

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Jersey Symphony Announces 2024 Edward T. Cone Composition Institute Composers

NEWARK, NJ—The New Jersey Symphony proudly presents the composers for the 10th Edward T. Cone Composition Institute. The 2024 Institute will take place Monday, July 15, through Saturday, July 20, in Princeton, culminating in a public performance at the Richardson Auditorium in Princeton, NJ on Saturday, July 20, at 8 pm with guest conductor Christopher Rountree. The program will also include Institute Director Steven Mackey's *Urban Ocean*.

This year's winning compositions include Leigha Amick's *Cascade*, Santiago Beis' *Spletna*, Paul Cosme's *A Stranger in a Festival of Spirits* and Jessie Leov's *Speculations on a Rainbow*.

The four composers will hear their music rehearsed and performed by the Symphony and participate in feedback sessions with Institute Director Steven Mackey, guest conductor Christopher Rountree, New Jersey Symphony musicians and industry leaders.

By the conclusion of the Institute's comprehensive experience, participants will have gained invaluable musical and practical feedback about composing for orchestra. They will also have participated in critical discussions about best practices for getting contemporary classical music funded, published and performed.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit njsymphony.org/tickets and for concert information, visit njsymphony.org/scores.

The New Jersey Symphony Edward T. Cone Composition Institute grew out of musical score-reading sessions the Symphony has held with Princeton University graduate students biennially for more than a decade. The Institute celebrates its namesake Edward T. Cone's legacy as both a composer and a Princeton University professor.

A collaboration between the New Jersey Symphony and Princeton University Department of Music, major funding support for the New Jersey Symphony's Edward T. Cone Composition Institute is generously provided by the Edward T. Cone Foundation and Princeton University. Learn more at njsymphony.org/institute.

Leigha Amick

Composer Leigha Amick believes that music has the potential to reflect on both the current and the timeless human experience, to provide grounds for intellectual fascination, and to quench the need for emotional expression. Her compositions have been performed by ensembles including the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, the Boulder Philharmonic, the Denver Young Artists Orchestra, the Orlando Philharmonic, the Indiana University New Music Ensemble, the Playground Ensemble, St. Martin's Voices, St. Martin's Chamber Choir, NOTUS Contemporary Vocal Ensemble and Ars Nova Singers. She has studied at summer programs including the Aspen Music Festival, the European American Musical Alliance (EAMA) and the IRCAM Contemporary Music Creation and Critique program through CIEE. EAMA awarded her the highest recognition in Counterpoint, Harmony and Solfège. Amick teaches counterpoint, keyboard harmony and solfège for the Young Artists Initiative at the Curtis Institute of Music. In 2022, New Voices Opera premiered *Rhiannon's Condemnation*: a one-act chamber opera based on a medieval Welsh legend from The Mabinogion for which Amick wrote both the libretto and the music.

Amick received her Master of Music degree in composition from the Curtis Institute of Music where she held the Jimmy Brent Fellowship and studied with Amy Beth Kirsten, Jonathan Bailey Holland, Nick DiBerardino, Richard Danielpour and Steve Mackey. She received her Bachelor of Music in composition with highest distinction from Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, completing minors in mathematics and electronic music. At IU, she studied composition with David Dzubay, Aaron Travers, Claude Baker, Sven-David Sandström and Don Freund. Before college, she studied with Daniel Kellogg and John Drumheller of the University of Colorado Boulder.

Composer's Program Note: *Cascade*

Cascade is loosely inspired by a piece by Carl Stone for electronics, bagpipes and organ called Mae Yao. Over the course of Stone's piece, the sounds gradually and seamlessly transform from disjunct, percussive material to smooth, lyrical material. *Cascade* is an orchestral response to that transformation. The primary material for the piece is a passacaglia in which a high voice is removed, and a low voice is added with each iteration of the chord progression. As the harmony gradually changes, so does the character with which the orchestra realizes each harmonic cycle.

