



Society of Composers, Inc.

**2021 Online National Student Conference
Concert No. 2**

Saturday August 21, 2021 | 4:30 pm ET

Tao Li

*Frore River**

flute, bass clarinet, violin,
cello, electronics

Kamratōn

Darcy Copeland

Primal Tongue

Fixed Media

Ania Vu

*Lost within Letters**

soprano, alto flute, cello

Kamratōn

Emily Joy Sullivan

Solstice

Fixed Media

Bobby Ge

*Pell-Mell**

flute, bass clarinet,

fixed media

Kamratōn

Max Johnson

*Spangled Dots**

soprano, clarinet, violin

Kamratōn

Zouning (Anne) Liao

Flip On, Airwaves

Zouning (Anne Liao), live

electronics

Spencer Adam Roberts

*Tango for Two**

clarinet, violin

Kamratōn

Heather Mease

House of the Mother

Fixed Media

*Denotes World Premiere Commission

Program Notes and Composer Biographies

Tao Li 李陶, Ph.D., is a composer and performer from China. While Chinese traditional culture profoundly influences her, years of living in the U.S. have formed her distinct multicultural musical language. The philosophy, literature, and spirituality of the ancient East play a formative role in the aesthetic of Dr. Li's work. Her music consists of vivid soundscapes, colorful timbres, and interdisciplinary elements that often lead her audiences on a multi-dimensional journey full of imagination. As an Asian female musician, Dr. Li is devoted to promoting gender equity and cultural diversity through her music as well as through collaboration with other artists.

Dr. Li's music has been performed at concerts and music festivals throughout the world including China, Japan, Korea, Australia, Ireland, Ukraine, and the U.S.A. Her primary interests include acoustic and electroacoustic composition, performance practices, and analysis of compositional techniques, aesthetics, and intercultural dialogues. Currently, she is working on her second Doctoral degree in Intermedia Music Technology Data-Driven Instruments at University of Oregon. For more information, please go to taolimusic.com.

江雪 *Frore River* is written for flute, bass clarinet, violin, cello, and electronics. The piece is inspired by a poem of the same title by Chinese poet Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-829) of Tang Dynasty China. I mimic the isolation and perfect stillness of the world the poem describes by exploring different timbres of the four instruments and integrating the acoustic sound and electronic elements.

I incorporate the poem in the electronics by sampling my voice reading the poem. By manipulating the samples, the broken-up vowels and nuances of Mandarin further accent the desolate atmosphere of the piece.

Many art works are inspired by this poem including some in the style of Chinese Shan Shui 中国山水画, a style of traditional Chinese painting that involves or depicts scenery or natural landscapes. One important Shan Shui concept is negative space. I adopt this concept in my piece by intentionally leaving many negative spaces while the music unfolds.

Poem

江雪
柳宗元
千山鸟飞绝，
万径人踪灭。
孤舟蓑笠翁，
独钓寒江雪。

English translation

River Snow
Liu Zongyuan
Mountains by the thousand but the last
bird flown,
And myriad footpaths with no human
traces shown.
Solitary boat and an old man in rush cape
and cap,
Alone fishing in the cold river snow.

English translation by Ten Zhiji, You Zheng

Darcy Copeland (b. 1996) is a composer, performer, and writer based in Seattle, WA. Described as “rare and pure”, “marvelous”, and “especially effective” (Cacophony), her compositional work is motivated by a desire to question & explore the human experience through tactile experimentation. Having been drawn to both the aural and embodied effects of sonic exploration from a young age through vocal experimentation,

her approach to composition today continues to be influenced by a primal curiosity of the physical world and what it means to be human within it.

In addition to composition, Darcy is also a cellist, vocalist, electronic musician, and researcher, exploring topics related to music & spiritualism, movement practices, and sonic activism. She is currently in pursuit of an MM in composition at the University of Washington in Seattle, WA, studying with Joël François Durand & Huck Hodge.

Primal Tongue utilizes electronically manipulated recordings of my breath, voice, and body sounds to create a visceral soundscape that invites the listener into the experience of the body. In publicizing these intimate and deeply personal sounds, I both invite the listener in to my body as an observer while also acting as an intruder myself in the body (ears) of the listener. This publication of forced intimacy between listener and artist is meant to parallel the distorting qualities of our modern age informed by social media, in which we willingly participate in the publication of our private lives, coupled with companies profiting off of our personal data being mined through these sites, and the surveillance of the NSA. While “social” media seeks to fulfill a need for connection and intimacy through the publication of the personal, in reality it creates a distorting effect which leaves its users in feelings of isolation and abjection while simultaneously exploiting and changing their users behavior over time.

