

Sunday, February 23, 2025

YARN/WIRE

Sae Hashimoto, percussion

Russell Greenberg, percussion

Laura Barger, piano

Julia Den Boer, piano

with special guest

NICOLETTA BERRY, SOPRANO

Quartet (2013)

Steve Reich

- I. Fast
- II. Slow
- III. Fast

Le Monde des ronds et des carrés (2015)

Misato Mochizuki

INTERMISSION

Music for Ensemble and Pitch-Shifter Delay (2012)

Tyondai Braxton

ghost story (2025)

Phil Kline

- I. Landscape with Obelisk
- II. The Kind Ghosts
- III. The Children's Hour
- IV. Talk of the Town
- V. My Funeral
- VI. Dear Friend

with Nicoletta Berry, soprano
world-premiere ISGM commission

*The world-premiere ISGM commission of ghost story (2025) is supported by the
Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts and New Music USA's Organization Fund in 2024–25*

Steinway piano provided by M. Steinert & Sons



NOTE FROM THE CURATOR

I am delighted to welcome Yarn/Wire in their Gardner Museum debut, and we are thrilled to be presenting the world premiere of composer Phil Kline's new work, *ghost story*, that draws its inspiration and text from the life of Isabella Stewart Gardner. Kline accepted our invitation for a brief residency at the Museum last year, spending time in the archives, the greenhouse, and the collection, to gather ideas and material for his new piece, which he has written for soprano Nicoletta Berry and the ensemble Yarn/Wire.

The ensemble's combination of two pianos and two percussionists remains relatively rare in concert works. So it is natural that Yarn/Wire have focused on commissioning new works as a central part of their activities.

This particular instrumentation first arose in Bartók's 1937 Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion. But behind the sound of Bartók's seminal work stands Stravinsky's 1923 ballet score *Les Noces*, which includes four pianos(!) and percussion. Stravinsky's ballet, in turn, was influenced by the composer's love for the maniacal rigor of the player piano.

Some of that ancestral spirit of machine music endures in two works commissioned by Yarn/Wire on today's program. Tyondai Braxton's insistent and dizzying music extends the quartet's sound world with electronics. Misato Mochizuki's work takes its title from "Des ronds et des carrés" ("Circles and squares"), an abstract and atomized text and graphics rendering of "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Cinderella" by the French artist Jean Ache (first published in Japan in 1975). While Mochizuki's piece begins with what feels like a consecratory ritual, the composer drives the music into a rationalized machine abstraction, to thrilling effect.

Steve Reich, whose music has long featured keyboards and percussion, calls his Quartet "one of the more complex I have ever composed." The piece beautifully balances drive and poetry and numbers among his most eloquent works.

—George Steel, *Abrams Curator of Music*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Described by the *New York Times* as "key figures from the contemporary music scene ... with unmistakable devotion and excitement," **Yarn/Wire** is a New York-based percussion and piano quartet (Sae Hashimoto and Russell Greenberg, percussion; Laura Barger and Julia Den Boer, pianos) dedicated to the promotion of creative, experimental new music. Since its formation in 2005, the ensemble has garnered widespread acclaim for its steadfast commitment to adventurous compositions and unique collaborative approach to music making. With a worldwide presence, Yarn/Wire strives to connect with audiences, building community to help new compositions realize their full creative potential. *New York Classical Review* claims, "Yarn/Wire may well be the most important new music ensemble on the classical scene today."

A fixture at the world's preeminent halls and music festivals, Yarn/Wire is known for performances at Lincoln Center and Brooklyn Academy of Music (New York, USA), Shanghai Symphony Orchestra Hall (China), Dublin SoundLab (Ireland), and Monday Evening Concerts (Los Angeles, USA), plus numerous European music festivals: Donaueschinger Musiktage (Germany), Bergen International Festival (Norway), the Edinburgh International Festival (Scotland); Rainy Days (Luxembourg), Ultima (Norway), Transit (Belgium), Contemplus (Prague), and Wien Modern (Austria).

Yarn/Wire's 2024–25 programming exemplifies its expansive reach, musical breadth, and international acclaim with residencies at EMPAC (Troy, NY), a repeat performance at Donaueschingen, and appearances at the Venice Biennale, Other Minds Festival (San Francisco), Manifeste (Paris), Black Mountain College, McKnight Center, and Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; and returns to Miller Theatre, Time:Spans Festival, Long Play Festival (Brooklyn), and Roulette. Yarn/Wire holds educational and performance residencies this season at Harvard and Columbia Universities, and the University of Miami (Ohio).



Through hundreds of commissions over 19 years, Yarn/Wire has championed composers including Annea Lockwood, Enno Poppe, Michael Gordon, George Lewis, Ann Cleare, Catherine Lamb, Tyshawn Sorey, Peter Evans, Alex Mincek, Thomas Meadowcroft, Misato Mochizuki, Sam Pluta, Tyondai Braxton, Kate Soper, and Øyvind Torvund. The ensemble enjoys collaborations with genre-bending artists such as Tristan Perich, Ben Vida, Mark Fell, Sufjan Stevens, and Pete Swanson. Their ongoing commissioning series, *Yarn/Wire Currents*, serves as an incubator for new experimental music in partnership with a variety of Brooklyn-based institutions including Roulette, Blank Forms, and ISSUE Project Room.

