



College of Music
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

MSU NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE

Musique 21

An Ode to Nature

Katherine Kilburn, conductor
Daniel Jaggars, guest conductor
Zongheng Zhang, guest conductor

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Monday, October 28, 2024
Fairchild Theatre, 7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

In focus (1999)	Dobrinka Tabakova (b. 1980)
Katherine Kilburn, conductor	
Sandbox (2020)	Viet Cuong (b. 1990)
E Mālama I Ke Kai (2019)	Michael-Thomas Foumai (b. 1987)
Zongheng Zheng, conductor	
Circling Back (2021)	Viet Cuong
Ash (2018)	Jennifer Jolley (b. 1981)
Daniel Jaggars, conductor	
Electric Aroma (Sinfonietta version) (2018)	Viet Cuong
Katherine Kilburn, conductor	

PROGRAM NOTES

In focus – The inspiration for this composition came from an idea of representing camera work (in cinematography) in slow motion, through music. There are two main objects, one static and one which moves. The composition is a journey from the static to the moving, but while the focus shifts from one to the other, there is a point at which neither is in focus. Towards the end there is a progressive layering of the ideas heard previously, which are gradually resolved in the final chord.

- Dobrinka Tabakova

Sandbox – One of my favorite aspects of writing percussion music is the exploration of new instruments, and I am particularly fond of creating percussion pieces with unexpected objects. For instance, my previous works include a percussion quartet that uses exclusively crystal glasses, as well as a snare drum solo played with just a hair comb and credit card (no drumsticks necessary). Composing for percussion brings out a child-like sense of curiosity in me, and my dear friends in Sandbox Percussion always come to mind when I think of musicians who perfectly capture this feeling of wonderment in their performances.

This piece, aptly titled *Sandbox*, is dedicated to them. Using mainly a wooden box, sandpaper, and some wooden slats, it is written to highlight everything I find beautiful about Sandbox's playing. Some say the best performances occur when musicians can make difficult music look easy, and ultimately that is what this piece is all about: transforming highly intricate percussive patterns into an experience that is akin to four kids playing in a sandbox.

Heartfelt thanks to Sandbox Percussion for their friendship, and to Jan Ziolkowski, Valerie Stains, and the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection for making this piece possible.

- Viet Cuong

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

E Mālama i ke kai, "to care and protect the ocean," is inspired by the marine ecosystems of the Hawaiian archipelago. Life began in the sea according to the Kumulipo, the ancient Hawaiian creation myth, and so humanity is seen as being tied to all living things, plants, animals, and the environment. The narrative of the work explores themes of the past, present and future for the marine world. Once teaming with creatures of aquatic life, the ocean environment is polluted and life endangered.

Composed for Music in the American Wild, the work is scored for a septet of mixed instruments. While there is no connection to traditional Hawaiian music, I set the phrase "E Mālama i ke kai," into several melodic phrases that could be used as a refrain. I then removed the words so the instruments could take the melody, leaving a bounty of mantra-like motives from which to work. The work is in three sections beginning with a festive music depicting a lively ocean environment. The second moves towards a more atmospheric and poignant music depicting a threatened marine environment with no life. The final section sees the rehabilitation of the marine world with the music of the beginning returning and the phrase refrain repeated in a call to protect the oceans.

- Michael-Thomas Foumai

Circling Back seems to reflect the moment of its creation, as well as the hope that things are getting better. It feels like waking up. It feels like remembering something significant. It feels wistful but determined. The expression "circling back" conjures images of a flight and the sense that we had been driven from our course but are now returning to the path we had charted, to the hopes and ideas we had to defer. Thank you to The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Cassie Pilgrim, and Sarah Lewis for bringing this piece to life. I am incredibly grateful to have had this opportunity to circle back to music-making with you.

- Viet Cuong

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

Ash – I never saw snowfall as a child growing up in Southern California; it was more a phenomenon that I saw in cartoons or read in children’s books.

I did, however, witness my first ash-fall when I was in elementary school. I looked up into the clouded sky and saw specks of ash falling from it. Excited but puzzled, I looked to my elementary school teacher during recess and held out my hand. “Oh, that’s ash from the wildfires,” she said. At that time, I could not comprehend how an enormous forest fire could create a small flurry of ash-flakes.

