

I/O FEST 2024  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 7:30 PM  
'62 CENTER FOR THEATRE AND DANCE

Presented by the Williams College Department of Music  
Featuring Bent Duo, New Music Williams, and quacktrioquack  
Duration: approx. 75 minutes, no intermission

PROGRAM

Free Improvisation

quacktrioquack

Francesca Hellerman '23, *live electronics*; Sara Stebbins '24, *voice*; Matt Wisotsky '23, *winds*

Sarah Hennies

*Unsettle* (2017)  
for Bent Duo

Bent Duo

David Friend, *piano*; Bill Solomon, *vibraphone and bells*

Matt Wisotsky '23

*deus ex machina* (2024) ➤  
for clarinet, violin, and piano

Matt Wisotsky '23, *clarinet*; Sara Stebbins '24, *violin*; Francesca Hellerman '23, *piano*

Julius Eastman

*Stay On It* (1973)  
for various instruments

New Music Williams

Sara Stebbins '24, *voice and direction*

Lucy Luo '27, *piano*; Petra Hinds '24, *voice*; Sienna Kelley '27, *voice*; Evan Zeltsar '27, *saxophone*;  
Matt Wisotsky '23, *saxophone*; Artie Carpenter '25, *trumpet*; Paul Kim '24, *trumpet*; Gwyn Chilcoat  
'24, *trombone*; Francesca Hellerman '23, *melodica*; Isabella Hayden '26, *violin*; Jazmin Morenzi '27,  
*violin*; Stella Oh '25, *violin*; Jessie Burdette '25, *viola*; Michael Ma '26, *electric guitar*; Josh Lee '24,  
*vibraphone*; Matthew Gold, *vibraphone*; Rein Vaska '25, *drum set*; with special guests Bent Duo

➤ Denotes World Premiere

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

### SARAH HENNIES: *Unsettle*

In modern experimental music, and especially among a number of musician-composers emerging in America during the Sixties, a fixation on process and awareness became a structural hallmark, exploring the gradual change of sonic materials, built environments, and the human body. In recent years, composer Sarah Hennes (b. 1979) is forging new paths of reduction and expansion. Taking its cue from a two or three player-one vibraphone piece called *Settle*, which was composed by Hennes in 2012, *Unsettle* (2017) is a spare and summarily weighty composition that finds space monolithic and driving. The score is economic, taking all of two pages to spin out 33 minutes of music. It begins with *una corda* fluttering, the passing of time held in single E notes bent at the edges and limned by vibraphone haze, gradually augmented by rumbling clusters and brassy, clanging bells. The inflection and increase in density among otherwise apposite events create an extremely intense landscape of tension without release, though powerful as well—the closing minutes of pedal movement, muted piano strings, and bell clatter (à la Iannis Xenakis' *Bohór I*) lead into prepared twang and supple metallic accents. Ditto the shock of vibraphone and muted clamor at minute twenty, carrying enough distorted overtones to defuse one's skull.

– Clifford Allen

Sarah Hennes (b. 1979, Louisville, KY) is a composer based in Upstate NY whose work is concerned with a variety of musical, sociopolitical, and psychological issues including queer & trans identity, psychoacoustics, and the social and neurological conditions underlying creative thought. She is primarily a composer of acoustic ensemble music, but is also active in improvisation, film, and performance art. She presents her work internationally as both a composer and percussionist with notable performances at MoMA PS1 (NYC), Monday Evening Concerts (Los Angeles), Warsaw Autumn, Ruhrtriennale (Essen), Archipel Festival (Geneva), Darmstädter Ferienkurse, Time:Spans (NYC), and the Edition Festival (Stockholm). As a composer, she has received commissions across a wide array of performers and ensembles including Bearthoven, Bent Duo, Claire Chase, Ensemble Dedalus, Mivos String Quartet, Talea Ensemble, Nate Wooley, and Yarn/Wire.

Her groundbreaking audio-visual work *Contralto* (2017) explores transfeminine identity through the elements of "voice feminization" therapy, featuring a cast of transgender women accompanied by a dense and varied musical score for string quartet and three percussionists. The work has been in high demand since its premiere, with numerous performances taking place around North America, Europe, and Australia and was one of four finalists for the 2019 Queer|Art Prize.

