

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

May 8, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall*



## The GC Composers Present: Talea Ensemble

*Amanacer*

Gabriel Bouche Caro

*Chromatic Revelations in Viscous Resin*

Nicholas Tran

I. Blue Painting (Kandinsky 1924)

II. Untitled (Newman 1946) // Circles in a Circle (Kandinsky 1923)

III. Untitled (The Voice) (Newman 1950) // Untitled (The Cry) (Newman 1946)

IV. Several Circles (Kandinsky 1926)

V. Cathedra (Newman 1951)

*Akāśā*

Ramya Thiyagarajan

I. Exploration

II. Dance of Time

III. A Glimpse

*"...Sands spoke; underneath them, the waves returned to the lighthouse..."*

Bahar Royacee

*hatching – renderings*

Tobias Fandel

*4 Sketches*

Teté Leguía

*Pares de Flores*

Itzá García

*Intus ergo foris*

Santiago Beis

*Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.*

***Talea Ensemble***

**Laura Cocks, *flute***

**Christa Robinson, *oboe***

**Benjamin Fingland, *clarinet***

**Adrian Morejon, *basoon***

**Wilden Dannenberg, *horn***

**Taka Kigawa, *piano***

**Sunghae Anna Lim, *violin***

**Leah Asher, *viola***

**Chris Gross, *cello***

**Tristan Kasten-Krause, *bass***

**David Fulmer, *conductor***

The **Talea Ensemble**'s mission is to champion musical creativity, cultivate curious listeners, and bring visionary new works to life with vibrant performances that remain in the audience's imagination long after a concert. Recipients of the Chamber Music America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, Talea has brought to life at least 45 commissions of major new works since it was founded in 2008. Engagements include performances at Lincoln Center Festival, Donaueschingen Musiktage, Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt, Warsaw Autumn Festival, Wien Modern, Vancouver New Music, Time of Music Finland, TIME:SPANS, NY Philharmonic Artist Spotlight Series, and many more. Talea's recordings have been distributed worldwide on the Kairos, Wergo, Gravina Musica, Tzadik, Innova, and New World Records labels. Talea assumes an ongoing role in supporting a new generation of composers, and has undertaken residencies in music departments around the country.

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**GC Composers** is a student organization dedicated to supporting the work of doctoral (Ph.D./DMA) candidates in music composition at The Graduate Center (CUNY). Founded and maintained by composers in the program, the GC Composers presents regular concerts of new works and invites collaborations with performers and ensembles, both from within CUNY schools and from New York City's new music community. The goal of the organization is to provide a venue for doctoral composers in the program to develop productive relationships with performers and ensembles by fostering an open and productive collaborative environment. The culmination of these annual collaborations are free public concerts, taking place in Elebash Recital Hall at the Graduate Center, and other CUNY venues.

Our past collaborations have included residencies by PinkNoise, Loadbang, Jack Quartet, Mivos Quartet, Contemporaneous, Either/Or, C4: The Choral Composer Conductor Collective, Mise-En, The Curiosity Cabinet, the Da Capo Chamber Players, TACETi, and soloists Gleb Kanasevich, Miranda Cuckson, and John Ferrari. GC Composers is generously supported by the Baisley Powell Elebash Fund and the Graduate Center Department of Music.

## Notes on the Program

*Amanecer*, which means dawn in Spanish, is a piece which served as a shift in aesthetic from my most recent works. Initially it started as music conceptually based on nature (mainly the sea), but I quickly realized that this was about some variation of rebirth, change or overcoming. The concept of dawn with its slow emerging colors, blending of dark and light, and sense of hope and creation seemed to parallel feelings that I personally have been looking for. These feelings seem to have appeared in the process of writing this piece even though the original concept was different. For *Amanecer* I explored a sonic palate focused mostly on delicate sounds. The piece gradually evolves, slowly adding to the texture with long dovetailing lines in contrast with the double bass. Inspired by chamber jazz traditions, the double bass acts as a quasi-soloist at certain moments. The climax of the piece presents a contrasting gesture of energetic string lines and expansion of the lower register acting as a sonic parallel to the dissipation of darkness before returning to a subdued, and soft style that will continue until the conclusion of the piece.

