

Music of America VII

Cleveland Chamber Collective

January 12, 2025, 3 PM
[Disciples Christian Church](#)
3663 Mayfield Rd
Cleveland Heights, OH

Blaze

Reena Esmail

Emily Cornelius, violin, Dylan Moffitt, tabla

Salad Bar

Ellen Ruth Harrison

1. Pommerngarten (Pomeranian Garden)
2. Gurkensalat nach "Hausfrauen Art" (Cucumber Salad, Home Style)
3. Sechs-Kräutersalat (Six-herb Salad)
4. Tomatensalat nach "Stettiner Art" (Tomato Salad, Szczecin Style)
5. Löwenzahnsalat (Dandelion Salad)
6. Küstenimpressionen (Coastal Impressions)

Linda White, flute, Brian Slawta, viola

Manhattan Serenades

Gabriela Lena Frank

1. Uptown
2. Midtown
3. Downtown

Jeff Singler, cello, Eric Charnofsky, piano

Pan Dances

Ty Alan Emerson

1. something
2. something else
3. something else entirely

Emily Cornelius, violin
Jeff Singler, cello, Dylan Moffitt, percussion

---BRIEF STAGE RESET---

Tooth and Nail

Brian Slawta, viola

Missy Mazzoli

Varied Trio

1. Gending
2. Bowl Bells
3. Elegy
4. Rondeau in Honor of Fragonard
5. Dance

Lou Harrison

Emily Cornelius, violin

Eric Charnofsky, piano, Dylan Moffitt, percussion

Le Grand Tango

Brian Slawta, viola, Eric Charnofsky, piano

Astor Piazzolla

PROGRAM NOTES

BLAZE, by Reena Esmail

Blaze is an exploration of Raag Vibhas — a pentatonic raag that straddles light and darkness. I love the dynamic, vibrant dialogue between musicians in Indian classical music, and I strove to recreate that in this piece, both with intense Hindustani rhythmic permutations and with moments of open melody and improvised soundscape that are more familiar to modern Western ears. The piece is meant to change and evolve based on the training and context of the two individual musicians, as they bring their unique perspectives into dialogue.

Blaze was commissioned by Shalini Vijayan. It was premiered by Shalini Vijayan and T.J. Troy on November 12, 2019 at MonkSpace, in Los Angeles, CA.

SALAD BAR, by Ellen Ruth Harrison

Several years ago, I was at the Baltic Sea on a family vacation. We went out to eat one evening at an incredibly snooty restaurant. Snooty for no reason, however, because I've never had a worse meal. The menu, on the other hand, was pure poetry. *Farbtupfer der Jahreszeiten, ein Genuss der Sinne* describes the seasonal splashes of color that dot the countryside near the coast of the Baltic Sea. (While we were laughing about the circumstances of our meal, my husband suggested that I take a menu and use it for a piece. I looked around furtively, completely cowed by the arrogant staff, and slipped the best page from its heavy leather folder.) The items on this page served as a source of inspiration for Salad Bar.

The coast at the Baltic Sea in Mecklenberg-Western Pomerania has a rather harsh climate. Waves batter the embankment mercilessly, and a raw wind blows at all times. It also blows briskly through several movements of Salad Bar: Pommerngarten (Pomeranian Garden or Local Garden), Sechs-Kräutersalat (Six-herb Salad), and Küstenimpressionen (Coastal Impressions). The other movements are less weather-related. Tomatensalat nach “Stettiner Art” (Tomato Salad, Szczecin Style) is a lament for the Jews deported from Szczecin, the first German Jews to be taken to the concentration camps in Poland. Gurkensalat nach “Hausfrauen Art” (Cucumber Salad, Home Style) and Löwenzahnsalat (Dandelion Salad) take their cues from their ingredients. The first is crisp and pale, like a good cucumber should be. The second reels from one texture to another, a reflection of the jagged edges and bitter taste of dandelion leaves, and then lands in the wind on which the seeds float out to sea.

