



College of Music  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

## MSU NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE

# Musique 21

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Michael Gabriel, conductor

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Monday, February 3, 2025  
Murray Hall, 7:30 p.m.

# PROGRAM

Drones, Variations, Ornaments (2011)	Nico Muhly (b. 1981)
Miss Minutes (2022)  Klaire Thomas, percussion	Gala Flagello (b. 1994)
Songs for the Post-Truth Era (2018) Incorrect Speaking The Charm of Anna The Supply of Flies	Karim Al-Zand (b. 1970) poet: Charles Lamb
Light, Awaken (2022)	Jennifer Bellor (b. 1983)
to wALk Or ruN in wEst harlem (2008)	Andy Akiho (b. 1979)

## PROGRAM NOTES

**Drones, Variations, Ornaments** – The piece is music in constant transformation. What begins as a simple, cloud-like sequence of string chords with a trombone melody slowly transforms into an agitated perpetual motion machine of winds, guitar, percussion, and piano. The machine spits out an incessant syncopated drone on middle-C, over which a fragment of a melody in the violin and trombone slowly turns into something more dangerous. The sound of breaking glass and assorted violent string pluckings slowly ushers in a decadent, syrupy melting texture in the strings, who accompany an alto flute solo. The piece ends in a suspended crystalline structure with a cello and trombone duet.

- Nico Muhly

**Miss Minutes** (2022) was commissioned by the Aspen Music Festival and School as a First Glimpse Chamber Music Commission. The work explores the 2022 AMFS season theme "Myths and Truths: What We Talk About When We Talk About Ourselves" through the alliterative and evocative turn of phrase "miss minutes". When we miss minutes, are we forgetting (missing memory), wasting time (missing opportunity), or careening off course (missing regularity)? When we find that minutes have been missed, can we enter a more desirable timeline? Further, this temporal concept becomes an entity when capitalized as a title: who is Miss Minutes? Musically, the percussion soloist, ensemble, conductor, and composer all take their turns as the piece's protagonist, grappling with the strict but slippery nature of a fleeting micro-concerto. Many thanks to Donald Crockett, the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, and the Aspen Music Festival and School for bringing this piece to life.

**Songs for the Post-Truth Era** (2018) – Facts are a feeble match for belief. Emotion trumps observation. Lie and truth are transposable, reason and fellow-feeling abandoned. Words careen through the air, cleaved from their meaning, simply sounds in the void.

*It is a Post-Truth Era.* This short song cycle is based on a poem about telling the truth: "Incorrect Speaking" by Charles Lamb, a didactic verse taken from his 1809 collection *Poems for Children*. Lamb's poem is used as the first song's text. I derive the text for the following two songs as "vocabularyclept" poems, a technique that preserves all the words from an original poem, but rearranges their order and syntax. The new poems, "The Charm of Anna" and "The Supply of Flies", generate unexpected, humorous and contradictory meanings—and eventually produce no meaning at all.

- Karim Al-Zand

## PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

**Light, Awaken** was premiered at the UNLV Nextet new music series concert on March 23, 2022, featuring Shawna Pennock (alto sax), Lauren Zwonik-Stutz (flute), Weiwei Le (violin), Jennifer Bellor (piano), and Gabriela Ordoñez Villalobos (percussion). The premiere also featured a robotic arm playing mini cymbals with Tim Warren conducting.

While composing *Light, Awaken*, I was inspired by the motion and sound of a robotic arm, which I was introduced to by mechatronic engineers at Haddington Dynamics. I imagined a beautiful, melodic composition that includes the sweeping motion and sound of the robotic arm paired with saxophone multiphonics, flute wind tones, and violin harmonics. When *Light, Awaken* was premiered, I included a visual element on stage, featuring the robotic arm that inspired the composition. The arm was programmed to play suspended finger cymbals.

- Jennifer Bellor

**to wAlk Or ruN in wEst harlem** (2008) – Andy Akiho is a “trailblazing” (Los Angeles Times) Pulitzer Prize finalist and seven-time GRAMMY®-nominated composer whose bold works unravel intricate and unexpected patterns while surpassing preconceived boundaries of classical music. Called “increasingly in-demand” by The New York Times, Akiho has earned international acclaim for his large-scale works that emphasize the natural theatricality of live performance. He is the only composer to be nominated for a GRAMMY® in the Best Contemporary Classical Composition category in 2022, 2023, and 2024.