Born in Puerto Rico, **Gabriel Bouche Caro** is based in New York City, where he is a PhD candidate at the CUNY Graduate Center. Gabriel explores concepts and perceptions of personal and musical identity through the experience of life as part of a colonized people and society. Identity, authenticity in a non-native environment, and foreignness are all tints that color the conception and discourse that is communicated in his work. In December 2022 his hour-long Song Cycle *Que tus ojos no se cansen de brillar*, was premiered at Americas Society in New York. Gabriel's music has been featured in the Havana Contemporary Music festival, Banff Evolution:Quartet, soundSCAPE, and New Music on the Point festivals. He has been commissioned by Americas Society, Peabody Institute, Baltimore Classical Guitar Society, Canvasounds Collective, and the Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts. He was also Artist in Residence at the Hunter College Center for Puerto Rican Studies. Upcoming performances include the premiere of a Soprano and Saxophone duo, May 30 at 7:00 PM at the The Silberman School of Social Work.

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### ***Chromatic Revelations in Viscous Resin (2024)***

This piece is inspired by and handful of Wassily Kandinsky's and Barnett Newman's paintings. The paintings are listed below:

- I. Blue Painting (Kandinsky 1924)
- II. Untitled (Newman 1946) // Circles in a Circle (Kandinsky 1923)
- III. Untitled (The Voice) (Newman 1950) // Untitled (The Cry) (Newman 1946)
- IV. Several Circles (Kandinsky 1926)
- V. Cathedra (Newman 1951)

I imagine these paintings being exhibited together, with *Blue Painting* shown by itself on the wall directly in front of a gallery's door. To the right, I see a long wall presenting Newman's 1946 Untitled work on paper alongside Kandinsky's *Circles in a Circle*. On the opposite wall, two more Newman paintings are presented side by side. The colors of the four paintings form an interesting counterpoint between each other. I imagine I walk into another room in the gallery, where I see Kandinsky's *Several Circles*, a mélange of richly pigmented and vibrant circles suspended in black and gray waves. Finally, I turn around from *Several Circles* and am engulfed by Newman's iconic *Cathedra*, which spans and impressive 213x95 inches. In this scenario, I see *Cathedra* casting its deep blues over and into *Several Circles* and pulling the light from the other gallery room into this one, where *Cathedra* can be nourished. The piece

is composed as a set of short fragments or phrases, each representing some interaction with or between the paintings in this imaginary exhibit.

The music of NYC-based composer and educator **Nicholas Tran** is described as “showy as peacocks” (The Strad) and “well worth the wait” (Boston Musical Intelligencer). Coming from a family of refugees, their music explores themes of emergence, grit, survivorship, transience, and a commitment to (re)claiming the unstable and celebrating the queer. Driven by a desire to affirm the indeterminate, Tran’s compositions are collaborations between the performer, their instrument, and the impact that an outsider—a composer—might have on such an intimate relationship. Tran has been commissioned by National Sawdust, Boston Musica Viva, and Margins Guitar Collective, among others. They have worked with the JACK Quartet, Mivos Quartet, TACETi Ensemble, and Talea Ensemble. Current projects include a cello concerto, fashion and music installation, and an evening-length piano solo. Tran holds a Bachelor of Music in Composition from the Boston Conservatory at Berklee and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in music composition at the CUNY Graduate Center, where they studied with Suzanne Farrin and Jason Eckardt. They hold the Graduate Center Fellowship and have been actively teaching in the CUNY system.

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*Akāśā* represents the subtlest form of matter and is often described as the infinite space in which all other elements exist, akin to a canvas upon which the universe is painted. From this primordial element emerges all vibrations that become Sound. While waiting in line at a Shiva temple in South India, I was struck by the multitude of sounds filling the vast space. Percussion instruments played different rhythms in front of different deities, there was a melodic reed instrument, chants, singing and bells. Voices of people conversing intertwined with this musical tapestry. As the busy soundscape intensified, a sudden hush descended. From this silence emerged a singular voice, singing in devotion, accompanied by the gentle flicker of a flame lifted before the deity. In that moment, I transitioned from identifying with the restless chaos to embracing the beauty that arose. But perhaps the truth lay in the 'space' in between the two. These aural experiences serve as an inspiration behind this composition. The first movement, "Exploration" depicts the movements of the Self within *Akāśā*. A Conch shell-like motif draws attention to the subtle space, as different instruments weave their own melodies, and meander through space before converging on the conch shell motif. The Self is represented by a recurring piano motif, which in its final iteration surrenders to waves of string harmonics. In the second movement, "Dance of Time" a cyclically repeating time structure emerges in 8/4, anchored in a *tala*, symbolizing the Self's entanglement in Time. The third movement, "A Glimpse," features a brief polyrhythmic passage, with bell-like calls drowning out the individual Self, offering a fleeting glimpse into something profound, beyond mundane existence.

