

# The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

March 11, 2024 6:00 p.m.

*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall*



## Meera Gudipati, flute & electronics with Grant Luhmann, electronics

Javārī Ratios (2021) Meera Gudipati  
(b. 1993)

On Solitude (2020) Soomin Kim  
(b. 1995)

*Grant Luhmann, electronics*

Case in Point (2024) \**world premiere* Aaron Levin  
(b. 1995)

Vox Avium (2022) Samantha Wolf  
(b. 1990)

### INTERMISSION

Parhelia (2024) \**world premiere* Grant Luhmann  
(b. 1994)

Four Airs (2024) \**world premiere* Benjamin Webster  
(b. 1997)  
*I. Free and wistful*  
*II. Evenly and methodically*  
*III. Very precise, energetic*  
*IV. Longingly*

Thorn (1993) David Lang  
(b. 1957)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.  
Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.

## Notes on the Program

### Elm City Soundscapes: Newly Commissioned Works by Yale Composers

In the spring of 2020, I embarked on a project to commission new solo flute works by Yale composers. The university town of Yale, New Haven, is also known as Elm City because of its many elm trees canopied over the streets. Intrigued by the idea of connecting music with nature, I commissioned new flute pieces with electronics from Soomin Kim and Samantha Wolf to be performed at the summit of East Rock Park, a cliff overlooking the town of New Haven. Following a rewarding experience collaborating with these composers, I reached out to more current and alumni Yale composers to commission additional works. Fresh from the press in 2024, these new flute compositions by Grant Luhmann, Benjamin Webster, and Aaron Levin have presented delightful challenges in preparation for this recital. Finally, to complement the program and honor the lineage of these composers, I have included "Thorn," a composition from 1993 by David Lang, an alumnus and current faculty member of the Yale School of Music. All the composers featured on this program have had affiliations with Yale at some point, and most of the works evoke scenes and experiences from Yale and its town, New Haven.

#### *Javāri Ratios* (2021) by **Meera Gudipati**

NYC flutist Leo Sussman commissioned my first flute and electronics piece. We met at Yale School of Music while getting our master's degrees in music. Both of our flute playing can be heard on the electronics track that accompanies the live flute. *Javāri* refers to the wide and curved bridge of a sitar, which is instrumental in producing its rich overtones. Inspired by the sitar spectrum, *Javāri Ratios* emulates the just-tuned harmonic ratios of the sitar.

*Javāri Ratios* takes the listener through a world of manipulated flute sounds. The electronics track opens with bansuri whistle tones emulating the highest parts of the sitar's acoustic spectrum, perhaps evocative of crickets. Lower partials progressively emerge, and the timbre of the sitar eventually becomes recognizable. The live flute enters with fluctuating wave sounds similar to tidal waves.

The electronics gradually incorporate material from the live flute and become increasingly independent. Towards the end of the piece, the track deepens and envelopes the performer as if submerging the flute into water. Conflict between performer and electronics creates a tension which, upon growing unbearable, abruptly releases, dropping the performer into a strikingly unfamiliar sonic landscape. The electronics gradually fade, and the flute finds comfort reminiscing on the old tidal waves in this altered yet tranquil new world.

—Meera Gudipati

#### *On Solitude* (2020) by **Soomin Kim**

Soomin Kim composed *On Solitude* while completing her master's degree in music at Yale School of Music. The track features my recording of multiple sustained alto flute notes. We looped these notes in the software Ableton Live to create the gradually stacking drones for *On Solitude*.

—Meera Gudipati

From the composer:

“In the middle of April 2021, I got a phone call from the contact tracing team that I might have been exposed to COVID-19, and that I had to isolate myself for 10 days. The self-isolation started out feeling like a vacation. I caught up on TV shows that I’ve been wanting to watch, listened to podcasts, and ordered some food without feeling bad about it. I was having a great time, until when I woke up the second day and realized that I had 9 more days to do the exact same thing.

