



UTNMF: Hearing Ice Megumi Masaki, Piano

Marjan Mozetich, *Roger D. Moore Distinguished visitor*, Norbert Palej, *festival coordinator*

Friday, February 2, 2024 at 7:30 pm | Walter Hall, 80 Queen’s Park

PROGRAM

Vista	K. Suzuki
Frozen Road	L. Cusson
And Bleak Blew the Easterly Wind	O. Hawker
Always Sideways	B. Lee
See the Freeze, Hear the Thaw	C. Braden

BIOGRAPHY

Megumi Masaki

“Her depth of understanding of narrative is unprecedented and her ability to translate musical composition into something emotionally vivid and alive is quite extraordinary” (The Wholenote 2018)

Megumi Masaki is a pianist, multimedia and interdisciplinary performing artist, educator and curator. For over thirty years, she has established an international reputation as a leading interpreter of Canadian and new music, and as an innovator that reimagines the pianist, piano and performance space. Her work explores new models of interaction and integration of sound, image, text and movement in multimedia works through new technologies, including hand-gesture-motion tracking to generate and control live-electronics and live-video, 3D visuals, piano controlled video game, e-textile sensors and artificial intelligence. This expands the possibilities of human expression and augments the piano and its surrounding space as a visual as well as a musical instrument in live interactive performance. As a Japanese Canadian artist, Megumi is

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

As part of the Faculty’s commitment to improving Indigenous inclusion, we call upon all members of our community to start/continue their personal journeys towards understanding and acknowledging Indigenous peoples’ histories, truths and cultures. Visit indigenous.utoronto.ca to learn more.

passionate about creating environments where all voices are heard and respected. Her work responds to Truth and Reconciliation calls to action and examines how human rights and environmental issues can be communicated through music and multimedia performances to create narratives that speak truth to power. Her work fosters dialogue, promotes action and positive change to seek more inclusive, sustainable and just societies across all communities and borders. In recognition of the significant impacts of her achievements, Megumi has been appointed as a Member of the Order of Manitoba and elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Megumi's long-standing research collaborators with composers, visual artists, writers and choreographers have culminated in 76 original works that have been created with/for her and she has premiered over 180 works worldwide. In May 2023, Megumi was appointed as Director of Music at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Since 2006, Megumi is Professor of piano at Brandon University's School of Music, director and conductor of the New Music Ensemble, curator/founder of the annual BU New Music Festival and appointed Artistic Director of the Eckhardt-Gramatté National Music Competition. Recognizing a lack of Indigenous representation in music universities, Megumi helped advocate for the first Indigenous composition tenure-track position and together with Knowledge Keepers, convened the first annual Indigenous New Music Festival at Brandon University. A highly regarded teacher, Megumi is regularly invited to give lectures and masterclasses, to such international institutions as the Royal Academy, Oxford University, University of York, Trinity Laban, Shanghai Conservatory, Beijing China Conservatory, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz, as well as to universities across the USA and Canada. She is also on faculty at the Banff Centre, Chetham's International Summer School in Manchester UK, and Casalmaggiore International Music Festival in Italy, where she also curates the contemporary music concert series.

PROGRAM NOTES

Megumi Masaki's HEARING ICE project seeks positive social and environmental change through the sharing of personal stories, scientific facts, and interactive artistic works. We aim to raise awareness of climate change on ice and amplify voices of impacted communities through the research, development and creation of new substantial piano+multimedia narrative works. This process has many layers, uncovering personal stories, scientific facts and the synergy that translates into sonic and visual results. While each work brings together different artists, scientists, and communities to explore distinctive perspectives of climate crisis, dynamic interactions throughout centres a common environment where all voices have equal weight. HEARING ICE connects us with nature and provides hope in a time of crisis.

