



# NEC Composers' Series

Michael Gandolfi, series director John Mallia, concert curator

Wednesday, October 16, 2024 7:30 p.m. NEC's Jordan Hall

#### **PROGRAM**

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Haleh Abghari, music (1970–2024) Remo Spada, video The Voice of the Soul

in memory of Haleh Abghari Haleh Abghari, voice Remo Spada, video

Fixed media

Marti Epstein

(b. 1959)

The Mingled, Mingling Threads of Life, Woven by Warp and Weft (2023)

Marti Epstein, piano, electronics

John Mallia

(b. 1968)

Vestige (2020)

Fixed media

Lautaro Mantilla

The minister regrets such statements

Lautaro Mantilla, voice, electronics

Gavin Bryars (b. 1943)

arr. John Mallia

The Sinking of the Titanic (1969)

Trygve Lebakken, vibraphone Aaron Michael-Smith, viola, electronics Kei Otake, cello Sid Richardson, electric bass Lautaro Mantilla, electric guitar, effects John Mallia, electronics

#### Abghari/Spada The Voice of the Soul

The video *The Voice of the Soul* was born from the collaboration [in the contemporary art residency SOUNDRES 2007] with the Iranian singer Haleh Abghari, member of the artistic collective VIA [VisionIntoArt of New York). It is an impromptu live performance in which she improvised the unfiltered power and sweetness of her voice. The video was presented in April 2008 as part of an environmental installation created in the Castle Charles V of Lecce, Italy on the occasion of the collective "A journey called love - art against violence against women" which was curated by Alessandra De Donatis.

Haleh Abghari, a native of Iran who divided her time between California and Colorado Springs and had performed to great acclaim as part of the New York new music scene, was murdered in her Colorado Springs home in early August, 2024. She was 54 years old. Haleh was a multi-talented artist who excelled as a singer, actor, and voice-over artist, captivating audiences in the U.S., Canada, and Europe with her remarkable performances.

A dedicated, selfless and generous daughter, sister, friend, performer, and advocate, Haleh was known for her fearless and passionate approach to life, engaging with diverse perspectives, advocating for human rights, and making meaningful connections with everyone she met.

In addition to collaborating with visual artist Remo Spada on an installation version of *The Voice of the Soul* that was included as part of a exhibit in Lecce, Italy addressing the subject of violence against women, she recently, as a faculty member of the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, "was instrumental in supporting the Visual and Performing Arts students there following the tragic death of student/guitarist Sam Knopp in February 2024. Following that tragedy, she became an unstoppable voice to change gun laws and testified at the state capitol."

Renowned for her extraordinary vocal performances, Haleh's work in Georges Aperghis' *Recitations* for solo voice was hailed as a virtuoso and winning performance by *The New York Times*. Her portrayal of King George III in Peter Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King* showcased her exceptional talent.

Haleh was one of the founding members of "Mouths Wide Open", an ad hoc group of volunteers who use art to advocate for active citizenship civic dialogue. She was also an integral member of Conway & Pratt Projects, from 1997-2001, a community-based arts group creating large-scale installation and performance.

Haleh pursued her studies in music at The University of California at Davis, Peabody Conservatory, The Mannes College of Music, and the Banff Centre for the Arts in Canada. Haleh was also awarded a Fulbright Scholar Grant to work on the vocal music of György Kurtág in Budapest. For the last 12 years, she taught at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Besides teaching voice and novel interdisciplinary music ensembles, she created and developed classes that inspired curiosity and excellence in performance. Her courses raised awareness of other innovative multidisciplinary artists who utilize their art for social justice. She constantly reiterated the critical roles artists play in our world and communities.

Haleh's life was a testament to her passion for the arts, human rights, and her commitment to her family and friends. She leaves behind a legacy of courage, creativity, and deep connections with those who knew her. As her family, friends, and community mourn this profound loss, they hold onto the memories of the incredible person Haleh was and the light she brought to this world.

from the obituary published by Dignity Memorial at

https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/colorado-springs-co/haleh-abghari-11939084# and a news announcement at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs which can be found at

https://app.uccs.edu/prospective\_student/scribe\_news/detail?feed=scribe\_news&id=a 307b0c0-a893-52b1-8087-c0b21c5cbde3

