



**Williams College
Department of Music**

presents

Visiting Artists: Composers and Their Laptops

Jeffrey Roberts

Song of the Roosting Crows (2011)
for guqin and electronics
Jeffrey Roberts, guqin

Neil Leonard

Nocturnal Remix (2010) for alto saxophone and laptop
Neil Leonard, saxophones

Sam Pluta

Signal Flow (2009)
for percussion quartet and electronics

Williams Percussion Ensemble
Matthew Gold, director; Casey McLellan '14; Nina Piazza '12; Adin Kreiger-Benson '15;
Sam Pluta - Audio Engineer

****Intermission****

Kathryn Alexander
Juraj Kojs
Margaret Lancaster
Jennifer Beattie

The Harbingers (2012)

**Sunday, April 29, 2012
3:00 p.m.**

*Brooks-Rogers Recital Hall
Williamstown, Massachusetts*

*Please turn off all electronic devices.
No photography or recording is permitted.*

Biographies

Sam Pluta

Sam Pluta is a New York City-based composer and improviser working in the fields of acoustic and electronic music. He is Technical Director for the Wet Ink Ensemble, a group dedicated to performing new works by young composers. He has been commissioned and premiered by Wet Ink Ensemble, Yarn/Wire, ICE, Timetable Percussion, RIOT Trio, So Percussion, Dave Eggar, and Prism Saxophone Quartet and has performed internationally as a laptop soloist and chamber musician. As a founding member of the improvising quartet GBL and performing with groups like the Peter Evans Quintet, Sam has focused in recent years on fusing the worlds of acoustic and electronic instruments through improvisation. A devoted pedagogue, aside from his teaching duties as faculty fellow at Columbia University, he holds the John Plude Faculty Chair in Computer Musicianship at the Walden School. His music is released on quiet design and Carrier Records, a label he runs with Jeff Snyder and David Franzson. www.sampluta.com

~~~~~

### Juraj Kojs

Juraj Kojs is a Slovakian composer, performer, multimedia artist, producer, researcher and educator residing in the US. His compositions have received awards from Europe—A Sound Panorama, Miami New Times Best Off Award, Eastman Electroacoustic Composition and Performance Competition and the Digital Art Award. Kojs has received commissions from The Quiet Music Ensemble, Miami Light Project and Meet the Composer.

Players who performed Kojs' music include Tomoko Mukaiyama, Blair McMillen, Margaret Lancaster, Madeleine Shapiro, Laura Wilcox, Michael Straus, Susan Fancher, Eugen Prochac, Canticum Ostrava, Atticus Brass Quintet, IKTUS Percussion Quartet, The Quiet Music Ensemble, Ensemble s21, Cassatt String Quartet, The Now Ensemble and Yale Gamelan Suprabanggo.

His research articles appeared in journals such as Organized Sound, Digital Creativity, Leonardo Music Journal, Journal of New Music Research and International Journal of Arts and Technology.

Kojs is the director of Miami-based Foundation for Emerging Technologies and Arts (FETA). He holds a Ph.D. in Composition and Computer Technologies from University of Virginia. Kojs has taught at Medialogy Department Aalborg University (Copenhagen, Denmark), Yale University and University of Virginia. He is currently a full time faculty in the Audio Production Department at Miami International University of Art and Design in Miami, FL. [www.kojs.net](http://www.kojs.net)

~~~~~

Margaret Lancaster

“New-music luminary” (The New York Times) and “leading exponent of the avant-garde flute” (Kyle Gann, Village Voice), interdisciplinary performer Margaret Lancaster has premiered well over 100 pieces and built a large repertoire of new works written specifically for her that employ extended techniques, dance, drama, multi-media, and electronics.

