



**ELLIOTT
SCHWARTZ
MEMORIAL
PRACTICE ROOMS PROJECT
9 PREMIERES FOR MULTIPLE PIANOS**

**COMPOSITIONS BY: CARLSEN, DESCHERER, GUNN, JANDREAU,
KAYALI, MATTHEWS, SASAKI, SCHELLE, STOVER**

**Saturday, January 18, 2020 | 7:00 PM
Portland Conservatory of Music Practice Rooms**

**A BENEFIT CONCERT FOR THE BACK COVE CONTEMPORARY MUSIC
FESTIVAL, HIGHLIGHTING STEINWAY'S PARTNER STUDIO PIANOS**

**PortlandConservatoryOfMusic.org | (207) 775-3356
202 Woodford Street, 3rd Floor, Portland, ME**

From the Director Philip Carlsen

One day before what would have been Elliott Schwartz's eighty-fourth birthday, we celebrate his legacy in the most appropriate way possible—with a concert of new music, all world premieres, by his friends, colleagues, and former students. As an inspiring teacher who encouraged the breaking down of traditional boundaries, he would have loved the academic setting of this concert and its subversive underlying concept: taking rooms whose primary purpose is instruction and practice and transforming them into a full-floor experimental concert venue. Elliott was the composer, after all, who reimagined the elevator lobbies of Bowdoin's Coles Tower as fifteen individual concert stages, with many different chamber pieces going on at once, members of the audience sampling them on their rides up and down from floor to floor on what was, in effect, a small moveable auditorium.

Tonight's concert began as a pipe dream. Last summer I was in a meeting at the conservatory, talking about the Steinway piano partnership program, looking down the hallway, imagining the instruments poised in their rooms, and I was struck with the notion of them all being played at once, doors open, with listeners in the hallway, bathing in a stereophony of music coming at them from all directions. There have been plenty of concerts and pieces of music for multiple pianos over the years, ever since the instrument was invented, but in most cases, the players and pianos were together on a single stage or in a single room, able to readily see and hear one another. What would it be like to put each player in a separate room, isolated visually, as well as, to a certain extent, acoustically? How to coordinate their playing? What would the experience be like for listeners, sitting in the hallway? What was the likelihood of lining up enough first-rate musical volunteers to pull this off? There was only one way to find out.

In the end, sixteen remarkable composers and pianists joined me in this project. I am beyond grateful to them for their enthusiasm and creative energy. Thanks to Steve Drown, sound engineer and director of the music program at Maine College of Art, for devising a way of preserving this challenging music in a multi-track recording. Acknowledgements, also, to Jean Murachanian and the other members of the Portland Conservatory family for getting behind this crazy venture. Enjoy!

Concert Program

with pianists MELSEN CARLSBURG, BRIDGET CONVEY,
JESSE FEINBERG, GEORGE LOPEZ, GULIMINA MAHAMUTI,
CHIHARU NARUSE, STEVEN PANE, and JIM PARAKILAS

FRANCIS KAYALI

The Voyage of the Back Cove Fleet

A nautical narrative, along with associated gestures and imagery, presented itself to me at the onset of this multiple pianos project because the idea of a group of large instruments communicating at a distance and working together suggested a fleet of boats or a pod of whales. Here, I picture several rowboats out on a misty cove, all rowing at a deliberate pace. Some of the more active figures in the upper register, including those that open the piece, could be heard as stylized calls from a flock of birds. Pianists play loosely coordinated gestures and gentle clusters; they are also called on to read from a marine forecast and to whistle. After the fleet breaks free into the open ocean, the work concludes peacefully with a parting chant.

JOSH JANDREAU

Curving Flowers Shimmering Fire

“... listen to the tones of the others—to all of them together, not to individual ones—and slowly move your tone / until you arrive at complete harmony and the whole sound turns to gold, to pure, gently shimmering fire.” (Stockhausen, *For Times to Come*)

“And I will reach across time and you will know that I am here, minutes falling like petals from curving flowers of moon smiles in the night sky distance between us; from my heart to yours.” (Jandreau, 2019)

HAROLD STOVER

The Voyager Rag

Classic ragtime has been one of my favorite compositional genres since the great ragtime revival of the 1970s. The spatial nature of this concert got me thinking about outer space and, well, could not the lure of ragtime extend outside of earth’s boundaries to others who might have been listening to Scott Joplin, James P. Johnson, and the rest of us lesser ragtimers? The result was *The Voyager Rag*, whose score carries this superscription: “A deep space probe picks up an unusual radio signal from a distant galaxy...”