Remo Spada is an independent artist working with photography, video, installations and materials recovery. He is a visual and conceptual artist, not tied to any particular expressive language, but faithful to continual experimentation. In 2004, he won third prize of OpenArt04 in the graphics section. Since 2005, he has participated in numerous international artistic residences. In 2006, he was included in the national catalog of the National "Celeste Prize" (curated by Gianluca Marziani) and is in the collective in Berlin with *Hypegallery*. In 2008, he was among the 25 finalists "RomaeuropaWebFactory" with the video *ERRARE*. In 2009, he produced the video *Violence Victoria* for the event "Art against Violence" interacting with the world of theater, participating in the workshop "MUSIKI" led by Paolo Pisanelli, and the short film screened at "Notte della Taranta 2009." He has participated in numerous exhibitions in Italy and abroad. He lives and works in Lecce, Italy.

from SCI-ART Lab <a href="https://kkartlab.in/profile/RemoSpada?overrideMobileRedirect=1">https://kkartlab.in/profile/RemoSpada?overrideMobileRedirect=1</a>

**Epstein** *The Mingled, Mingling Threads of Life, Woven by Warp and Weft The Mingled, Mingling Threads of Life, Woven by Warp and Weft* was commissioned by the Nebraska Music Teachers Association in 2023 and is for piano and fixed media.

The fixed media was made from recordings of my friend Patty's gorgeously outof-tune Steinway piano. It is meant to sound as if the live pianist is playing a duet with herself in the past and in her own memory.

Deepest gratitude to Nikhil Singh and Mrityunjay Sathyanarayanan for technical assistance, and especially to Patty Thom for the use of her gorgeous piano.

– Marti Epstein

**Marti Epstein** started studying composition in 1977 with Professor Robert Beadell at the University of Nebraska. She has degrees from the University of Colorado and Boston University, and her principal teachers were Cecil Effinger, Charles Eakin, Joyce Mekeel, Bunita Marcus, and Bernard Rands.

Marti was a fellow in composition at the Tanglewood Music Center in 1986 and 1988 and worked with Oliver Knussen and Hans Werner Henze. As a result of her association with Henze, she was invited by the City of Munich to compose her puppet opera, *Hero und Leander*, for the 1992 Munich Biennale for New Music

Theater. She was on the jury for the 1994 Biennale.

Marti has received commissions from the Paul Jacobs Memorial Commissioning Fund, the CORE Ensemble, ALEA III, Sequitur New Music Ensemble, the Fromm Foundation, guitarist David Tanenbaum, the American Dance Festival, the A\*DEvant-garde Festival of Munich, tubist Samuel Pilafian, flutist Marianne Gedigian, the New England Brass Quintet, the Iowa Brass Quintet, Boston Conservatory, Boston University Marsh Chapel Choir, pianist Kathleen Supové, the CrossSound New Music Festival of Juneau Alaska, the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, the Radius Ensemble, the Ludovico Ensemble, and the Callithumpian consort. The Longy School of Music commissioned her to compose *Quartet* for BSO English horn soloist Robert Sheena to be played at the Inauguration of Karen Zorn, their new president. Marti's music has been performed all over the world by ensembles, which include the San Francisco Symphony, the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Frankfurt, the Atlantic Brass Quintet, and Ensemble Modern.

The Atlantic Brass Quintet, Sequitur New Music, The Seattle Trumpet Consort, pianist Kathleen Supové, guitarist Ulf Golnast, Robert Sheena with the Boston Conservatory Wind Ensemble, and the University of Iowa Brass Quintet have recorded Marti's music. In 2015, the Ludovico Ensemble recorded and released *Hypnagogia*, a CD of Marti's music. *Nebraska Impromptu*, an album of her chamber music with clarinet, featuring Rane Moore and Winsor Music, was released in 2021 by new Focus Recordings. She was a resident at the MacDowell Colony in 1998, 1999 and 2022. She was a recipient of a 1998 Fromm Foundation Commission, and she won the 1998 Lee Ettleson Composition Prize. She is a recipient of a 2005 grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Marti is a 2020 Guggenheim Fellow to compose works for Hinge Ensemble, loadbang, and soundicon. She is a recipient of a 2023 Chamber Music of America Commission to compose a new work for the Kozar/Byrne duo.

Marti is an active pianist and a devoted teacher. She plays prepared piano with guitarist David Tronzo in the Epstein/Tronzo Duo. She is Professor of Composition at Berklee College of Music, where she has taught harmony, counterpoint, and composition since 1991, and is also on the faculty of Boston Conservatory. Marti is a 2020 Guggenheim Fellow in Music Composition.

