

**SEAMUS@40 – *Electroacoustic Fais Do Do***  
***Cinema for the Ears***  
**Friday, April 5, 2024 7:30 PM**  
**Digital Media Center Theatre**

**Program Notes:**

***To Think of Rain***

In eleven short episodes, *To Think of Rain* (2021) explores the magical realism of rain as it touches, inhabits and shapes our lives. Short poetic texts, spoken by a returning narrator, introduce each episode and inspire the freewheeling auditory tableaux that follow. A contrapuntal weave of everyday sound objects, actions, and events fill each scene in illustration of its new anthropomorphic vision of rain. The position and movement of sound objects plays a central role in the work, as it draws upon the opportunities of the 24-channel wavefield array for which it was composed.

**Paul Koonce** (b.1956) studied composition at the University of Illinois and the University of California, San Diego where he received the Ph.D. in Music. He is the recipient of fellowships from the Guggenheim and McKnight Foundations, and has received awards and commissions from the Luigi Russolo Competition, the National Flute Association, Prix Ars Electronica, IMEB, ICMA, and Dartmouth College. His music is available on CD from SEAMUS, Mnemosyne, ICMA, Panorama, Innova, Einstein, Centaur, Computer Music Journal, and Mode records. He holds the position of Professor Emeritus of Music at the University of Florida.

***Kagemusha***: for Pipa and Electronics is an eight-minute journey through sound, inspired by the stirring imagery and narrative depth of Akira Kurosawa's jidaigeki masterpiece, *Kagemusha*. This electroacoustic composition forges a bold synthesis between the traditional Chinese pipa and the expansive realm of electronic music. At the heart of this piece lies a poignant reflection on the human condition amidst the Sengoku period's tumultuous twilight. It seeks to sonically encapsulate the intense struggle and the pervasive sense of calamity that characterized the era's climactic wars. In a seamless marriage of the acoustic and the digital, every electronic texture is meticulously derived from the pipa itself using signal processing techniques. The piece begins within a dark atmosphere shaped by electronic timbres, then interweaves with the organic voice of the pipa, establishing a dialogue between past and future, between flesh and circuitry. This process not only honors the pipa's musical heritage but also reinvents it, allowing the instrument to resonate in forms that evoke the clashing of swords and the chaos of the era it seeks to portray. This piece is not merely a fusion of musical styles; it is a tapestry woven from the threads of history, technology, and artistic vision. It invites the listener to traverse the boundary of time to experience the echo of ancient battles through the lens of modern sonic exploration.

**Ningxin Zhang** is an electroacoustic composer, multimedia artist, electronic instrument designer, and pipa player born in Chengdu, Sichuan, China. She studied Translation, Interpreting, and Intercultural Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University and Electronic Production and Design at Berklee College of Music. She is currently studying Music, Science, and Technology at Stanford University. Ningxin's electroacoustic music, audio-visual works, and academic research have been accepted and performed/presented at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA), Harvard University's Interdisciplinary Conference on Musical Media (IIICON), New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival (NYCEF), International Csound Conference (ICSC), etc. She has also performed as a pipa/electric pipa player at many concerts, including her multichannel works at the Interdisciplinary Arts Institute Showcases, microtonal music at the Micro-jam concert with the Planet MicroJam Institute, and traditional Chinese music at the International Folk Festival. Ningxin received the Max Mathews Award, twice the John Towse Scholarship from Berklee, and The School of Humanities and Sciences Fellowship from Stanford University.

**Six Studies**

This visual music composition divides into six parts, each a construction of memory that builds on techniques used to build the previous part. The sounds sometimes spring from filtered noise and collections of sine tones, but also explore large reverberating systems, squashed waveforms, and convolution. After completing the music for each section, a visual counterpart unfolded that employed various features of the Blender 3D creation suite.