MIHO SASAKI

スパーク Supāku (spark)

A chance piece using notated scores, the “chance” element is in how quickly the sight-reading pianists can learn their material(s). Each pianist has one page of an existing Sasaki piano piece (various pieces); they are given their parts at the moment of the beginning of the performance. Each player has six minutes to master their piece, and then all pieces are performed simultaneously at the seventh minute. In the spirit of Elliott, the result is a very busy practice room area with many pianists practicing very challenging music!

PHILIP CARLSEN

Dem ESCHART von Brunswick gewidmet

The title alludes to the dedications appearing at the head of many of Beethoven’s works. Although two of his piano sonatas were inscribed to the count and countess of Brunswick, the Brunswick of this piece is the town where Elliott Schwartz lived and taught for most of his career. ESCH(w)ART(z) is Elliot’s musical motto, the first seven notes of a tone row on the letters of his name. From that row I derived a melodic theme and a sequence of major and minor chords that recur in different guises. Surrounding them are multiple fragments from Beethoven’s solo piano music, especially snippets featuring Elliott’s initials, E and S (the German name for E-flat or D-sharp). Examples include the theme from the last movement of the “Waldstein” sonata, the urgent E minor theme from the second movement of Sonata No. 9 and a similar one from the opening bars of Sonata No. 27, a brief hint of *Für Elise*, and so on. The intent of *Dem ESCHART*, with its fleeting sounds coming from many different directions, is to immerse the listener in an echoing, shimmering dreamscape.

BILL MATTHEWS

Aviary

AVIARY, for any number of pianos and audience cellphones, was completed in December of 2019. The piano score features transcribed songs of the Red-breasted Morningbird, Freed's Lark, Swell's Warbler, the Hooded Waderbird, the Tutti Flycatcher, the Grass-green Wren, and the Whiskered Thrush. The audience will be given a selection of QR codes that link to sound files online; those tracks include the sounds of actual birds from all over the world and accompanying sounds from Logic software. Instructions about how to participate with a phone will be given before the performance.

JOSHUA DESCHERER

4x3 Rituals to Counteract Contrapuntal Confusion

Ritual I: The Rituals of Competition

Ritual II: The Rituals of Collaboration

Ritual III: The Rituals of Cooperation

Every standing ovation and public triumph on the concert stage is typically the result of hours of repetitive labor in the cramped and sterile environment of the practice room. Much of the time, these rooms are an afterthought, located in basements or dark hallways, clustered together, with little attention given to aesthetics, privacy, or soundproofing. The three rituals of this piece celebrate the environment of the practice room through speed and repetition. They are also built on several interesting musical memories: attempting to complete a dictation assignment in a poorly-soundproofed space while surrounded by practicing pianists; hearing the same Christmas carol played simultaneously (with different key and tempo) by several different violin lessons; and attempting to practice Bach in my living room while a toddler played piano while singing randomly chosen solfege syllables. Fittingly, the middle section of this work pays tribute to Elliott Schwartz, along with several other musicians and artists with whom I share a January 19 birthday. They include bassist Linda McKnight, my first private teacher, composer Mark Piszczek, a former student of Elliott's, and important artists who passed before I was born, including Janis Joplin and Edgar Allan Poe.

NANCY GUNN

888

888 is an experiment in space, sonority, and sequence. The title refers, of course, to 8 pianos, with 88 keys each. My goal was to explore the possibilities of dynamic and rhythmic call and response, as well as the ability of the performers to listen and respond to one another, across somewhat large distances. At some moments, I was hoping to achieve a type of unity, against all odds; at others, I meant to evoke the chaos of many different points of view, all expressed simultaneously. Our current political situation was an inspiration for this work.

MICHAEL SCHELLE

Psalm of These Days

Written for one of my dearest composer friends, my big brother Elliott Schwartz, *Psalm of These Days* (a.k.a. *Psalmware Over the Rainbow*) is a seven-minute game piece based on detailed written instructions and given musical material (a famous Thomas Tallis hymn, reflecting Elliott's life-long passion for the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams). Each pianist, performing a series of events, eventually "arrives" at the Tallis at different times, so the closing minutes are a hymn-phasing hallucination.

Bios of Participants

MELSEN CARLSBURG has degrees in piano performance and studio art from Oberlin College. His performance of *October*, a virtuosic solo piece written for him by his dad Phil Carlsen, is available on the Navona CD “Pendulum.” He has created many spontaneous piano improvisations in public spaces, many of which can be heard at the Melsen’s Piano Log podcast, and on YouTube on Melsen’s channel. He works as a graphic artist and web developer in the Boston area.

