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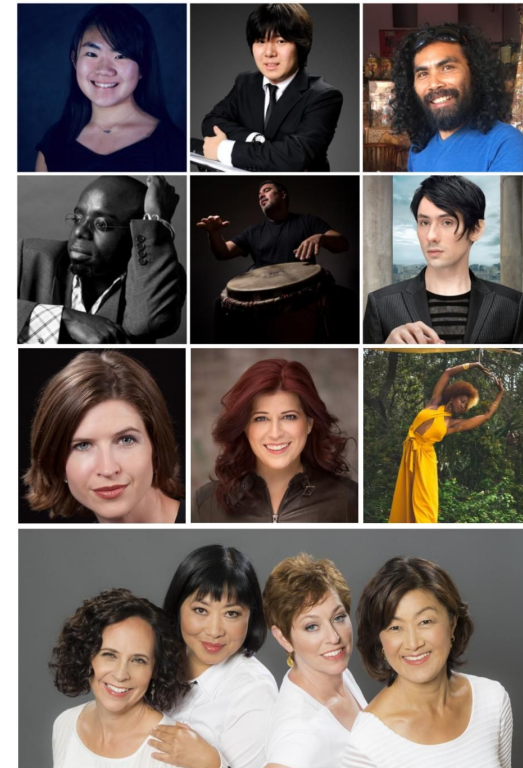
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2019 Composers Now Festival Opening Event

Hosted by Tania León, Artistic Director
2019 Composers Now Visionary Awards honoring
T. J. Anderson and Laura Kaminsky



Thursday, January 31, 2019 at 7:00 pm
National Opera Center
New York City

2019 Composers Now Visionary Awardees



T.J. Anderson talks risks, doubt, and the choice between something you're good at and something you love. T.J. is a composer, conductor, orchestrator, and educator. He is well known for his orchestration of the Scott Joplin opera, *Treemonisha*. T.J. has received awards from The Rockefeller Foundation and The John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, among others. He has also been commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts, Yo Yo Ma, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, and Harvard University, among many others. As a lecturer, consultant, and visiting composer, he has appeared in institutions in the U.S., Brazil, Germany, France, and Switzerland.

(Video: "Any man or woman in a bath tub can give you a tune" produced by Kindling Group for *What's Your Calling?*)



Laura Kaminsky, "one of the top 35 female composers in classical music" (*The Washington Post*), frequently addresses issues including sustainability, war, and human rights in her work. "Full of fire as well as ice, [she writes] in an idiom that contrasts dissonance and violence with tonal beauty and meditative reflection. It is strong stuff." (*American Record Guide*) With co-librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed she has created the most widely-produced contemporary opera in the U.S., *As One*

(2014), *Some Light Emerges* (Houston Grand Opera 2017), and the forthcoming *Today It Rains* (Opera Parallèle/American Opera Projects 2019). Upcoming: a Piano Quintet for Ursula Oppens and the Cassatt String Quartet; and with Reed, *Postville*, inspired by the unprecedented and devastating immigration raid there in 2008, for a consortium led by Santa Fe and San Francisco operas. She is head of composition at the Conservatory of Music/SUNY Purchase.

Photos: T.J. Anderson by Andrew Ross, Laura Kaminsky by Rebecca Allan.

Program

Welcome and Presentation of the 2019 Composers Now Visionary Awards

T.J. Anderson, presented by Tania León

Video: "Any man or woman in a bath tub can give you a tune"

Laura Kaminsky, presented by Ursula Oppens

Yuri Lee (b. 2004)

Blustery Day (2019)

Face the Music: Nina Uesato and Yuri Lee, violins; Musajon Khakharov, viola; Laura Melnicoff, cello; coached by Adrianna Mateo

Yusei Hata (b. 2002)

Very Short (2019)

Face the Music: Ruby Pine and Yusei Hata, violins; Liliana Peeler, viola; Alma Zurita McKinnon, cello; coached by Whitney George

Laura Kaminsky (b. 1956)

Forage, third movement of *Rising Tide* (2012)

Cassatt String Quartet: Muneko Otani and Jennifer Leshnowar, violins; Ah Ling Neu, viola; Elizabeth Anderson, cello