*to wAlk Or ruN in wEst harlem* was composed for the 2008 Bang On A Can Summer Music Festival, to evoke the suspense of a harrowing personal experience Akiho had while walking home late one night. The work explores extended sonic possibilities. The string instruments are, through a technique called scordatura, tuned differently from standard practice. A variety of extended percussion sounds are called for, including the preparation of the vibraphone's lowest octave with rubber bands. The interplay between winds, strings, and percussion is rhythmically and melodically complex, contributing to the work's mysterious aesthetic.

# STUDENT BIO

**Michael A. Gabriel** is a graduate student in Wind Conducting and Music Theory at Michigan State University. He has premiered many new works for wind ensembles and produced arrangements for acclaimed performers including Julian Bliss and the Boston Brass. His most recent project in collaboration with the Chick Corea estate, *The Continents*, won a grant from the MSU College of Music. A Florida native, Gabriel was Director of Bands at Charles W. Flanagan High School (Pembroke Pines, FL) prior to MSU, where the ensembles were lauded for innovative programs and collaborations, and he was awarded the Broward County Music Teacher of the Year Award by the Barry Manilow Foundation

## MUSIQUE 21 PERSONNEL

### Violin

Alirna Korieva, Tashkent,  
Uzbekistan  
Heng-ping Lin, Taipei, Taiwan

### Viola

Kunjie Chai, Beijing, China

### Cello

Weigen Jiang, Qingdao,  
Shandong, China

### Bass

Alex Zajdel, Plymouth

### Flute

Ya Zhuo, Yancheng, Jiangsu,  
China

### Clarinet

Ricky Latham, Mason City,  
Iowa

### Bassoon

Dylan Myers, Stevens Pt. WI

### Alto Saxophone

Parker Fritz, Grand Rapids

### Trombone

Alex Ortiz, Odessa, Texas

### Electric Guitar

Michael Kirby, Harrison

### Percussion

Angel Juan Hernandez, Grand  
Rapids  
Klaire Thomas, Neosho, MS

### Piano

Yingyi Xu, China

### Vocalist

Elia Meekhoff, Lansing

# TEXT

## Songs for the Post-Truth Era

From Poetry for Children by Charles Lamb (1809)

Incorrect Speaking  
Incorrectness in your speech  
Carefully avoid, my Anna;  
Study well the sense of each  
Sentence, lest in any manner  
It misrepresent the truth;  
Veracity's the charm of youth.

You will not, I know, tell lies,  
If you know what you are speaking.  
Truth is shy, and from us flies;

The Charm of Anna  
Unless we are seeking to pry the truth  
From my words of youth,  
Carefully avoid the charm of Anna:  
She is not shy, not shy in any manner.

If you study well your speech,  
And diligently misrepresent into each  
Sentence, lest it supply  
The what, will, who and know,

The Supply of Flies  
Take carefully each speech  
Pry every sense from my sentence

Speaking, seeking  
Of youth, of truth,  
Or of lies--  
We will ready the supply of flies!

I, you, my, we  
Study your veracity's  
You see?  
Incorrectness

if, of, oft  
the will, the well, the words

Unless diligently seeking  
Into every word we pry,  
Falsehood will her place supply.

Falsehood is not shy, not she—  
Ever ready to take place of  
Truth, too oft we Falsehood see,  
Or at least some latent trace of  
Falsehood, in the incorrect  
Words of those who Truth respect.

Incorrectness will take Veracity's place—  
you see?  
In her place, we sense, flies some latent  
trace of oft.

Speaking of Truth:  
In truth, every word of those you respect  
is  
Falsehood, Falsehood, Falsehood,  
Falsehood!  
(Or is at least incorrect.)

We respect, incorrect  
Truth, shy, truth  
(Place into you-know-who)  
Falsehood, shy, falsehood

it us, in lest, at least, in some  
not word, what know,  
those are

Not to avoid charm  
Truth is she any?  
Unless in latent her manner too diligently  
is...

Of truth tell not ever  
Anna

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- **Gordon E. Miracle** (Votapek, Sept. 25; Helton, Oct. 31)
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