PHILIP CARLSEN took over directing the Back Cove Contemporary Music Festival from Elliott Schwartz in 2016. He is Professor Emeritus of Music at the University of Maine at Farmington, where he taught for thirty-three years. Phil’s music has been performed widely, including by the Portland Symphony, Manhattan Marimba Quartet, New Juilliard Ensemble, National Symphony Orchestra Chamber Players, etc. The next two months bring performances by Augusta’s Reprise Choral Ensemble, by Chris Klaxton’s Our Big Band (for Steve Grover tribute concerts in Portsmouth and Portland), and at the national conference of the Society of Composers in Arlington, Texas.

Pianist **BRIDGET CONVEY** has found much fulfillment collaborating with living composers, including Morton Subotnick, Mel Powell, James Tenney, and Elliott Schwartz. As a soloist and ensemble musician, Bridget has performed at venues such as Lincoln Center, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Ojai Music Festival, Maybeck Performing Arts Studio, and Percussive Arts Society International Convention. She earned her Diploma at Mannes College of Music, BFA at SUNY Purchase, and MFA at CalArts. Bridget appears on the Navona, Cuneiform, Independent, and Nataraja labels. Christopher Hyde wrote “... the piano shining like a star, without dictating a thing ... Convey realized the part perfectly.”

Composer and double bassist **JOSHUA DESCHERER** (b. 1977) began his musical studies in the preparatory division at Manhattan School of Music, and has earned degrees in music from Colby College, Tufts University, and the University at Buffalo. His compositions have been performed by The Sage City Symphony and the Tufts University New Music Ensemble, as well as by various soloists and chamber ensembles. Joshua plays bass with the Colby and Bowdoin symphony orchestras and has given solo recitals at Hallwalls (Buffalo, NY) and Kennebec Valley Community College. He currently teaches at Kennebec Valley Community College and the University of Maine at Augusta.

JESSE FEINBERG is an accomplished and internationally recognized concert pianist and piano teacher. He has performed on stages in Turku and Helsinki, Finland, Stockholm, Oslo, and most recently in Moscow. Jesse graduated summa cum laude with his Bachelor's of Music degree in Jazz and Contemporary Music from the University of Maine at Augusta in 2013, and his Associate's Degree in the Arts from Holyoke Community College in 1999. Jesse appears on the recently released album “Taylor O'Donnell sings T. Monk Ballads: A Love Letter to Thelonious,” and has released multiple volumes of “Classical Improvisation Templates,” a method to teach improvisation.

NANCY GUNN was born in New York and earned an M.A. in Composition from the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. in Composition from the CUNY Graduate Center. Her works have been performed by the Resinosa Trio, the Maine All-State Treble Choir, the Portland Piano Trio, the New York Festival of Song, the Colorado Symphony, and the Portland Youth Wind Ensemble, among others, and have received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the ASCAP Foundation, the Maine Humanities Council, and the Aspen Music Festival. Gunn teaches music theory and history at Southern Maine Community College.

JOSHUA JANDREAU creates multimedia art that reframes traditional thinking and fosters personal connections. Among the artists that have commissioned and performed his music are the Grammy-nominated Imani Winds, members of Fifth House Ensemble, the Boston New Music Initiative, Black Sheep Contemporary Ensemble, cellist Amanda Gookin, and Grammy award-winning hornist Andrew Pelletier. Jandreau teaches piano in the greater Boston area. An advocate for arts education, he has been awarded several grants for educational and community outreach and led successful crowd-funding campaigns to donate instruments and music to schools. When not writing music, he is a winemaker.

FRANCIS KAYALI is a French-American composer whose instrumental works have been performed by the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, the North/South Consonance Chamber Orchestra, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), and the ETHEL string quartet. His choral music has been sung by C3LA and KC VITAs. Kayali often composes in a tonal style, but some of his works—such as his electronic work “Téléphone arable,” which was recently selected for publication by Taukay Edizioni Musicali—display a more experimental streak. A student of Elliott Schwartz, Kayali holds degrees from Bowdoin, Stony Brook, and USC. Visit franciskayali.com for recordings and scores.

GEORGE LOPEZ, Bowdoin College's Robert Beckwith Artist in Residence, has been a dedicated and dynamic performer, educator, and lecturer for over thirty years. His 2019-2020 concert season has included tours of New England and the Bay Area, Seattle, New Orleans, Boulder, and Mexico, with concerts in Switzerland, Italy, and China this summer. His “Music in the Museum” series at Bowdoin consistently sells out to audiences who enjoy his creative lecture-recitals on the relationship of music to art and ideas. As conductor, he has built up the all-student Bowdoin College Orchestra into a group that performs full symphonic programs each semester.

