

NEMF2025@EIU

Napoleon Electronic Music Festival 2025

Tuesday February 4, 2025

Eastern Illinois University - Doudna Fine Arts Center Theater

Concert 1 - 4pm

All works feature electronics and/or computer processing.

Followers

Eric Simonson

Eric Simonson, piano

Prelude (Rocks Sparkle Because They Break the Light)

Lucy Shirley

Matt A. Mason, piano

Artificial Spring

Jake Sandridge

Jake Sandridge, keyboard

Aloier-Abyme

Ben Zucker

Ben Zucker, vibraphone

Five Bagatelles (About Buildings and Food)

Jay Batzner

Bagatelle 1

Bagatelle 4

Bagatelle 5

Jay Batzner, toy piano and micro synthesizers

Lines Around the Corner

Ralph Lewis

Dante Freund, violin

Dear Delightful Hollow Square

James A. Devor

Aimless Duo: Paige Abramson, clarinet; James A. Devor, double bass

Human vs. Transhuman: Act One

Cecilia Suhr

Cecilia Suhr, voice and video

Followers

Eric Simonson

This is a work concerned with tracing the pitch and attack-point structure of a given melodic segment and generating distorted copies of it (the "followers"). The distortions amount to expanding or contracting the intervals (in pitch-space and time) of the segment with reference to chosen pitches and attack-points in the segment. The first note in a segment is sampled by the computer for sound material, and the pitch and time data tracked by the computer is stored for future manipulation using phase vocoder and/or granular synthesis "voices." Additionally, pitch following is used to create swelling or pulsing chords. Classic sawtooth or trapezoidal waveforms are used for these textures. This constitutes a simpler kind of following.

These segments and what follows in the live instrument part may be notated (as in the composer's score), or they may be improvised. If improvised, segments should always begin with a long single tone, followed by a monophonic, unison texture. The cue that follows will end the recording and the analysis of the segment. The length of each segment may vary widely but should not be exceedingly long. Tempos in the score need not be followed when segments are improvised, but the tempo changes and pulse speeds that follow in the computer part will be proportional to the length of the recorded segments. All the same processing and distortions indicated by the cues in the score will be applied to the improvised segments. When improvising the material that follows the recorded segments, the performer is free to advance to the next cue at any time. In this way, the form of the piece is somewhat fixed, but not its content or proportions.

Though the score is intended for piano, other pitched instruments may be used.

A light amount of reverberation is applied to both live audio and computer-generated sounds. The precise, non-selective "hearing" of the computer may pick up unanticipated and unmusical note data along the way, or may not detect intended notes, which is altogether accepted as a risk of the unique acoustical environment of each live performance.

Eric Simonson's music has been heard in concerts across North America, including SEAMUS (Society of Electroacoustic Music in the United States), ICMC (International Computer Music Conference) and SCI (Society of Composers Incorporated) performances. His composition teachers have included William Heinrichs, Harvey Sollberger, Eugene O'Brien and Roger Reynolds. His degrees are in composition, but his interests and teaching experience have involved computer music, music theory and musicology. He studied piano with Boaz Sharon at the University of Tulsa and subsequently enjoyed a brief career as an accompanist and chamber musician. Currently, he serves as a professor at Danville Area Community College in Danville, Illinois, teaching musicology and music theory courses in the Liberal Arts division.

Prelude (Rocks Sparkle Because They Break the Light)

Lucy Shirley

A precious stone is only considered valuable because of imperfections created by pressure and by time. So much meaning is given to expensive rocks in the context of relationships when the rocks themselves only sparkle because of the way they refract, or seemingly "break," light. *Prelude (Rocks Sparkle Because They Break the Light)* explores the idea of precious stones and the fragile crystallization of a relationship in the form of shattered slivers of sound. Short fragments introduced by the piano are deconstructed through granular synthesis until they become so numerous as to meld into a melodic interlude. This togetherness doesn't last long, and the fragments begin to break off again until they finally shatter apart under pressure.