Lancaster is a member of Either/Or, Glass Farm and Fisher Ensemble, a guest of the Argento Ensemble, Sequitur, Ne(x)works, Counter)induction, and Talujon, and a recurring performer at Spoleto Festival USA and Santa Fe New Music. Performance highlights include Lincoln Center Festival, Ibsen Festival, Edinburgh Festival, Whitney Museum, Tap City Festival, New Music Miami, Festival D'Automne, HERE Arts Center and Bremen Musikfest with Absolute Ensemble. She has appeared as a lecturer/soloist at many sites including Stanford, Dartmouth, Princeton, Bennington, and the National Flute Association, has recorded on New World Records, OO Discs, Naxos, Innova and Tzadik, and was selected for Meet the Composer's *New Works for Soloist Champions* project. Noted for her inter-disciplinary performances, Lancaster, who also works as an actor, choreographer, dancer, and amateur furniture designer, presents solo and chamber music concerts worldwide and acts in Lee Breuer's OBIE-winning *Mabou Mines Dollhouse* ...www.margaretlancaster.com.

Jeffrey Roberts

As composer and improviser, Dr. Jeff Roberts works to integrate different elements of music styles and cultural traditions that sonically and aesthetically resonate. His training in Jazz and free improvisation led to work in found object experimentation through the founding of the Walden Percussion Project, and most recently with his integration of the Chinese guqin tradition and found object sound using computers and Max-Msp. Out of this work, Jeff forms his language for composition, focusing on the small details of idiomatic sound gesture in the context of a spontaneous musical flow.

His compositions have been performed in the US, Europe and China by ensembles such as E-mex Ensemble, Dinosaur Annex, Mikrococosmos, members of Eighth Blackbird, Bent Frequency Ensemble, Wet Ink Ensemble, Cygnus Ensemble, Boston Chamber Orchestra and the Brandeis-Wellesley Orchestra. He has been commissioned by Philharmonisches Orchester Cottbus, Colorfield Ensemble, E-mex Ensemble, Dinosaur Annex, and Boston Chamber Orchestra with music selected for performance in several festivals including Music09 Blonay, Città di Udine International Festival, June in Buffalo, Warebrook Music Festival, Wellesley Composer Conference and Columbia Music Scholarship Conference.

He is the recipient of several fellowships, awards and residencies including a Fulbright Fellowship to China, the Kaske Fellowship Prize from the Wellesley Composer's Conference, artist residencies at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the STEIM Foundation in Amsterdam, and guest composer residencies at the University of Indianapolis and with E-mex Ensemble at the Folkwang Museum in Essen, Germany.

Dr. Roberts performs on Chinese guqin in traditional and modern contexts. His study of the guqin repertoire with guqin master Li Xiangting in Beijing served as a foundation for the pursuit of improvisation under the guidance of his teacher. Recently he has integrated Chinese guqin and Western experimental found object sound worlds using computers and Max-Msp. He has been a guest performer at several Universities in the US (Dartmouth, Northwestern, U Indianapolis, U Indiana) and on concert series worldwide (Karnatic Lab-Amsterdam, D-22, Yishu8-Beijing, Open Sound-Boston). He has presented recitals alongside his research at ISIM (Chicago), CIMACC (Cambridge U, England) and CHIME (Belgium) conferences. He collaborates on guitar and guqin with guqin master Wuna in Beijing and both have been commissioned by The Beijing Center and Ricci Institute to record a CD of guqin and guitar improvisations along with an accompanying book of essays on improvisation and intercultural collaboration. He also continues to perform as a jazz guitarist and with his Walden Percussion Project, performing new works for found object percussion.

His research investigates aspects of Chinese music and explores relationships between Chinese and Western aesthetics and traditions. He has written on guqin master Li Xiangting's modern Improvisation, the Western composer-performer model with a non-western performance base and is currently writing a paper that explores aesthetic and philosophical resonance between Chinese Daoism and New England Transcendentalism and their influence on music. His 'Guitar Atlas:China' was released by Alfred Press in 2009 and has two articles on Chinese Traditional Music in Modern China and Western Classical Music in Modern China coming out in the journal Crosscurrents, published by the Ricci Institute.

Dr. Roberts holds a PhD in Theory and Composition from Brandeis University, an MM in Composition from Boston University and a BM in Improvisation from New England Conservatory of Music. He pursued special studies with composer Hans Zender at the Hochschule für Musik, Frankfurt am Main Germany, through a grant from the Franz Goethe Stiftung. He studied with guqin master Li Xiangting on a Fulbright in 2006.