Final scene from the opera *Today It Rains* (2018)

Blythe Gaisert, mezzo-soprano; Kristen Kemp, piano

Gusti Komin Darta (b. 1978)

Tipat Taluh (World Premiere) for *gender wayang*

Aptingulun (2009) for *gender wayang*

Saiban: Gusti Komin Darta, Bethany Collier, Savanna Morrison, Sarah Mullins

Major A. Scurlock (b. 1972) with Kendra J. Ross

Black Moon (La Lune Noir) (2011)

Monstah Black, choreographer and costumes; Holly Daggers, visual designer; Karma Mayet Johnson, vocals; Eddie Alsina, guitar; Major A. Scurlock, keyboard; Kendra J. Ross, Sunder Ashni, DeeArah Wright, Adaku Utah, dancers; M. Asli, videographer

Samuel Torres (b. 1976)

Aguazul (2019)

Samuel Torres, Maracas Llaneras

Joseph Keckler

"Goth Song", "City," and "GPS Song"

"Goth Song" video by Joseph Keckler and Laura Terruso

Joseph Keckler, voice; Dan Bartfield, violin; Matthew Dean Marsh, piano

Notes on the Program

Blustery Day was written after being motivated to write a piece about wind while going on a walk on a frigid, windy day; the title was inspired by a phrase from one of the tales of Winnie the Pooh later on. The piece illustrates the transformation of the wind, from a breeze to a gust of wind. The calmness at the beginning represents a gentle breeze, and the waltz-like rhythm reflects the movement of the leaves being carried away by it. As the energy picks up and the dynamics get louder, the breeze gains speed and power. At the climax, a tree is not able to hold its ground and falls down, and calmness is brought once again - as if the wind, now barely a breeze, is satisfied with its work.

Very Short is written in three movements. Each one of these movements is meant to have a different and specific feeling to it. The first movement feels heavy; the second feels airy; and the third feels heavy and airy. Additionally, the intention is that there is a lot of contrast but have some connections that makes the piece whole.

“Forage” is the third of four movements from *Rising Tide* (2012), my sixth string quartet. The work was commissioned by the Fry Street Quartet for The Crossroads Project, a multi-layered and multi-disciplinary collaboration that is a passionate yet reasoned response on the part of artists and scientists to the ongoing crisis our world faces if we ignore the impact of climate change, do not accept the human responsibility for its creation, nor take rigorous and impactful steps to alter the course. The thematic structure of the quartet—*H2O*, *Bios*, *Forage*, and *Societas*—adheres to the conceptual framework delineated by physicist Dr. Robert Davies, who initially conceived The Crossroads Project, and is among the most vocal, fervent, and learned scientists working in the field today. Since its premiere in 2012, the Crossroads Project has been presented across the U.S. and abroad over 50 times and has been recorded on the Navona Records label.

Today It Rains (2018), commissioned by Opera Parallèle in association with American Opera Projects, opens in San Francisco in March. With music by Laura Kaminsky and libretto by Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed, *Today It Rains* was inspired by a pivotal event in the life of artist Georgia O’Keeffe. On April 27, 1929, O’Keeffe boarded a train in New York with her friend and fellow artist Rebecca Strand and arrived in Santa Fe three days later, soon to be transformed by the area’s landscape. The opera imagines O’Keeffe’s personal journey on this seminal train ride as she reexamines her tumultuous marriage with photographer Alfred Stieglitz, her artistic stasis, and her need for new inspiration to guide her work. In the closing Scene 11, O’Keeffe rhapsodizes about the new landscape she sees from her compartment. As the train reaches its destination, she bids farewell to all of her apprehensions and emerges from the train into the bright morning.

Creating *tipat* is a devotional craft done in every Hindu Balinese household. To make *tipat*, you start with a simple young coconut leaf, form it into circular loops, then tuck and weave the loops to make a variety of different shapes. *Tipat* can range from very simple creations made for daily offerings to more intricate arrangements for use in temple or community ceremonies. Because simple *tipat* are so common in Bali, many people find them unremarkable, but I think that some of the most interesting things can be made with simple elements. I find many similarities between making *tipat* and composing, then, where I first search for the right sounds and then weave them into circles to make a melody. Each melody then gets linked to its neighboring melody, a process that creates interesting, unique compositions that range from simple to complex. Watching my mother create *tipat* at home, I was moved to compose a series of pieces for *gender wayang* using *tipat*-related themes – an egg, a grasshopper, a duck. Inspired by the easy-to-make egg *tipat*, my composition ***Tipat Taluh*** has a sweet, easy-to-sing melody that evokes the simple, soft, and delicate qualities of an egg.