She is the recipient of a 2019 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists Award, a 2016 fellowship in music/sound from the New York Foundation for the Arts, and has received additional support from the Fromm Foundation, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, New Music USA, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Creative Work Fund.

As a scholar and performer she is engaged with ongoing research about the percussion music of Iannis Xenakis and a recording project to document music by the American percussionist and composer Michael Ranta. Sarah is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at Bard College.

MATT WISOTSKY '23: *deus ex machina*

*deus ex machina* references a literal interpretation of the literary trope, which translates roughly to “god from the machine.” Written in 7 short movements, the piece explores the interconnected relationships between human and machine, while also considering the consequences of the deification of technology.

– Matt Wisotsky

Matt Wisotsky is a composer and multi-instrumentalist currently based in northern New Jersey. His work focuses on combining the Western classical tradition with other stylistic influences, such as jazz and contemporary performance practice. He recently received an ASCAP Plus award for work during 2023, and in addition to composing, he has also been active as a performer, musical director, improviser, and arts administrator. Matt is a recent alum of Williams College, and he plans to continue composing and performing in the future.

JULIUS EASTMAN: *Stay On It*

Com' on now baby, stay on it.  
Change this thread on which we move  
from invisible to hardly tangible.

With you movin and groovin on it,  
making me feel fine as wine,  
I don't have to find the MEANING,  
because you will have filled in his most invisible and intangible Majesty's place;  
But only if you stay on it. *You Dig*  
Although his majesty does stay with it,  
he can't stay on it. (Does that move you?)

Ties that move and break,  
disappear, and return again, are not ties that stay on it.  
They are sometimy bonds. These bonds cause  
screens like the Edge of Night, with  
Ivory snow liquid to appear.

This is why baby cakes, I'm ringing you up in order to relay this song message  
so that you can get the feelin

O sweet boy

Because without the movin and the groovin,  
the carin and the sharin, the reelin and the feelin,  
I mean really.

– Julius Eastman

*Stay On It* (1973) has become one of the most oft-performed works by composer, singer, pianist, conductor, and performance artist Julius Eastman (1940-1990). “What I am trying to achieve,” Eastman once said, “is to be what I am to the fullest. Black to the fullest, a musician to the fullest, a homosexual

to the fullest.” His uncompromising artistic and political views, as well as his struggles with mental illness, addiction, and homelessness, only compounded the difficulties of making a stable career in an anti-Black, homophobic music industry. He died alone at the age of 49 in Buffalo, New York; it took eight months before the first public notice of his death appeared in *The Village Voice*. Most of his scores had been impounded by the New York City Sheriff’s Office following his eviction in the early ’80s, and for a long time, his music had been all but forgotten. Luckily, recent efforts to recover and reconstruct Eastman’s music, based on recordings, recollections of his collaborators, and remnants of his scores (which, as they were, employed loose notational methods and left much up to interpretation) have restored the composer to his rightful place in the history of Downtown music. And so, Eastman’s body of work lives on, is made anew in each performance. It’s associated with a rather painful history—and yet it is vibrant and defiantly joyous music. It calls upon performers to engage in an act of collective interpretation, entering into dialogue with each other and, transhistorically, with the composer himself.

“Stay On It” is a structured improvisation that may be performed with any instrumentation that includes voice, piano, and mallet percussion. The score consists of many cells, the most important of which is the Main Theme, a measure-long melodic riff harmonized in parallel major triads. As in Eastman’s other “organic music,” other “layering cells” accumulate throughout the piece as the main theme stays relatively constant. About halfway through the piece, however, the main theme also begins to fall apart, as players are instructed to “gradually move out of phase with each other.” At the start of each new section, the players snap back into playing the main theme together, only for the texture to begin fraying again. Towards the end of the piece, the main theme is replaced by a related but distinct closing theme: a heaviness that still insists upon moving and grooving, accumulating layers of dissonance as it pushes obstinately onwards—which, to me, sounds like the movement of history. The piece ends with a tambourine playing an incessant sixteenth note pattern that repeats for an unspecified amount of time. It could go on forever: this is time itself made audible. Unheard until the very end, it is the thread upon which we move and groove, that which connects us to our collective past, me to Eastman, me to you...