In spring 2023, the ensemble premiered Sorey's multidisciplinary performance work, *Be Holding*, as part of their multi-year residency at Girard College in Philadelphia. Using poet Ross Gay's book-length poem inspired by Philadelphia basketball champion Julius Erving (a.k.a. "Dr. J") as its libretto, the piece explored themes of Black genius and beauty in the face of racial violence and inequities. Recent highlights also include a debut appearance at the Big Ears and Long Play Festivals; Michael Gordon's tour-de-force *Material* in Leuven, Belgium; and performances with the SWR Symphony Orchestra and Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra.

Yarn/Wire has recorded for the WERGO, Kairos, New Amsterdam, Northern Spy, Distributed Objects, Black Truffle, Shelter Press, Populist, and Carrier record labels, in addition to maintaining their own imprint. Recent and upcoming releases include *Tonband*, featuring works by Enno Poppe and Wolfgang Heiniger, on the WERGO label; Annea Lockwood's *Becoming Air / Into the Vanishing* with trumpeter Nate Wooley on Black Truffle Records; *Yarn/Wire Currents 7* featuring works by Victoria Cheah, Zeno Baldi, and Diana Rodriguez; Marcel Zaes's *Parallel Prints*; the piano and percussion works of Andrew McIntosh; and many more. The 2024–25 season brings the release of *Yarn/Wire Currents 10*, a portrait album of the works of Thomas Meadowcroft on MODE Records, and a recording of Michael Gordon's *Material* on Cantaloupe Records.

A strong advocate for education, Yarn/Wire has presented collaborative workshops, masterclasses, and residencies at Princeton University, Columbia University, Harvard University, Stanford University,

Brown University, Duke University, Northwestern University, Cornell University, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Adelphi University, UC Santa Cruz, Girard College, Brandeis University, and University of Pennsylvania.

Since 2014, the ensemble has hosted the annual Yarn/Wire International Institute and Festival for composers and performers interested in exploring the collaborative side of contemporary music, in which they get the opportunity to study and interact with the ensemble and faculty. Affordable, accessible, and open to all instruments, the institute has been organized around a mission to challenge and deepen our understanding of performance, scholarship, and practice. The Yarn/Wire Institute Festival provides both participants and the public a week of free performances on Long Island and NYC. Festival attendees have access to interact with Yarn/Wire members as well as leading mentors such as Tyshawn Sorey, Vicky Chow, Ann Cleare, Wang Lu, Klaus Lang, Catherine Lamb, Michelle Lou, Peter Evans, and Eduardo Leandro.

At the core of Yarn/Wire's artistic mission is its dedication to transformative work and creating unforgettable experiences. Through performances, commissions, collaborations, and mentorship initiatives, the ensemble's commitment to pushing creative boundaries leaves an impact on audiences and composers alike.

For more information, please visit www.yarnwire.org.

Nicoletta Berry is a New York City-based soprano known for her compelling interpretations of both Baroque and contemporary repertoire. This season, she premieres *ghost story*, a new song cycle by Phil Kline, at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in February. In March, she joins City Lyric Opera's Baroque Festival in *ORPHEUS//EURYDICE*, a reimagining of the myth featuring a new commission by composer Rebecca Scout Nelson. She also returns to the New York Festival of Song for their program *Le Tour de France*.

Last season, Ms. Berry made her Carnegie Hall debut as the soprano soloist in Beethoven's *Christ on the Mount of Olives* and debuted as Despina in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with Opera Saratoga.



She earned her master's degree from the Juilliard School in 2022, where she developed a deep connection to Baroque music, performing as Clizia in Handel's *Teseo* and Giunone in Rossi's *L'Orfeo*. She has since collaborated with the Baroque ensemble Twelfth Night, most recently performing Handel's *Armida Abbandonata*. While at Juilliard, she made her Alice Tully Hall debut as the soprano soloist in Claude Vivier's *Lonely Child* under the baton of Barbara Hannigan.



A recipient of the Stephen Novick Grant in 2022, she was also a Renée Fleming Artist that summer, performing Zerlina in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Additional roles include Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Tytania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Chautauqua Conservatory).





TEXTS

ghost story

1. **Landscape with Obelisk** by Phil Kline, based on an ISGM blurb about the painting *Landscape with Obelisk* by Govaert Flinck (one of the four paintings stolen from the Dutch Room), a pupil of Rembrandt

for many years
this strange little painting
was thought by many
to be the work
of Rembrandt
but there were questions.

the oddity is in the obelisk,
glowing inward on this dying day,
a glint of gold much smaller
than the darkened tree
before us.

a section of its twisted trunk
has fallen to the ground,
a tiny man on horseback
talks to someone on the road,
if it really is a road

across the bridge is a water mill,
beyond that, a shining pool
and a distant mountain looms
in the shadows

the subject is a mystery
the obelisk seems important
or aspires to be
for if it does not mean anything
why are we here?