The piece captures various emotions I experienced during the isolation. The solitude was introspective and meditative, but also made me feel stir crazy at times. I have a feeling you know exactly what I’m talking about – we all became masters of solitude, whether voluntarily or not, in this last year. I’d like you to reflect on the feelings and the thoughts you had when you were in your room by yourself, while we listen to this piece of music together.”

*Case in Point* (2024) by **Aaron Levin**

Aaron Levin and I first crossed paths while pursuing our master’s degrees in music at the Yale School of Music. Currently, Aaron is pursuing a doctoral degree in music at Yale and is spending the 2023-2024 academic year as a resident at the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague in the Netherlands. During our time together, we collaborated on a commissioned project, exemplified by our exploration of various flute percussive effects. Notably, we discovered that an explosive “*tha*” sound proved most effective in juxtaposing the aggressive and lyrical timbres. —Meera Gudipati

From the composer:

“*Case in point* responds to the rich body of works for solo flute that deal with counterpoint, such as J.S. Bach's *Partita in A minor*, BWV 1013, Sigfrid Karg-Elert's *Chaconne*, Op. 107, No. 3, and Martijn Padding's *Canon 5:11* from *One Flute* (2018-19). My approach to create the illusion of independent voices, or characters, with a single monophonic instrument, was to use two distinct timbres. The first is a sonorous, more standard flute sound. The second is an aggressive, percussive effect. *Case in point* takes its form by pairing these two characters in an unfolding argument, which strives for a resolution without ever quite finding one.”

*Vox Avium* (2022) by **Samantha Wolf**

Samantha Wolf graduated Yale School of Music with two master’s degrees in 2022. Samantha Wolf and I met while she was completing her master’s degree at Yale School of Music in 2022. Wolf transcribed local bird samples which I recorded. Utilizing these recordings, Wolf created five electronic triggers for *Vox Avium*. —Meera Gudipati

From the composer:

“*Vox Avium* is based on samples of bird songs from East Rock Park, a hiking area in New Haven, Connecticut. The piece reflects composer Samantha Wolf’s view that “music is a way of understanding and interacting with the world.” Like other works by Wolf, *Vox Avium* is deeply reflective of its time and place, and draws inspiration from a wide array of sources, including philosophy, scientific and physical phenomena, and environmental and social justice issues.”

*Parhelia* (2024) by **Grant Luhmann**

I met Grant Luhmann while he was studying composition at the Yale School of Music in 2018. After graduating Yale in 2019, Luhmann changed careers shortly after to become a medical doctor. Still active in the music world, Luhmann keeps composing in his spare time. After commissioning and premiering Luhmann's live electronic solo flute and wind ensemble piece *Panacea* in 2019, I commissioned another work from Luhmann that utilizes the same live electronics software, *maxmsp*, but upholds an entirely different sound world. —Meera Gudipati

From the composer:

“A parhelion (pl. parhelia) is an optical phenomenon in which ice crystals high in the atmosphere refract sunlight, giving the appearance of two bright spots flanking the sun. Images of three winter suns have inspired works of poetry, art, and music since antiquity—notably, the penultimate song of Schubert's *Winterreise* on poems of Müller is titled *Die Nebensonnen*, or “the false suns,” in reference to a parhelion.

*Parhelia* is a strict four-voice canon in which live-processed electronics turn the sound of a single flute into four by way of delays and transposition. Unlike most canons, however, the voices enter very close to each other, only 0.3 seconds apart, or one quarter note in cut time. Like a parhelion, the flute is closely followed by false versions of itself. The melodic line itself is a *perpetuum mobile*, perhaps a nod to Bach, whose shadow looms large over the world of contrapuntal writing.”