Polish of Vietnamese descent composer and pianist, **Ania Vu (née Vu Dang Minh Anh)** is currently a Ph.D. candidate in composition at the University of Pennsylvania. Her music explores varied notions of time, musical energy related to form, and the interplay between linguistical sound properties and semantics. Her recent teachers include Anna Weesner, James Primosch, and Marcos Balter. In 2017, she received her B.M. in composition and theory from the Eastman School of Music.

Winner of the BNMI's 9th Annual Commissioning Competition (2021) and prize recipient of the Megalopolis Saxophone Orchestra's Call for Scores (2020), Ania has had the privilege of working with the Daedalus and Mivos string quartets, TAK ensemble, International Contemporary Ensemble, and Iridium Saxophone Quartet. Her music has been heard at the Tanglewood Music Center, Tage Neuer Musik in Regensburg, International New Music Festival at U. of South Florida, Red Note New Music Festival, Valencia International Performance Academy, and SoundSCAPE.

As a pianist, she performs solo and chamber, standard and contemporary repertoire, and works of her own and her colleagues. She has won several awards in national and international competitions in Europe, and has performed in Hungary, Spain, Italy, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Vietnam, the US, and Poland.

Lost within Letters is inspired by my opera-in-progress, “Through the Doors” for chamber ensemble, and engages with some philosophical questions on the extent of personal freedom, choice, and the role of time.

Emily Joy Sullivan (b. 1987) is a composer, educator, and choral director based in Northern California. Her music is animated by the spirit of song, dance, and storytelling, and is largely grounded in vernacular traditions. Sullivan's works have been performed in New York, Chicago, Memphis, Melbourne, Vancouver, Valencia, and Cape Town, South Africa. She holds a Master's Degree in Music Theory & Composition from SUNY Fredonia and a BA in Music from Amherst College, where her feminist musicology thesis was "Envoicing Eve: Femmes Fatales in Carmen, Salome, and Lulu." She is currently pursuing a PhD in Music Theory & Composition at UC Davis. Primary areas of research include music and gender, musical theater, lyricism and song forms, and creative pedagogy. Sullivan is committed to creating music in a collaborative spirit, and has worked with librettists, poets, choreographers, and instrumentalists to create modern, relevant art in community together. She is currently working on a suite of pieces for performance over Zoom, as well as a musical drama retelling fairy tales from the heroines' points of view.

Solstice was created entirely from a 30-second clip of my community choir singing a Macedonian folk song. Using a variety of programs and techniques, I wove a tapestry of voices, experimenting in order to create the mood and effect I desired. Ultimately, I created one long gesture with the impression of a narrative: voices raised in reverence, in joyous ritual. The voices are at once atavistic and other-wordly, distant and immediate, static and changing; even as the forces of the natural world come and sweep them away, they return. One season ends as another begins, and the song goes on – both in new voices and in echoes of the old. The rite of song is carried through space and time; though everything must pass away, we find peace in that constant, eternity in that mortality. Clock-time dissolves as we enter the moment fully, surrendering in order to find an ancient sense of oneness.

Bobby Ge (b. 1996) is a Baltimore-based composer and avid collaborator who seeks to create vivid emotional journeys that navigate boundaries between genre and medium. He has created multimedia projects with painters collective Art10Baltimore, the Space Telescope Science Institute, the Baltimore Rock Opera Society, the Scattered Players Theater Company, and writer/poet Jenny C. Lares. Ge has received commissions and performances by groups including the Albany Symphony's 'Dogs of Desire,' the Harbin Symphony Orchestra, Music from Copland House, the Bergamot Quartet, Pique Collective, KLK New Music, the Student Symphony of USC, and the Future Symphony Competition Orchestra.

The first half of 2021 proved to be surprisingly fast-paced - if not in locomotion (most of my time has still been spent locked in my room), then certainly in terms of news cycles and workload. For several months, I found myself fretting about what crazy event would trigger the next wave of headline-addled social media rants - riots, mass shootings, record temperatures, collapsing buildings - all while composing furiously, trying desperately to meet deadline after deadline. As each submission date began to feel less reasonable than the last, some of that frenzied, nervous activity began to creep into the music I was writing. I noticed that many of my pieces were becoming increasingly pulse-driven, filled with wild mixed meters and rapid modulations.

Pell-Mell continues that trend, collapsing so many months of frenetic energy into a five minute long mad dash. I wanted to try and compress my usual processes as compactly as possible, building the piece out of two ideas - an oscillating sixteenth note motif, and an off-kilter 4/4+3/4 rhythm. As the flute blazes through double-tongued barrages of notes over vicious bass clarinet multiphonics, the two motifs play against one another through constant stepwise modulations. The piece ultimately captures a mite of my mental state in its large-scale form - a continuous Shepard tone ascending to nowhere, perpetually heightening in tension while never quite breaking.