Vista (2022) | 14'

piano, video, live interactive electronics and ice commissioned by Megumi Masaki with the support of Canada Council for the Arts

music: Kotoka Suzuki

video: Antonia Contro

animator: Joseph Merideth

Vista is a work created in collaboration with the visual artist Antonia Contro that addresses the consequences of climate change in the Arctic. Scientists, along with conservation organizations, such as the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Canada, have been closely monitoring the changing underwater soundscape of the Arctic using hydrophones. These audio recordings provide information on how increased open water in the Arctic, together with rising noise levels from a growing human presence, are significantly affecting underwater soundscapes and natural habitats. Mammals listen to each other and use sound to sense their habitat and detect both predators and prey. Finding more open water in the Arctic sea, mammals are increasingly

moving from the subarctic to the Arctic and are doing so earlier in the season. Increased open water also increases noise levels and allows for increased human activity in the Arctic region. With permission from the Western Arctic Program conservation team at the WCS Canada (Conservation Scientist/Arctic Acoustic Program Lead, William D. Halliday), the work directly incorporates sounds from their audio archive.

About the composer

Kotoka Suzuki is a composer focusing on both multimedia and instrumental practices. She has produced several large-scale multimedia works, including spatial interactive audio-visual work for both concert and installation settings, often in collaboration with artists and scholars from other disciplines. Her work engages deeply in the visual, conceiving of sound as a physical form to be manipulated through the sculptural practice of composition. Her work often reflects on life, breath and wind. Suzuki's work has been featured internationally by performers such as Arditti String Quartet, eighth blackbird, Pacifica String Quartet, Continuum, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne (NEM), Mendelssohn Chamber Orchestra (Germany), and Earplay Ensemble, at numerous venues and festivals such as Ultraschall, ISCM World Music Days, ZKM Media Museum, Inventionen, The Stone, ICMC and Music at the Anthology (MATA). Among the awards she has received include DAAD Berlin Artists in Residence Program (Germany), Bourges First Prize in Multimedia, First Prize in Musica Nova (Czech Republic), Norton Stevens and North Shore fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, Howard Foundation Fellowship, and Robert Fleming Prize from Canada Council for the Arts. She has held residencies at MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, Djerassi, Ucross and Center for Arts and Media (ZKM). She taught at the University of Chicago and Arizona State University, and currently Associate Professor at University of Toronto. Her works are published on Starkland, Edition RZ, Albany Records, EMF Media, IMEB records and Signpost Music. She is an associate composer at the Canadian Music Centre since 2001. For more information, visit: www.kotokasuzuki.com

Frozen Road (2022) | 14'

piano, electronics and video

commissioned by Megumi Masaki with the support of Canada Council for the Arts

music: Ian Cusson

voice in electronics: Amber King

video: Brendan Briceland

Frozen Road interweaves music and fragments of interviews with Amber King, member of Beausoleil First Nation in Ontario, on the changing relationship of these communities with winter ice roads as a result of climate change. Ian grew up in a Métis community on Georgian Bay, Penetanguishene, where families traveled across frozen waterways in winter. In recent years, these journeys have become increasingly dangerous, changing the way this community lives. Ian's fascination with these ice pathways of connection, that appear each winter as if by magic only to melt away in spring, are the central motivating idea of the piece. The work is a dramatized dialogue between pianist and the interviewees, where something of the magical, ephemeral and increasingly fragile nature of these pathways is evoked in the intersection of words and music.

About the composer

Ian Cusson is a composer of Métis and French Canadian descent. His work explores Canadian Indigenous experience including the history of the Métis people, the hybridity of mixed-racial identity, and the intersection of Western and Indigenous cultures. He has studied with Jake Heggie, Samuel Dolin, James Anagnoson and Johannes Debus. Ian was an inaugural Carrefour Composer-in-Residence with the National Arts Centre Orchestra for 2017-2019 and is Composer-in-Residence for the Canadian Opera Company for 2019-2021. He is an Associate

Composer of the Canadian Music Centre and a member of the Canadian League of Composers.

About the media artist

Brendan Briceland's work includes Projection Designer for *Jungle Book* (Alberta Theatre Projects), Assistant projection Designer for *Little Women* (Theatre Calgary), Assistant Projection/Lighting Designer for *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Theatre Calgary). Digital Media Designs for: *Serena Ryder* (2022 Concert), *Twin Flames* (2022 Concert), *Don Giovanni* (The Banff Centre), *Opera in the 21st Century* (The Banff Centre), *Evolution Classical Concert Series* (The Banff Centre '22/'23). Instagram: @mrbrendanb