Santiago Beis

Santiago Beis (1990) is an Uru-Brazilian composer, pianist, audio designer, arranger and artistic researcher. He holds a bachelor's degree in composition from Escola de Música e Belas Artes do Paraná–UNESPAR where he worked with new music ensembles such as Orquestra de Câmara da Cidade de Curitiba, Ensemble Nova Camerata, Ensemble Móbile, Quarteto Brasileira, UM2UO Percussion, Orquestra filarmônica da UFPR, Orquestra de Câmara da Cidade de Curitiba, Orquestra à Base de Sopro de Curitiba, Orquestra à Base de Cordas de Curitiba and Quinteto Sopro5. In Brazil he won first prize in XXII Funarte Prémio de Composição Clássica (2017), and in IV Bienal Música Hoje (2017) composition festivals and played his compositions at *Made in NY Jazz Gala* jazz competition at the Tribeca Center of Performing Arts in New York (2017). In Curitiba, as a producer with Composteira casa de Criação, he organized workshops for composers-in-residence including Marcos Balter, Paulo Rios Filho, Alex Buck, Alexandre Torres

Porres and Jorge Antunes, among other Brazilian Artists. In the US Beis graduated in 2023 with a Master of Music in Composition from the School of Music of the University of Missouri, Columbia, where he studied with Yoshiaki Onishi and Stefan Freund. During this period, Beis worked with the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, the [Switch~ Ensemble], the UM University Philharmonic for the Sinquefield Composition Prize (2021) and the Sheldon Arts Foundation, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and the JACK Quartet (JACK Studio 2022). Recent works include *Color Utterance* for the ensemble Alarm Will Sound and *intus ergo foris* for Talea Ensemble. Beis is pursuing a Ph.D. in Composition at the City University of New York Graduate Center in Dr. Suzanne Farrin's composition studio.

Composer's Program Note: *Spletna*

Spletna is a symphonic composition that delves into the profound concept of entanglement between the present moment and the fading memories of immediate events, as encapsulated by the Czech term coined by composer Leoš Janáček. This complex interplay of the immediate and the vanishing past, which Janáček perceived as a chaotic moment, serves as the central theme of the piece, resulting in a multifaceted exploration of memory's intricate dance with the present.

Performed by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (SLSO) at Powell Hall, *Spletna* is a testament to the powerful connection between music and memory. This composition was featured in two reading sessions alongside pieces by three University of Missouri School of Music students in November 2022 and March 2023, as part of a collaboration between the SLSO and the Mizzou New Music Initiative. This project is generously funded by the Sinquefield Charitable Foundation, providing a unique opportunity for audiences to engage with the works by Mizzou composition students.

Stephanie Childress, the former Assistant Conductor of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, shared her perspective on *Spletna* during its performance, stating, "Santiago's *Spletna* is very... I wouldn't say ambient, but he really has a feel for rhythm and a more kind of abstract way of looking at rhythm and composition."

This composition exemplifies how the intricate nuances of rhythm and memory can come together in a symphonic narrative, challenging conventional boundaries and offering a fresh perspective on the interplay of memory and the present. The purpose of this study is to encourage a reevaluation of the role of memory within the context of formal musical structures. By weaving together moments of memory within the musical composition, Beis seeks to test and expand upon Janáček's theory of entanglement, ultimately contributing to the field by offering a unique perspective on the intricate relationship between memory and immediate experience.

Spletna is a bold and innovative exploration of memory's role in shaping the present moment. As Beis intricately orchestrates the interplay of memory and immediacy, this composition challenges conventional boundaries and opens doors for cross-disciplinary dialogue. Performances of *Spletna* invite the listener to engage with the eternal dance between the present and the vanishing past, transcending the boundaries of music and memory.