Described as “an intrepid composer, architect of sound and beast of the bass...” (NYC Jazz Record) composer-bassist **Max Johnson** creates complex worlds of sound, challenging his listeners to engage deeply and be rewarded with an experience always crafted with love, care, and clarity. With nine albums and over fifteen hundred concerts internationally with artists Anthony Braxton, Mary Halverson, Tyshawn Sorey, John Zorn, and Mivos Quartet, Johnson brings a wild energy and excitement. He has studied with Jason Eckardt, Jonathan Bailey Holland, Jane Ira Bloom, Mark Dresser, and Henry Grimes, and is the father to a beautiful chihuahua named Gabby.

Born in Guangdong, China, **Zouning** is a music composer who recently finished her Bachelor’s of Music in composition at Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music. She has studied with Aaron Travers, David Dzubay, John Gibson, Chi Wang, Don Freund, Claude Baker and P.Q. Phan. Zouning’s music draws inspiration from explorations in technology and nature, blended with her constant curiosity of the playing capacity of different instruments as she seeks to incorporate noise into her music. Throughout three years of music composition study, her music has been consistently performed and read by musicians from within the school as well as visiting ensembles and conferences such as Wet Ink Ensemble, pianist in residence Jihye Chang and the NSEME conference. Recently, her electronic music work *Water, Bowls and Rocks* has been selected as one of the finalists for ASCAP/ SEAMUS Student Composer Commission Competition. In addition to receiving a major in composition, she also earned minors in music history, theory and electronic music. She is going to pursue a Master’s degree with double majors in music theory and electronic music at Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music in fall 2021. Zouning is always interested in learning the different facets of music -- from analyzing music from the past, to incorporating contemporary technology into her composition. In her free time, she also enjoys fermenting kimchi and baking Soufflés at home.

Flip on, Airwaves is an exploration of the sonic transformation and interaction within a collection of sounds such as the flip of a switch, and voices from the AM/FM radio. A switch can turn into typing, or thunder, and voices become granulated glitches.

I was born as **Spencer Adom Roberts** in Indianapolis, Indiana on January 22, 1996. I earned Music Education and Music Composition degrees in undergraduate studies at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX in May of 2018, and I am currently pursuing graduate degrees in Music Composition and Instrumental Conducting, also at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. My primary instruments are the main members of the saxophone family (soprano, alto, tenor and baritone); doubles include Bb clarinet, Bass Clarinet and Flute. I am a saxophonist for a professional wind ensemble based in Anna, TX, named the Toccare Winds, performing concerts and participating in community outreach. I am also serving as the Composition Competition chair, working with the music director to create an annual competition for composers of multiple age groups, offering opportunities for collaboration and portfolio/career building as well as a chance to make meaningful connections in the field of music. Please visit <https://www.toccarewinds.com/> for more information about the ensemble and its personnel. Please see my YouTube channel for updated samples and recordings of my work, as well as my SoundCloud page.

Tango For Two is inspired by the romantic and expressive qualities of the clarinet and the violin. Rhythm and romance are at the core of the tango, and I employ both of these elements within the work by exploiting techniques and natural sonic properties of both instruments in a very natural way. Extended techniques such as range, instrumental percussion, slap tonguing and dynamic extremes are the ingredients to this stew of emotions and human desire – the warmth of this stew comes from the potency and prominence of this lust, allowing for the music to reach farther into the depths of human feeling. The tango is a very personal and intimate style of interaction, and I aim to capture that style in its essence whilst remaining true to the personalities of both the clarinet and the violin; this is the basis for my expression of passion and organicism through the lens of a versatile duet.

Heather Mease is a composer and graduate student at the University of Virginia whose work focuses on the appropriation of media, recorded materials, and found objects as a means for exploring material culture, waste, and the consequences of nostalgia. Heather performs and releases experimental electronic music as corncob. www.hmmease.com.

“The House of the Suicide” and “The House of the Mother of the Suicide” are a pair of architectural structures by John Hejduk erected in tribute to the 1969 self-immolation of the Czech dissident Jan Palach whose death was in protest of the 1968 Soviet invasion. *House of the Mother* is about things remembered, things unremembered, misremembered, remembered only through mediation, layered real and unreal, memories. A performance by viola da gamba consort Science Ficta provides the base sound material, resampled and processed, and layered with sound from personal home video.