



**CCM**

GUEST ARTIST SERIES  
PRESENTS

MISSY MAZZOLI,  
COMPOSER

*This concert is made possible through the generosity of the  
Alexander Zemlinsky Prize for Composition Endowment*

**Thursday, November 18, 2021**  
**Robert J. Werner Recital Hall**  
**7:30 p.m.**

# PROGRAM

Ecstatic Science for flute, clarinet, trumpet, violin, viola, and cello (2017)

Missy Mazzoli  
(b.1980)

Henrik Heide, flute  
Joe Morris, clarinet  
Stephen Wadsack, trumpet  
Eric Bates, violin  
Caterina Longhi, viola  
Lucas Song, cello  
William R. Langley, conductor

Enthusiasm Strategies for string quartet (2019)

**Beo String Quartet**

Jason Neukom, violin  
John Lardinois, violin  
Sean Neukom, viola  
Ryan Ash, cello

A Thousand Tongues for cello, voice, and pre-recorded electronics (2009)

Sara Kim, cello  
Yunze Mu, electronics technician

Lies you Can Believe In for string trio (2007)

Charles Morey, violin  
Caterina Longhi, viola  
Allan Rafferty, cello

Vespers for Violin for violin and electronics (2014)

Charles Morey, violin  
Yunze Mu, electronics technician

Heartbreaker for solo piano (2013)

Michael Delfin, piano

Harp and Altar for string quartet and electronics (2009)

**Beo String Quartet**

Jason Neukom, violin  
John Lardinois, violin  
Sean Neukom, viola  
Ryan Ash, cello  
Yunze Mu, electronics technician

Still Life with Avalanche for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion (2008)

Henrik Heide, flute  
Joe Morris, clarinet  
Eric Bates, violin  
Lucas Song, cello  
Matthew Umphreys, piano  
Kyle Lamb, percussion  
William R. Langley, conductor

# PROGRAM NOTES

## **Ecstatic Science (2017)**

Ecstatic Science was commissioned by New York-based sextet yMusic and premiered at Carnegie Hall, New York, in December 2016. There's a lot of math at play; chord progressions are drawn-out, multiplied, condensed, and layered. Melodies are flipped upside-down and fractured into the smallest possible element. The horizontal becomes vertical and the vertical stretches systematically into a twisting melody. The "science" behind the notes provides a frame for a persistent, bubbling energy, a scaffold for the ecstatic gestures that eventually consume everything else.

## **Enthusiasm Strategies (2019)**

I think of music itself, particularly the music made by the Kronos Quartet, as a strategy for mustering enthusiasm and joy. It's a way of setting the world in order, a method of carving up time in way that, seemingly by magic, changes our frame of mind, energizes us, and gives us courage and reassurance. In this piece, I tried to combine techniques that were both scary and familiar to me; a cascade of natural harmonics collapses into an ecstatic chorale, which then evaporates into silence. Enthusiasm Strategies was composed for the Kronos Quartet as part of their amazing and important educational initiative Fifty for the Future. I'm honored to contribute to this project and thrilled to be part of the incredible legacy of this quartet.


## **A Thousand Tongues (2009)**

A Thousand Tongues was commissioned by Jody Redhage. This piece is a short but intense response to the following text by Stephen Crane:

Yes, I have a thousand tongues,  
And nine and ninety-nine lie.  
Though I strive to use the one,  
It will make no melody at my will,  
But is dead in my mouth.

## **Lies you Can Believe In (2007)**

Lies You Can Believe In, for string trio, was commissioned by Milwaukee-based ensemble Present Music. The "lies" in the title are



not untruths, and instead refer to the old-fashioned word for an improvised and embellished story. This type of lie is not malicious; the process of invention and the telling of the tale are ultimately more important than the truth behind the account. In this piece I created my own “lie,” an invented and embellished urban folk music. The strings tell an improvisatory tale, touching upon the violence, energy, mania and rare moments of calm one finds in a city. This piece is inspired as much by modern gypsy music, punk, and electronica as it is by traditional Bulgarian and Romanian folk music. Many thanks to Present Music for engendering and inspiring this piece.

### **Vespers for Violin (2014)**

Vespers for Violin (2014), for amplified violin and electronics, began as a reimagining of my recent composition Vespers for a New Dark Age. I sampled keyboards, vintage organs, voices and strings from that composition, drenched them in delay and distortion, and re-worked them into a piece that can be performed by a soloist. The result is something completely separate from the original work, with only distant, nostalgic connections to the source material. Vespers for Violin was composed for Monica Germino and Frank van der Weijand premiered at the Sounds of Music Festival in Groningen in October, 2014. The work was later recorded by Olivia de Prato for her album *Streya*, and was nominated for a 2019 Grammy award in the category of Best Classical Composition. In 2019 director James Darrah created a music video for the work featuring dancer Sam Shapiro.

### **Heartbreaker (2013)**

As a composer who started her musical life as a pianist, it was unexpectedly difficult to write a short piece for the American Pianists Association’s competition. I wanted to write something virtuosic but something that stood out from traditionally showy “competitive” pieces. My new work, *Heartbreaker*, is virtuosic in subtle, unusual ways. It starts out deceptively simple, and quickly spirals into something that is just within the limits of the pianist’s control. It requires a virtuosity that is not about playing faster than everyone else, or even about playing more accurately than everyone else, but more about striking a balance between rhythmic precision and the free-wheeling abandon the piece requires.