And Bleak Blew the Easterly Wind (2022) | 8'

for piano, live interactive electronics and video

concept and commissioned by Megumi Masaki with the support of Creative Scotland

music: Ollie Hawker

video: Katie Muir

snow-patch researcher: Iain Cameron

"And bleak blew the easterly wind is a eulogy for the Sphinx snow patch, Scotland's longest-lasting snow patch. Located on Braeriach in the Cairngorms, the Sphinx only melted away completely three times in the 20th century, but has disappeared five times in the last 20 years. As a visual spectacle, the patch itself is small and humble, but as a symbol of the effects of the current climate emergency it is powerful and saddening. Whereas a lot of environmental music takes the acoustic instruments as natural forces to be disrupted by electronic elements, we want to challenge this metaphor by having the electronic element consist of pure, untouched sine tones which are gradually disrupted and overtaken by the piano, the ultimate symbol of Western music and culture. To cast a similar lens on the history of Scottish folk music, the piano material is a deconstructed version of a traditional tune *The Road to Dundee*. We have a duty to address folk music's colonial connections and explore how its past is connected to the present-day forces involved in the destruction of the world's natural habitats. This particular tune has a clear connection, as Charles Gray, who wrote the lyrics based on *Grim Winter Was Howlin'*, a line from which our title is paraphrased, was a British army captain in the 19th century, at the height of the empire's colonial and industrial power. In framing the tune and the piano as the disruptive force, the piece challenges ideas of the assumed naturalness of folk music. The video was inspired by Celtic funeral tradition, in which the body of the deceased is kept for seven days so that loved ones can travel from afar and say their goodbyes. First the ice melts, then the fog comes and envelopes the landscape, before it is visited by its old friends: the unpredictable wind, the dramatic rain, the stoic sun and finally the mournful moon.

About the composer

Ollie Hawker is a Glasgow-based composer and improviser primarily interested in ideas of digital nostalgia. He holds a Music degree from the University of Glasgow, and a Masters in composition from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where he was awarded the 2020 Kimie Composition Prize. He has recently received commissions from Sound Festival, Cryptic, and Live Music Now Scotland, and has performed his live electronic pieces at Sound Thought Festival, Radiophrenia and the Scottish Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. He plays in the bands *Neuro Trash* and *Instruction Manual*, and works as a music practitioner for the charities *Paragon* and *Hear My Music*.

About the visual artist

Katie Muir is a Glasgow based multidisciplinary videographer, graphic designer and visual artist. Her practice centres around the climate anxiety felt by so many as we globally sit at the knife's

edge of the climate crisis. In recent works she has been using archive materials to reflect on modern society's nostalgic cultural tendencies paired with modern climate issues to emulate the everyday eeriness of world changing around us. Since graduating from The Glasgow School of Art in 2020 with a degree in Communication Design, her work has been featured in Design Wean's Show Off, Rumpus Room's Act+Adapt Climate Actions Edition, and she was named a Local Heroes Design One-to-Watch. katiemuir.myportfolio.com/videography

Always Sideways (2023) | 8'

for piano, live interactive electronics and video

music: Brent Lee

video: Sigi Torinus

Always, Sideways is a piece for piano with live audio processing and live video mixing. The pacing of the piece and character of the audiovisual gestures reflect the slow and relentless nature of changes to our environment, particularly the melting of the polar ice caps. The title is reminiscent of the movement of glaciers, with the video exploring themes of transformation, fluidity, fragility, and the transformative qualities of water and ice. Ephemeral shapes constantly change and evolve, matched by periodic shifts in timbre and harmony in the piano music.

About the composer

Brent Lee is a composer, media artist, and musician whose work explores the relationships between sound, image, and technology, especially through multimedia performance. He has created more than one hundred works, ranging from orchestral music to interactive media pieces to film soundtracks. His most recent project is entitled Homstal, a set of multimedia pieces featuring saxophone improvisation in an interactive audiovisual environment. He is a co-founder of the Noiseborder Ensemble and the Electric Improv Lab, and teaches in the School of Creative Arts at the University of Windsor.

About the media artist

Sigi Torinus creates new media works that include site-specific installation and improvisatory interactive live-video performance. She is a co-founder of the Noiseborder Ensemble and has been awarded significant funding for research/creation through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Ontario Arts Council. She is a Professor of Integrated Media in the School of Creative Arts at the University of Windsor where she co-directs the Noiseborder Multimedia Performance Lab (NMPL).