**Maurice Wright's** musical life began as a percussionist, when he performed a solo on a toy glockenspiel in a one-room schoolhouse in Buckton, Virginia. Shortly thereafter, he began to study piano, and within two years gave a public recital at the Bethel Community Church, which included "The Daring Young Man On The Flying Trapeze." He also began to experiment with electricity, wiring up a battery-powered telephone that ran from the basement of the family's house outside to an old maple tree. He ended piano lessons as he began to compose, and later began to study the trombone, playing in a brass quartet with friends, and composing short pieces for the group. At age 13, his family moved to Tampa, Florida. He attended Florida State University's summer music camp, winning its Musicianship Award. While studying the Hindemith Trombone Sonata with Douglas Baer, Principal Trombonist of the Tampa Philharmonic, Wright spent a year with the Tampa Police Dance Band, rehearsing with armed musicians and performing at police social functions across the state. He also experimented with tape recorders, and studied FØRTRAN programming as a continuing education student at the University of South Florida. His compositions began to take on more substance, and, at the urging of a musician friend, he submitted two of them (Sonatina for piano, and Two Preludes for trombone and piano) with his application to Duke University. A Mary Duke Biddle Scholar at Duke University, he graduated Magna Cum Laude with Distinction in Music, and became a President's Fellow and Harriman Scholar at Columbia University, from which he received his doctorate in 1988. At Columbia, he studied electronic music with Mario Davidovsky and Vladimir Ussachevsky, computer music with Charles Dodge, instrumental composition with Chou Wen-Chung and Charles Wuorinen, music theory with Jacques-Louis Monod, and opera composition with Jack Beeson. Outstanding ensembles and soloists have performed his work, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Emerson String Quartet, and the American Brass Quintet. His visual music and electroacoustic music compositions have been performed on five continents. The American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Fromm Music Foundation, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Independence Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts have recognized and supported his work. Recordings of his work appear on New World, Innova, Equilibrium, everglade, CRI, and other labels. His compositions are published by APNM, Theodore Presser, Schott, and by the composer. He is Laura H. Carnell Professor of Music Studies at Temple University's Boyer College Of Music and Dance.

**Textures Arcs The Points** is dedicated to my late teacher Mark Chambers, who was a great composer that often introspect about music. Thank you for introducing me to the world of "Spectra and Pixies" and the world of electronics. *Textures Arc The Points* was commissioned by the Debris Project; utilizing sound solely from their database.

*Engulfed by the many points, as these materials conglomerate within the plane  
Matter as figurative and external*

*Conglomerates veil the arcs*

*Meandering through the flow, at times with extreme exaggeration  
Flow that is never the same  
As flow is made up of impermanent elements*

*Cyclic material that occurs "once"; an ephemeral quality  
Often unfair*

*Endure with an inner rhythm of  
Textures of a phantom-like movement  
Veiled by the engulfment of the points*

*We endure through perception of, not form, but rather*

*Yielding the flow  
And respond to the “through” material*

**David Quang-Minh Nguyen** is audio engineer, sound designer + re-recording mixer, and a composer. His current interests lie in composing acousmatic works dealing with multi-channel loudspeaker expansion, sound spatialization, and immersive audio. Being recognized nationally and internationally, David has had his pieces presented at the June in Buffalo New Music Festival, during which he received individual master classes with Harvey Sollberger, Martin Bresnick, Roger Reynolds and Brian Ferneyhough. David was an active participant for Festival DME under the direction of Åke Parmerud, Musique & Recherches Académie d'été de composition électroacoustique under the direction of Annette Vande Gorne and João Pedro Oliveira, and the Sounds Around Me Festival under Thomas Gorbach. He was also selected by Master Artist Robert Normandeau for a residency at the Atlantic Center for the Arts. Among others, his works have been performed at Electronic Music Midwest Festival, New York City Electronic Music Festival, SEAMUS, Toronto International Electroacoustic Symposium, International Computer Music Conference, 15th Sound & Music Computational Conference, 2018 MISE-EN Place Bushwick Open Studios, 2018 Third Practice Electroacoustic Music Festival, Spaced-Out Radia, Washington State Festival Of Contemporary Art Music, CEMI Circles, MOXSonic, and Diffrazioni multimedia festival. He has been published on ABLAZE records Electronic Masters Vol. 7 and received an honorable mention for the XII° Destellos Electroacoustic Competition 2019 for his work Misprints as well as achieving 2nd place for XIII° Destellos for Adumbrations, a finalist for PRIX CIME 2019 and won 2nd for the ASCAP/SEAMUS award for his work Weight Stranding. David Q. Nguyen holds a BM from Old Dominion University where he studied with Andrey R. Kasparov and Mark Chambers. David also graduated at the top of his class from The Omega Studios School of Applied Recording Arts & Sciences for Audio Engineering in the Music Industry and Film/ Television. He has received his Masters and is pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where his primary teachers are Sever Tipei and Scott A. Wyatt.