Composer **Lucy Shirley's** works are polystylistic and playful, often focusing on language and aspects of the human voice. Shirley's earliest musical influences were gleaned from long car rides listening to her mom's mixtapes of showtunes and classic Americana, and she still often finds herself incorporating aspects of theatricality and folk melody into her current music-making. Shirley's awards include winning IAWM's 2024 Call for Scores, selection in SOLI Chamber Ensemble's 2024 30x30x30 Project, a 2022 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award, and 2nd place in the 2021 UMKC Chamber Music Composition Competition. She has attended festivals such as the Norfolk New Music Workshop, June in Buffalo, HighSCORE, and Nief-Norf, and has worked with artists such as the JACK Quartet, the Imani Winds, the mdi ensemble, Carrie Koffman, Don-Paul Kahl, and the Mammoth Trio. Shirley is currently a PhD student at the University of Iowa where she studies with David Gompper.

Matt A. Mason is a Chicago-based composer, pianist, and educator whose work has been described as "brooding, tense," "heartbreaking," and brimming with "constellations of pitch and rhythm in a densely complex mesh." Matt's

work as a composer draws deeply from his rural midwestern background, telling stories about queer visibility, nostalgia, social responsibility, and trauma. Matt's latest projects explore using the piano as an intermediary device. Matt serves as an Assistant Professor of Musicianship at Roosevelt University in Chicago, and holds a Bachelor's in Piano Performance and Pedagogy (Illinois Wesleyan), a Master's in Composition and Piano Performance (Butler University), and a Ph.D in Music Composition and Theory (UIowa). Matt is a passionate educator, with practice teaching in the fields of Composition, Theory, Piano, Music Technology, and Music Production. Matt has presented his research on gender performance in popular music at the Universities of Chicago, Kentucky, Iowa, and Oregon. Matt has worked with prestigious ensembles such as the JACK Quartet, Ensemble Dal Niente, Impulse Ensemble, Random Access Music, Hypercube, The Center for New Music, Out of the Box, and has participated in celebrated international projects such as 250 Piano Pieces for Beethoven, Songs from the Levant, Dances for Water, and Moments in this Time. In his spare time, Matt hosts Watch No Evil, a critically-acclaimed horror media analysis podcast.

Artificial Spring

Jake Sandridge

'Artificial spring' is the first in a series of works dedicated to experiments in creating a computer improvising partner. In this piece, the pianist creates the form by performing short notated gestures in any order they choose. The computer collects and analyzes MIDI data from the performance and creates new material in real-time based on the input material.

Jake Sandridge is a composer, educator, installation artist, and pianist. His interests lie primarily in experimenting with ways to incorporate interactive technology into sound, investigating ways in which sound and technology can create and strengthen community, and creating works that encourage audience and performer agency.

His work has been programmed through arts organizations such as Da Camera of Houston, Aurora Picture Show, FRAME Dance, Moody Center for the Arts, monOrchid Gallery (Phoenix), and 4411 Montrose, and his music has been programmed at conferences such as ICMC/New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival, SEAMUS, the Studio 300 Digital Art and Music Festival (Lexington), N_SEME (Charlottesville), inner sOUNscapes (Oklahoma University), the Ball State University New Music Festival, the West Fork New Music Festival, and the North American Saxophone Alliance Conference.

Jake received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Rice University in May 2024, and is a teaching assistant professor in the School of Music at West Virginia University, where he teaches courses in electronic music, music theory, and aural skills.

Aloier-Abyme

Ben Zucker

Aloier-Abyme is a performance for vibraphone and live electronics utilizing pitch and envelope tracking, LFOs, and granulation to shape real-time material, further subject to feedback from the amplification of the vibraphone. It was designed as a dynamic environment for solo performance, in which improvisation on the part of the performer is complemented by "improvisation" on the part of the system, in the sense of a series of emergent parameters related to live inputs. Since these frameworks of pre-planning only affect ranges, they are a meta-form that maintains the liveness and unpredictability of the setup. The title, using French terms for "alloy" and "abyss", reflect the combinatorial duality of the performance, and its potential. The nearly-defamiliarized sounds of the vibraphone, extended through the live electronics, invoke a range of electroacoustic practices from Stockhausen's Strahlen to George Lewis' Voyager system to the contemporary ambient textures of Masayoshi Fujita and Jan Jelinek.

