

22/23 A Season of the New

New Music Concerts Presents

# Standing Wave: ex Machina

Artistic Director
Brian Current

**52nd Season**— 419th Event

**Sunday, November 20th, 2022** St. George by the Grange 30 Stephanie St

#### **Land Acknowledgment**

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples. Today Toronto is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands. We are grateful to have the opportunity to meet, work, and live on this island.

#### 22/23 Concert Season

Artistic

**Director**Brian Current

## Standing Wave:

Standing Wave Ensemble:

Christie Reside - Flutes AK Coope - Clarinets Rebecca Whitling - Violin Cristian Márkos - Cello

Allen Stiles - Piano

Vern Griffiths - Percussion
James O'Callaghan - Electronics

(for in an archipelago)

52nd Season

— 419th Event

Nov.20.22

St. George by the Grange

30 Stephanie St

#### **Program**

7:15pm Conversation with Composers and Guests

#### 7:45pm Young Artist Overture:

Derives I by Pierre Boulez performed by musicians from The Glenn Gould School

Esther Hwang - Flute Santiago Oviedo - Clarinet
Tiffany Tsai - Violin Shun-Ming Yang - Cello
Henry From - Piano Cassandra Wolfe - Vibraphone

#### 8:00pm ex Machina: Performed by Standing Wave Ensemble

Bekah Simms single Red flower (2022)

I. a few warbles for the little dead II. the big alive, feeling small

Mari Alice Conrad Atalanta's Arrow (2022)

Olivier Messiaen, arr. Jennifer Butler Le Merle Noir (1952, arr. 2013)

James O'Callaghan in an archipelago (2020)

I. a repeating island
II. ultima Thule

Gordon Fitzell Deus ex Machina: The Nine Lives of

Schrödinger's Cat (2019)



### A Message from NMC Artistic Director Brian Current



NMC is thrilled to embark upon our 52nd season of bringing the world's adventurous music to Toronto. Once again we present our signature mixture of 20th century masterpieces in dialogue with brand-new commissioned works, all superbly performed by NMC's exceptional performers and guest artists.

This season we truly celebrate the new with no less than twelve world premieres by Canadian composers. We also continue our tradition of hosting visiting ensembles to keep us in touch with other musical centres with BRuCH, Standing Wave and Duo Airs each bringing their own unique voices to our stages.

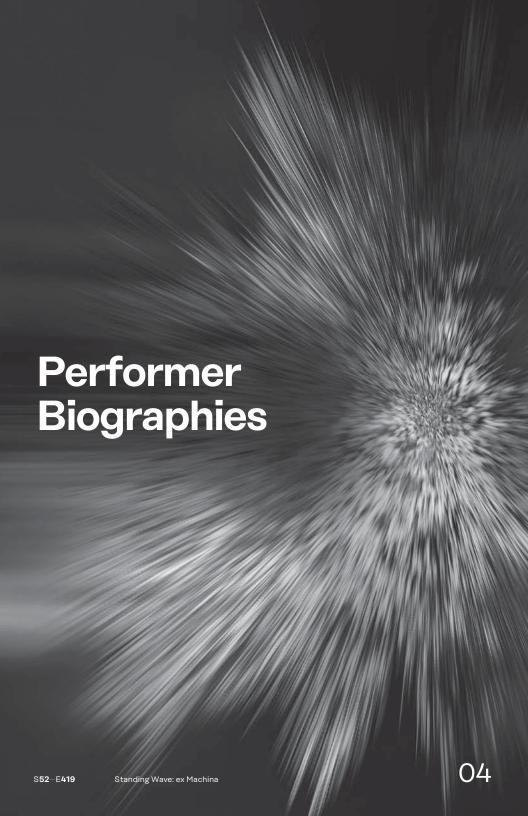
We also continue to celebrate our 50th anniversary with our signature Commissions for Distanced Ensemble, an exceptional documentation of

musical creation in 2022, as well as the unmissable Re-Sequencing Berio, a hybrid concert experience combining brand new music films of canonic Berio Sequenzas juxtaposed with live performances of new commissions.

Finally, we are making a major push towards fostering the next generation of creators and performers with the establishment of the empowerment program Makeway, which encourages emerging musical creators of all backgrounds to design, produce and lead their own projects.

As always, all performances are hosted in a lively and welcoming atmosphere with conversation aplenty. No matter where you come from, if you love adventurous music, you will always have a home at NMC. Let's ignite something miraculous, together.

