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Concert Program

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Welcome to NEC!

I am thrilled to share New England Conservatory's 2024-25 concert season—a celebration of the power of music to connect and inspire one another.

Whether you are seated in one of our concert halls or watching online, we hope you are uplifted by the performances of our students, faculty, and guest artists.

Above all, we thank you for your support of our students as they cultivate their artistry and contribute to the world through music.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrea Kalyn".

Andrea Kalyn
President

*Echoes Through Time:
A Tapestry of Voices*

DMA/MM Composer Showcase

Lingbo Ma, curator

Thursday, March 27, 2025

7:30 p.m.

NEC's Jordan Hall

Echoes Through Time: A Tapestry of Voices features works by seven NEC DMA and Masters composers. Each piece in this concert is a unique thread, woven together to form a rich, harmonious tapestry that transcends time and place. From the vibrant autumn hues to the stirring legacies of Shostakovich, from ancient Chinese myth to the profound explorations of emotions and mathematics, and from the reflective metaphor of a glass prism to the musical realization of inescapability, this program takes you on a journey across cultures, histories, and sonic landscapes. — *Lingbo Ma*

Trygve Lebakken '25 MM

Eigenmelodie for percussion quartet

Liam McManus, Camden Briggs,
Samuel Kerr, Patrick Sorah, percussion

Devin Cholodenko '27 DMA

Descending for cello and piano

Jiheuk Choi, cello
Yoshino Toi, piano

Tomer Rozen '25 MM

Two Songs for countertenor and piano

In My Garden
Love of the Golden Apple

Ricky L. Owens, countertenor
Tomer Rozen, piano

Lingbo Ma '26 DMA

嫦娥奔月 (*Chang E Flying to the Moon*)

Shalun Li, Seongwoo Moon, piano

Yangfan Xu '25 DMA

Colors of Woodlands for solo cello

Verdant Raindance
Lilac Whispers
Summer Crescendo
Summer Sunset
Enchanted Ember
Wild Silver Wind

Jonah Kernis, cello

Yini Chen '25 MM

Prism

Anne Chao, flute
Zoe Schramm, clarinet
Ava Kenney, violin
Rita Hugues Söderbaum, viola
William Rawlinson, cello
Pauline Pu, piano
Jackie Hu, conductor

Yi-Chen Chang '24 DMA

DSCH

Anne Chao, flute
Phoebe Kuan, clarinet
Tzu-Ting Chen, violin
Chi-Jui Chen, viola
Lian Yu, cello

Lebakken *Eigenmelodie*

Eigenmelodie was written as part of the 2022 Sō Percussion Summer Institute. It is a piece defined by its use of a theoretical language based on the mathematical concept of an eigenvector. An eigenvector is a vector that only changes in length when it is transformed while most other transformed vectors will change in both direction and length. In this way, the eigenvector stays “recognizable” after the transformation occurs. This piece is that concept translated into musical terms: there is a single Melody presented in unison between all four players that is then transformed and morphed while remaining audibly intact.

– Trygve Lebakken

Cholodenko *Descending*

The musical materials of this work fall into a particular pattern, depicting a sort of inescapability—like a question that answers itself, and yet, somehow still remains a question. In this way, the music falls deeper and deeper into itself: just when it seems to be arriving somewhere new, it becomes clear that the musical materials have merely appeared in a new form.

– Devin Cholodenko

Rozen *Two Songs*

Two Songs is a mini set of two artistic Hebrew poems composed as modern “Lieder”. The poems were written by two of the most acclaimed poets of the Hebrew language: Rachel Bluwstein and Dalya Ravikovitch. “In My Garden” is a love song, using the garden as a metaphor for emotional intimacy. “Love of the Golden Apple” is an enigmatic text about complex love/hate relationships.

– Tomer Rozen

In My Garden

I planted you in my garden,
my hidden garden - my heart.
Your fruits were intertwined
And in me your roots deepened.

And from dawn till dusk
the garden shall not rest -
it is you there, you there
blissfully like thousand birds.

Love of the Golden Apple

A golden apple loved the one who ate it,
good for looking at and good for eating,
became aware that he is the one who sees him.
A citron boasted:

I'm smarter than he is,
a tree saddened:
he shall die and be gone.
Worthy fear, who shall revive it?
A citron scorned:
be wiser, naive one!
A tree was angry:
it's a misdeed and a sin,
take it back, for I hate a fool.
A golden apple loved the one who ate it,
loved the one who beat it, with all of its being.
A golden apple loved the one who ate it,
went to its beater as food to its teeth.
A golden apple was swallowed in its eater,
came in its skin,
even in its flesh.