Chinese-American pianist **GULIMINA MAHAMUTI** debuted major works at Carnegie Hall and performed in Canada, Denmark, Turkey, Hungary (invited by the Turkish Ambassador to Hungary), and across the U.S. and China, broadcasting on their national radio/TV programs. She performed piano concerti with the Southeast Kansas Symphony Orchestra, Mansfield Symphony Orchestra, and Harbin Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra (China) and was featured on the radio in San Francisco, Queens College/CUNY podcast, China Touch Radio, and Istanbul Technical University Radio. She is the first Uyghur from China to receive a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Piano Performance in the U.S. For more information, visit www.gulimina.com.

BILL MATTHEWS (b. 1950) was trained at Oberlin, the University of Iowa, the Institute of Sonology in the Netherlands, and the Yale School of Music. He is Esty Professor of Music Emeritus at Bates College, where he recently retired after forty years of teaching. He composes for dance and theater productions, and last year received a national citation for sound design and music from the Kennedy Center for Bates's production of *DIARY OF A MADMAN*, adapted and directed by Kati Vecsey. He has also made more than one hundred other compositions for orchestra, chorus, chamber ensembles, and computer-generated video and electronica.

CHI HARU NARUSE, a graduate of the Hanns Eisler Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, has performed as soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States, Germany, France, and Japan, including concertos with multiple orchestras and collaborations with the Da Ponte Quartet, Portland String Quartet, Venti Cordi, and the Portland Ballet. She is also a well-respected teacher, chamber music coach, and competition adjudicator. Many of her students have received competition prizes and been accepted to major music conservatories. Naruse is a member of the Bates College applied music faculty and the faculty of the Portland Conservatory of Music.

STEVEN PANE has performed as piano soloist, chamber musician, and conductor in Carnegie Recital Hall, Harvard University, Academy of Music in Philadelphia, Aaron Davis Hall in New York City, Davies Hall in San Francisco, and the Kennedy Center. With a lifelong interest in interdisciplinary performance, Pane works frequently with colleagues in sound art, philosophy, poetry, and literature on such projects as *Lyric Time: Intermedia Variations on Chopin's Ballades and John Keats's Odes*. He is Professor of Music at the University of Maine at Farmington where he teaches courses in music history as well as first-year seminars and travel courses to Italy.

JIM PARAKILAS is the James L. Moody, Jr., Family Professor of Performing Arts (emeritus) at Bates College, where he taught music from 1979 until his retirement in 2016. As a solo and chamber pianist he has given the premieres of works by Elliott Schwartz, William Matthews, and Philip Carlsen, among others, and he has performed on many Maine concert stages. As a scholar he has published books and articles and delivered lectures on piano music and the cultural life of the piano as well as on opera.

From Chiba City, Japan, **MIHO SASAKI** (b. 1978) came to the United States in 2000 to study English and music (piano / composition) at Indiana University and Butler University. She has studied piano with Hiromi Iwadate (Japan), Panaayis Lyras, and Andrew Russo, and composition with Hifumi Shiomyama, Michael Schelle, Elliott Schwartz, and Elvis Costello. In 2017 Ms. Sasaki received the prestigious Creative Renewal Arts Fellowship (\$10,000) from the Arts Council of Indianapolis, a highly competitive program which only awarded a dozen grants out of more than four hundred applications across all arts disciplines.

MICHAEL SCHELLE (b. 1950) was raised in northern New Jersey and graduated from NHR High School where, as captain of the track team, he held all-state distance records in javelin, shot put, and hammer for three years running. Composer in residence at Butler University for over thirty years, he has received commissions and/or performances from

over 350 orchestras, symphonic bands and professional chamber ensembles across the US and abroad. Highlights of 2019 included guest-composer residencies at Indiana University, UConn, CCM, with the Bargemusic Series in Brooklyn, Dayton Philharmonic, and Warsaw (Poland) production in May 2019 of his opera *The End of Al Capone*.

HAROLD STOVER is a native of Latrobe, Pennsylvania, and a graduate of the Juilliard School. His keyboard, vocal, choral, and chamber music compositions have been published by Augsburg-Fortress, Belwin-Mills, Boosey & Hawkes, etc., and recorded on the ACA Digital, Albany, and Gloriam Dei Cantores labels. He has performed classical organ recitals on most major New York series, at the National Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Harvard and Princeton universities, and other distinguished venues. A charter member of the Portland Conservatory faculty, he directs the Portland-based chorus Renaissance Voices, and is organist and director of music at St. Peter's by-the-Sea in Cape Neddick.