

# CEMEC

Saturday, April 21st, 2018 – 8:00 p.m.  
Conrad Prebys Music Center Experimental Theater

Threads Carolyn Chen and  
Christopher Clarino (UCSD)

Las Chivas; Slower Michael Janz (CalArts)

The Walrus and the Carpenter Scott Perry (UCSB)

Ocean Pearl Teardrops Anqi Liu (UCSD)

Occlusive Thoughts Sam Friedland (CalArts)

## *Intermission*

Eric, Turn Off the Nintendo Elizabeth J. Hambleton (UCSB)

Haunting Ballad Melodie Michel (UCSC)

Real Men Drive Cars Preston Towers (UCSB)

Jeu-Parti Alex Stephenson and  
Dimitris Paganos Koukakis (UCSD)

***Threads* – Carolyn Chen, composer**  
**Christopher Clarino, percussion**

Instrumentation: solo performer with 4-channel audio playback

Duration: 16'

Academic Institution: UCSD

Program Notes: In thinking about composing a piece involving ASL (American Sign Language), I wanted to honor its languageness - its actual function as a means of communicating amongst people who might not otherwise be able to connect. I wanted movement not to disappear into abstraction, but to attempt to communicate - some kind of story. As someone who grew up between two languages, and living in China for the first time at the time of writing, these issues around communication - who you are able to communicate with, what you have the ability to express, what is able to be heard of understood - are particularly foregrounded.

The situation of the percussionist is a physical separation from instruments, the usual means of expression. The instruments are connected only remotely, by string - their sound cannot be virtuosically controlled. This leaves the percussionist in a somewhat vulnerable situation, paralleled by the situation of the audience, who might miss some of the story, or instrumental sound, depending on hearing ability. Always there are holes, and things to piece together. Understanding does not operate in perfect translation, but a tangled, personalized turning-over - in the hands of the performer, in the mind of the listener.

There was a Chinese fold story that I remembered from childhood, about a number of brothers with special powers, getting through adventures. Special abilities are always coupled with vulnerabilities and inabilities. Online, I found an English version, which was not quite what I remembered, but the discrepancy helped to thematize the unreliability of memory and utterance. I retold the story starting from memory, then filling in from other angles of possibility or interpretation, sometimes contradicting, as different points of view will tend to do.

Instrumental materials - paper, leaves, wood, glass - are elemental, and span a spectrum from soft friction sounds to more resonant collisions. Their relative dampness or brilliance corresponds to varying emotional tenors. The writing moves between different voices, sometimes more matter-of-fact, sometimes more wrapped-in-a-dream. The tone is somewhat influenced by the feeling of coming at English from Chinese: the writing is noun-heavy and synonym-light, using very basic vocabulary and simple sentence structure. Monosyllables abound. The other angle is approaching English sentences as music, isolating the basic elements and permuting, inverting, repeating, varying them. In applying traditional compositional techniques to the sound of the lines - phrase rhythm, rhyme, and the little sounds and feelings in words - the process was exactly that of composing music. *Threads* was written for percussionist Christopher Clarino for a project combining music and American Sign Language.

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***Las Chivas; Slower* – Michael Janz, composer and performer**

Instrumentation: Synthesizer and Computer

Duration: 9'49"

Academic Institution: California Institute of the Arts

Program Notes: "Studies on a Field Reorder; *Las Chivas*" is a series of works based on a field recording made in Guadalajara, Mexico. The recording is made from the perspective of a 5th floor hotel room, through a window, above a city-wide celebration that erupted after the Guadalajara Football team, "Las Chivas", won the Mexican National Championship at home. This piece explores the barriers between actual events and our perceptions of them. It invites the participants to explore a sonic happening, but at the same time, prevents them from accessing the event in any straightforward manner. The noise and distortion that come from recording at a distance and in a non-pristine environment challenges the listener. They must attempt to overcome these barriers in order to discover interesting and noteworthy events in the midst of chaos. These barriers may represent technical limitation, or may in fact represent each individual's upbringing and cultural/societal basis that constantly stand in the way of true perception. "*Las Chivas; Slower*" is the second piece in this series. By slowing specific selections of the original recording down by 400% and then applying a customized spectral filter, I highlighted certain fundamental frequencies from the unaltered version. Using a spectral filter, I isolated these frequencies and then used them as the foundation for a type of improvisational response. By nature, the responses are meant to give the player the maximum amount of freedom, while remaining relevant to the recording.