2. **The Kind Ghosts** by Wilfred Owen (1893–1918)

She sleeps on soft, last breaths; but no ghost looms
Out of the stillness of her palace wall,
Her wall of boys on boys and dooms on dooms.

She dreams of golden gardens and sweet glooms,
Not marvelling why her roses never fall
Nor what red mouths were torn to make their blooms.

The shades keep down which well might roam her hall.
Quiet their blood lies in her crimson rooms
And she is not afraid of their footfall.

They move not from her tapestries, their pall,
Nor pace her terraces, their hecatombs,
Lest aught she be disturbed, or grieved at all.

3. **The Children's Hour** after the poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882)

Between the dark and the daylight,
When night begins to lower,
Comes a pause in our occupations,
That is known as Children's Hour.

In the chamber above me
The patter of little feet,
The sound as a door is opened,
And a voice so soft and sweet.

A whisper,
and then a silence:

I can see the eyes
plotting and planning
To take me by surprise.

If I try to escape, they surround me;
They seem to be everywhere.

Everywhere

you shall not depart,
you are held in the tower
of my heart.

And there
I will keep you
forever and a day,

until the walls fall down
and the dust is blown away



4. **Talk of the Town** by Phil Kline, adapted from an article in the Autumn 1912 issue of the gossip magazine *Town Topics*

That Mrs. Jack Gardner
should resort to such
sensational methods
in keeping herself
before the public eye
as to wear
a big white sash
with these words
in scarlet letters

OH, YOU RED SOX!
OH, YOU RED SOX!
OH, YOU RED SOX!
OH, YOU RED SOX!

This leads us to believe
that the woman
is out of her mind

At the Symphony on Saturday,
she appeared in her prominent seat
with this banner in her auburn hair
causing panic in the audience
and even the orchestra,
their startled eyes
wandering
from their music stands

5. **My Funeral** adapted from Isabella Stewart
Gardner's detailed instructions that she left for her
funeral

I do not want
a black cloth casket.
I want a coffin made of oak,

and long enough so that
my head is not forced in,

Please, please,
Please use the purple pall
Put it on the coffin
at Fenway Court

as soon as the lid is on
and never take it off.

If violets are in season
I want a cross of them
the length and width of the coffin

But if it is not the season,
I want white roses and heather
With the Tartan ribbon tied to the cross.

I should like a piece
of white heather by my hands.

Place me in the chapel
with my feet to the altar,
and four high candles at the corners

6. **Dear Friend** by Phil Kline, using phrases that
Mrs. Gardner used in her correspondence with art
historian Bernard Berenson

Dear Friend,
I am lost to the world around us
It knows nothing of me

I dream of waters
closing in

Dear Friend,
I am so glad to get your letter.
I fear no one is quite alone as I,
but then again, here you are

Dear Friend
I would mortgage my eyes
to see you again
This is only a word of greeting
that the sun may shine on us

and if you have a cigarette
please smoke one for me

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES:

**SIMONE PORTER, VIOLIN
WITH PALLAVI MAHIDHARA, PIANO**
Sunday, March 2

ACRONYM WITH REGINALD MOBLEY, COUNTERTENOR
Sunday, March 9

**JOHAN DALENE, VIOLIN
WITH SAHUN SAM HONG, PIANO**
Sunday, March 16

NEVERMIND
Sunday, March 23

MORGENSTERN TRIO
Sunday, March 30

SŌ PERCUSSION
Sunday, April 6

**STRING TRIO: GENEVA LEWIS, VIOLIN |
YURA LEE, VIOLA | JAY CAMPBELL, CELLO**
Sunday, April 13

**STERLING ELLIOTT, CELLO
WITH WYNONA WANG, PIANO**
Sunday, April 27

Kindly turn off all electronic devices during the concert and refrain from any photography or filming in the hall. Also, please note the location of the emergency exit doors: across the hall from the doors through which you entered.

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum resides on the homelands of the Massachusetts Tribe, who belong to this place and continue to regard these lands and waters as sacred.

Music at the Gardner is supported by Nora McNeely Hurley / Manitou Fund. Hemenway & Barnes LLP is the lead corporate sponsor of the Weekend Concert Series. The Museum thanks its generous concert donors: The Coogan Concert in memory of Peter Weston Coogan; Fitzpatrick Family Concert; James Lawrence Memorial Concert; Alford P. Rudnick Memorial Concert; David Scudder in memory of his wife, Marie Louise Scudder; Wendy Shattuck Young Artist Concert; and Willona Sinclair Memorial Concert. The piano is dedicated as the Alex d'Arbeloff Steinway. The harpsichord was generously donated by Dr. Robert Barstow in memory of Marion Huse, and its care is endowed in memory of Dr. Barstow by The Barstow Fund. Music at the Gardner is also supported in part by the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts, New Music USA's Organization Fund, Nicie and Jay Panetta, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, which is supported by the state of Massachusetts and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Hemenway
& Barnes LLP

NEWMUSIC
USA



Mass
Cultural
Council

NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
for the ARTS
arts.gov