Like at a salad bar, performers are free to pick and choose any number of movements, and can play them in any order. Of course, like in any salad, it’s all in the mix. (ERH)

MANHATTAN SERENADES, by Gabriela Lena Frank

Although lighthearted in nature, *Manhattan Serenades* demands a high level of agility from both pianist and cellist. Elements of jazz define the work, including improvisation and triplet swing tempos that are not exactly notated. For many a classically trained musician, this is a scary task! — but it is my hope that *Serenades* provides an entertaining and worthwhile forum in which to explore such unknowns...

PAN DANCES, by Ty Alan Emerson

...is a companion piece to the work, *Pan Songs*, composed for Dylan Moffitt and his homemade steel pan instrument. The instrument consists of three concentric circular playing areas, each inner ring higher (most of the time) than the outside. The notes are not laid out according to the circle of fifths principle, like modern steel pans, rather it is kind of D centered, in that D is the central note in each circle. But it has a strong B tendency with D#, G#, and A#. And they are in the wrong places. And they are out of tune.

In *Pan Songs*, I took a very earnest approach to composing for the instrument, letting its idiosyncracies and mechanics lead the way. This time, I decided to allow the quirkiness show in the character of the pieces. I chose violin and cello to fill out the ensemble, given their ability to adjust to the pan’s tuning, and also because of the wonderful players, who are game for just about anything.

TOOTH AND NAIL, by Missy Mazzoli

Tooth and Nail was inspired by the extraordinary musical traditions of Uzbekistan, where jaw harp (also called Jew’s harp or mouth harp) plays a prominent role. The jaw harp player consistently plucks the instrument, creating overtones and melodies by changing the shape of his or her mouth, and the central Asian style takes this technique to wild and beautiful extremes.

I have created my own version of this music, based on my memories of hearing Uzbek jaw harp players. The electronic part is made up almost entirely of viola samples, allowing the live viola to play in counterpoint with itself. *Tooth and Nail* was written for violist Nadia Sirota and recorded for her album *Baroque*. (MM)

VARIED TRIO, by Lou Harrison

The *Varied Trio* arose from Harrison's friendship with the percussionist William Winant, with whom he had a number of musical collaborations. The original version of the piece had five participants, with Winant, keyboardist Julie Steinberg and violinist David Abel joined by Harrison playing harp and Colvig playing bells. While this first version was intended solely for these specific people and the festival in which it was premiered, Harrison had always planned to have the final version be a trio that could both be played by the Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio and eventually by other performers. The published score is an arrangement by Julie Steinberg, in which the original keyboard part for virginal is given to a piano, which also takes over the harp part, while the parts for bells move to vibraphone and gongs. Again, the idea of a musical performance as being an expression of friendship, intended for specific human beings rather than for abstract instrumental performers is very representative of Harrison's larger views on music and life.

LE GRAND TANGO, by Astor Piazzolla

Le Grand Tango, single-movement piece for cello and piano by Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla that expresses the spirit of *nuevo tango* ("new tango"), a melding of traditional tango rhythms and jazz-inspired syncopation. Written in 1982, *Le Grand Tango* was published in Paris—thus its French rather than Spanish title.

Piazzolla studied composition in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, who encouraged him to stick with the tango rather than focusing solely on classical composition. Taking her words to heart, he began to experiment with the standard Argentine tango, diverging from the expected Latin harmonies and producing an edgier sound than that found in classic tango. He composed *Le Grand Tango* for Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, who did not play it until 1990 or record it until 1996.

Although structured in a single movement, the work has three broad sections. It opens with the indication "Tempo di tango," in which strongly accented tango rhythms dominate. In the second section, performers are told to allow more motion, with a "libero e cantabile" ("free and singing") spirit. It contains extensive dialogue between the cello and the piano. The final section, for which Piazzolla provided the tempo indication "giocoso" ("humorous"), presents a mood of electric energy and even humour. The music charges forward to its conclusion, giving the cellist many challenging double-stops (playing two notes at once) and glissandos (sliding

rapidly through a musical scale). At this performance, the performers are presenting Piazzolla's own arrangement for viola and piano.