Now I have the ominous understanding that something so magical and beautiful comes from something so powerful and destructive.

- Jennifer Jolley

Electric Aroma – **Between** painting, sculpting, and printmaking, Pablo Picasso found the time to write some very intriguing poetry. *Electric Aroma* was creatively sparked by a line he wrote on October 10, 1936, which reads “an electric aroma a most disagreeable noise”. By using electronic inspired sounds such as buzzy percussion effects, raucous multiphonics, and delay-like echoes, this piece forces some disagreeable sounds to agree with each other as they are woven into a distorted tango-like romp.

The original chamber version of this piece (*Electric Aroma* for clarinet, soprano sax, percussion, and piano) was commissioned by Elizabeth and Justus Schlichting for the 2017 Eighth Blackbird Creative Laboratory. This larger sinfonietta adaptation was created for Alarm Will Sound for the 2018 Mizzou International Composers Festival.

- Viet Cuong

COMPOSER BIOS

Called “alluring” and “wildly inventive” by *The New York Times*, the music of American composer **Viet Cuong** has been performed on six continents by musicians and ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, Eighth Blackbird, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Sō Percussion, Alarm Will Sound, Atlanta Symphony, Sandbox Percussion, Albany Symphony, PRISM Quartet, and Dallas Winds, among many others. Cuong’s music has been featured in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Kennedy Center, and his works for wind ensemble have amassed several hundreds of performances worldwide. Passionate about bringing these different facets of the contemporary music community together, his recent projects include a concerto for Eighth Blackbird with the United States Navy Band. Cuong also enjoys exploring the unexpected and whimsical, and he is often drawn to projects where he can make peculiar combinations and sounds feel enchanting or oddly satisfying. His works thus include a snare drum solo, percussion quartet concerto, and double oboe concerto. He is currently the Pacific Symphony’s Composer-in-Residence and serves as Assistant Professor of Music Composition at The University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Cuong holds degrees from Princeton University (MFA/PhD), the Curtis Institute of Music (AD), and Peabody Conservatory (BM/MM).

Dr. Michael-Thomas Foumai, from Honolulu, Hawai‘i, is the Director of Artistic Engagement and the first Composer in Residence for the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra (HSO). His music, described as “vibrant and cinematic” (*New York Times*) and “full of color, drama, and emotion” (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*), encompasses an extensive catalog of symphonic music, spanning commercial arranging to the avant-garde, and focuses on the culture of his Hawai‘i home. Dr. Foumai’s orchestral works have been conducted and performed by Yannick Nézet-Séguin with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Lidiya Yankovskaya with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Lina Gonzalez-Granados with the National Symphony Orchestra, Sarah Hicks and the Seattle Symphony, George Manahan with the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, Osmo Vänskä with the Minnesota Orchestra, and with Dane Lam, Mei-Ann Chen, JoAnn Falletta, Hans Graf, Earl Lee, Rei Hotoda, Anthony Parnter, Andrew Grams, and Scott Yoo with the Hawai‘i Symphony Orchestra. In addition, Dr. Foumai designs and hosts the HSO education series *Beyond the Music*; he is the program notes annotator for the HSO Masterworks series and is the principal HSO arranger for guest artists who have included Yo-Yo Ma, Jake

COMPOSER BIOS (cont.)

Shimabukuro, Raiatea Helm, Amy Hānaiali'i, and Robert Cazimero. His honors include a Fromm Foundation Grant from Harvard University, the MTNA Distinguished Composer of the Year Award, the Jacob Druckman Prize from the Aspen Music Festival, and three BMI composer awards. Dr. Foumai is currently on faculty at the University of Hawai'i West O'ahu and holds multiple degrees in music composition from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (BM) and the University of Michigan (MM, DMA).