Ma 嫦娥奔月 (*Chang E Flying to the Moon*)

This piece is inspired by the ancient Chinese myth of 嫦娥奔月 (*Chang E Flying to the Moon*). Chang E, the heroine, is a smart woman and leads a happy life with her husband, general Hou Yi. Hou Yi is given an elixir of life by a goddess as a reward for his brave and altruistic act of helping people on the earth. Though the elixir promises eternal life, Hou Yi, content with his life on Earth, has no desire to leave his present life and join the gods in the heavens. In this piece for piano four hands, the two pianists take the roles of Chang E and Hou Yi respectively and tells the story with music. The higher register represents Chang E who ascends to the moon while the lower register embodies Hou Yi who remains behind on Earth. The piece starts with a meditative introduction in the high register, almost like a portrait of the moon. This is followed by a harmonious passage, reflecting the couple's peaceful and happy life together. The serenity is abruptly interrupted when Peng Meng, Hou Yi's wicked associate, bursts in, attempting to steal the elixir. A frantic, percussive section conveys the struggle, as Chang E defends herself but ultimately swallows the elixir in desperation. As the magic takes effect, she begins to float, gradually ascending toward the moon. At this moment, only one pianist remains, playing in the very high register to evoke the sensation of floating in the air. Hou Yi returns home at sunset, but his wife is nowhere to be found. Chang E waves at him from the moon. From that point on, the couple live in separation, each yearning for the other. The two pianists return to the original theme, but now in different pitch levels, creating a juxtaposed dissonance that symbolizes their distance and sorrow. The piece closes with a reflection of the opening, leaving the ending open to interpretation. Is their separation permanent or will they reunite? Perhaps it has all been a dream. The choice is left to the listener.

– *Lingbo Ma*

Xu *Colors of Woodlands*

Dedicated to cellist Jonah Kernis, *Colors of Woodlands* is a journey through nature's shifting seasons, inspired by the brilliant transformation of late September leaves. This solo cello work unfolds in six evocative movements, each a poetic portrait of a season's distinct character.

The opening movement, "Verdant Raindance," features vivid and lively rhythms that evoke percussive raindrops, shimmering greens, and sparkling highlights as the woodland awakens. "Lilac Whispers" follows with a mysterious and playful quality, its elusive melodies conjuring the delicate charm of a blooming lilac. In "Summer Crescendo," the music bursts forth with extra energetic summer vitality, capturing the dynamic pulse and exuberance of the season. "Summer Sunset" then paints a serene, nonstagnic picture, its warm, glowing tones reminiscent of a sun-drenched horizon gently yielding to twilight. The journey continues with "Enchanted Ember," a mesmerizing and warmly lyrical movement that invites the listener into an intimate embrace of sound. Finally, "Wild Silver Wind" sweeps in as a fierce and untamed finale, its vigorous spirit echoing the raw force of a silver winter wind.

Together, these movements weave a continuous tapestry of sound and color, celebrating the eternal dance of nature's seasons and inviting a deep, reflective communion with the world around us.

– Yangfan Xu

Chen *Prism*

"Prism", in optics, is a piece of glass or other transparent material cut with precise angles and plane faces, useful for analyzing and reflecting light.

In this piece, the idea of a prism becomes a metaphor for the manner in which sound is reflected and transformed in numerous sonic rays. These sonic rays blend through a series of timbral oppositions, such as bright versus dark, soft versus harsh, simple versus complex. Sound color evolves gradually from a monochromatic texture into a diverse canvas, eventually returning to a tranquil, static state.

– Yini Chen

Chang *DSCH*

This piece is titled DSCH, a musical motif used by the composer Dmitri Shostakovich. It's a musical cryptogram emulating the manner of the Bach motif (the note names of the motif are Bach's initials), consisting of D, E-flat, C, B natural (or in German pronunciation as "De-Es-Ce-Ha"), thus standing for the German translation of Shostakovich's initials: D. Sch.

B-C-D-Eb is also a musical signifier that drew the attention of the greatest composers of the 19th and 20th centuries to reinvent or go beyond the conventional writing of tonal music. Its symmetrical characteristic is adaptable to the variety of pitch set combinations as well as the formation of interesting scales such as octatonic scales. Juxtaposing minor/major second, it resonates with the suppression and tension in a turbulent world that is still valid today. This work elaborates on the colorful characters of this motif. It is omnipresent throughout the piece in its original form and variants. The texture, harmony, rhythmic characters, and other features also pay tribute to Shostakovich.

There are three sections in this work. Each section is connected through a pre-recorded electronic passage. The thematic material of the first one comes from the opening of Shostakovich's Eighth String Quartet, Mvt. 1 (measure 1-26), a signature piece featuring Shostakovich's DSCH motif. And the second one comes from measure 153-192 of the same movement. According to the score, String Quartet No. 8 is dedicated "to the victims of fascism and the war"; his son Maxim interprets this as a reference to the victims of all totalitarianism, while his daughter Galina says that the composer dedicated it to himself. All three descriptions are reflective and relevant to the meaning of this work.

Due to the stage setting criteria, pre-recorded electronic passages are not included in the performance this evening.

– Yi-Chen Chang

Upcoming Composers' Series concert

NEC Composers' Series, John Mallia, curator
Malcolm Peyton Composers-in-Residence - Ingrid Laubrock and Ikue Mori
Thursday, May 1, 2025 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

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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