Paul Cosme

Filipino composer/scholar Paul Gabriel L. Cosme (b. 2000) blends and breaks boundaries in his constant search for home. He combines various media, instruments and sound worlds from Asian and Western traditions with classical, pop & rock, jazz and traditional artists from the United States and throughout Asia and the Pacific including the JACK Quartet, taiko master Kenny Endo, critical theorist and artist-activist Mari Matsuda, shakuhachi player Christopher Blasdel, sheng performer Loo Sze Wang, koto player Maruta Miki, kulintang player Ron “kulintronica” Querian, members of the Minnesota Opera and the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestras, traditional musicians from Seoul National University, the BIPOC-centered Sugar Hill Salon Collective and many musicians he considers his dear friends.

As a scholar, Cosme's research and works involve constructions of Philippine/Filipino subjectivities through contemporary and popular music in the 20th and 21st centuries, which are published and presented in various journals and conferences internationally. His most recent publication focuses on musical mimicry in the Philippines by comparing Taylor Swift and Filipina singer-songwriter Moira dela Torre. His current project revisits and problematizes discourses in intercultural composition through the works of Filipino composer and ethnomusicologist José Maceda.

Cosme received his Master of Music in Composition from the University of Hawai'i as a graduate degree fellow at the East-West Center. A winner of the Lila Bell Acheson Wallace Endowed Prize in Music, Cosme graduated as Summa cum Laude from Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota where he majored in Music and International Studies. He is also the inaugural winner of the Nā Haku Mele Competition of the Hawai'i Chapter of the American Choral Directors Association where he reimagined one of Queen Lili'uokalani's works. His teachers include Donald Reid Womack, Takuma Itoh, Thomas Osborne, Randy Bauer and Victoria Malawey.

When Cosme is not composing, he enjoys improvising on the kulintang, a set of bronze knobbed gongs from the Philippines, which he had the fortune to play in the Hawai'i premiere of Pulitzer Prize winner and Navajo composer Raven Chacón and Carcross/Tagish curator Candice Hopkins's *Dispatch*.

Cosme loves dogs, the morning dew, Beethoven op. 132, punk rock, mangoes and his favorite Filipino dish: sinigang. paulcosme.com

Composer's Program Note: *A Stranger in a Festival of Spirits*

Back home in the Philippines and many other Asian countries, we tell stories of unknowingly enter the world of spirits—often waking up suddenly in a familiar yet strange place. And after a period, they return to the land of the living, often forgetting details or even the entire experience. Taking inspiration from these tales, this work is about that stranger who finds themselves suddenly transported to another world in a time when the spirits are preparing for a joyful festival. Initially frightened of the unknown, this stranger is welcomed by the kindred spirits as they share their festivities with them. Being an outsider, the stranger crosses boundaries and navigates this other world through their own eyes.

The idea came to be when I was visiting the Honolulu Museum of Art in the fall of 2022, and I experienced an installation by British artist Rebecca Louise Law called “Awakening,” which comprises of endless hanging strings of flora and fauna of Hawai‘i—both endemic and otherwise. Her work reminded me of the richness of the sounds in the islands and the various sounds that make up my sonic worlds. Like Law’s visual work, I experience music through various gradations and shocks of colors which I owe to the sounds I heard in places I have called home.

Thus, *A Stranger in a Festival of Spirits* takes inspiration from various folk music and festival traditions from Pacific Asia: pista, kulintang, and folk songs in the Philippines, Javanese and Balinese gamelan from Indonesia, matsuri from Japan and various gut from Korea, among others. The reason for amalgamating these traditions is not simply my interest in these traditions and my time practicing this music, but because of friends and dear ones from these places who invited me to their homes and shared their celebrations with me. They taught me fragments of their music that now stay with me and inform parts of my work. In many ways, I am that stranger who entered this festival of spirits, and the most crucial task is to honor and take care of the generosity and hospitality that they offered to me.

Jessie Leov

Jessie Leov is an award-winning composer, songwriter and musician based in Aotearoa, New Zealand. With a diverse practice as a music-maker, Leov’s work traverses both the classical and popular music space. Her music has been commissioned and performed by groups across Aotearoa, New Zealand and beyond including the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (NZSO), the NZSO National Youth Orchestra, NZTrio, Auckland Youth Choir, KC Vitas (US) and Celebris Ensemble (US).

