



COLLEGE OF MUSIC

University of North Texas College of Music

Special Recital | Saturday, March 23, 2024 | 6:30 pm | MEIT (M1001)

SEAMUS @ 40 @ CEMI @ 60 Immersive Realities Explored

Funeral for a Whale..... Matias Vilaplana Stark (b. 1990)

fixed media

stitches upon stitches.....Indigo Knecht (b. 1998)

fixed media

TORFred Szymanski (1954–1998)

fixed media

Lines and circlesThomas Ciufo (b. 1965)

fixed media

there will come wine dark rainHeather Pryse (b. 2000)

Octothorpe

Nolen Liu, no-input mixer • Joshua "JD" Fuller, lap steel guitar
Heather Pryse, live diffusion

*Six hundred thirty-eighth program of the 2023–2024 season
Photography and videography are prohibited*

Funeral for a Whale by Matias Vilaplana Stark

Program Notes: *Funeral for a Whale* developed from my curiosity regarding the funeral practices of whales and other marine mammals, some of whom carry their deceased relative's body for days as a manifestation of their mourning. Sometimes, whales and dolphins will even keep vigils around their deceased family members or companions. I found this at once so strange and uncanny, and yet also so immediately relatable as a communal expression of grief and loss. This piece imagines that space of grief and reflects on their ceremonies of remembrance. My goal when creating music is always to encourage reflection and imagination, not to be too overly prescriptive regarding what the music is really about. My hope is that *Funeral for a Whale* can reconcile my anxieties by offering some context for the piece as I was creating it, while still inviting listeners to weave together a story of their own.

Bio: Matias Vilaplana Stark is a Chilean music technologist, composer, and improviser. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the composition and computer technologies program at the University of Virginia. He holds a BFA from the music technology program at Universidad de Chile, and a MA in media arts from the University of Michigan. His research interests lie at the intersection of immersive media and musical practice, working on designing interactive music environments with motion capture systems, virtual reality, and the creation of 3D virtual environments as graphic scores for musical improvisation. In his music, field recordings, sound synthesis and samples from musical instruments are combined through different processing and editing techniques to blur the lines between real-world and abstract sounds to produce fictional soundscapes that cross over into the magical realm.

stitches upon stitches by Indigo Knecht

Program Notes: *stitches upon stitches* is a work for fixed media, one of my favorite mediums, and as an electroacoustic composer it utilizes field recordings and my own recorded performances. Based on my most treasured textile, my baby blanket, I envisioned the work as a tapestry of my struggles from childhood to the present. As I look at my blanket, I can't help but focus on all the tears and damage accumulated over the years. There are stitches upon stitches from where my child self attempted to sew and patch the rips. I kept it with me for years, slept with it every night as a kid, and even brought it with me after moving out of my family's home—I still imagine the trauma I faced as a child through the years of wear upon the fabric. To me, this blanket is a biography of my 25 years of existence. One of my favorite things as a child was sound. Whether it was the sound of a toy or the singing of birds on a warm North Carolina day, I always loved sound. Once I began my musical journey as a child, first on flute, then tuba, I carried this love with me. One of my greatest struggles, however, is insecurity. Whether it came from others' disappointment in me or my own negative thoughts, I tend to drown myself in feelings of inadequacy, failure, and worthlessness. My love for sound warps into a hatred that engulfs my perception of myself. For *stitches upon stitches*, I take the melody from Enrique Granados's "Melódico" from *Valses Poéticos* and arrange a lyrical variation for flute and tuba. I recorded myself playing through the themes, including my mistakes. The theme of "Melódico" is gorgeous; my goal was to absolutely destroy it through thoughts of my own disgust with my performance. I combine these recordings of the theme with field recordings from my life in Miami, my voice, and some of my favorite sounds. With these sounds I stitch together my own patchwork piece detailing my love and hate for sound from childhood to present day. While I may still cloud my vision with distortions of myself, I always come back to what brought me to music in the first place: sound.

Bio: Indigo Knecht is a composer, tubist, and educator fascinated with the challenges people face as they navigate this world. Through a synthesis of

contemporary classical music and rock & roll, Indigo explores themes such as environmentalism, mental illness, self-realization, and advocacy for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Due to their passion for nature, Indigo centers environmentalism in many of their works. Past projects include sonifying data from the Earth's melting ice caps, a musical documentary on the effect of climate change in Miami, and a sonic installation that demonstrates humankind's impact on the environment. Their work has been featured annually on the Earth Day Art Model telematic festival hosted by the Donald Louis Tavel Arts Technology Research Center at the Indiana University Purdue School of Engineering and Technology. Indigo's other projects involve developing a new music controller known as the Fidget Muse, a device meant for neurodivergent folks to interact with to relieve anxiety while creating ambient music. The first version of the controller won the 2021 Arduino Day Community Challenge for its educational and innovative functionality. Due to the powerful, yet thoughtful nature of their work, Indigo has received a variety of recent successes in their field. Indigo's unbroken passion for the well-renowned new music ensemble Hypercube premiered this piece in October 2023 with an additional performance at the Scholes Street Studio in Brooklyn in November 2023. They were recently selected as one of five composers for the 2023 CAMP Young Composers Competition in which they had brand new works premiered in February and March 2024. Indigo is currently in their second year at University of Miami pursuing a D.M.A. in composition under the guidance of Dr. Charles Norman Mason. After graduating in May 2025, Indigo intends on teaching music theory, composition, and technology at the university level while continuing to develop expansive compositions that bring awareness to issues in our world with groundbreaking technology.