- Brian Current, Artistic Director



#### **Standing Wave Ensemble**



Juno-nominated contemporary chamber ensemble Standing Wave ventures into a panoply of musical worlds with passion and assurance. Modern classics by Xenakis, Murail, Glass, and Vivier are staples of the ensemble's repertoire, along with commissioned works by pioneering Canadian composers such as James O'Callaghan, Nicole Lizee, Jocelyn Morlock, Giorgio Magnanensi, and Jordan Nobles.

In its 30 year history, Standing Wave has commissioned and premiered well over 100 works. The ensemble presents an annual season of concerts in Vancouver, has toured across Canada, and has collaborated with luminary artists such as Kokoro Dance, Ballet BC, Mina Shum, Peter Anderson, Talking Pictures, Veda Hille, and the Git Hayetsk Dancers.

Standing Wave's latest album, 20C Remix (2021), received a Juno nomination for Classical Album of the Year (small ensemble). The ensemble has twice been named Classical Artist/Ensemble of the Year at the Western Canadian Music Awards.

Celebrated on stages across Canada, Standing Wave has been featured as part of the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, the Modulus Festival, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra New Music Festival, the Victoria Symphony's New Currents Festival, the Vancouver International Jazz Festival, the Montreal New Music Festival, and Ottawa's Chamberfest. 2022 will see the ensemble performing on Winnipeg's venerable Groundswell Concert Series as well as New Music Concerts in Toronto.

Dedicated to fostering the next generations of Canadian composers, Standing Wave created Compocon in 2019. Compocon is a summer intensive for composition students. Mentor composers join ensemble members during this week-long program that culminates in the development of new works by the students for Standing Wave's 'Pierrot + Percussion" instrumentation. Standing Wave has been an ensemble in residence at the University of British Columbia School Of Music since 2004, working with members of the Composition Faculty to provide readings of student works, offering feedback and suggestions from the standpoint of a conductorless chamber ensemble, as well as open rehearsals and workshops.

## The Composers And Their Music

#### Bekah Simms — *single Red flower*



#### **Program Note**

"Single Red Flower" was written shortly before, during, and after the death of my two rats Parsley and Sage. They were my pandemic companions, providing much love and friendship during two awful years of lockdown in a small Toronto basement apartment. The two movements are threaded with residual emotion from their passing.

Having never dealt with losing a pet before — let alone two in quick succession — I was mystified, touched, and overwhelmed with the rituals of their little deaths: laying them in the cage for their cagemates to process their death; picking out a flowerpot, soil, and seeds in which to bury them; and laying them to rest in a backyard rental which we would soon be leaving. Only one plant bloomed from the planter, a beautiful red flower of a species I have never seen before.

While I often try to keep my emotions out of my music, this piece inadvertently became strange, small, and ritualistic, reflecting these experiences. Little, quiet sounds are brought to the forefront and

amplified to fill the space in the same way that little things can fill our hearts beyond bearing.

#### **Biography**

Composer Bekah Simms hails from St. John's, Newfoundland and is currently based in Glasgow after nine years living and working in Toronto. Her varied musical output has been heralded as "cacophonous, jarring, oppressive and totally engrossing!" (CBC Music) and lauded for its "sheer range of ingenious material, expressive range and sonic complexity" (The Journal of Music.) Propelled equally by fascination and terror toward the universe, her work is often filtered through the personal lens of her anxiety, resulting in nervous, messy, and frequently heavy electroacoustic musical landscapes. Recent interests in just intonation and virtual instruments have resulted in increasingly lush and strange harmonic environments.

Bekah's music has been widely performed across North America and

#### Bekah Simms Continued

Europe. She has worked with some of the top interpreters of contemporary music internationally, including Crash Ensemble, Riot Ensemble, Eighth Blackbird, and l'Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal. Bekah has also been the recipient of over 35 awards, competitive selections, and prizes, including the 2019 Barlow Prize. The resulting work, "metamold," was nominated for the 2022 Gaudeamus Award. Works from her debut album "impurity chains" were nominated in both 2019 and 2020 for the JUNO Award for Classical Composition of the Year. Her music has thrice been

included in the Canadian Section's official submission to World Music Days (2016, 2019, & 2021), and in 2016 the CBC included her among their annual 30 hot classical musicians under 30.

As of September 2022, Bekah is a Lecturer at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, following previous academic positions at the University of Toronto and University of Western Ontario. Her principal teachers during academic studies were Gary Kulesha and Andrew Staniland, alongside significant private study with Clara Iannotta and Martin Bédard.

## Mari Alice Conrad — Atalanta's Arrow



#### **Program Note**

Atalanta's Arrow: Inspired by Violet Archer's cantata, The Bell.