### ***Drum Circle***

Fragments of field recordings from Northern Greece, West Africa, and the Lower French Quarter pilot physical models of membranes and metal plates, tuned to resonate to harmonic frequencies. These pitch-shaded drum patterns encircle the listener; minute variations in timbre, position, and speed create a dynamic and constantly shifting aural landscape. Occasional washes of spatialized percussion samples provide a layer of counterpoint to the mobile loops.

The American/Italian composer **Christopher Trapani** was born in New Orleans, Louisiana. He earned a Bachelor's degree from Harvard, a Master's degree at the Royal College of Music, and a doctorate from Columbia University. He spent a year in Istanbul on a Fulbright grant, studying microtonality in Ottoman music, and nearly seven years in Paris, including several working at IRCAM. Christopher's honors include the 2016-17 Rome Prize, a 2019 Guggenheim Fellowship, and the 2007 Gaudeamus Prize. His works can be heard on two portrait CDs on New Focus Recordings: *Waterlines* (2018) and *Horizontal Drift* (2022).

### ***Of Human Utterance: Humor***

The first recordings made at Louisiana State University's Digital Media Center recording studio were not of sophisticated contemporary works for acoustic instrument or an experimental sonic environment built from micro-controllers and sensors — it was giggles. Specifically the giggling and laughter of my four children Gwen, Cade, Damien, and Dae, while I cleaned and worked on getting the space in better order. I'll admit, a

few tickles helped prime the pump. A year later, this piece bubbled up from those initial recordings and serves as a reminder to how contagious sonic smiles can be.

**Jesse Allison** teaches experimental approaches to sonic art and music through technology. His work centers around the idea that computer interactivity, used wisely, can produce new and engaging forms of art. As part of the Cultural Computing focus area in the Center for Computation & Technology, he is a collaborative catalyst in ways that technology can expand what is possible in the arts. As an artist, Allison has disseminated works around the globe through live performance art, interactive installations, and virtual and hybrid world interventions. Significant performances/exhibits include Siggraph, SxSW, TEDx, New Interfaces for Musical Expression, ICMC, ISEA, and the Boston Cyberarts Festival. He coordinates the Experimental Music & Digital Media program at LSU and created the Digital Design & Emergent Media STEM Pathway for high schools in Louisiana.

### ***7deadlySins (2023)***

The composition "7deadlySins" is constructed entirely of recordings of people saying the seven words that are considered taboo on US television without censorship. The piece is divided into seven movements, each of which explores a different "sin" word by breaking it apart and reconstructing it using granular synthesis to create new sonic landscapes. These explorations are then spread out across a 16-channel speaker array to create an immersive audio experience. The purpose of the piece is to challenge the notion that spoken words are inherently "obscene" and must be kept hidden from public audiences. The composer argues that these words are merely sounds that only become obscene when used in specific contexts. The irony of "7deadlySins" is that it can be broadcast without censorship, as the original words never reappear. Even the movement titles have been "sanitized" with euphemisms for the original "sins".

**Stephen David Beck** is Professor of Composition and Computer Music at the LSU School of Music, where he holds the Derryl and Helen Haymon Professorship. Additionally, he serves as the Associate Vice President of Research and Economic Development at LSU. In 1988, he earned his PhD in music composition and theory from the University of California, Los Angeles, where he studied under Henri Lazarof, Elaine Barkin, Alden Ashforth, Paul Reale and Roger Bourland. During 1985-86, he was a Fulbright Fellow at the prestigious Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM) in Paris, France. At LSU, he co-founded the LSU Center for Computation & Technology, where he created the Cultural Computing research group. Later, he established the Experimental Music & Digital Media PhD program at the School of Music. His current research interests include sound diffusion systems, high-performance computing applications for music, music interaction through alternative interfaces, and music software for laptops and mobile devices.