Mizzou New Music Initiative
University of Missouri

University of Missouri School of Music
2026-2027 Guest Artist Series

TAK Ensemble

Laura Cocks, flute
Madison Greenstone, clarinet
Charlotte Mundy, voice
Modney, violin
Ellery Trafford, percussion

7:30 PM, Tuesday,
November 10, 2026
Sheryl Crow Hall

PROGRAM

Process ..... Dominick DeStefano

Deseo from ‘Love, Crystal and Stone’ ..... Ashkan Behzadi

O, Mercy ..... Aiden Spavale

INTERMISSION

At Midnight I Walked Into the Middle of the Desert .. Bethany Younge

學生哥 *(students) ..... Mon Ieong Cheok Kai*

Root and Vein from ‘Interbeing’ ..... Eric Wubbels

PROGRAM NOTES

Process (2026)

Making music is both frustrating and absurd.

– Dominick DeStefano

Deseo (2017) from *Love, Crystal and Stone*

Love, Crystal and Stone (2017) is a song cycle based on a collection of poems by Federico García Lorca. These poems were selected from their Farsi translations by the Iranian poet and translator, Ahmad Shamlou. The idea of this piece lies in its attempt to convey the poetic essence of Lorca's work through the music, sometimes diverging from a direct incorporation of the text. "Deseo" (meaning "desire" in Spanish) is the opening song of this song cycle, drawing loose inspiration from Lorca's poem, *Escula*.

School
The Teacher
What maiden will marry
the wind?
The Child
The maiden of all
our desires.
The Teacher
What does the wind
give the maiden?
The Child
Whirlwinds of gold.
A pileup of maps.
The Teacher
And she gives him what?
The Child
Her heart laid bare.
The Teacher
Tell me her name.
The Child
Her name is a secret.
(The window in the school
has a curtain of stars.)”

Translated by
Jerome Rothenberg

– Ashkan Behzadi

***O Mercy* (2026)**

O Mercy is a piece about a personal journey of mine, of my departure from religion, particularly Christianity. I wanted to capture that sense of hopelessness, anger, and depression as I battled my inner self to find what I truly did or did not believe to be true. My reasons for separating from the Christian faith are my own, and I have always found the topic difficult, and I wanted to make something that could express these feelings in a way that may help 'finalize' my spiritual journey. Though, this piece does not capture the whole story.

It focuses only on perhaps the first 'half' of this journey, the half where I brought myself away from religion all together. However, I am still re-orienting myself, and I feel that it would be unwise to speculate on things that are yet to come. Regardless, the music is focused on these ideas, set to text that I wrote myself, specifically for this piece. The text is as follows:

O Mercy, O mercy,
When I brush my hand to your skin,
An oak, not one, but many, ancient and vast,
Yet no heart to beat of life within.

Water rushes at my feet,
A thousand, million hands at my ankles.
I look to my reflection,
I cast but only a shadow.

O mercy, O mercy, When my back is torn from rocks below,
My body aches, my mind relents;
I stray from your promise,
I was away.

I thrash, I scream, I drown.
Branches pass me, my salvation;
My arms out-stretch, but yours refrain.
So close, so far; a torture, so far.

I'm cast upon the rocks.

I'm free, but from you, O mercy, I too am freed.

O Mercy, o mercy,

You forsake me,

O lord, you don't trust me.

I didn't deserve to die,

But only then I may yet live.

The text is heavily allegorical, comparing the feeling of hopelessness and being essentially 'abandoned' by a higher power to being dragged along a fast river current, being unable to control one's own movement and thus being unable to save themselves. Only at the end is the narrator 'saved,' but not through the actions of any benevolent outsider, but by essentially 'giving up' on waiting for someone to come save them and rather accepting that they are just along for the ride, even if it is rough. I will not explain further. There is also a reference to the River Styx, Tantalus, and System of a Down. I will not explain further.

– Aiden Spavale

***At Midnight I Walked Into the Middle of the Desert* (2019)**

Originally written for TAK ensemble (soprano, flute, bass clarinet, violin, and percussion), *At Midnight I Walked into the Middle of the Desert* uses text written by ensemble members Marina Kifferstein, Charlotte Mundy, and Laura Cocks. I originally sent members of TAK a fictional world from which a sonic landscape would eventually emerge. I then asked them to imagine themselves in this world and to send me two memories that surfaced, one false and one true, without telling me which was which. I chose one memory from each of them and used those as the primary text for the piece. From there, I then made an audio mockup for how I imagined the recorded text being spoken. Mundy, the soprano, reinvisioned my mockup with her own unique intonation.