This piece was born in 2009 when, in the midst of happily playing music, I had the sudden urge to compose a piece for my father who had died two years earlier. Hours later, ideas started coming, with my mind and heart working together to create a masterpiece worthy of this extraordinary man, my first music teacher. In commemoration of my father, this piece is titled ***Aptiningulun***, a composite of two Sanskrit words meaning "My Heart."

Black Moon is an Interdisciplinary multimedia work in two acts, which paraphrases Arnold Schoenberg’s groundbreaking melodrama *Pierrot Lunaire*. This new parody of *Pierrot* is an allegory for the Black American Male Experience as told through the story of Pierrot, a fictional character based on a Black Vaudevillian Performer with a futuristic twist. The text for *Black Moon* is derived from the original poems by French poet Albert Giraud, poems by Langston Hughes, and interviews of Black Men from the NYC community.

A *Llanero* (plainsman) is a South American herder. The name is taken from the Llanos grasslands occupying western-central Venezuela and eastern Colombia. The Llanero were originally part Spanish and Indian and have a strong culture including a distinctive form of music. Traditional Llanero music uses the harp, the maracas and a small guitar called a cuatro. The joropo, a Llanero dance, has become the national dance of Venezuela and of the Llanos of Colombia. **Aguazul** is a town and municipality in the Department of Casanare, Colombia. Its economy is dependent on oil, other important products of its economy are livestock and rice. This Improvisational piece for Maracas Llaneras is inspired by a trip I did to Aguazul during my childhood; it was the first time for me to go deep in the Colombian Plains. Special thanks to Edmar Castañeda for sharing his knowledge on the Llanero Tradition.

About the Featured Composers

Yuri Lee is an 8th grader at Tuckahoe Middle School in N.Y. and has been studying composition with Daniel Felsenfeld at The Juilliard School Music Advancement Program since 2016. She also participates in Face the Music and Manhattan Chamber Music as a violinist. Her pieces *Cherry Brownies* and *Plane Ride* won awards in Hear It LIVE!, a showcase concert hosted by Concordia Conservatory, in 2017 and 2018. She has been composing her first opera *Perseus and Medusa* based on Greek mythology since 2017. "Medusa Tango," a scene from the opera, brought her the honor to be a Luna Composition Lab fellow in 2018-2019 and the recipient of the Patrino Foundation Fellowship. Her goal in life is to make people happy with music. So, she founded the "Music Around Us Project," where she organizes concerts with young musicians for seniors in assisted living facilities.

Yusei Hata is an 11th grader at Special Music School High School, studying composition and violin. He also attends the Juilliard School Pre-College Program studying composition and piano. He is a winner of the 2017 New York State High School Choral Composition Competition and the 2018 Community Music School of Webster University Young Composers Competition Level I. He was a finalist of the 2017 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composers Award and an Emerging Composer of the 2016 Tribeca New Music Young Composer Competition. Yusei's music has been performed by The New York Philharmonic, pianist Erika Dohi, Contemporaneous, the Curtis Institute Faculty, college students of the Juilliard School, and members of Face the Music. He is second violinist in the Face the Music Quartet Program in collaboration with ETHEL, and he is concertmaster of Face the Music.

Originally from the village of Pengosekan, Bali, **Gusti Komin Darta** stands out as a leading composer, performer, and teacher of his generation. Born in 1978, he first studied music with his father, renowned musician Gusti Ketut Kerta, and began performing professionally for shadow puppet plays (*wayang*) at the age of 9. As a teenager, he enrolled at the national arts conservatory, now known as the Indonesian Institute for the Arts. Gusti Komin is a founding member of the virtuosic Balinese gamelan *Çudamani* and has toured extensively throughout Europe and the United States. For more than a decade he has taught Balinese instruments to local and foreign students out of his family home located a short distance from the village of Ubud. Komin currently performs and teaches widely along the U.S. east coast and is eagerly sought after as a composer, performer, and educator. He is Founding Director of the innovative chamber gamelan Saiban, and holds teaching positions at Bucknell University (PA), Queens College (CUNY), and with New York City's acclaimed Gamelan Dharma Swara.