TOR by Fred Szymanski

Program Notes: TOR explores the interplay of sound and image through a constellation of intersecting parts. Folding and scaling the force field around a zero-dimensional iterative-functional system results in the creation of a radial flow in which the surface is repeatedly absorbed and annihilated. This visual element is coupled with sound encompassing a multiplicity of time scales and exhibiting a network of interactions at the micro-level of sonic design. TOR premiered at the IRCAM Forum Concert hosted by NYU at The Garage (Brooklyn) in late 2022. The European premiere took place at the ArteScienza Festival, Goethe Institute (Rome), in September 2023. TOR was featured in the Apparitions Program at the Matera International Multimedia Festival in November 2023.

Bio: Fred Szymanski, a sound and image artist based in New York, investigates relations between nonlinear forces and applies the results in multi-screen installations and spatialized sound performances. He is known for his electroacoustic work, which has been released on CD and performed at many festivals. Special citations include the Premier Prix Monaco Electroacoustique (2015) and First Prize Musica Nova (2017). His work has been presented at Città di Udine (Italy), the International Festival of Experimental Music (Bratislava), and Matera Intermedia Festival (Italy). His image-sound works have been featured in Recombinant Media Labs's 360-degree Surround CineChamber at Mutek (Montreal) and at Club Transmediale (Berlin) and SonicLIGHT (Amsterdam). His work has been released by Sub Rosa (Belgium), Asphodel Ltd. (San Francisco), JDK Productions (Amsterdam), Soleilmoon (Portland), and Staalplaat (Netherlands).

Lines and circles by Thomas Ciuffo

Program Notes: *Lines and Circles* is an improvisational live performance project using a custom-built modular synthesis system. With numerous hands-

on controls and many physical patch points, this system requires constant attention and multiple, ongoing direct engagements. Concentration, careful listening, muscle memory and musical/sonic problem solving are all requirements for designing and performing on such a system. The sonic outcome can range from subtle modulations to noisy disruptions, and everything in between. Each performance uses a unique combination and interconnection of modules, so the instrument/system is always evolving. For performer and audience, this is an opportunity to share in the ongoing discovery of what might happen next. For this concert, I am presenting a recorded excerpt from a longer format live performance.

Bio: Thomas Ciufo is a sound artist, composer, improviser, and music technologist working at the intersections of electronic music, electro-acoustic performance, sonic art and emerging technologies. Additional research interests include acoustic ecology and listening practices, audio recording and production, and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. He has performed and presented his work at numerous national and international experimental music festivals and conferences. His most recent collaborative CD project, *ElectroResonance*, was released on the innovative NEUMA record label and his new work in progress CD is also under contract with NEUMA. Thomas is an associate professor at Mount Holyoke College, serving in the Music Department and leading the college-wide Arts and Technology Initiative and directing the Arts and Tech Labs.

***there will come wine dark rain* by Heather Pryse**

Program Notes: "there will come wine dark rain" is a continuation of my study into the tortured artist myth and a juxtapositional partner to my previous work "The Tools of Our Own Destruction." The painting that inspired this composition is a work I created from wine soaked into a canvas and depicts a nature scene that plays on the pastoral tendencies of watercolor. This canvas is an exploration of the generative beauty of destructive substances and a meditation on the quietude that can be found in repurposing pain, unlike "The Tools of Our Own Destruction," whose purpose was to synthesize self-harming objects into an uncomfortable soundscape depicting the inner sound of a tortured artist. The composition for lap steel guitar, no-input mixer, and 8-channel fixed media with live processing and live sound diffusion is a graphic score-driven improvisation based on the original painting. The performers are asked to outline on their copy of the painting the lines and shapes that speak to them, and to base their improvisation from their sketch as well as the graphic score prescribing the contour of intensity across dynamics and time. This composition was written for Octothorpe, an electronic music duo from the University of North Texas.

Bio: Heather Pryse is a recent graduate of music composition from UNT under the guidance of Sungji Hong, Joseph Klein, Kirsten Soriano, and David Stout. Their most notable achievements include performances at the SEAMUS National Conferences at the University of Virginia and the University of North Texas, a Finalist in the Marion Brown Prize residency 2023, an Honorable Mention Finalist in the 2023 Flute New Music Consortium Flute and Electronics category, a Semi-Finalist in the Instrumental Chamber Music category of the American Prize 2018 and being featured on National Public Radio for the premiere of their first symphony by the Crozet Community Orchestra under the direction of Philip Clark. They are a current composer fellow for the No Divide KC "Come as You Are" initiative in partnership with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Their music focuses on exploring improvisation and other forms of collaboration, as well as theatrical multimedia productions which utilize live and fixed electronics, poetry recitations, cake decoration, and other performance elements.