In 2011-2012 he is a Visiting Assistant Professor at Williams College. He previously taught at the Beijing Center for Chinese Studies in Beijing, China. Dr. Roberts is also co-founder and Music Artistic Director for the Music Beyond the Moongate Concert Series and International Chamber Music Festival at Yishu-8 Art Space in Beijing, China.
www.jeff-roberts.org

Kathryn Alexander

Composer Kathryn Alexander was the 2009 winner of the Roger Sessions Memorial Bogliasco Fellowship in Music, for which she resided as Composer-in-Residence at The Liguria Study Center in Bogliasco, Italy during March and April 2009. She was a 2007–08 winner of the Aaron Copland Award and a 2006 recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship. In addition to the Copland Award and the Guggenheim Fellowship, Alexander has been awarded a Radcliffe Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study at Harvard University (2004–2005), a Computerworld Laureate Award from the Smithsonian Institute (2000–2001), a Composer's Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts (1989–1990), and the Rome Prize (1988–1989). She has won numerous awards from ASCAP (1993–present) and has held residencies at the MacDowell Colony (1994/1989), The Millay Colony (1990), The Virginia Center for the Arts (1990), Yaddo (1989), the Atlantic Center for the Arts (1986), and the Tanglewood Music Center (1985).

In addition to 'The Harbingers,' her current projects include a string octet for The JACK Quartet, a chamber work for the Argento Ensemble, a guitar piece for soloist Benjamin Verdery, a violoncello concerto for soloist Ole Akahoshi, a mini-chamber contra-bass concerto for Eric Snoza and Fifth House Ensemble of Chicago, another chamber opera for Jennifer Beattie, Fifth House Ensemble and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and a multi-movement, cyclical choral setting of the *Song of Songs* for the Yale Camerata.

