



YERKES OBSERVATORY PRESENTS

***BLACKBIRD  
CREATIVE LAB  
2023***



YERKES  
OBSERVATORY



# PROGRAM

***to no end +*** | Ari Sussman

*Performed in Dome*

+World Premier

Matthew Duvall - *Percussion*

Claudia Fuller - *Violin*

Michelle Hromin - *Clarinet*

Lisa Kaplan - *Piano*

Eliza Shephard - *Flute*

Kathryn Sloat - *Harp*

Kathryn Vetter - *Bass Clarinet*



***Artifacts +*** | Christian Quiñones

*Performer in Dome*

+World Premier

Max Hammond - *midi keyboard*

Noel Holloway - *computer keyboard*



***Wax and Wire*** | Viet Cuong

*Performed in the Programs Room*

Claudia Fuller - *Violin*

Max Hammond - *Piano*

Daniel Knapp - *Cello*

Kathryn Vetter - *Clarinet*



## PROGRAM (cont.)

***Galactic Playground +*** | Wenbin Lyu

*Performed in the Programs Room*

+World Premier

Lina Andonovska - *Flute*

Ethan Cowburn - *Percussion*

Claudia Fuller - *Violin*

Max Hammond - *Piano*

Daniel Knapp - *Cello*

Kathryn Vetter - *Clarinet*

***finding space +*** | Lab 2023 Composer Cohort

*Performed in the Dome*

+World Premier

Tyler Eschendal

Asuka Kakitani

Wenbin Lyu

Sophie Mathieu

Anna Murray

Christian Quiñones

Ari Sussman



# PROGRAM (cont.)

***Hidden Mass +*** | Sophie Mathieu

*Performed in the Dome*

+World Premier

Matthew Duvall - *Percussion/Piano*

Andres Guerra - *Guitar/Piano*

Max Hammond - *Piano*

Kathryn Sloat - *Harp/Piano*



***LEARNING +*** | Tyler Eschendal

*Performed in the Ann M. Drake Family Library*

+World Premier

Lina Andonovska - *Flute*

Ethan Cowburn - *Percussion*

Noelia Cruz - *Violin*

Noel Holloway - *Percussion*

Alexandra Koi - *Voice*

Eliza Shephard - *Flute*

Kathryn Vetter - *Clarinet*



***Light and Dark +*** | Asuka Kakitani

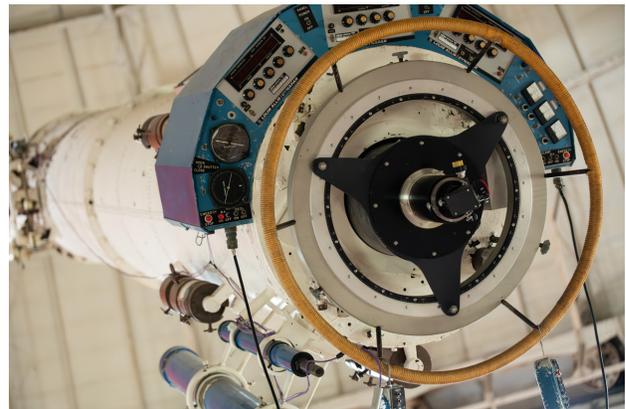
*Performed in the Hagenah Rotunda*

+World Premier

Maiani da Silva - *Violin*

Daniel Knapp - *Cello*

Alexandra Koi - *Voice*



# PROGRAM (cont.)

***Both Beaming and Beckoning* +** | Anna Murray

*Performed in the Dome*

+World Premier

Noelia Cruz - *Violin*

Andres Guerra - *Guitar*

Michelle Hromin - *Clarinet*

Alexandra Koi - *Voice*

Zachary Good - *Clarinet*

***Into the Night* \*** | Joan Tower

*Performed in the Dome*

\*Midwest Premier

***Eighth Blackbird***

Lina Andonovska - *Flute*

Zachary Good - *Clarinet*

Maiani da Silva - *Violin*

Daniel Knapp - *Cello*

Matthew Duvall - *Percussion*

Lisa Kaplan - *Piano*



# COMPOSER NOTES

*See bios for Lab 2023 cohort here: <https://www.8bbcreativelab.org/2023-artist-cohort>*

*See bios for faculty here: <https://www.8bbcreativelab.org/faculty>*

*See bios for Lab creative team here: <https://www.8bbcreativelab.org/creative-team>*

## ***to no end - Ari Sussman***

While I am by no means religious, I do consider myself a proud cultural and spiritual Jewish American. Naturally, I often gravitate toward and find fascination and solace in traditional Jewish music and chant. *to no end* was composed for the 2023 Blackbird Creative Lab by literally following the compositional prompt of “respond in some way to the context of Yerkes/astronomy.” Without giving too much away, *to no end* paraphrases the cantillation chants of two excerpted verses of the Book of Genesis regarding the stars and celestial beings (the original Hebrew is translated below). While both verses are similar in tone, meaning, sentiment, and nature, the perpetual and unremitting chant-like melodies serve as the foundation for this work; it is constantly evolving by building, compressing, deconstructing, decompressing, “melting,” and mutating.