In 2022, Leov was the recipient of an APRA AMCOS Professional Development Award, and received first place in the Open Category of Compose Aotearoa!, a national choral composition competition run by Choirs Aotearoa, New Zealand. She was also selected to take part in the NZ Composer Sessions where her orchestral work, *marble, bark, silver*, was recorded by the NZSO, in collaboration with SOUNZ Centre for New Zealand Music and Radio New Zealand. In 2024, Leov is Composer-in-Residence for the NZSO National Youth Orchestra, who commission and perform a new orchestral work each year by a New Zealand composer.

Leov is passionate about collaboration and has worked with artists from various disciplines including theatre, film, poetry and sonic arts. She is currently working alongside sonic artist Garling Wu on a collaborative project titled *earthworks*, supported by Creative New Zealand. Responding to climate change, this project brings together their respective backgrounds in contemporary classical and electroacoustic music as well as exploring wider musical influences.

Leov holds a Master of Music in Composition from the University of Auckland, completed in 2021 under the supervision of Dr. Leonie Holmes and Dr. David Chisholm.

Composer's Program Note: *Speculations on a Rainbow*

Celebrating the work of internationally acclaimed Aotearoa, New Zealand artist Judy Millar, *Speculations on a Rainbow* is a response to Millar's "The Rainbow Loop." Millar's large-scale gestural work, a long looping painting on wood and canvas, forms a twisted coil that seeks to 'interrupt and invade' the space it occupies. Drawing on the duality of Millar's sweeping strokes of vibrant color, offset by stark monochromatic landscapes, *Speculations on a Rainbow* offers continuity and flow disrupted by dancing, rolling, shifts of perception. The piece weaves its way through a shifting canvas of stability and turbulence, stillness and motion, offering the audience a brief glimpse into the 'temporary twisted world' of "The Rainbow Loop."

Steven Mackey

As a teenager growing up in Northern California obsessed with blues-rock guitar, Steven Mackey was in search of the "right wrong notes," as he often likes to say, referencing Thelonius Monk. Today, Mackey is a GRAMMY Award-winning composer of works for chamber ensemble, orchestra, dance, winner of several awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Kennedy Center Friedheim Award.

Mackey began composition studies at the University of California at Davis and received his Ph.D. at Brandeis University. Upon graduating and becoming a professor at Princeton, Mackey merged his academic training with rock guitar music. Signature pieces incorporating rock vernacular into traditional classical ensembles emerged: *Troubadour Songs* (1991), *Physical Property* (1992) and *Banana/Dump Truck* (1995).

Mackey repertoire includes: *Dreamhouse* (2003) for solo tenor, vocal quartet, electric guitar quartet and orchestra, nominated for four GRAMMY awards; *A Beautiful Passing* (2008) for violin and orchestra, an emotional reflection upon the death of his mother that Leila Josefowicz premiered with the BBC Philharmonic; and *Slide* (2011), an experimental music theater piece that won a GRAMMY Award for a recording featuring Mackey on electric guitar alongside vocalist Rinde Eckert and eighth blackbird. In 2021, the LA Phil, Gustavo Dudamel, and trumpet soloist Thomas Hooten gave the world premiere of *Shivaree*, a fantasy for trumpet and orchestra. Mackey further expanded his theatrical catalog with his short chamber opera *Moon Tea* about the 1969 meeting between the Apollo 11 astronauts and the Royal Family, premiered by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in 2021, as well as with his 2022 music theater work *Memoir*, based on the pages of his late mother's memoirs and 2022 *Concerto for Curved Space*, premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Andris Nelsons. *Red Wood*, a new environmentally concerned work, was premiered as part of The Soraya's Treelogy Project and Mackey's *RIOT* was premiered by mezzo-soprano Alicia Olatuja, Mackey on electric guitar, New Jersey Symphony, Princeton University Glee Club and conductor Xian Zhang.