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHIES

REENA ESMAIL

[Reena Esmail](#), an Indian-American composer, who works between the worlds of Indian and Western classical music, and brings communities together through the creation of equitable musical spaces. Esmail's life and music were profiled on Season 3 of PBS Great Performances series Now Hear This, as well as Frame of Mind, a podcast from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Esmail divides her attention evenly between orchestral, chamber and choral work. She has written commissions for ensembles including the Los Angeles Master Chorale, Seattle Symphony, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and Kronos Quartet, and her music has featured on multiple Grammy-nominated albums, including *The Singing Guitar* by Conspirare, *BRUITS* by Imani Winds, and *Healing Modes* by Brooklyn Rider. Many of her choral works are published by Oxford University Press.

Esmail is the Los Angeles Master Chorale's 2020-2025 Swan Family Artist in Residence, and was Seattle Symphony's 2020-21 Composer-in-Residence. She also holds awards/fellowships from United States Artists, the S&R Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Kennedy Center.

Esmail holds degrees in composition from The Juilliard School (BM'05) and the Yale School of Music (MM'11, MMA'14, DMA'18). Her primary teachers have included Susan Botti, Aaron Jay Kernis, Christopher Theofanidis, Christopher Rouse and Samuel Adler. She received a Fulbright-Nehru grant to study Hindustani music in India. Her Hindustani music teachers include Srimati Lakshmi Shankar and Gaurav Mazumdar, and she currently studies and collaborates with Saili Oak. Her doctoral thesis, entitled *Finding Common Ground: Uniting Practices in Hindustani and Western Art Musicians* explores the methods and challenges of the collaborative process between Hindustani musicians and Western composers.

Esmail was Composer-in-Residence for Street Symphony (2016-18) and is currently an Artistic Director of Shastra, a non-profit organization that promotes cross-cultural music connecting music traditions of India and the West.

She currently resides in her hometown of Los Angeles, California.

ELLEN RUTH HARRISON

Cincinnati composer [Ellen Ruth Harrison](#) won two commissions from the Fromm Music Foundation and four Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Awards. Her music has received additional honors and awards from organizations such as the American Guild of Organists, the IBLA European International Music Foundation, the International League of Women Composers, the Jacob K. Javits Foundation, the Rebecca Clarke Society, SPECTRI SONORI, and UC Berkeley. Her works have been widely performed both in the United States and abroad by a diverse range of performers such as A/tonal, Cincinnati Soundbox, the Cincinnati Symphony Chamber Players, concert:nova, Earplay, the Empyrean Ensemble, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, the Linton Chamber Music Series, the Lydian String Quartet, Octagon, Parnassus, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the Society for New Music, Voices of Change, and Zafe Collective. Her music has been described as “stunning” and full of “sophisticated ensemble writing” (The San Francisco Chronicle). Her chamber music often has “a very, very quick series of contrasting moods and atmospheres, which gives it a lot of texture and beauty, and it has a deep sonic realm.” (Boston Globe).

Harrison was born and raised in Streator, Illinois and is currently Adjunct Associate Professor of Composition at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. She is also chair of music theory and composition in CCM’s Preparatory Department. As a recipient of a Jacob K. Javits fellowship, she earned her doctorate in composition from the University of California, Berkeley, where her teachers included Edwin Dugger, Richard Felciano, Andrew Imbrie and Olly Wilson. She spent two years studying in Paris supported by U.C. Berkeley's Prix de Paris, and attended composer workshops at IRCAM. She also studied with Milko Kelemen at the Musikhochschule in Stuttgart, and with Thomas Frederickson and Paul Zonn at the University of Illinois.

Penned for instrumental and vocal ensembles of various sizes, Harrison's compositions are inspired by diverse experiences and circumstances. Echoing her evocatively titled movements, her music at times seems to dip into distant and antique sonic realms to portray a series of contrasting moods and atmospheres. At other times the tone is more jocular as she juxtaposes impetuous activity with infernal calm at multiple levels, presenting an extraordinary variety of textures, melodic materials, and expressive gestures.