Atalanta's Arrow is the second work in a collection of chamber pieces exploring my fascination with the mythology surrounding the Greek goddess Atalanta. A daughter of a king,

Atalanta was abandoned at birth in a forest because she was not a male heir. Despite her odds, she grew into a strong and prolific huntress and bravely carved out her own way.

Violet Archer (1913-2000) was a composer and music professor at the University of Alberta from 1962-1978

#### Mari Alice Conrad Continued

who worked to carve her own way in the composition world. As evident in her 1972 cantata, The Bell, music was her religion, and she gave everything to her art. Her focus was bold, direct, and as sharp as an arrow. She courageously and unapologetically shared her own distinct musical voice.

Violet and Atalanta exemplify the courage and independence of women in a world where others more powerful or privileged assume the target or trajectory of life arrows. As a current graduate student at the University of Alberta, I often think of Violet while walking the hallways of the Fine Arts Building and imagine she is passing on her sharp, arrow-like focus to all of those who share a similar aim in life: an aim steadied with strength, passion, and courage to boldly defy societal expectations in efforts to achieve their ambitions.

#### **Biography**

Mari Alice Conrad is an award-winning composer currently living in Alberta, Canada. Her works have been performed

by various ensembles across Canada, United States, and Europe. Mari Alice specializes in writing concert works for chamber ensembles, choirs, soloists, and large ensembles in a variety of genres. Performances of her works have been presented at Ottawa Chamberfest, Vancouver's Allegra Chamber Orchestra FestivELLE, Été musical de Barachois in New Brunswick, in the Žofín Palace for the World Wind Music Festival and WASBE Conference in Prague, Czech Republic, Toronto's East Chamber Music Festival, the Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity EvoFest. New Music Edmonton Summer Solstice Festival, and the Toronto 2022 Choral Canada's Podium Conference as the recipient of the Stephen Chatman Student Award in Choral Composition. Mari Alice's compositional practice shines an exceptional light on the human condition and fosters curiosity, authenticity, connection, and collaboration, creating a compelling experience for both performers and audience alike.

www.marialiceconrad.com

## James O'Callaghan — in an archipelago



#### **Program Note**

in an archipelago is a work for sextet and electronics, or any combination of its constituent parts, from solos, various possible duos and trios, and so on, all the way up to the full band, for a total of 127 possible combinations. The work was composed during the COVID-19 pandemic, where an uncertain future led to the idea of affording the extracting of solos from the commission of a chamber piece-to-be. Each instrument's part was composed one-by-one, first as a mockup assembled from recordings of my past pieces, among other sources. I listened to each of these parts in different combinations and fine-tuned them as I went in order to compose in such a way that they could exist on their own or in this variable company. I then transcribed the parts into a notated chamber score. Each instrument has a phoneme attached to it. drawn from the title, and the title of each performance becomes an assemblage of its parts.

Antonio Benítez-Rojo's 1985 essay The Repeating Island set out a way of thinking borne of the postcolonial conditions of the Caribbean that challenges the binary ontologies of Analytical and Continental Thinking. An Archipelagic Thinking is one of multiplicity and polyrhythm which conceptualizes through fragmentary interrelations rather than a system or a totality. In composing this piece, I was thinking about connectivity through isolation, and the idea that repetition brings necessarily a difference and a deferral. The kind of densely modular repetition I experiment with, where every moment is densely recontextualizable, is one that I hope offers an opportunity to collapse binary listening.

in an archipelago was commissioned by Standing Wave.

#### **Biography**

James O'Callaghan (b. 1988) is a composer and sound artist based in Montréal praised for his "mastery of materials and musical form." (Electromania, Radio France) His music has been described as "very personal... with its own colour anchored in the unpredictable." (Goethe-Institut) Never

#### James O'Callaghan Continued

having studied an instrument, he came to music first through making industrial electronic dance music. His work intersects acoustic and electroacoustic media, employing field recordings, amplified found objects, computerassisted transcription of environmental sounds, and unique performance conditions.

His artistic output, spanning chamber, orchestral, live electronic and acousmatic idioms, audio installations, and site-specific performances, has been performed in 26 countries, and variously commissioned by the Groupe de Recherches Musicales (INA-GRM), Gaudeamus Muziekweek, the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, Esprit Orchestra, l'Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal, Standing Wave, and many others. His album Espaces tautologiques, released by empreintes DIGITALes, won a Prix Opus, and was listed by 5:4 as one of the "best albums of 2016". His extended collaboration with Ensemble Paramirabo resulted in a portrait album of his works in 2019, entitled Alone and unalone. It was released on Ravello Records and was nominated for a JUNO award.