*Four Airs* (2024) by **Benjamin Webster**

Benjamin Webster is currently a doctoral music fellow at Yale School of Music, previously studying clarinet performance at the University of Miami and the University of Southern California. In 2023, I had the pleasure of meeting Benjamin at *Koffee?*, one of my favorite coffee shops in New Haven. It was during this meeting that we began brainstorming ideas for a new piece commissioned by a consortium of flutists affiliated with Yale School of Music. —Meera Gudipati

From the composer:

“*Four Airs* is a collection of pieces for solo flute that are based off field recordings taken in and around New Haven, Connecticut. All parties involved in the creation of this work (myself the composer, as well as the four flutists commissioning the piece) have called New Haven “home” at some point or another in our lives, and I thought it would be meaningful to somehow embed the sounds of the city into the music itself. The title's meaning is twofold, “air” not only refers to the musical term for song-like works (such as those by JS Bach or John Dowland), but of course the air that powers the flute and carried the original sounds off of which each movement is based.”

*Thorn* (1993) by **David Lang**

Following Lang's graduation from Yale in 1989, he went on to co-found the *Bang on a Can* music festival. According to a 1989 *New York Times* article by Allan Kozinn, the festival was “a showcase for an array of avant-garde styles and a lively burst of contemporary fireworks.” Four years later, Lang composed *Thorn*, showcasing his distinct compositional style characterized by minimalism, mathematical precision, and virtuosity. Lang dedicated the piece to Jacob Druckman, his colleague at Yale and a celebrated Pulitzer Prize-winning composer.

*Thorn* was written for and premiered by *Carin Levine* at the Gropiusbau museum in Berlin, Germany. Levine is an avid new music performer who has premiered over 1000 works for the flute and published two books, *On Techniques of Flute Playing I and II*.

Lang structures *Thorn* with repeatedly placing three notes apart in the high, middle, and low registers of the flute. Lang creates the repeated “thorn” of the piece by utilizing the highest (most powerful) notes of the flute with a *staccatissimo* marking, which is a markedly short attack. The minimalist rhythm remains steady throughout the piece, except for the last sustained note. In a way, Lang reversed the idea of his original concept of the piece:

From the composer:

“My first idea for **thorn** was to embed a single spike somewhere in the middle of a long, slow, quiet melody. I thought that the listener would then spend the first part of the piece in fear and the second part in shock, and this would change the ways that the tune would be perceived. The problem with this was that the spike turned out to be the most interesting part of the piece, and, ultimately, I couldn’t resist the temptation to add many, many more of them.”—David Lang

## About the Artist

**Meera Gudipati** is a flutist, composer, and educator based in New York City. Driven by a passion for exploring how new music can deepen our understanding of one another, Gudipati has spent the last three years collaborating on compositions for flute and electronics with Yale composers.

She currently holds the co-principal flute position with the South Asian Symphony Orchestra. Previously, Gudipati served as co-principal flute with the United States Coast Guard Band and as acting principal flute with the New Haven Symphony Orchestra. Additionally, she teaches at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City and has held flute faculty positions at Wesleyan University, Connecticut College, and the National Orchestral Institute & Festival.

As a musical ambassador for the United States and India, Gudipati performed in “Spirit of South Asia,” a digital gitanjali (musical offering) by the musicians of the South Asian Symphony Orchestra. As a composer, Gudipati’s creative process centers on her multiculturalism, belonging, and awareness. Her work for wind ensemble, *Bhagalu*, explores her bilingual heritage and will be released soon on an album by the United States Coast Guard Band. Her commission by Lauren Williams, *Ashakiran* for Solo English Horn, draws on raag *Bhairavi* and can be heard on Jacqueline Leclair's album “Music for English Horn Alone”. NYC flutist Leo Sussman commissioned and premiered Gudipati’s flute and electronics piece *Javāri Ratios* at The John Donald Robb Composers' Symposium.

Gudipati graduated with a Master of Music degree from the Yale School of Music and a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Texas at Austin, studying with Ransom Wilson and Marianne Gedigian, respectively. She currently is a doctoral fellow at The City University of New York studying with Tara Helen O’Connor.