– Sara Stebbins

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

quacktrioquack is an electroacoustic improv ensemble consisting of Francesca Hellerman (electronics), Sara Stebbins (voice), and Matt Wisotsky (winds). first formed during I/O Fest 2023 at Williams College, quacktrioquack is dedicated to exploring a wide range of exciting and unusual sonic worlds. their live performances are built around a fun-oriented approach to improvised music, and include completely spontaneous sets, interpretations of pages of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* selected by random number generator, and covers of classic American folk tunes. they are available to play at weddings, children’s birthday parties, church services, corporate retreats, coronations, inaugurations, press briefings, high school reunions, pets’ birthday parties, intramural sporting events, et cetera: email [quacktrioquack@gmail.com](mailto:quacktrioquack@gmail.com) with any inquiries.

Bent Duo is a NYC-based experimental duo that performs and creates innovative work. Founders Bill Solomon and David Friend are conservatory-trained musicians whose careers have been deeply rooted in NYC’s New Music scene, performing with ensembles and collaborating with composers across the city and around the world. In Bent Duo, they explore the outer reaches of experimental music practice and investigate new techniques for creating and performing new works that transcend conventional

boundaries between disciplines, frequently with a focus on queer aesthetics and social practice. Bent Duo has performed in concert halls and DIY venues across the United States, including Miller Theatre (NYC), Betalevel (LA), and the Harvard Art Museums, and in festivals including TIME:SPANS, where they shared a bill with Deerhoof. They have been invited to lecture on their work at institutions including Yale University, Bard College, Hartford Art School, Yarn/Wire Institute Festival, and they were presented as a guest performer at the Performing Indeterminacy International Conference hosted by the University of Leeds (UK).

They have created a varied body of original work, imbricating a variety of creative practices and forms. These include original sound-based performance pieces, multi-disciplinary installations in public space, participatory community sound structures, and digital, video, print, and recording projects. Their most recent work, DARKROOM, was a performance installation for blindfolded, individual audience member that premiered at Brick Aux over the course of a full weekend. They frequently collaborate with other artists, including composers such as Sarah Hennies, Matt Sargent, and Casey Anderson, as well as artists from various other creative practices, including Jace Clayton and Aine Nakamura.

They have recorded celebrated albums for the New World and a wave press labels, and have also self-released recording projects including the cassette project Ramble. [www.bentduo.com](http://www.bentduo.com)

## ABOUT I/O FEST

I/O Fest, the Williams College Department of Music's annual immersion in the music of today, is a multi-day exploration of adventurous music featuring new voices, fresh perspectives, and creative modes of musical expression. Performances, talks, and workshops are held in the '62 Center for Theatre & Dance and The Clark Art Institute, with a special interest in unconventional spaces and modes of performance. Featuring renowned guest artists and performances by the I/O Ensemble, New Music Williams, faculty, and students, I/O Fest seeks to present innovative and visceral programs that invite listeners to experience music in new ways.

## 2024 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS (All events are free, no reservation required, unless otherwise noted)

### FRIDAY 1/12

7:30 PM | '62 Center

Bent Duo, New Music Williams, and quacktrioquack

Music by Sarah Hennies and Julius Eastman

### SATURDAY 1/13

7:30 PM | '62 Center

Transient Canvas and New Music Williams

Music by Yaz Lancaster, Crystal Pascucci, Mikhail Johnson, and Yi-Ting Lu

### SUNDAY 1/14

3:00 PM | The Clark\*

RAWdance, I/O Ensemble, and Ephemera (directed by Anna Lenti)

\*Reserve your seat at [Clarkart.edu](http://Clarkart.edu)

### THURSDAY 1/18

6:00 PM | The Clark\*

The Lodger

Live music for a classic Hitchcock film performed by Matthew Gold and Paul de Jong

## I/O FEST STAFF

Matthew Gold, Artistic Director; Sara Stebbins '24, Student Director; Jeffrey Miller, Stage and Orchestra Manager, Williams College Department of Music; Jonathan Myers, Concert and Event Coordinator, Williams College Department of Music

## Acknowledgements

Ed Gollin, Music Dept. Chair; Nathaniel Wiessner, '62 Center Operations Manager; John Burrow, Sound and Media Manager; Daniel O'Connell, Production Technician; Corissa L. Bryant, Patron and Visiting Artist Services Manager; Ileana Perez Velázquez, Zachary Wadsworth, Composition Faculty; Will Schmenner, Clark Art Institute; Jeff Bentley, Piano Technician; Daniel Czernecki, Recording Engineer