GABRIELA LENA FRANK

Currently serving as Composer-in-Residence with the storied Philadelphia Orchestra and included in the Washington Post's list of the most significant women composers in history (August, 2017), identity has always been at the center of composer/pianist [Gabriela Lena Frank's](#) music. Born in Berkeley, California (September, 1972), to a mother of mixed Peruvian/Chinese ancestry and a father of Lithuanian/Jewish descent, Gabriela explores her multicultural heritage through her compositions. Inspired by the works of Bela Bartók and Alberto Ginastera, Gabriela has traveled extensively throughout South America in creative

exploration. Her music often reflects not only her own personal experience as a multi-racial Latina, but also refract her studies of Latin American cultures, incorporating poetry, mythology, and native musical styles into a western classical framework that is uniquely her own.

Moreover, she writes, "There's usually a story line behind my music; a scenario or character." While the enjoyment of her works can be obtained solely from her music, the composer's program notes enhance the listener's experience, for they describe how a piano part mimics a marimba or pan-pipes, or how a movement is based on a particular type of folk song, where the singer is mockingly crying. Even a brief glance at her titles evokes specific imagery: *Leyendas (Legends): An Andean Walkabout*; *La Llorona (The Crying Woman): Tone Poem for Viola and Orchestra*; and *Concertino Cusqueño (Concertino in the Cusco style)*. Gabriela's compositions also reflect her virtuosity as a pianist — when not composing, she is a sought-after performer, specializing in contemporary repertoire.

In 2020, Gabriela was a recipient of the prestigious 25th anniversary Heinz Award in the Arts and Humanity category with an unrestricted cash prize of \$250,000, a meaningful portion of which was donated by Gabriela to the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music. The award recognized Gabriela for breaking gender, disability, and cultural barriers in the classical music industry, and for her work as an activist on behalf of emerging composers of all demographics and aesthetics.

TY ALAN EMERSON

...see also, performer bios or for [Emerson's](#) webpage

MISSY MAZZOLI

Recently deemed “one of the more consistently inventive, surprising composers now working in New York” (NY Times), “Brooklyn’s post-millennial Mozart” (Time Out NY), and praised for her “apocalyptic imagination” (Alex Ross, The New Yorker), [Missy Mazzoli](#) has had her music performed by the Kronos Quartet, LA Opera, eighth blackbird, the BBC Symphony, the Minnesota Orchestra, Scottish Opera and many others. In 2018 she became, along with Jeanine Tesori, one of the first woman to receive a main stage commission from the Metropolitan Opera, and was nominated for a Grammy award in the category of “Best Classical Composition”. She is currently the Mead Composer-in-Residence at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and from 2012-2015 was Composer-in-Residence with Opera Philadelphia.

Her 2018 opera *Proving Up*, created with longtime collaborator librettist Royce Vavrek and based on a short story by Karen Russell, is a surreal commentary on the American dream. It was

commissioned and premiered by Washington National Opera, Opera Omaha and Miller Theatre, and was deemed “harrowing... a true opera for its time” by the Washington Post. Her 2016 opera *Breaking the Waves*, commissioned by Opera Philadelphia and Beth Morrison Projects, was called “one of the best 21st-century American operas yet” by Opera News. *Breaking the Waves* received its European premiere at the 2019 Edinburgh Festival; future performances are planned at LA Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and the Adelaide Festival. Her next opera, *The Listeners*, was premiered in 2021 at the Norwegian National Opera and Opera Philadelphia. In 2016, Missy and composer Ellen Reid founded Luna Lab, a mentorship program for young female composers created in partnership with the Kaufman Music Center. Her works are published by G. Schirmer. missymazzoli.com

LOU HARRISON

American composer [Lou Harrison](#) (1917–2003) is perhaps best known for challenging the traditional musical establishment along with his contemporaries and close colleagues: composers John Cage, Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, and Leonard Bernstein; Living Theater founder, Judith Malina; and choreographer, Merce Cunningham. Today, musicians from Bang on a Can to Björk are indebted to the cultural hybrids Harrison pioneered half a century ago. His explorations of new tonalities at a time when the rest of the avant garde considered such interests heretical set the stage for minimalism and musical post-modernism. His propulsive rhythms and ground-breaking use of percussion have inspired choreographers from Merce Cunningham to Mark Morris, and he is considered the godfather of the so-called "world music" phenomenon that has invigorated Western music with global sounds over the past two decades.