#### Mallia Vestige (2020)

In this study, a noise-veiled chord progression with slowly oscillating trills is grafted onto the upper harmonic structure of a 'hidden' chorale melody that lies below the lower limit of audible frequency. The majority of recorded sounds utilized in *Vestige* were produced by bowing string instruments (guitars, mandolin, banjo, phonoharp, and e-bowed dulcimer). Noise and artifacts resulting from bowing with unstable materials pervades the composition. Sustained tones from the reeds of a pump organ are also present. All recordings were made by me and carefully re-tuned to match the construct of the hidden model.

— John Mallia

#### Mantilla The minister regrets such statements

(with excerpts of the Dada Sound Poem *Der Minister* and Emma González's March for our Lives speech)

The minister regrets such statements
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The mnstr rgrts sch sttmnts

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"It has to start somewhere - it has to start sometime - what better place than here - what better time than now." Rage Against The Machine

### Bryars The Sinking of the Titanic (1969)

This piece originated in a sketch written for an exhibition in support of beleaguered art students at Portsmouth in 1969. Working as I was in an art college environment, I was interested to see what might be the musical equivalent of a work of conceptual art. It was not until 1972 that I made a performing version of the piece for part of an evening of my work at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London and during the next three years I performed the piece several times. In 1975 I made a recorded version for the first of the ten records produced for Brian Eno's Obscure label. In 1990 I re-recorded the piece 'live' at the Printemps de Bourges festival when the availability of an extraordinary space – the town's disused water tower dating from the Napoleonic period – and the rediscovery of the wreck by Dr. Ballard made me think again about the music. In any case the piece has always been an open one, being based on data about the disaster but taking account of any new information that came to hand after the initial writing.

All the materials used in the piece are derived from research and speculations about the sinking of the "unsinkable" luxury liner. On April 14th 1912 the Titanic struck an iceberg at 11.40 PM in the North Atlantic and sank at 2.20 AM on April 15th. Of the 2201 people on board only 711 were to reach New York. The initial starting point for the piece was the reported fact of the band having played a hymn tune in the final moments of the ship's sinking. A number of other features of the disaster which generate musical or sounding performance material, or which 'take the mind to other regions', are also included. The final hymn played during those last 5 minutes of the ship's life was identified in an account by Harold Bride, the junior wireless operator

"...from aft came the tunes of the band.....The ship was gradually turning on her nose—just like a duck that goes down for a dive... The band was still playing. I guess all of the band went down. They were playing "Autumn" then. I swam with all my might. I suppose I was 150 feet away when the Titanic, on her nose, with her afterquarter sticking straight up in the air, began to settle slowly.... The way the band kept playing was a noble thing... the last I saw of the band, when I was floating out in the sea with my lifebelt on, it was still on deck playing "Autumn". How they ever did it I cannot imagine."

This Episcopal hymn, then, becomes the principle element of the music and is subject to a variety of treatments and it forms a base over which other material is superimposed. Although I conceived the piece many years ago, I continue to enjoy finding new ways of looking at the material in it and welcome opportunities to look at it afresh.

— Gavin Bryars

Tonight's version of the piece includes elements of Bryars' original version released on Brian Eno's Obscure record label as well as many new materials informed by the research-based text document that Bryars provides as a kind of concept score. The hymn tune ("Autumn") is present in varied ways; as a distant backdrop veiled with instrumental layers and/or electronic noises, as fragments at the surface, and is sometimes interwoven with additional hymns and/or rhythmicized according to Morse-code distress signals sent from the Titanic that were referenced in the research document.

In August 2010, I created a version of the piece in collaboration with Steve Drury and his Callithumpian Consort. The performance was site-specific, utilizing the lighting and shading capabilities of the ICA's indoor performance space, as well as their outdoor dock area. At the close of that performance, a cellist was rowed out into Boston harbor as the sun set while playing a Celtic folk tune with live electronic processing of a signal transmitted via wireless microphone. This evening's performance will utilize some of the materials from the 2010 performance, alongside many newly created elements and Bryars' original 'tape' materials (hymn + excerpts of interviews with two Titanic survivors) that are sometimes altered through layering, editing, and signal processing.

— John Mallia

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Food and drink are not allowed in the concert hall, and photography and audio or video recording are prohibited.

Assistive listening devices are available for all Jordan Hall concerts; contact the head usher or house manager on duty or inquire at the Coat Room.

Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of management.



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