– Bethany Younge

學生哥 *(students)* (2026)

學生哥 can be interpreted as “students.” It aims to portray the experiences of dropout students and blue-collar workers. This piece was written for the TAK ensemble in 2026.

I

人之初 性本善 性相近 習相遠

苟不教 性乃遷 教之道 貴以專

II

你哋呢班打工仔

日熬夜熬 頻頻撲撲 為啲咩?

為錢幣 為三餐 為頭家

日日拎住嗰鐵飯碗 去乞食

你開心咩?

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

I.

Everyone is born with a good and similar nature. Yet, this nature is gradually shaped by the environments in which we live, learn, and grow.

Without thoughtful guidance and education, their nature will drift and change. The essence of teaching is to cultivate the mind with dedication and concentration.

II.

YOUUUUUUU workers,

Burning yourselves out day after day, always hustling and scrambling.

For what?

For money? For food? For family?

Clinging to that iron rice bowl every day, just to survive.

Are you happy?

– Mon Ieong Cheok Kai

“Root and Vein” (2023) from *Interbeing*

Root and Vein (quintet as solo) is one movement drawn from the expanding intermedia folio of *Interbeing*. Inspired by the Buddhist-philosophical concept of the same name, *Interbeing* proposes a method of exploring the deep interdependence and interconnectedness of all things in the universe, localized through the medium of site-responsive performances involving tea, locally sourced food, cooking bowls, leaves and branches collected from outdoors, bells, performed sculptures, and chamber music. *Root and Vein* creates a microcosm of interdependence fanning out from the backbone of the percussion, where TAK improvises through kaleidoscopically shifting rhythmic tesselations.

– Eric Wubbels

ABOUT THE COMPOSERS

Originally from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, **Dominick DeStefano** (b. 2001) is a composer, musician, and music educator. As a composer, he has written works for a wide variety of ensembles, including orchestra, wind ensemble, big band, brass ensemble, and various chamber ensembles. His works have been recorded and performed by numerous groups including the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, Yarn/Wire, West Chester University Wind Symphony, the Criterions Jazz Ensemble, Network for New Music, and Constellation Men’s Ensemble.

In addition to his compositions, Dominick is active in the marching arts world as an arranger, sound designer, and educator, and he performs regularly as a bassoonist. Dominick holds a bachelor’s degree in composition from West Chester University and is currently pursuing his master’s degree at the University of Missouri. In his free time, Dominick enjoys the outdoors, biking, and hiking.

Ashkan Behzadi (b. 1983), a recipient of a 2025 Ernst von Siemens Composer Prize and a 2021–2022 Guggenheim Fellowship in Music Composition, is an Iranian-Canadian composer based in New York. He earned his DMA in composition at Columbia University, where he studied with Fred Lerdahl, George Lewis, and Georg Friedrich Haas. Prior to this, he graduated from McGill University with a bachelor's degree in composition and music theory, studying composition with Chris Paul Harman and Brian Cherney. Ashkan also holds a bachelor's degree in architecture from Tehran University, where, at the same time, he took composition and music theory lessons with Alireza Mashayekhi.

Ashkan's music has been commissioned and performed by various international performers and ensembles, including Ensemble Recherche, TAK Ensemble, Oerknal Ensemble, Ensemble Mosaik, Yarn/Wire, JACK Quartet, Grossman Ensemble, Divertimento Ensemble, Ensemble Alternance, Ensemble UnitedBerlin, Exaudi, Ekmeles, Wet Ink, Talea Ensemble, and le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne (NEM).

For the 2019–2020 academic year, Ashkan Behzadi joined the Department of Music at the University of Chicago as a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Center for Contemporary Composition. Since september 2023, he has been teaching at the Manhattan School of Music as a faculty member in Music Composition.

Aiden Spavale (b. 2006) is a second-year student at the University of Missouri, pursuing a degree in Music Theory and Composition. Originally from St. Peters, Missouri, he was actively involved in music from a young age, performing as a violist in local orchestras, including Webster University's Young People's Symphony Orchestra, with which he performed at Carnegie Hall. Aiden began composing in high school and has participated in programs such as Mizzou's Summer COMP and Webster University's Summer Composition Initiative, as well as their respective composition competitions. At the University of Missouri, Aiden continues to develop his musical voice as a member of the University Symphony Orchestra and as a composition student, refining his skills and expanding his artistic perspective.