Ben Zucker uses music to speculate on the systems and shapes of change, which has led to a wide-ranging career as a composer, multi-instrumentalist improviser, producer, and cultural worker, with contributions to experimental scenes across North America and Europe. Acclaimed as a "master of improvisation" (IMPOSE Magazine), and "more than a little bit remarkable" (Free Jazz Blog), their work includes "stirring compositions...built on a lifetime of musical curiosity" (Chicago Reader), performed by artists including Third Coast Percussion, Ensemble Dal Niente, David Moliner, Khorikos, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Distractfold Ensemble, and Musica Nucleo Nova. As a performer, he utilizes vibraphone, brass, keys, voice, and electronics across styles including with musicians such as Anthony Braxton, Gareth Davis, the Vocal Constructivists, Karen Borca, Rinde Eckert, and Beth Orton, and makes frequent local appearances as an ensemble contributor and bandleader of experimental jazz quartet Fifth Season and creative music collective Mad Myth Science, the latter called "the next generation of Chicago jazz" by the Quietus. Following PhD studies at Northwestern University, they continue to live in Chicago, working as a freelance musician, lecturer, President of New Music Chicago, and curator for Elastic Arts' Improvised Music Series.

Five Bagatelles (About Buildings and Food)

Jay Batzner

These pieces were composed for the RPM Challenge in February 2024 in order to use my various collection of toy pianos and mini synthesizers. Each piece fixates on a small musical obsession and provides space for improvisation and play. The only connection to the Talking Heads is that I'm intensely jealous of that album title.

Jay Batzner is a composer who has Done Things and Been Performed Places. His catalog ranges from traditional ensembles (natural horn + live electronics, 4-hand organ duo, and countertenor + alto sax, etc.) to unusual and idiosyncratic ensembles (voice + piano, unaccompanied bassoon, choir, etc.). His works have been performed on all habitable planets in the known universe.

Lines Around the Corner

Ralph Lewis

"Lines Around the Corner" approaches the violin in a choreographic manner, uses moments of push, pull, squeeze, and release to draw the violin and electronic gestures throughout the piece.

Dr. **Ralph Lewis** is a composer and music theorist who currently serves as Adjunct Instructor of Music Composition and Music Theory at Millikin University. His compositions seek meeting points between sonorous music and arresting noise, alternative tunings and timbre, and the roles of performer and audience. Lewis's music has been presented at festivals and conferences including APMC and Tenor Conference (AU), Convergence, the ARC Project, Radiophrenia Glasgow, and Sonic Cartography (UK), Pärnu Days of Contemporary Music Festival (EE), International Computer Music Conference/ISSTA (IE), the Orpheus Institute in (BE), Audio Rocket Festival (JP), as well as numerous events in the United States including New Music Gathering, Verdant Vibes, Thirsty Ears Festival, SEAMUS National Conference, Boston Microtonal Society, SCI National Conference, College Music Society National Conference, Electronic Music Midwest, MOXsonic, N_SEME, CHIMEFest, Electroacoustic Barn Dance, and the Music for People and Thingamajigs Festival.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, Lewis served as Composer-in-Residence for the Oberlin Arts and Sciences Orchestra. He has also been honored with artist residencies at Banff Art Centre, Westben, and WGXC Wave Farm. Lewis has been featured as a guest composer at University of South Florida, Heidelberg University, California State University, Bakersfield, and other institutions. In 2023, he was elected as the SEAMUS' first Member At Large for Outreach. Lewis graduated from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 2021, receiving a DMA in Music Composition. In 2016, Lewis founded and teaches composition with All Score Urbana, a free-to-the-public composition engagement workshop.

Dante Freund (*he/him*) is a Violinist and Composer studying at the University of Illinois working on a masters degree in performance with Meg Freivogel of the Jupiter Quartet. Dante's former teachers include Dr. Julian Ross, Dr. Aaron Jacobs, and Dr. Clint Needham. Dante is an avid chamber musician who has performed regularly throughout his life including performances in masterclasses with the Pacifica Quartet and the Kronos Quartet. Dante placed first in the Indiana University Summer String Academy Haydn Competition studying under Jonathan Ong of the Verona Quartet. This past fall Dante placed first in the Paul Rolland Memorial Violin competition.