His music has been the recipient of nearly 40 national and international prizes and nominations, including the ISCM Young Composer Award (2017), the Salvatore Martirano Award (2016), the Robert Fleming Prize (2015), the Jan V. Matejcek Award in New Classical Music (2018), the Jeu de Temps-Times Play Awards (2014), the SOCAN Foundation John Weinzweig Grand Prize (2014), and the audience and jury prize from the ECM+ Génération 2018 tour. Significant nominations include those

for the Gaudeamus Award (2016), prix Métamorphoses (2018), and two JUNO Awards(2014, 2020) — the first at 26 as the youngest nominee in the history of the category classical composition of the year.

Active as an arts organiser and advocate for reform and increased access to and equity in music infrastructures, he co-founded the Montréal Contemporary Music Lab, served on the artistic committee of Codes d'accès, and as a national councillor of the Canadian League of Composers. He also presents at conferences and publishes regularly on compositional topics including instrumental transcription of environmental sound, cross-media transcription, soundscape music, and electroacoustic diffusion through instruments (Organised Sound, Twentieth-Century Music, eContact!, Electroacoustic Music Studies). He is an associate composer of the Canadian Music Centre.

Originally from Mount Currie, British Columbia, he received a Master of Music degree in composition from McGill University in 2014, studying with Philippe Leroux. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts honours degree from Simon Fraser University in 2011, studying with Barry Truax, David MacIntyre, Rodney Sharman and Arne Eigenfeldt. He has also studied and taken workshops with Kaija Saariaho, Jean-Baptiste Barrière, Lasse Thoresen, Mark Andre, Simon Steen-Andersen, Clara Iannotta, Pierluigi Billone, Agostino Di Scipio, Jorge Sánchez-Chiong, Christopher Butterfield, Christopher Fox, Antoine Beuger, Juliet Palmer, Michel Gonneville, Bekah Simms, and R. Murray Schafer.

## Jennifer Butler — Le Merle Noir, Olivier Messiaen, arr. Jennifer Butler



#### **Program Note**

Le Merle Noir was originally written in 1952 for flute and piano by French composer and ornithologist Olivier Messiaen. This piece represents the first time that Messiaen worked from recorded birdsong, in this case that of the European blackbird. This combination of music and the natural world is a common element in my music, and is also what draws me to the music of Messiaen.

I chose to arrange this piece for Standing Wave because it has been one of my favourite pieces since I studied it during my undergrad degree, when I was majoring in flute performance. It was also one of the pieces that drew me more and more towards the music of the 20th Century in my days as an emerging composer. Arranging this duo for Standing Wave turned out to be both fascinating and challenging, because the music is so intricate and tightly woven.

For example, there is no time signature, and every measure has a different number of beats. The pulse is constantly shifting in subtle ways, so when you move from two to six players it becomes very demanding on the ensemble.

I want to thank Standing Wave for commissioning this piece, and also for the many stunning performances they have given over the years.

#### **Biography**

Jennifer Butler is a composer, teacher, and flutist living in Vancouver, British Columbia. Her music, described as "beautifully remote" (Vancouver Sun), "intimate" (Globe and Mail), and "disquieting" (Vancouver Observer), has been commissioned, performed, and broadcast across Canada, in the United States, Australia, and Europe. She holds both a Master's degree and Doctorate in music composition from the University of British Columbia.

#### Jennifer Butler Continued

Recent and upcoming projects include: After Rain, commissioned by the Blueridge Chamber Music Festival; The End of the World (or else the beginning), commissioned by the Vancouver Intercultural Orchestra for flutist Mark Mcgregor and the Borealis String Quartet; Songs for Klee Wyck, commissioned by Victoria's Emily Carr String Quartet with Marion Newman; and an upcoming commission for the Vancouver Island Symphony for voice and string orchestra. She is currently producing her first album, a collection of her chamber music, supported by the Canada Council.

Passionate about teaching, Jennifer currently teaches first-year composition

at UBC and 20th Century theory at the Vancouver Academy of Music. She is also a Teaching Artist with Vancouver Opera and a composer mentor with both the Turning Point Ensemble and the Okanagan Symphony.

Jennifer is the Chair for the advisory committee for the BC region of the CMC, and is an active board member for Redshift music and the Standing Wave Ensemble. She was the first female President of the Canadian League of Composers from 2011-14. One of her greatest influences remains her participation in R. Murray Schafer's Wolf Project between 2000-2016.