Major A. Scurlock, BM and MM in Piano Performance from The Juilliard School, is an artist of unique talent and drive—an attribute equaled only to his love and passion for music and the arts. His piano playing is both powerful and commanding with elements of true lyricism. Major is currently a Piano Faculty member of The Juilliard School's Music Advancement Program and has had his works performed locally and nationally with great acclaim. He has worked with various choreographers including Hope Boykin (Hope Boykin Dance), Germaul Barnes, Caitlin Trainor (Trainor Dance), Christian Van Howard (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre School), and Desmond Richardson (Complexions).

Samuel Torres is one of today's most versatile Latin jazz artists. Shortly after arriving in the U.S., his career took a dramatic turn when he was tapped by famed Cuban trumpet virtuoso Arturo Sandoval. He spent four years touring and recording with the jazz great, polishing his ever-expanding talents while attracting the attention of renowned jazz, Latin pop, and salsa artists with whom he would eventually perform, arrange, produce, and record, including luminaries such as Tito Puente, Paquito D'Rivera, Chick Corea, Ricky Martin, and Shakira. His talents have also been featured in concerts with classical orchestras such as Berlin Symphoniker and Los Angeles Philharmonic. In 2006, Torres released *Skin Tones*, his debut recording as a leader, trumpeted by *JazzTimes* magazine as "at once intelligent, sophisticated and explosive." Then came *Yaoundé*, which draws from the deep reservoir of Colombian folkloric traditions Torres has cultivated, as well as African sonorities and shadings of funk and avant-garde jazz.

Joseph Keckler is singer and writer. He was recently described as a "major vocal talent who shatters the conventional boundaries" by *The New York Times*. His concerts and live performances have recently been seen at Lincoln Center, The Adult Swim Festival, and Centre Pompidou. He has created several evening-length performance pieces and numerous songs and videos. His piece *Train With No Midnight*, commissioned by Beth Morrison Projects, MCA Chicago, and Dartmouth, premiered at Prototype 2019 and his forthcoming performance *Let Me Die* is commissioned by FringeArts and Opera Philadelphia. His writing has appeared in *Literary Hub* and *VICE*. *Dragon at the Edge of a Flat World*, a collection of his essays and stories was published last year by Turtle Point Press. Awards include Creative Capital, NYFA, and Franklin Furnace. He made his off-Broadway debut as Chaliapin in *Preludes* at Lincoln Center Theater. He is currently working on projects in the realms of music, art, and TV.

"GPS Song" and "City" appear in the cycle of monologues and songs *Train With No Midnight*, which premiered in Prototype 2019. "City" was also featured in The Civilians' *Rimbaud in New York* at BAM.

About the Performers and Organizations

Luna Composition Lab, founded by acclaimed composers Missy Mazzoli and Ellen Reid with **Kaufman Music Center**, is a program that addresses the gender imbalance among professional composers. Luna Composition Lab provides aspiring young female, non-binary, and gender non-conforming composers ages 13-19 from across the United States with one-on-one mentorship and bi-monthly Skype lessons with an established female composition mentor, a culminating performance opportunity in New York City, and instant access to a network of professional performers and composers. By connecting young women with established female professionals Luna Lab provides positive role models, fosters confidence, and gives these young women an outlet for unique self-expression. Luna Composition Lab is the only program of its kind in the United States, and was founded in partnership with Face the Music at the Kaufman Music Center in New York City.

Face the Music is **Kaufman Music Center's** contemporary music education program for teenagers, and the country's only youth orchestra dedicated to post-genre music by living composers. It features a collection of ensembles, including chamber orchestras, a jazz big band, an improvisation collective, string quartets, and mixed chamber-groups, dedicated to studying and performing experimental, new-classical, new-jazz, and avant-garde music written exclusively by living composers. Composers Now extends a special thanks to Vasudevan Panicker, Director of Face the Music.