In their biography, authors Bill Alves and Brett Campbell trace Harrison's life and career from the diverse streets of San Francisco, where he studied with music experimentalist Henry Cowell and Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg, and where he discovered his love for all things non-traditional (Beat poetry, parties, and men); to the competitive performance industry in New York, where he subsequently launched his career as a composer, conducted Charles Ives's *Third Symphony* at Carnegie Hall (winning the elder composer a Pulitzer Prize), and experienced a devastating mental breakdown; to the experimental arts institution of Black Mountain College where he was involved in the first "happenings" with Cage, Cunningham, and others; and finally, back to California, where he would become a strong voice in human rights and environmental campaigns and compose some of the most eclectic pieces of his career.

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

[Astor Piazzolla](#) was an Argentine tango composer and bandoneón player. His oeuvre revolutionized the traditional tango into a new style termed nuevo tango, incorporating elements

from jazz and classical music. An excellent bandoneonist, he regularly performed his own compositions with different ensembles. He is known in his native land as “El Gran Astor” (“The Great Astor”).

Born in Argentina in 1921 to immigrant Italian parents, Piazzolla spent most of his childhood with his family in New York City. While there, he acquired fluency in four languages: Spanish, English, French, and Italian. He also started playing the bandoneon, quickly rising to the status of child prodigy. He returned to Argentina in 1937, where strictly traditional tango still reigned, and played in night clubs with a series of groups. The pianist Arthur Rubinstein (then living in Buenos Aires) advised him to study with the Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera. Delving into scores of Stravinsky, Bartók, Ravel, and others, he gave up tango temporarily and worked as a modernist classical composer.

After winning a grant from the French government to study in Paris with the French composer and conductor Nadia Boulanger, he returned to Argentina in 1955, formed the Octeto Buenos Aires to play tangos, and never looked back. Upon introducing his new approach to the tango (nuevo tango), he became a controversial figure among Argentines both musically and politically. The Argentine saying “in Argentina everything may change – except the tango” suggests some of the resistance he found in his native land. However, his music gained acceptance in Europe and North America, and his reworking of the tango was embraced by some liberal segments of Argentine society, who were pushing for political changes in parallel to his musical revolution.

Piazzolla’s nuevo tango was distinct from the traditional tango in its incorporation of elements of jazz, its use of extended harmonies and dissonance, its use of counterpoint, and its ventures into extended compositional forms. Piazzolla also introduced new instruments that were not used in the traditional tango, including the flute, saxophone, electric guitar, electronic instruments, and a full jazz/rock drum kit.

Piazzolla played with numerous ensembles beginning with the 1946 Orchestra, the 1955 “Octeto Buenos Aires”, the 1960 “First Quintet”, the 1971 “Noneto”, the 1978 “Second Quintet” and the 1989 “Sextet”. As well as providing original compositions and arrangements, he was the director and Bandoneon player in all of them. He also recorded an album with the famous cellist Yo-Yo Ma and another one with jazz sax player Gerry Mulligan. His numerous compositions include orchestral work such as the “Concierto para Bandoneón, Orquesta, Cuerdas y Percusión”, “Doble-Concierto para Bandoneón y Guitarra”, “Tres Tangos Sinfónicos” and “Concierto de Nácar para 9 Tanguistas y Orquesta”, as well as song-form compositions that still today are well known by the general public in his country, like “Balada para un loco” (Ballad for a madman) and “Adiós Nonino” (dedicated to his grandfather) which he recorded many times with different musicians and ensembles. Biographers estimate that Piazzolla wrote around 3,000 pieces and recorded around 500.

GUEST PERFORMER

[JEFF SINGLER](#) is a professional cellist and educator based out of Cleveland. Mr. Singler teaches privately, at The Music Settlement, and at the Oberlin Community Music School. He has served as cello faculty at Youngstown State University and Ohio University, and is in demand as a teacher, music coach, and lecturer across Northeast Ohio. Mr. Singler is Principal Cellist of the Youngstown Symphony, Warren Philharmonic, and Ashland Symphony, and performs regularly with the Erie Philharmonic, Columbus Symphony, West Virginia Symphony, and Akron Symphony, as well as with the Lake Effect Piano Trio, Obsidian String Quartet, and Prism Jazz Ensemble.