## Gordon Fitzell — Deus ex Machina: The Nine Lives of Schrodinger's Cat



#### **Program Note**

I have recently taken to basing aspects of my work on the unlikely pairing of seemingly unrelated concepts, with the aim of discovering unusual and unexpected commonalities. In my 2018 flute concerto Techno Messiah: Zoom | Richter | Langsam | Pop, for example,

#### Gordon Fitzell Continued

I examine the abstract paintings of Gerhard Richter's alongside the synth-pop music of Kraftwerk and other West German bands of 1970s and 80s. In Deus ex Machina: The Nine Lives of Schrödinger's Cat, I explore two equally dissimilar concepts—an improbable plot device and a preposterous thought experiment.

The term deus ex machina is Latin for 'god from the machine'. It refers to a convention of Greek tragedy wherein a machine was used to hoist actors playing gods onto the stage, as a means of resolving a seemingly unsolvable problem. Schrödinger's cat, on the other hand, is a paradox that highlights the seemingly nonsensical implications of a fundamental principle of quantum physics known as quantum superposition. In short, the scenario presents a cat that may be considered to be both alive and dead because it is linked to a random subatomic event that may or may not occur. In terms of readily perceivable musical elements, the related concept of wave-particle duality is reflected in the extensive use of orchestrational pairing throughout the piece.

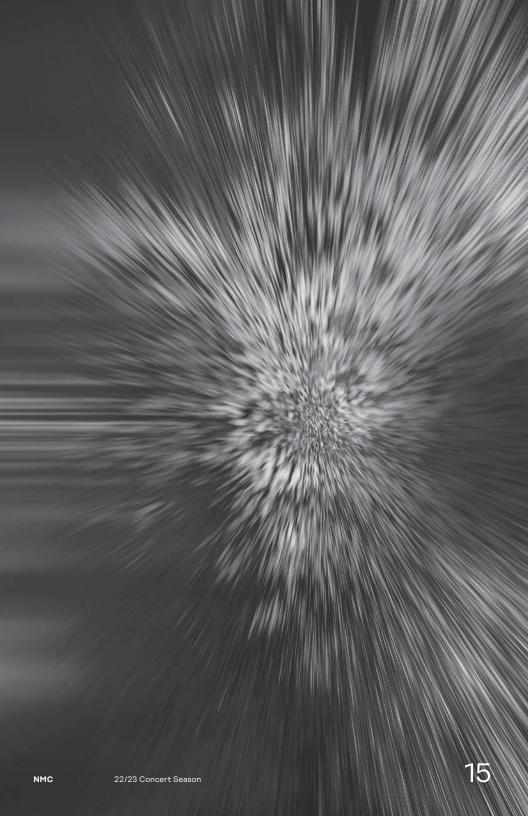
The "nine lives" component stems from a little-known master's thesis in which nine interpretations of quantum mechanics are addressed. These nine sections correspond to the opening nine sections of my musical composition; a tenth and final section of the composition acknowledges more recent (and even more bizarre) interpretations of Schrödinger's cat. This final section also represents the "Deux ex Machina" of the title. Deus ex Machina: The Nine Lives of Schrödinger's Cat was commissioned

#### **Biography**

Gordon Fitzell is a Canadian composer, improviser, and sound artist. His Music, described as "eerie, throbbing and trancelike" (New York Times), tends to explore peculiar points of connection between classical and popular elements of culture, freely inhabiting acoustic, electroacoustic, and interdisciplinary performance environments.

He has worked with a wide range of artists including BIT20 Ensemble (Norway), eighth blackbird (USA), ensemble mosaik (Germany), Ensemble Orchestral Contemporain (France), and PianOrquestra (Brazil), as well as Canada's Ensemble Contemporain de Montreal, Standing Wave, and Trio Fibonacci. His music has been conducted by Robert Aitken, Daniel Kawka, Veronique Lacroix, Reinbert de Leeuw and Bramwell Tovey, and performed at international festivals including the Darmstadter Feriendurse (Germany), the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (England), the Pan Music Festival (South Korea), the Tanglewood Music Festival (USA), and the Winnipeg New Music Festival (Canada).

His music is featured on various albums, including GRAMMY-winning, Opus Award-winning, JUNO-nominated, and West Coast Music Award-nominated recordings. In addition to concert music, he has presented sound installations in North America and Europe and produced recordings for other artists. He is an associate composer of the Canadian Music Centre and a professor of composition at the University of Manitoba Desautels Faculty of Music, where he co-directs the experimental Improv Ensemble (XIE).



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