Mackey's music is published by Boosey & Hawkes. Today, he lives in Princeton, New Jersey with his wife, composer Sarah Kirkland Snider, and their children Jasper and Dylan. Mackey teaches at Princeton University, where he mentors young composers as director of the Edward T. Cone Composition Institute.

Christopher Rountree

Conductor and composer Christopher Rountree stands at the intersection of classical music, new music, performance art and pop. Following his 2020–21 debut with Long Beach Opera conducting Philip Glass' *Les Enfants Terribles*, Rountree was named Music Director from the 2021-22 season. He maintains a long-term relationship with Martha Graham Dance Company resurrecting, recording and performing works by Copland, Kodaly, Rountree (MGDC commission), and others, with his ensemble Wild Up. In 2019, Rountree began recording a four-volume set of the music of Julius Eastman. In conjunction with this recording project, he toured the country with Wild Up, culminating in an Eastman portrait at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. Rountree is currently working on two operas about love and technology with librettists Royce Vavrek and Roxie Perkins.

Rountree's inimitable style has led to collaborations with: Björk, John Adams, Yoko Ono, David Lang, Scott Walker, La Monte Young, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Mica Levi, Alison Knowles, Yuval Sharon, Sigourney Weaver, Tyshawn Sorey, Ragnar Kjartansson, Ashley Fure, Julia Holter, Claire Chase, Missy Mazzoli, Ryoji Ikeda, Du Yun, Thaddeus Strassberger, Ellen Reid, Ted Hearne and James Darrah. Rountree also has worked with many orchestras and ensembles including the San Francisco, Chicago, National, Houston and Cincinnati Symphonies; the Los Angeles Philharmonic; International Contemporary Ensemble; Roomful of Teeth; Opéra national de Paris; and the Los Angeles, Washington National and Atlanta Operas. He has presented compositions and concerts at Walt Disney Concert Hall, Palais Garnier, Mile High Stadium, the Coliseum, Kennedy Center, Philadelphia Museum of Art, ACE Hotel, National Sawdust, MCA Denver, The Hammer, The Getty, a basketball court in Santa Cruz and at Lincoln Center on the New York Philharmonic's Biennale.

Rountree is the artistic director and conductor of Wild Up, the ensemble he founded in 2010, and artistic director of an interdisciplinary ambient series in an oak grove in LA called SILENCE. Rountree is a seventh-generation Californian descended from the first sheriffs of Santa Cruz County, he lives in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles.

New Jersey Symphony

The Emmy and GRAMMY Award-winning New Jersey Symphony is redefining what it means to be a nationally leading, relevant orchestra in the 21st century. The Symphony is renewing its deeply rooted commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion by championing new, and often local, artists; engaging audiences for whom the inspiring depth and breadth of classical music will be a new experience; and incorporating the broadest possible representation in all aspects of our organization—all to better reflect and serve our vibrant communities. Since 2021, Music Director Xian Zhang has worked together with composer, violinist, educator and social-justice advocate Daniel Bernard Roumain, the orchestra's Resident Artistic Catalyst, to offer programming that connects with diverse communities in Newark and throughout New Jersey.

Internationally renowned Chinese American conductor Xian Zhang began her tenure as the New Jersey Symphony's current Music Director in 2016. Since her arrival at the New Jersey Symphony, Zhang has revitalized programming with an industry-leading commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in mainstage concerts.

For more information about the New Jersey Symphony, visit www.njsymphony.org or email information@njsymphony.org. Tickets are available for purchase by phone 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476) or on the Orchestra's website.

Connect with Us:

njsymphony.org

@NJSymphony on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#) and [X](#)

@NewJerseySymphony on [YouTube](#)

Email: information@njsymphony.org

The New Jersey Symphony's programs are made possible in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, along with many other foundations, corporations and individual donors.

Press Contacts

Ali Harrison

Communications Manager

New Jersey Symphony

973.735.0969

aharrison@njsymphony.org

Geoffrey Anderson

Vice President of Marketing & External Affairs

New Jersey Symphony

973.735.1713

ganderson@njsymphony.org

###