, facilitating simple copy/paste operations between sculptural elements. Set in three movements— *Touch*, *Pulse*, *Send* —*Conduit* evokes this man/machine synthesis. As bright waves of color explode from repeated sonic bursts, *Touch* compulsively repeats the gesture so fundamental to how we interact with our devices. In *Pulse*, long lines in the flute and cello move through a cloud of asynchronous repeated notes, evoking that instantaneous moment when data passes from finger to screen. Finally, *Send* completes the transfer. Action follows as the music energizes and accelerates, moving briskly to a wild conclusion.

About the Composers

Stephanie Berg (b. 1986), St. Louis composer, was heralded as a “promising new compositional voice,” and has since delivered a sizeable repertoire of music for ensembles large and small that has been consistently met with “enthusiastic ovations” worldwide and has been described as “fun, creative,” “vivid,” “unabashedly cinematic,” and possessing “a tremendous energy.” She has had pieces professionally recorded and released on five separate albums and counting. Her *Oboe Concerto* was performed at the 2024 International Double Reed Society Conference.

She has received countless performances with organizations such as the St. Louis Symphony, the Rochester Philharmonic, and the Arkansas Symphony, where she was named “Composer of the Year” for their 2016-2017 season. She has also been performed by Symphony Tacoma, the Broadway Bach Ensemble, the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra, the 484th Army Band, the Texarkana Symphony Orchestra, and a multitude of universities and conservatories, including Juilliard, Eastman, Oberlin, the Royal British Conservatoire, and Indiana University. Her music has also been performed on numerous chamber series as well, such as the St. Louis Symphony and Arkansas Symphony chamber series, and Chamber Project St. Louis.

Berg earned her master’s degree at the University of Missouri. She studied with W. Thomas McKenney, Stefan Freund, Paul Garritson, and Edward Dolbashian.

Ethan Sanders (b. 2005) is a composer and violinist from the St. Louis area. Beginning with his instrument at 12 years of age, he soon turned his attention toward creating music of his own. The premiere of his first work in the summer of 2018 marked the beginning of a compositional career that continues now, a career that has seen project requests and opportunities from ensembles including members of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, faculty from the Mizzou School of Music, the Mizzou New Music Ensemble, members of Ensemble Dal Niente, and the JACK Quartet. He currently studies composition at Mizzou with Utku Asuroglu, and has previously studied with Selim Göncü, all with the generous financial support of Dr. Jean Siquel.

Kevin Ernste (b. 1973) is a composer, performer, and teacher of composition and electronic music at Cornell University where he is Director of the Cornell Electroacoustic Music Center (CEMC). He did graduate work in Music Composition at the Eastman School of Music (MA, PhD). He is a founding member of the Cornell Avant-Garde Ensemble (CAGE). He was the Acting Director of the Eastman Computer Music Center and Co-director of the ImageMovementSound Festival.

His recent music includes *Nisi* [nee-see] (“Island” in Greek) for hornist Adam Unsworth released on Equilibrium Records, *Numina* for Brooklyn-based Janus Trio (flute, viola, harp) presented at the Spark Festival in MN, *Seiend* for brass quintet premiered by Ensemble Paris Lodron (Salzburg, Austria), *Roses Don’t Need Perfume* for guitarist Kenneth Meyer (gtr. and electronic sounds, 2009) recently presented by Dr. Meyer on a Hungary/Romania tour, a piece for saxophone and electronics called *To Be Neither Proud Nor Ashamed* (released on Innova Records), and *Birches* for viola with electronic sounds for John Graham, performed on Mr. Graham’s recent China tour (Beijing, Wuhan, Xiamen, Hong Kong), as well as at the Aspen Summer Music Festival. Mr. Graham presented *Birches* again in August 2011 at the International Computer Music Conference (ICMC) in Huddersfield, UK.

Ernste's recently commissioned works include *Chorale* for chamber ensemble and electronics (after Stucky on Purcell), *Palimpsest* for the JACK Quartet, and a half-evening-length work in progress for viola, percussion, and "unmanned" prepared piano.

Celebrated for his "waves of colorful sounds" (New York Times) and "smart, appealing works" (The New Yorker), **Robert Honstein (b. 1980)** is a New York-based composer of orchestral, chamber, vocal, and film music.

Ensembles and performers of Robert's music include the Albany Symphony, Dayton Philharmonic, Orchestre Symphonique du Mulhouse, Eighth Blackbird, Ensemble Dal Niente, Mivos Quartet, Del Sol Quartet, Argus Quartet, TIGUE, New Morse Code, Colin Currie, Theo Bleckmann, Doug Perkins, Michael Burritt, Karl Larson, and Ashley Bathgate, among others. Interdisciplinary collaborators include photographer Chris McCaw, projection designer Hannash Wasileski, graphic designer Laura Grey, and director Daniel Fish, and his music has also been choreographed by numerous dance companies including the National Ballet of Canada, the Alberta Ballet, and the Cincinnati Ballet. His music has been released by New Focus Records, Soundspells Productions, Cedille Records, and New Amsterdam Records. NPR included his piece *Conduit II. Pulse* from Eighth Blackbird's 'Hand Eye' as one of their top 100 songs of 2016. His debut film score, *The Real Charlie Chaplin*, was nominated for a News & Documentary Emmy in Outstanding Music Composition.

Robert is a founding member of the New York-based composer collective, Sleeping Giant. As an educator, Robert has taught composition seminars around the country and is Program Director of Concert Composition and Composition Faculty at NYU, Steinhardt.

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 ten University of Missouri graduate students under the direction of Stefan Freund, 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 Siquefield and the Siquefield Charitable Foundation. The Siquefields' 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 Siquefield Music Center, 573-884-2604) at least seven days in advance of the event. Events are subject to change.

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