**Ramya Thiyagarajan** is an emerging composer currently pursuing an MA in Composition and Ethnomusicology at Hunter College. She comes from a lineage that cherishes South Indian classical music, and her early years were dedicated to learning the violin within this tradition, eventually transitioning to vocal training. A chance encounter with Western choral music, led to a transformative decision to pursue an undergraduate degree in Western Classical music, focussing on vocal studies and composition. Concurrently, she continued to hone her Indian vocal techniques with the distinguished Kalaimamani Yogam Santhanam in Chennai, and performing solo concerts across India. She has also worked and performed with the Grammy-award winning Indian composer of film music, AR Rahman. Exploring these diverse and rich traditions of music has been a fascinating and thought provoking journey, and her compositional work often blends the emotive power of the ragas and the vibrant rhythmic elements of the *tala* system with Western music's rich harmonic language and orchestration,

as they produce compelling soundscapes. She likes writing for voice and finding interesting ways to connect text and music, while also delighting in the abstract expressions of purely instrumental ensembles. As a vocalist, she delves into Indian voice with contemporary stylistic elements, composing her original works in both English and Indian languages, and has published an EP and Single under her artistic alias, Mukura.

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**“...Sands spoke; underneath them, the waves returned to the lighthouse...”** is about the repetition of a still image that moves in the mind’s memories. This piece centers on ornamentation as the primary focus of the music, shows rhythm as a “body movement phenomenon”, and deals with the perception of time among the musicians.

The acoustic and electro-acoustic music of Iranian composer/sound designer **Bahar Royae** has been acclaimed as “succeed(ing) as a poetic incantation, brimming with ideas and colors” (Classical Voice North America) and “haunting” (Boston Arts Review). Bahar writes music for various genres from opera, theater and film to chamber music. Her work has been performed by luminaries such as Claire Chase, Suzanne Farrin, International Contemporary Ensemble, Ensemble der gelbe Klang, Jack Quartet. Significant chamber music performances include Ultraschall Berlin with Muriel Razavi (2023), Berlin Prize for Young Artists with Adam Woodward (2023, ICE Festival Germany with ensemble Tempus Konnex (2022), Tehran Electroacoustic Music Festival (2022) and Time: Spans Festival (2020) with International Contemporary Ensemble and Suzanne Farrin.

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**hatching – renderings:** This composition is inspired by the printmaking technique "hatching" and explores intricate layering and textural depth by emulating gradual changes of shape and definition.

**Tobias Fandel** is a composer and visual artist with a creative interest centered on aesthetical implications of digital culture. In his recent projects he engages the friction in-between current and obsolete media technologies, investigating elusive qualities and sensory artifacts across different cultural sensitivities. He has previously collaborated with Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Tempus Konnex, Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble, Contemporary Insights, Ensemble Mise-En, Meitar Ensemble, Soyuz21, Pink Noise Ensemble, among others. Tobias teaches Music at Baruch College and is currently pursuing a PhD at the CUNY Graduate Center under the guidance of Suzanne Farrin, Jason Eckardt, Douglas Geers, and David Grubbs. He lives and works in Harlem, New York.

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**4 Sketches** is a collection of short pieces that explore saturation. The first one was inspired by the music of Toshiji Mikawa. The second by the sound produced when air enters the mouth through a small opening. The third is based on the chord in measure 470 of Helmut Lachenmann's *Grido* string quartet. The fourth in a drawing made with a pale blue marker.