Mr. Singler was formerly Principal Cellist of the Ohio Valley Symphony, and has filled in as Principal Cello of City Music Cleveland, and Opera Per Tutti. He has been Acting Principal Cello in the Erie Philharmonic, and frequently fills in as Principal or Assistant in that orchestra. He has also performed with the Blossom Festival Orchestra, Blue Water Chamber Orchestra, Columbus Camerata, Valley Lyric Opera, and the Canton Symphony.

Praised by Cleveland Classical for his "poise and precision" as a performer, Mr. Singler is an active recitalist and chamber musician in Northeast Ohio, including guest artist recitals for the Bratenahl Chamber Music Series, the Youngstown State University Fine and Performing Arts Series, Erie Festival of The Arts, the Cain Park Concert series, The Chamber Music Society of Ohio, the Local 4 Music Performance Fund, She Scores!, and First Night Canfield. He has also been featured as a guest soloist with the Ashtabula Orchestra, The Summit Choral Society, the Butler Choral Society, The Salem Youth Chorus, the Canton Comic Opera Company, the Dana Symphony at Youngstown State University, and the Erie Philharmonic.

Mr. Singler has collaborated in chamber music performance with many renowned musicians, including Annie Fullard of the Cavani Quartet, John Root of the Juilliard School of Music, Liz DeMio of the Cleveland Institute of Music, and others. His solo and chamber music performances have been broadcast over WCLV in Cleveland, WYSU in Youngstown, WQED in Pittsburgh, and WQLN in Erie, PA. Several performances are available on YouTube as well.

In the popular vein, Mr. Singler has recorded with the Sony label, been part of the Final Fantasy Tour Orchestra, and has performed in concert with Amy Grant, Jordan Smith, and as principal cello for Clay Aiken, and Michael W. Smith.

As an educator, Mr. Singler is on faculty at the Music Settlement and the Oberlin Community Music School, and also teaches cello and chamber music privately in the Cleveland area. He has been cello faculty at Youngstown State University and Ohio University. He gives frequent master classes, lectures, performances and coachings to middle school, high school, and collegiate level individual students and groups in Ohio and Western Pennsylvania, and has presented his clinic on cello tone and technique at the OMEA Convention. His private students have achieved success as principal cellists and senior soloists at their schools, have been members of All-Region and All-State Orchestras, Contemporary Youth Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra, and Northern Ohio Youth Orchestra. Students have gone

on to successful careers in diverse fields, including music education, therapy, recording, and performance.

Mr. Singler holds degrees from Youngstown State University and the Cleveland Institute of Music, and has taken part in the Aspen Music Festival and the Bowdoin Music Festival where he was performing and teaching assistant to Peter Howard. His most influential teachers have included Michael Gelfand, Alan Harris, Mark Schroeder, Peter Howard, Richard Weiss, and Bryan Dumm. He plays both a Czech cello of unknown maker circa 1850, and a cello by Lawrence Wilke made in 2000. His bows are a 1999/2022 bow by John Norwood Lee, and a bow by John Dodd, circa 1810.

THE CLEVELAND CHAMBER COLLECTIVE

The Cleveland Chamber Collective is committed to the idea that great music can have a great impact. Leonard Bernstein said, “Art cannot change events. But it can affect people so that they are changed...enriched, ennobled, encouraged.” Our mission is to enrich, ennoble, and encourage the diverse people of our community by providing exceptional artistic experiences to all. We continue to seek out new and innovative ways to engage our community, challenging the normal performance paradigms. We further seek out similarly motivated partners in the hopes that our shared resources will have a greater impact than our work separately.

THE BAND

Linda White, flutes, Emily Cornelius, violin,
Brian Slawta, viola, Eric Charnofsky, piano, Dylan Moffitt, percussion
Ty Alan Emerson, Director

For complete biographies please visit us online at

<https://www.chambercollective.org/the-band>

Audio recording by [Erie Fire Sound](#), Jonathon Smith