Bethany Younge (b. 1989) is a composer and performer whose work interrogates the physicality of music-making, merging acoustic and electronic sound with the visceral presence of the performer. Her pieces often employ instrumental deconstruction, motion-activated technologies, sounding costumes, and choreographed movement to amplify the body's role in musical expression. Propulsive rhythms and uneven grooves collide with extended techniques, creating a tactile, kinetic sound world that teeters between control and abandon.

Currently Technical Director and Core Lecturer at Dartmouth College, Younge has been commissioned and performed by festivals worldwide, including National Sawdust (New Works Commission), Gaudeamus Muziekweek, Darmstadt International Summer Course, Resonant Bodies Festival, Long Beach Opera, and Frequency Festival. She has collaborated with ensembles such as JACK Quartet, TAK Ensemble, Collective Lovemusic, International Contemporary Ensemble, ASKO|Schönberg, Fonema Consort, and Ekmeles Vocal Ensemble, among others across the U.S. and Europe. Her awards include the American Academy of Arts and Letters Charles Ives Scholarship Award, a Fromm Commission, the Kanter/Mivos Prize, the Barcelona Mixtur Commission, a Stipend Prize from Darmstadt, the Dublin Sound Lab Commission, a Gaudeamus Award nomination, and a residency fellowship from the Civitella Ranieri Foundation.

Mon Cheok Kai Ieong (b. 2000) is from Macau, China, and currently pursuing his master's degree in both percussion and composition at the University of Missouri-Columbia (Mizzou) studying percussion with Dr. Megan Arns and Dr. Julia Montag and composition with Dr. Stefan Freund and Dr. Utku Asuroglu. He earned his bachelor's degree in music performance from Sam Houston State University, where he studied percussion under the guidance of Dr. John Lane, Dr. Brian Graiser, and Dr. Craig Hauschildt, and composition with Dr. Kyle Kindred.

Eric Wubbels (b. 1980) is a composer, pianist, and Executive Director of the Wet Ink Ensemble, a New York collective devoted to creating, promoting, and organizing adventurous contemporary music.

Wubbels's music has been performed throughout Europe, Asia and the U.S., by groups such as the Wet Ink Ensemble, Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin, ICE, Yarn/Wire, Ensemble Linea, Talea Ensemble, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, and the Mivos Quartet, and featured on festivals including the Zurich Tage für Neue Musik (2013), Metz Festival (2014), and MATA Festival (2012).

He has received commissioning grants from Chamber Music America's Classical Commissioning Program, ISSUE Project Room, the Jerome Foundation, New Music USA, and Yvar Mikhashoff Trust, and has been awarded residencies at the MacDowell Colony and Civitella Ranieri Center (Italy).

As a performer, he has given U.S. and world premieres of works by major figures such as Peter Ablinger, Richard Barrett, Michael Finnissy, Beat Furrer, George Lewis, and Mathias Spahlinger. He has recorded for hat[NOW]art, Spektral, Albany Records, Carrier, and Quiet Design.

He holds a D.M.A. and M.A. in composition from Columbia University, and a B.A. from Amherst College, and has held teaching positions at Amherst College (2009-11) and Oberlin Conservatory (2012-13). His principal teachers include Lewis Spratlan, Tristan Murail, and Fred Lerdahl.

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 NEW MUSIC INITIATIVE EVENTS

Tyondai Braxton: Extended Play
presented with Dismal Niche Arts
***also featuring* MU's Creative Improvisation Collective**
7:00 PM Friday, November 13, 2026
Sheryl Crow Hall

(Non-MU attendees may purchase tickets via Eventbrite)

New Music Ensemble with Landlocked Opera
***The Murderess* by Dr. Allison McIntosh**
***Snow Angel* by Dr. Bonnie McLarty**
featuring performances by
Christina Ray and Dr. Alexandra Schoeny
7:30 PM Sunday, December 6, 2026
Sinquefield Music Center 130

Visit newmusic.missouri.edu for a full list of events and opportunities!

Partner Organizations
University Concert Series • www.concertseries.org
Odyssey Chamber Music Series • www.odysseymissouri.org
Columbia Civic Orchestra • cco.missouri.org
We Always Swing Jazz Series • www.wealwaysswing.org
CAAM • www.ChoralArtsAllianceofMissouri.com
KMUC Classical 90.5 FM • www.kmuc.org

Requests for accommodations related to disability should be made to building coordinator, Susan Worstell, 206 Sinquefield Music Center, 573-884-2604 at least seven days in advance of event date. Events are subject to change.