### ***The Walrus and the Carpenter* – Scott Perry**

Instrumentation: Fixed Audio Media Playback

Duration: 5'01"

Academic Institution: UCSB

Program Notes: The Walrus and the Carpenter by Lewis Carroll

“The sun was shining on the sea,  
Shining with all his might:  
He did his very best to make  
The billows smooth and bright —  
And this was odd, because it was  
The middle of the night.

The moon was shining sulkily,  
Because she thought the sun  
Had got no business to be there  
After the day was done —  
“It’s very rude of him,” she said,  
“To come and spoil the fun.” ...

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### ***Ocean Pearl Teardrops* – Anqi Liu**

Instrumentation: fixed media- 8 channel sound diffusion

Duration: 12'

Academic Institution: UCSD

Program Notes: Ocean Pearl Teardrops integrates the traditional Inner Mongolian arietta with electroacoustic. The Mongolian arietta in the fixed media is a valuable cassette tape recording between the 60th and 70th measures. This work was composed as part of my efforts to preserve the Mongolian music by adapting its aesthetics to the contemporary music.

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### ***Occlusive Thoughts* – Sam Friedland, composer and performer**

Instrumentation: Live DSP and Video processing in Max/MSP/Jitter

Duration: 4~6 minutes

Academic Institution: CalArts

Program Notes: Occlusive thoughts are artifacts of unrealized potential. They are both opaque and elusory, undetectable despite occupying the entire field of view. They are Schrödinger’s medium of choice, much to his cat’s dismay.

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### ***Eric, Turn Off the Nintendo* – Elizabeth J. Hambleton**

Instrumentation: Interactive electronics, on computer

Duration: 5-15

Academic Institution: UCSB

Program Notes: “Eric, Turn Off the Nintendo” is a walking simulator in which the player performs a soundwalk in an 90’s-RPG-style virtual space. Every sound and silence is triggered by the player’s movement through the game world. Every performance will be different, and the exit (the trigger to the final cut scene) can appear in a number of different places. This ‘game’ is written as an homage to the younger siblings who grew up watching their older siblings play video games and never let them have their turn. Without being able to interact with the game, the only thing the voyeur can enjoy at the same level as the player is the music. I chose these particular sounds because, at least to me, they evoke the vague, childish memory of watching my brother navigate the dungeons in Zelda and 007 games. I created the sounds on a Pittsburgh Modular Synth, and the game itself was made on RPG Maker VX Ace.

### ***Haunting Ballad* – Melodie Michel**

Instrumentation: Bassoon samples and electronic

Duration: 4'40

Academic Institution: UCSC

Program Notes: This is a musical research involving a little number of elements: a few bassoon samples, a few functions. The narrative is nothing more than a night wandering in a sonic world, with mysterious events that are meant to destabilize the wanderer, albeit giving them graspable elements to figure their way around. Due to the great number of randomized elements, every performance will be different, even if the structure of the narrative and its timeline is thought to be consistent.

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### ***Real Men Drive Cars* – Preston Towers**

Instrumentation: Audio/Visual

Duration: 4'06''

Academic Institution: UCSB

Program Notes: Real Men Drive Cars was inspired by a series of seven text messages I received from my mother's husband in May 2017. The piece is segmented into seven stylistically distinct sections which take inspiration from a wide range of sources. In order create continuity thought the entire piece every sound is derived from recordings of my voice and the only visuals are white text on a black background. The audio was recorded on my iPhone and put together in Ableton Live and the visuals were created by making frames of animation in Pages and arranging them iMovie.

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### ***Jeu-Parti* – Alex Stephenson Dimitris Paganos Koukakis, piano**

Instrumentation: piano and electronics

Duration: 9'

Academic Institution: UCSD

Program Notes: Jeu-Parti takes its inspiration from the dialogic medieval genre of the same name in which two troubadours offer differing opinions on some shared topic. Here, perhaps the interlocutors are the piece's two parts, which could be viewed as re-compositions of one another—or they might be the piano and electronics themselves, which alternately ignore, caress, interrupt, and ensnare one another until, finally, one of them wins out and gets the last word.

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