Jennifer Jolley is a composer, conductor, and professor. Her work is founded on the belief that the pleasures and excesses of music have the unique potential to engage political and provocative subjects. Addressing a range of topics such as climate change, #MeToo, feminist history, and the abuses of the Putin regime, Jennifer strives to write pieces that are equally enjoyable and meaningful. Jennifer's works have been commissioned and performed by ensembles worldwide, including the Dallas Winds, Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, Vermont Symphony Orchestra, Central Ohio Symphony, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, and Quince Ensemble. Her music has been featured in venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Rivera Court at the Detroit Institute of Arts, and Žofín Palace. A future piece commissioned by the US Navy Band will premiere at the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (WASBE) Conference in Gwangju, South Korea, in Namhansanseong Art Hall. Jennifer received degrees from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music. She is now an Assistant Professor of Music Theory and Composition in the Department of Music, Multimedia, Theatre, and Dance at Lehman College in the Bronx and was a Fulbright Scholar to Egypt in 2023. She has been a composition faculty member at Interlochen Arts Camp since 2015.

Dobrinka Tabakova is a Bulgarian-born, London-based composer known for her "exciting, deeply moving" music (Washington Times) with "glowing tonal harmonies and sweeping gestures" (The Strad). She has been commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society, BBC Radio 3, and the European Broadcasting Union. Her debut album, *String Paths*, released on ECM Records, was Grammy-nominated in 2014. In 2017, she became composer-in-residence with the BBC Concert Orchestra, and her latest album, featuring her orchestral works recorded by the Hallé Orchestra, was released in October 2023.

COMPOSER BIOS (cont.)

Tabakova's music has been featured in films, dance productions, and festivals across Europe and the U.S., including the BBC Proms, Schleswig-Holstein Festival, and Bang on a Can. She has served as resident composer at prestigious venues like the Davos Summer Festival and Truro Cathedral.

Her accolades include composing an anthem for Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee and winning First Prize at the Sorel Choral Composition Contest. Major works include *Immortal Shakespeare*, *Together Remember to Dance*, and *Centuries of Meditations*. Tabakova's second album, featuring her choral music, was a 2019 Gramophone Critics' Choice.

Recent notable projects include the orchestral *Earth Suite* and the violin concerto *The Patience of Trees*. In 2022, she was named Artist in Association with the Hallé Orchestra. Upcoming projects include new commissions for *The Sixteen* and a second ECM album.

ARTIST FACULTY BIO

Award-winning conductor **Katherine Kilburn** has conducted in music halls all over the U.S. and in Europe. She has served as Assistant Conductor of the National Repertory Orchestra, the El Paso Opera, the Hot Springs Music Festival, the Bowling Green State University Philharmonia, and the St. Louis Symphony Chorus. She was Conductor of the Interlochen Arts Academy Wind Ensemble, Music Director and Conductor of the Greater New Haven Youth and Chamber Orchestras, Conductor of the Rhode Island Philharmonic Youth Repertory Orchestra. She has guest conducted the Mansfield Symphony Orchestra, the Lawrence University Symphony Orchestra and Opera Theater, the Green Bay Symphony, Ensemble X, Cleveland Opera Theater, and the Baldwin Wallace Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Kilburn assisted Sir Simon Rattle for performances of Peter Grimes at the Salzburg Easter Festival, and toured with world-renowned clarinetists David Shifrin and Alexander Fiterstein. She has conducted numerous world and USA-premieres and has conducted in the Cabrillo Music Festival, the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music Festival, the Philadelphia International Music Festival, and the Sewanee Summer Music Festival. Ms. Kilburn has been on the faculty of Cornell University, Kent State University, and Baldwin Wallace Conservatory, and is now Assistant Director of Orchestras at Michigan State University.

STUDENT BIOS

Daniel Jaggars is a Master student in Orchestral Conducting at Michigan State University. A student of Professors Octavio Mas-Arocas and Katherine Kilburn, Daniel serves as Assistant Conductor for the MSU Symphony Orchestra and MSU Concert Orchestra. He holds a Bachelor degree in music from the University of Nebraska, Omaha, where he studied conducting with Miguel Harth-Bedoya. Additionally, Daniel studied clarinet at Ithaca College with Dr. Richard Faria. He has attended several workshops with renowned conductors and performers, studying symphonic, operatic, and chamber repertoire. He is immensely grateful for the numerous people who have made his journey in music possible.