The **Cassatt String Quartet** was the first quartet chosen for Juilliard's Young Artists Quartet Program. Since then, they have performed at New York's Alice Tully Hall, and Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Tanglewood Music Theater, the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, and the Beijing Central Conservatory in China. At the Library of Congress, the Cassatt performed on the library's matched quartet of Stradivarius instruments, and they performed the complete Beethoven Quartet cycle three times at the University at Buffalo. The Cassatt has been heard on NPR's Performance Today, Boston's WGBH, and New York's WQXR and WNYC. They have 30 recordings, and were named three times to Alex Ross' 10 best classical recordings of the year in The New Yorker magazine. The quartet is named for the celebrated American impressionist painter Mary Cassatt. Cassattquartet.com

Today's performance by the quartet is funded in part by the Ditson, Copland, and Amphion Music funds, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Mezzo-soprano **Blythe Gaissert** has established herself as a preeminent interpreter of some of the brightest stars of new classical music. A true singing actress, she has received critical acclaim for her interpretations of both new and traditional repertoire in opera, concert, and chamber repertoire, performing in the leading opera houses and music festivals and concert halls around the world including the Metropolitan Opera and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. 2018-19 engagements include *Today It Rains* with San Francisco's Opera Parallele, *Postville* with Cincinnati Opera NewWorks, Berlioz *L'Enfance du Christ* with Spain's RTVE Orchestra, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Buffalo Symphony and Sarasota Orchestra).

Originally from Florida, vocal coach and accompanist **Kristen Kemp** has worked with numerous opera companies throughout the United States, including Cincinnati Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, Sarasota Opera, Utah Festival Opera, Martina Arroyo Prelude to Performance, Opera North, Chelsea Opera, and the Opera Theatre of Lucca, Italy, among others. Kristen has been a coach for Sherrill Milnes's V.O.I.C. Experience in New York, Florida, and Savannah since 2010. Kristen was also a music staff member at Sarasota Opera beginning in 2003, and the Studio Artist Director for five seasons. Currently Kristen is a vocal coach for the Opera Theater Department at Manhattan School of Music. Kristen received her Master's Degree in Vocal Accompaniment and Artist Diploma in Opera Coaching from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

Founded in 2017, **Saiban** is a transcontinental contemporary Balinese chamber ensemble based in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, USA, and Pengosekan, Bali, Indonesia. Committed to exploring the space between Balinese and American musical sensibilities, Saiban performs innovative new works and creative reimaginings of traditional music in flexible configurations ranging from 2-15 players. Saiban's rapidly-expanding repertoire is infused with elements from traditional gamelan, American jazz, western European art music, and experimental music.

Kendra J. Ross is a dancer, choreographer, and community worker from Detroit, who now lives in Bedford-Stuyvesant. As a performer, Kendra has traveled the world dancing for Urban Bush Women, DJ Kid Koala, MBDance, and Monstah Black. A recent Artist in Residence at Brooklyn Studios for Dance and a BAX Space Grantee, Kendra is currently a member of Ase Dance Theater Collective and Movement of the People Dance Company. Kendra is also the Founder/Director of a Bed-Stuy based art platform called STooPS. kendrajross.com

Composers Interviewing Composers

These Composers Now-sponsored events feature live discourse among festival composers. All Composers Now Festival registrants were eligible for the "Composers Interviewing Composers" initiative, and these events were selected to be featured.

Friday, February 1

Fresh Squeezed Opera: The Female Gaze

8:00pm

Roulette (Brooklyn)

With composers Whitney George, Gabrielle Herbst and Gemma Peacocke.

Saturday, February 9

Astoria Music Project: New York State of Mind

7:30pm

Art House Astoria (Queens)

With composers David T. Bridges, Rachel Devore Fogarty and Brian Mark.

Sunday, February 17

NowNet Arts Festival

2:00pm

DiMenna Center (Manhattan)

Composer Sarah Weaver will lead a conversation with composers Mark Dresser, Ng Chor Guan, Denman Maroney and Matthias Ziegler.

Thursday, February 28

Musical Ecologies: Pamela Z

8:00pm

The Old Stone House (Brooklyn)

Series curator Dan Joseph will lead a conversation with composer Pamela Z.

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