



I/O FEST 2022
SATURDAY, JANUARY 15, 2022, 3 PM
THE CLARK: CONFORTI PAVILION

BlackBox Ensemble
Intersections

Tanner Porter	<i>Heather</i> (2018) pierrot ensemble and percussion
Brittany J. Green	<i>...To Experience Life.</i> (2019) trumpet, piano, percussion, electronics
Bekah Simms	<i>Everything is... Distorted</i> (2017) pierrot ensemble, percussion, and tape
Paul Novack	<i>prisms and mirrors</i> (2021) pierrot ensemble and percussion
Brittany J. Green	<i>Intersections</i> (2017) open instrumentation - with members of the I/O Ensemble

BlackBox Ensemble

Leonard Bopp '19, Conductor/Trumpet, Artistic Director
Annie Nikunen, Flute, Marketing Director
Tyler Neidermayer, Clarinet, Technical Director
Lara Lewison, Violin
Jordan Bartow, Cello, Operations Director
jc, Percussion
Yifei Xu, Piano

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Tanner Porter, *Heather* (2018)

"Heather" is based on the poem of the same name by Robert MacFarlane, taken from his collection *The Lost Words*. MacFarlane's poem suggests that heather, as a plant, is more than it appears to be. Heather shares the ground it grows from with so many other flowers, and is an inherently compassionate neighbor made more lovely by its kindness.

Brittany J. Green, ... *To Experience Life*. (2019)

How do we define the experience of life? Is it the breaths we take? The biological functions of existence and growth? Perhaps, living is defined through our time on Earth, the thoughts we have, our experiences with one another, or the impact we leave on our planet and the collective conscious.

...to experience life. explores these varying explanations through fragmented gestures of growth and decay, juxtaposed with manipulated recordings of text that attempts to define the experience of life. The intertwining of these gestures and manipulations throughout the ensemble abstractly reflect the drama, nuance, and meaningful meaninglessness of life. The electronic elements of this piece were realized using Pro Tools, Max/MSP, Adafruit Neopixels, and Arduino.

Text:

"Life is the quality that distinguishes a vital and functional being from a dead body."

"An organismic state characterized by capacity for metabolism, growth, reaction to stimuli, and reproduction."

"Life is the sequence of physical and mental experiences that make up the existence of an individual."

"The life expectancy for Homo Sapiens on planet earth is 69 years, meaning the average primate has 828 months, 3,588 weeks, 25,189 days, 604,440 hours, 36,266,400 minutes, or 2,175,984,000 seconds to experience life."

Text taken from definitions of the word "Life" found in Webster's Dictionary and statements written by the composer.

Bekah Simms, *Everything is... Distorted* (2017)

"...the immediate experience of the world, its perceptible pleasure has been totally exhausted to the extent that by now everything is filtered, mediated, distorted by technology... Romitelli insisted that art could not resist technological violence other than through a response that was even more violent and artificial."

—Interview: Plouvier about Romitelli

Paul Novak, *prisms and mirrors* (2021)

I'm fascinated by prismatic musical forms: structures that continuously refract and reflect, kaleidoscopically shifting and evolving but at the same time static and unchanging. I imagine a light shined through a series of crystals and mirrors, shimmering into colorful spectra and bouncing in unexpected directions. Similarly, *prisms and mirrors* maps a single idea through a series of musical refractions and reflections, a set of continuous variations which is by turns textural, rhythmic, and melodic. To me, this concept of musical form resonates with the beautifully collaborative nature of writing music, in which all ideas are continually refracted throughout the course of notation, interpretation, and performance. *prisms and mirrors* musically enacts this refraction, with all the fragility, intricacy, and color of a prism refracting light.

Brittany J. Green, *Intersections* (2017)

Intersections is a concept piece representative of the finite yet infinite nature of moments where paths are crossed. The piece has no set beginning or ending, just a cycle of intersected lines to be interpreted at the performer's will. *Intersections* can be performed as a solo or ensemble piece, with any combination of instrumentation, so long as no instruments are a second apart (i.e. clarinet and piano, F horn and alto saxophone). Players may start anywhere on the score and may play from left to right or right to left, so long as each subsequent part is connected to the previous. When performed in an ensemble setting, it is recommended that performers do not share their starting points with one another, and use non-verbal communication to signal ending. Written deliberately without stems or clefs, performers are free to translate the pitches presented as they wish.

ABOUT The BlackBox Ensemble

The BlackBox Ensemble is a New York City-based, flexible-instrumentation contemporary music collective. We produce projects that aim to resonate with our cultural and political present, advocate for social justice causes, and explore the experimental boundaries of the music of our time. In doing so, we are committed to championing some of today's most powerful emerging composers through close collaboration.

Our 2021-2022 season includes four world premieres, including Tanner Porter's "Honey" with the composer performing with the ensemble, new works by Paul Novak and Annie Nikunen, and an evening-length work by Erich Barganier premiering at the DiMenna Center for Classical Music in April. Our season also includes a composer portrait of Jessie Cox and a season-long feature of works by Brittany J. Green, whose ensemble works we will perform and record throughout the season. In the summer of 2021, the ensemble completed a residency at the Avaloch Farm Music Institute, with Novak and Nikunen serving as composers-in-residence. Following the residency, our recording of Novak's *reflected tides*, featuring new poetry by Ira Goga, was presented as a part of the 2021 New Music Gathering conference.

In the 2020-2021 season, we presented "Elegy," a virtual concert and accompanying album featuring music by Juhi Bansal, Carlos Simon, Yaz Lancaster, Brittany J. Green, and Jessica Mays. Reviewing this program, *I Care If You Listen* wrote "the 45-minute chamber music program showcased five worthy contemporary composers, with earnest performances that did justice to the extramusical connotations." We also presented an outdoor, socially-distanced performance of Julius Eastman's *Feminine* in Marsha P. Johnson State Park. Our regular season concluded with "Gallery of Sound," a performance of solo works performed in isolated rooms at an underground bar and record store in Midtown Manhattan. In all of our programs, we aim to present contemporary classical music in a format that is approachable, innovative, and impactful.

Our name, BlackBox, is inspired by this term's meaning in other fields. In theatre, a Black Box is a type of performance space—usually a square room with black walls—that offers flexible staging and seating arrangements, creating an environment ripe for creative experimentation and intimate human connection. Meanwhile, in science, computing, and the humanities, a "black box" is a system with defined inputs and outputs whose inner workings are unknown. We believe that music, as a cultural medium, fills the role of the black box, enacting an ambiguous but vital relationship between artistic expression and social life. In doing so, we follow the inspiration of the theatrical definition—to foster experimentation, innovation, and human connection.

ABOUT I/O FEST

I/O Fest, the Williams College Department of Music's annual immersion in the music of today, is a multi-day exploration of adventurous music featuring new voices, fresh perspectives, and creative modes of musical expression. Performances, talks, and workshops are held in the '62 Center for Theatre & Dance and The Clark Art Institute, with a special interest in unconventional spaces and creative modes of performance. Featuring renowned guest artists and performances by the I/O Ensemble, faculty, and students, I/O Fest seeks to present innovative and visceral programs that invite listeners to experience music in new ways.