Zongheng Zhang is a first-year Doctoral student in Orchestral Conducting at Michigan State University, studying under Professors Octavio Más-Arocas and Kathrine Kilburn. He holds a Master degree in Orchestral Conducting from UT Austin, where he served as Assistant Conductor for the UT Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the UT University Orchestra. Zhang has worked with Austin Opera, Butler Opera Center, and Berlin Opera Academy. He has conducted operas such as *La bohème* and *Carmen*, and premiered *Le faucon* by Dmitry Bortniansky in 2024. From 2016 to 2021, Zhang was Concertmaster for The Orchestra Now and Bard Conservatory, collaborating with renowned conductors.

MUSIQUE 21 PERSONNEL

Violin

Farangiz Takhirova
Alirna Korieva

Viola

Xinye Xu

Cello

Tung-An Chien
Avigail Arad

Bass

Cole Sheffer

Flute

Ya Zhuo

Oboe

Lauren O'Connor

Clarinet

Dylan Parks
Daniel Jaggars

Bassoon

Finn McCune

Horn

Alexander Delperdang

Trumpet

Evelyn Szilagyi

Trombone

Gracy Tormek

Percussion

Margaret Parker
Klaire Thomas
Angel Hernandez
Isaac Hinshaw
Cadence Miller

Piano

Rye Na Lee

Assistant Conductors

Daniel Jaggars
Zongheng Zhang

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- **Sam and Mary Austin Fund for New Music** (Tambuco Mexican Percussion Ensemble, Nov. 21)
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- **James and Susan Bonfiglio** (Symphony Orchestra, Apr. 26; Fall Opera)
- **Jenny Chung and Family for Human Rights Fund** (Jazz Nonets concerts)
- **Joanne and Bill Church** (West Circle Series)
- **April Clobes and Glen Brough** (Celebrating the Spectrum; Whirlwinds)
- **Trustee Emerita Dee Cook in memory of her husband Byron Cook** (Baroque Fest)
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- **Dean Transportation** (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- **Alena Fabian, M.D.** (Votapek, Sept. 25; Piano Monster)
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- **Stanley and Selma Hollander Endowment for Chamber Music** (Happy Birthday Mozart!)
- **Thea Glicksman** (From Vienna with Love, Jan. 17)
- **Howard and Pam Gourwitz** (Lulloff, Nov. 25)
- **Anne Hiller** (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- **Lauren Harris** (Celebrating the Spectrum)
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- **Clare Mackey** (Pass a Good Time, Oct. 6; Oboe, Trumpet and Organ, Feb. 11)
- **Joseph and Jeanne Maguire** (A Jazzy Little Christmas)

- **Patrick and Victoria McPharlin Guest Artist Endowment for Jazz Studies in the College of Music** (Jazz: Spirituals, Prayer and Protest Concert)
- **Pat & Mary McPharlin** (Tambuco Mexican Percussion Ensemble, Nov. 21)
- **Dr. Roy and Christine Meland** (Vive La France)
- **Gordon E. Miracle** (Votapek, Sept. 25; Helton, Oct. 31)
- **MSU Federal Credit Union** (Showcase Series; Spartan Spectacular; Celebrating the Spectrum)
- **MSU Federal Credit Union Entrepreneurial Musical Artist-in-Residence Endowed Fund** (Tambuco Mexican Percussion Ensemble, Nov. 21)
- **George Orban and Rae Ramsdell** (Red Cedar Organ, Sept. 15)
- **Milton Powell, in memory of Sue Powell, accomplished pianist and organist** (Red Cedar Organ, Sept. 15)
- **Liz and Tony Raduazo in honor of Andrew Raduazo** (Sensory Friendly Spartan Concert, Nov. 9 and April 8)
- **Nancy and Charlie Seebeck** (MSU-Stanford Piano Quartet)
- **Michael and Elaine Serling** (A Celebration of the Beautiful Voice)
- **Leonard and Sharon Tabaka** (Jazz Spectacular Finale Concert)
- **TechSmith** (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- **Dr. Robert W. Uphaus and Dr. Lois M. Rosen** (Symphony Orchestra, Sept. 27; Woodward String Quartet, Mar. 13; Bagratuni, Mar. 31)
- **Linn Van Dyne and Mike Knox** (Symphony Orchestra, Feb. 7)
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