*“Then God brought him (Abraham) outside and said: ‘Look up to the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to number them.’ Then God said...”*

*“I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky, and I will give your descendants all of these lands. And through your descendants, all peoples and nations will be blessed.”*

Genesis 15:5

Genesis 26:4

(Translation by Ari Sussman, via Bible Gateway)

- Ari Sussman

# COMPOSER NOTES

## *Artifacts* - Christian Quiñones

*Artifacts'* examines the idea and role of the virtuoso through different musical and physical artifacts. In the piece, the performers are examined, challenged, and pushed to their limits via a series of notated and typing tests. The piece features live electronics and live visuals that adapt to the performer's input and unravel the overarching narrative of the piece. The keyboard acts as a sampler that contains snippets of music that are widely regarded as virtuosic, from standard piano repertoire, to pop, to singer-songwriters. This directly mirrors the percussionist's instrument, a laptop keyboard that acts as a percussion instrument to type in, and as the second artifact.

The utilized samples and the quoted text in the piece slowly unfold an intertextual narrative that deals with my own issues of self-doubt, scrutiny, and ultimately vulnerability and self-forgiveness.

-Christian Quiñones

## *Wax and Wire* - Viet Cuong

Several years ago, I was introduced to the figurative wire sculptures of Michael Gard. Though his sculptures are made of metal wire, many of them are depictions of dancers in gentle poses that impart a delicate quality to their innately harsh material. Gard describes his artistic process:

"Each figure begins as a block of clay and a spool of wire. The clay is sculpted. This sculpture is reproduced in wax. Individual lengths of wire are woven and knotted stitch-by-stitch around the wax form. Finally the wax is melted away, leaving a rigid figure, both light and strong." [[www.michaelgard.com/](http://www.michaelgard.com/)]

*Wax and Wire* is a translation of Gard's process, using musical "smears" as an aural representation of both rigidity and flexibility. The smears are constructed of chromatic scales in the piano that are destabilized by quartertone embellishments in the clarinet, and then by glissandi in the violin. By the end, these smears melt away, revealing a transformation of a rigid idea presented earlier in the piece.

-Viet Cuong

# COMPOSER NOTES

## ***Galactic Playground* - Wenbin Lyu**

Welcome to the *Galactic Playground*, a magical universe of whimsy and wonder, where anything is possible and adventure awaits around every corner. This piece is a sonic exploration of a child's playful imagination, taking us on a journey through the vast expanse of the cosmos.

The first movement, "Celestial Groove," invites us to dance and play among the stars. The music is lively and jumpy, evoking the energy and excitement of a child's playful universe. The ensemble weaves together a playful melody that sparkles like the stars themselves, with each instrument of the Pierrot ensemble contributing to the cosmic groove.

The second movement, "Battle for the Milky Way" is a dramatic and intense piece that pits us against the forces of darkness and chaos. The music is aggressive and dynamic, as the ensemble engages in a cosmic battle for the fate of the universe. The ensemble demonstrates their virtuosity in this piece, with the instruments building on each other to create a sense of tension and conflict that culminates in a powerful climax.

The third movement, "Into Metaverse" propels us into a realm beyond our wildest dreams. As we venture deeper into the cosmic playground, the music takes on a mesmerizing and ethereal quality, transporting us into a new dimension of existence.

-Wenbin Lyu

## **Finding Space - Lab 2023 Composer Cohort**

*Finding Space* is a collaborative composition written by the seven 2023 Blackbird Creative Lab composers: Tyler Eschendal, Asuka Kakitani, Wenbin Lyu, Sophie Mathieu, Anna Murray, Christian Quiñones, and Ari Sussman, drawing inspiration from their experiences at Yerkes Observatory. The piece is an immersive sonic journey through the wonders of space that explores the introspective contemplation of our place in the universe. In memory of the recent passing of the outstanding Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho, to whom this piece is dedicated, *Finding Space* serves as a heartfelt tribute to her remarkable contribution to contemporary music.

# COMPOSER NOTES

## ***Hidden Mass* - Sophie Mathieu**

*Hidden Mass* is an exploration of pre-discovery Neptune — a mysterious planet lurking in the dark and exerting unseen force.

-Sophie Mathieu

## ***LEARNING* - Tyler Eschendal**

*LEARNING* is a theatrical chamber piece in which an unpunctual singer is pitted against an ensemble. Music forms around the singer's tardiness, the score deceives and reroutes their expectations, the ensemble forges ahead without them, all while chasing the promise of a solo at the end of the piece...