### **Harp and Altar (2009)**

Harp and Altar was commissioned by the Kronos Quartet. At its core, this piece is a love song to the Brooklyn Bridge. The title comes from a poem by Hart Crane, in which he describes the Brooklyn Bridge as "that harp and altar of the Fury fused". The Borough of Brooklyn is impossible to describe, but the Brooklyn Bridge seems to be an apt symbol for its vastness, its strength and its history. Halfway through the work the vocalist Gabriel Kahane's pre-recorded voice enters, singing fragments of these lines from Crane's poem, The Bridge: Through the bound cable strands, the arching path upward, veering with light, the flight of strings, taut miles of shuttling moonlight syncopate the whispered rush, telepathy of wires.

### **Still Life with Avalanche (2008)**

Still Life with Avalanche (2008) was commissioned by eighth blackbird. The piece is essentially a pile of melodies collapsing in a chaotic free fall. The players layer bursts of sound over the static drones of harmonicas, sketching out a strange and evocative sonic landscape. I wrote this piece while in residence at Blue Mountain Center, a beautiful artist colony in upstate New York. Halfway through my stay there I received a phone call telling me my cousin had passed away very suddenly. There's a moment in this piece when you can hear that phone call, when the piece changes direction, when the shock of real life works its way into the music's joyful and exuberant exterior. This is a piece about finding beauty in chaos, and vice versa. It is dedicated to the memory (the joyful, the exuberant and the shocking) of Andrew Rose.



# The ALEXANDER ZEMPLINSKY PRIZE for COMPOSITION

Mrs. Louise Zemlinsky endowed the Alexander Zemlinsky Prize for Composition at the University of Cincinnati in 1990 to promote the music of young composers from around the world. The fund is jointly administered by the University of Cincinnati through the Dean of the College-Conservatory of Music, the Alexander Zemlinsky Fund in Vienna, Austria and the Austrian Cultural Institute in New York City.

The Alexander Zemlinsky Prize for Composition serves three purposes: 1) To perpetuate the memory of Alexander Zemlinsky, 2) To discover new works for symphony orchestra that are truly original and have the power to communicate with and engage a broad audience, and 3) To promote and encourage young composers from around the world.

The fund has endowed two major prizes in new music composition. The first is an international competition and prize in orchestral music composition and the second is an international competition and prize in chamber music. For each competition a respected international jury of composers is assembled to select a short list of five winners with the final selection of first second and third place winners made by a small committee including the Dean of the College-Conservatory of Music.

In 2019, the prestigious panel comprised of composers Carl Vine (Australia), Missy Mazzoli (USA), Iris ter Schiphorst (Austria) and Colin Matthews (UK) selected the Japanese/Dutch composer Aya Yoshida to create a new orchestral work for dance that will premiere at CCM in December 2021. The panel members were all invited for one-week residencies at CCM during which time, lessons, masterclasses, public lectures and a showcase recital of their music would be a feature of the residency.

Tonight's concert features the work of our jurist/composer from New York City, Missy Mazzoli.


Dr. Douglas Knehans, Norman Dinerstein Professor of Composition  
Scholar, Director of the Alexander Zemlinsky Prize for Composition

# BIOGRAPHY:

## Missy Mazzoli (b. 1980)

“American composer Missy Mazzoli emerged in the 2010s as a popular composer in New York and beyond. Much of her music falls into the conventional genres of opera, orchestral music, and chamber music, but she has worked with indie rock musicians as well and appealed to fans of that genre also. Her music has been diffused partly through a band of her own creation as well as through performances by established ensembles.

Mazzoli was born in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, on October 27, 1980. She attended the Yale School of Music, the Royal Conservatory of the Hague (studying there with Louis Andriessen, a major influence), and Boston University. Among her other teachers were Aaron Jay Kernis, John Harbison, Richard Ayres, and David Lang. She taught composition for a year at Yale and then moved to New York to take a position as executive director of the MATA Festival, oriented toward the promotion of young composers, between 2007 and 2010. During this period she founded the quintet Victoire for the performances of her own compositions; with its mix of electronic and acoustic instruments, it lay somewhere between a band and a classical chamber ensemble. She has released three albums with Victoire, beginning with *Cathedral City* in 2010; the 2012 album *Song from the Uproar* was drawn from Mazzoli’s first opera, and 2015’s *Vespers for a New Dark Age* featured percussionist Glenn Kotche (of the alternative country band Wilco). It was for vocal works, including *Song from the Uproar* (based on the story of Swiss explorer Isabelle Eberhardt), that Mazzoli first gained wide attention. For that and for subsequent operas, she has collaborated with librettist Royce Vavrek, dubbed “the indie Hoffmansthal.” *Song from the Uproar* was performed by several American companies and had its premiere in Vienna in 2018. Mazzoli’s 2016 opera *Breaking the Waves* was based on the 2006 film of the same name by controversial Danish director Lars von Trier; that work, co-commissioned by Philadelphia Opera, won the Music Critics of North America Association Award for Best New Opera. Mazzoli has also been a prolific composer of instrumental music, with works performed by, among others,



the BBC Symphony, the Kronos Quartet, the JACK Quartet, eighth blackbird, the Detroit Symphony, the American Composers Orchestra, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Performers are attracted to her music range, notably, from established traditional ensembles to contemporary groups of various kinds. In 2018 Mazzoli, selected by conductor Riccardo Muti, earned a two-season, composer-in-residence slot with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and her opera Proving Up was premiered that year. She is on the faculty at Mannes College of Music.” —James Manheim

In 2021 Mazzoli was named Musical America’s Composer of the Year.

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