Dear Delightful Hollow Square

James A. Devor

Inspired by traditional shape-note or Sacred Harp singing, dear delightful hollow square gets its title from physical set-up of the four vocal parts: trebles, altos, tenors, and basses. The piece literally places the audience inside the middle of the hollow square with the four encircling speakers passing off live modulation of prerecorded vocals, text, and instrumental textures. The Sacred Harp tradition, originating in New England, became increasingly more popular with the 1844 publication of the tunebook, *The Sacred Harp*, collected and edited by Benjamin Franklin White and Elisha J. King, who both lived in Georgia at the time. The hymn text, *The cross of Christ inspires my heart*, is combined with poetry of Sidney Lanier, Georgia native, and are interspersed between selections of *On moving into the hollow square*, a contemporary narrative essay by Deborah Robson which details her experience and the emotions felt at her first Sacred Harp meeting. The resultant musical story attempts to challenge the audience's expectations between sacred and religious while creating my own modern interpretation and representation of the hallowed hollow square.

James A. Devor (b. 1998) is an American composer, sound artist and double bassist whose music draws on his own wide-ranging musical background. His music grapples with rapidly-changing human emotions and attempts to sort through the natural chaos of the world. When writing, he focuses on the act of collaboration between the composer, performers and audience. While his catalogue includes solo, chamber, and large ensemble compositions, he has an affinity for art song. His mini-opera, *Fairies Found and Lost*, premiered during *Opera from Scratch 2024*. James completed his Master of Music in composition at The Hartt School – University of Hartford, studying composition with Keen Steen and Robert Carl and double bass with Robert Black. James has also studied privately with composers Libby Larsen and Daron Hagen, and has received his Artist Diploma from OAcademy as a 2024 member of the

Gabriela Ortiz Composing Studio.
Find more at: www.jdevormusic.com

Currently based in Madison, **Aimless Duo** is a mixed chamber duo that actively promotes 20th and 21st century repertoire composed for clarinet and double bass. Comprised of Paige Abramson (clarinets) and James A. Devor (double bass), Aimless Duo explores largely forgotten chamber works and commissions new pieces from living composers. The duo was recently selected to premiere James' large-scale chamber work, dear delightful hollow square, for clarinets, amplified contrabass, and live electronics at the 2024 Georgia Music Teachers Association Conference at Georgia State University – Perimeter College.

Human vs. Transhuman: Act One

Cecilia Suhr

Human vs. Transhumanism: Act One is a multimedia performance that delves into the ethical and spiritual dimensions of transhumanism, utilizing live voice improvisation alongside live electronics and fixed media. This performance seamlessly merges real-time audio and visual interactivity, intertwining the sounds of live human voices with electronics. This piece features images generated by the A.I. chatgpt, alongside visuals of robots and transhumans that embody the central theme. In act one, the performance opens with a concise audio-visual introduction to the concept of transhumanism, created with the assistance of AI, followed by an engaging sequence of voice improvisations and singing. At the end of this piece, the absence of the human voice, along with the overpowering cacophony of machine voices, heightens the representation of "singularity."

Cecilia Suhr is an award-winning intermedia/interdisciplinary artist and researcher, multi-instrumentalist (violin, cello, voice, piano, bamboo flute), multimedia composer, painter, author, and improviser. She has won numerous awards in the fields of music, art, interactive media, and academic research, including the American Prize (Honorable Mention), MacArthur Foundation, Digital Media and Learning Research Grant Award, Pauline Oliveros Award from the IAWM, Silver Medal Award from the Cambridge Music Competition, Bronze Medal Winner from the Global Music Awards, and Best of Competition Winner in Interactive Media and Emerging Technologies from the Broadcast Education Association, to name a few. Her music has been performed and featured worldwide in professional organizations, including the ICMC, SEAMUS, EMM, SCI, NYCEMF, ACOM, ATMI, Tenor, Convergence, Mise-En Music Festival, NoiseFloor, New Music Gathering, Splice Festival, New Music on the Bayou, Performing Media Art Festival, Mantis Festival, VU Symposium, Turn Up Festival, Hot Air Music Festival, Moxonic Festival, Beast Feast, ISSTA, Klint Gut, and many more. She is the author of "Social Media and Music" (Peter Lang Press, 2012) and "Evaluation and Credentialing in Digital Music Communities" (MIT Press, 2014). She is a full professor in the Department of Humanities and Creative Arts at Miami University Regionals.