-Tyler Eschendal

## ***Light and Dark* - Asuka Kakitani**

When I moved to Minnesota from Brooklyn in 2016, I was shocked to discover that the night was much darker in my new neighborhood. Walking back home, I realized I could not see my own feet, but when I looked up, I saw many stars. This experience stuck with me, so when I heard that this commission piece for the creative lab could be science and astronomy inspired, it made me think about light pollution. I learned about *Globe at Night*, an international citizen-science campaign, from Amanda, an astronomer at Yerkes Observatory. Reading about light pollution on their website immediately inspired me, and they generously allowed me to use the text, which I am very grateful for since the text became the center of the piece. It has been a joy and privilege to experience inspiring collaboration and witness my piece come alive with the excellent care and thoughtfulness of the amazing Maiani, Daniel, and Alex.

-Asuka Kakitani

# COMPOSER NOTES

*Light and Dark* Text:

A little more than 100 years ago,  
you could walk outside at night even in a city  
and see the Milky Way galaxy arch across the night sky.  
Being able to see thousands of stars was part of everyday life.

Light pollution is excessive, misdirected, or obtrusive artificial light.  
Too much light pollution has consequences:  
it washes out starlight in the night sky,  
interferes with astronomical research,  
  
disrupts ecosystems, has adverse health effects and wastes energy.

Can you find Orion?  
Can you find?

Light pollution is excessive, misdirected, or obtrusive artificial light.  
Too much light pollution has consequences:  
it washes out starlight in the night sky,  
interferes with astronomical research,  
  
disrupts ecosystems, has adverse health effects and wastes energy.

I can't see you  
I can't find you  
I can't see you  
I can't find you  
I can't see you  
I can't find you  
I can't ah ah ah

It can confuse  
the migratory patterns of animals,  
alter competitive interactions  
of animals,

Change predator-prey relations, and cause physiological harm.  
The rhythm of life is orchestrated by the natural diurnal patterns of light and dark;  
so disruption to these patterns impacts the ecological dynamics.

Can you find?  
Can you find?  
Can you?  
Light and Dark  
Light and Dark

A little more than 100 years ago,  
you could walk outside at night even in a city and see the Milky Way galaxy arch  
across the night sky.

**Text permission by NSF's NOIRLab and to Globe at Night, the international citizen science campaign on light pollution.**

# COMPOSER NOTES

## ***Both Beaming and Beckoning* - Anna Murray**

*Both Beaming and Beckoning* takes as its inspiration paths of light, and the echoes between movement on the astronomical and human scales. The title is drawn from the writing of anthropologist Tim Ingold; "To witness the sun, is to see by its own light".

Movement is lines carved in space. Stars carve curves of orbits through the empty medium of space. We carve lines of gestures through the atmosphere. The players of *Both Beaming and Beckoning* create lines and paths of sound through the air.

## **Into the Night - Joan Tower**

*Into the Night* was commissioned by Harry Santen in honor of the birthday of his wife, Ann. The other ensembles involved in the consortium were Bang on a Can(NY) and Collage New Music(Boston).

The work is dedicated to three friends of mine who are leaders of those groups: Lisa Kaplan (Eighth Blackbird), Julia Wolfe (Bang on a Can) and Frank Epstein (Collage).

The title *Into the Night* was taken from the last movement of my cello concerto *A New Day*, which was dedicated to my husband who passed away in November of 2022.

The decline and loss of a partner of fifty years creates a major and complex challenge of emotions that involve sadness, love, anxiety and too many other emotions to describe in words. I guess this piece has helped me go through a journey of those feelings through a musical expression- my beloved and supportive friend-which I am so blessed to have in my life.

I want to thank Lisa and Eighth Blackbird for inviting me to their extraordinary summer music program and for playing my piece so very beautifully.

- Joan Tower

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Blackbird Creative Lab Faculty

### **Eighth Blackbird**

- **Lina Andonovska** *flute*
- **Zachary Good** *clarinets*
- **Maiani da Silva** *violin*
- **Ashley Bathgate** *cello*
- **Matthew Duvall** *percussion*
- **Lisa Kaplan** *piano*

**Susy Bielak** *Interdisciplinary Art*

**Viet Cuong** *Composition*

**Jonathan Bailey Holland** *Composition*

**Christopher Murrah** *Theater Performance*

**Joan Tower** *Composition and Performance*

**Pamela Z** *Composition and Performance*

## Blackbird Creative Lab Guest Artists

**Dalia Chin** *Flutist*

**Meg Leary** *Performance Artist and Grantmaker*

**Odell Mitchell III** *Entertainment Lawyer and Entrepreneur*

**Angel Ysaguirre** *Arts and Civic Leader*

## Blackbird Creative Lab Team

**Susy Bielak** *Lab Director / Producer*

**Matthew Duvall** *Producer*

**Camila Guarda** *Videographer*

**Lisa Kaplan** *Producer*

**Christopher Murrah** *Director*

**Garrett Obrycki** *Lab Deputy Director / Producer*

**Matthew McCabe** *Audio and Lighting Engineer*

**Gabriel Borin** *Audio Associate*

**Ayu Eini** *Lab Associate*

**Lena Yang** *Lab Associate*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Hannah Jonas**, *Tours and Programs Assistant*

*And special thanks to the entire Yerkes Staff!*

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