**Teté Leguía** is a bassist and composer from Lima, Perú. His compositions and instrumental playing draw inspiration from free improvisation, noise music, and spectralism. He has been part of the experimental music scene in Lima since 2003 and the NY free improv scene since 2022, and has collaborated with musicians such as Martín Escalante, Camilo Ángeles, Brandon Seabrook, Weasel Walter, Luke Rovinsky, Caleb Duval, Aliya Ultan, Sam Weinberg, Kevin Murray, Eli Wallace, James Paul Nadien, Concepción Huerta, Kaelen Ghandi, James McKain, Gibrán Andrade, Michael Larocca, Levi Lu, among others. Since 2016, he curates “Minutos para el fin”, a series of free improv and noise music concerts based in Lima.

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***Pares de Flores*** (Pairs of flowers): In Aztec dance tradition, performances are structured similarly to a rondo form. The central theme is referred to as the “plant” or “root” while the episodes are known as “flowers”; several dances follow the plant + flower structure, which can be repeated for hours on end. In the early 1990s a newly developed performance of the *Cenzotle* dance was conceived using only alternating pairs of flowers. *Pares de flores* is influenced by the embodiment of the conceptual framework and the structural transformation that the dance represents.

**Itzá García** (b.1993, México) is a composer with a creative focus on the relationship between time and togetherness in musical settings that involve interactions with technology. Her music has been performed by ensembles such as Ensemble Musikfabrik, JACK Quartet, the Center for Experimentation and Production of Contemporary Music (CEPROMUSIC) ensemble, Pink Noise Ensemble, 2e2m Ensemble, among others. She has received prizes and distinctions such as the CONACYT Grant for Graduate Studies in Mexico 2018, the 2021 Early Provost’s Research Grant of the Graduate Center CUNY, the Atlantic Center for the Arts Residence program, the ICST Artist Residency from the Zurich University of the Arts, and the Art Science Connect Fellowship for co-organizing the “innovation-sound- technology” series. Itzá is currently based in New York City, pursuing a Ph.D. degree in composition at The Graduate Center, CUNY.

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***Intus, ergo foris*** (Latin for "within, hence outward") explores the duality of internal and external individuations of musical form. From the start of the composition, I present a sonic marker that serves as the signal that returns, denoting progressively extended periods within each iteration. Around this dialogue, dynamic tempo shifts, shifting block textures, proportional time notation, and the microtonal relation of instruments of fixed different intonations to each other create a "steady instability" to the musical pattern set from the start of the piece. As the blocks that conform to each episode dilate, more and more of each identity reveals to the listener as separate entities; thus, what was thought at first as a single entity discloses as elements from a larger form.

**Juan Santiago Beis** (1990) is a Uru-Brazilian composer, pianist, audio designer, arranger, and artistic researcher. He holds a Bachelor's degree in composition from Escola de Música e Belas Artes do Paraná – UNESPAR, where he worked with new music ensembles such as Orquestra de Câmara da Cidade de Curitiba, Ensemble Nova Camerata, Ensemble Móvil, Quarteto Brasileira, UM2UO Percussion, Orquestra filarmônica da UFPR, Orquestra de Câmara da Cidade de Curitiba, Orquestra à Base de Sopro de Curitiba, Orquestra à Base de Cordas de Curitiba, and Quinteto Sopro5. In Brazil, he won first prize in XXII Funarte Prêmio de Composição Clássica (2017) and in IV Bienal Música Hoje (2017) composition festivals and played his compositions in *Made in NY Jazz Gala* jazz competition at the Tribeca Center of Performing Arts in New York (2017). In Curitiba, as a producer with Composteira casa de Criação, he organized workshops for composers in residence, including Marcos Balter, Paulo Rios Filho, Alex Buck, Alexandre Torres Porres, and Jorge Antunes, among other Brazilian Artists, in the U.S.A. Beis graduated in 2023 with an M.M. in Composition program at the School of Music of the University of Missouri, Columbia, where he studied with Yoshiaki Onishi and Stefan Freund. During this period, Santiago worked with the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, the [Switch~ Ensemble], the U.M. University Philharmonic for the Sinquefield Composition Prize (2021) and the Sheldon Arts Foundation, The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and the JACK Quartet (JACK Studio 2022). Recent works are *Color Utterance* for the ensemble Alarm Will Sound and *intus ergo foris* for Talea Ensemble. Santiago is pursuing a Ph.D. in Composition at the City University of New York Graduate Center in Dr. Suzanne Farrin's composition studio.