Alexander studied with Donald Erb and Eugene O'Brien at The Cleveland Institute of Music and later earned her DMA in composition at the Eastman School of Music, working with Samuel Adler, Barbara Kolb, Allan Schindler and Joseph Schwantner, and pursued additional study with Leon Kirchner at the Tanglewood Music Center. She currently teaches composition and music technology at Yale University and prior to that taught at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Dartmouth College and the University of Oregon. Alexander is the Co-Founder and Artistic Director of New Music on the Point, a summer contemporary chamber music festival. <http://www.kathrynalexander.org>

~~~~~

## **Neil Leonard**

Leonard is a sound artist/composer/saxophonist. His work includes jazz performance; composition for orchestra with computer generated video/sound; sound/music for dance, theater, installation and film. He collaborates with musicians/composers in North America, Latin America, Europe, China and Russia.

Leonard's compositions/performances were featured by Carnegie Hall, Boston Globe Jazz Festival, Havana Jazz Festival, Panama Jazz Festival, Musicacoustica (Beijing), American Music Festival (Shanghai), International Computer Music Convention (Montreal), Tel Aviv Biennial for New Music, Moscow Autumn, Auditorium Parco della Music (Rome), Museo Riena Sofia (Madrid). Leonard's "Dreaming of an Island", (for orchestra, electronics and live-video) was premiered by the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra. Leonard's collaborative work with visual artist Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons was featured by the 49th Venice Biennial, Museum of Modern Art (NYC), purchased by the Guangzhou Contemporary Art Museum (China), National Gallery of Canada and presented by the U.S. State Department at Dakar Biennial (Senegal). Leonard composed the music for *Relatives*, by Tony Oursler and Constance DeJong that was featured by the Whitney Biennial, NYC.

Leonard performed and recorded with AfroCuba, Marshall Allen (Director, Sun Ra Arkestra), Boston Ballet, Bruce Barth, Juan Blanco, Joanne Brackeen, Don Byron, Uri Caine, Kevin Eubanks, Robin Eubanks, Bill Frisell, Leroy Jenkins, Vijay Iyer, Orlando 'Cachaito' Lopez (Buena Vista Social Club), Rudresh Mahanthappa, John Medeski, Butch Morris, Phill Niblock, Emiliano Salvador, Evan Ziporyn.

Leonard is the Artistic Director of Berklee's Interdisciplinary Arts Institute and Professor of Electronic Production and Design at Berklee College of Music.

## Program Notes

### *Signal Flow*

Signal Flow is a work I composed in 2009 for percussion quartet. The piece is based on an interaction between amplified orchestral chimes and amplified snares that are feeding back. The 2 snare drums are placed between a microphone/speaker setup that is feeding back. This triggers the snares to resonate. At the same time two percussionists are playing and amplifying orchestral chimes. This brings out the harmonics of the orchestral chimes, which beat against each other as well as the feedback going through the snares. This beating causes the snares to pulsate at the frequency of the harmonic beating. On top of this, two performers play on harmonicas, changing their vocal formants as they play. The piece is bookended by a bass drum/tam-tam swell at the beginning and a woodblock roll at the end.

### *Nocturnal Remix (2010)* for alto saxophone and laptop.

The work was composed after the discovery of the earliest known instruments at the Hohle Fels cave in southern Germany. Included in the recent finds are a flute made from a hollow bone of a griffon vulture that is estimated to be 40,000 years old. The composition reflects on the intersection of emerging technologies and the genesis of artistic languages, many nights ago.

*Nocturnal Remix* was premiered at the International Conference for Auditory Display in Washington D.C. in 2010. The computer performs realtime signal processing and executes computer-driven models for improvisation. The work revisits sound design from *Nocturnal Sounds from Hohle Fels (2009)*. In *Nocturnal Remix*, the first section uses a circular panning derived from planetary motion to move re-synthesized vocal samples around the audience (5.1 audio version only). The second section juxtaposes solar wind data and fragments of an original composition recorded by my quartet to create a remix combining scientific data and jazz music.

John Hull and Enrico DeTrizio de Trizio assisted in mixing and sound design of *Nocturnal Remix*. Julia Easterin sang additional vocal parts to double processed voice.

### *The Harbingers*

A collaboration by Kathryn Alexander, Juraj Kojs, Margaret Lancaster and Jennifer Beattie

*The Harbingers* relates the tale of a woman dreaming of her life as a butterfly. Through the butterfly's life stages of egg, caterpillar, pupa and adult, *The Harbingers* engages music, improvisation, real-time, interactive performance technologies and theatrical narrative to 'tell the tale.' In today's premiere, the dreaming woman performs on flutes and relates the butterfly's life through narration and dramatic action. An additional character, perhaps Mother Nature (?), lends her disembodied voice through song to reveal that, according to many legends, a deceased person's soul can be released by the butterfly.

*The Harbingers* is a collaborative project with Kathryn Alexander and Juraj Kojs as composers, improvisers and real-time, interactive performers using Ableton's Suite 8, Margaret Lancaster as flutist, improviser and actress, and Jennifer Beattie as vocalist.

## Song Texts

### I. The Unlocking (Egg)

Here in the midnight ether  
Tic, tack, tic, tack, chew and clank!  
Grasping, shivering,  
Tic, tack, tic, tack, chew and clank!

Here in the midnight ether  
Grasping, gasping, laughing  
To air and earth, water and fire;  
Molding, mulching in violent desire;  
Soon to be born, so quickly impatient!

Here in the midnight ether  
Tic, tack, tic, tack, chew and clank!

### II. I'm Here!

There's a soft wind in my hair  
A whirling song of tasty places  
I feel the waterfalls of desire!

I long for the joy of warm rays,  
Ache for the dripping moisture  
from underneath the juicy leaf!  
And what is left?

Just a soft wind in my hair  
A whirling song of tasty places  
I am the waterfall of desire!

### III. The Meditation (Cocoon)

I carry my dear companion,  
Beside my beating heart!

Nested in my deep meditation,  
I give myself, to her.  
I carry my dear companion,  
Beside my beating heart!

The unconditional nurturing  
of her soft voice.  
My dearest companion,  
Beside my beating heart!

### IV. The Butterfly's Dance (Butterfly)

And my dear, sweet caressing,  
It ended in unexpected burst!  
She urged to stretch, to push the blue out higher and  
higher!

With hours of contemplation  
the brides and bridegrooms  
and their swelling desires  
escalated in a dizzying dance!

Past the thin air, the sun's rays,  
Rays that tattooed and tingled  
her butterfly wings!

And she rose and fell,  
Rose and fell,  
Keeping her wings up,  
Always in the eternal swirl!

Releasing MY soul,  
Ready to become  
Ceaseless beauty!