See the Freeze, Hear the Thaw | 24'

piano, film and soundtrack (2022) editing and commissioned by Megumi Masaki with the support of Canada Council for the Arts

music and sound design: Carmen Braden

film: Caroline Cox and Benjamin McGregor

cultural liaison: Tiffany Ayalik

Written in dialogue with pianist Megumi Masaki, and local residents Fred Sangris (Yellowknives Dene Chief), Karen Wright Fraser (Gwich'in artist), Amos Scott (Tlicho harvester), Andrea Bettger (lives off-grid, musician), Peter Curran (ice road truck driver), Rosy Tutton (ice/ climate scientists), Pretty Ngo (17 year-old activist), and Chelsea Seiben (13 year old activist) (with permissions from all) *with the support of Manitoba Arts Council and Canada Council See the Freeze, Hear the Thaw . "Snow, snow, cold, freeze, we're waiting for that" - the words of Yellowknives Dene First Nation Chief Fred Sangris are the first words we hear in this piece. "I can't live without the ice " are the closing words. This work for piano and multimedia has a story at its core: the story of a relationship between ice and people.

Specifically, between ice in the sub-Arctic area of Canada and the people in Dettah and Yellowknife, Northwest Territories who live with it, live on it, study it, need it for survival, and include it in their cultural identity.

In some moments a celebration and in other moments a prelude to grief, *See the Freeze, Hear the Thaw* gives space for the stories to be heard, for the dynamic beauty and wonder of the ice to be seen (and heard!), and for the music to connect it all. Written in dialogue with pianist Megumi Masaki, and local residents Fred Sangris (Yellowknives Dene Chief), Karen Wright Fraser (Gwich'in artist), Amos Scott (Tlicho harvester), Andrea Bettger (lives off-grid, musician), Peter Curran (ice road truck driver), Rosy Tutton (ice/ climate scientists), Pretty Ngo (17 year-old activist), and Chelsea Seiben (13 year old activist), with videography by Caroline Cox and Benjamin McGregor.

About the composer

Award-winning contemporary composer and singer/songwriter Carmen Braden is a dynamic force in the world of new music, hailing proudly from Yellowknife NWT. Carmen is a “multi-talented artist” (BK on the Scene) recognized as an “acoustic ambassador of the Canadian Subarctic” (Musicworks). She has played intimate theatres and main stage folk festivals, and smoothly jumps between genres of songwriting and composing. Her contemporary classical compositions are nationally recognized, with commissions and performances by world class ensembles and performers including the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, James Ehnes and the Canadian Chamber Choir. Carmen has released three studio albums: *Seed Songs* (2021), *Songs of the Invisible Summer Stars* (2019) and *Ravens* (2017). Carmen has been nationally recognized, winning the Western Canadian Music Award for Classical Composer of the Year in both 2020 and 2019.

About the filmmakers

Caroline Cox is a Northwest Territories based filmmaker who lives off-grid and specializes in projects that focus on the culture, environment and lifestyles of Canada's far north. Caroline is the producer and director of the hit TV series *Wild Kitchen* and CBC series *NorthernHer*. Caroline also works as an Associate Producer for the Discovery Channel. and She is a co-founder at Copper Quartz Media with her business partner, Inuk performing artist, Tiffany Ayalik. *Food For The Rest of Us* is Caroline and Tiffany's first feature length documentary film. The film is a Hot Docs Ted Rogers Fund recipient as well as a Doc Society Good Pitch and Redford Centre selected project. Caroline also produced and was the director of photography on the film *Okpik: Little Village in the Arctic*, which received funding from the Rogers Doc Fund and is currently available to stream on CBC Gem. Benjamin McGregor is an Inuit independent filmmaker who grew up in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Ben has written and directed award-winning projects that have screened locally as well as across Canada, the US, and abroad (Whistler Film Festival, Los Angeles Recovery Film Festival) and most recently has been nominated for a Leo Award in BC. He is very passionate about stories that tackle social issues and has a love for genre films. Ben is excited to create content locally in the NWT to bring the beauty it has to offer to the mainstream.

