



WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
College of Fine Arts and Communication  
& School of Music

present

NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL 2021  
CONCERT III

Music by  
Amanda Schoofs and Baljinder Sekhon

Tuesday, March 9, 2021  
7:30 PM

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THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS AND COMMUNICATION PROUDLY  
CELEBRATES OVER 50 YEARS AT WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

College of Fine Arts  
and Communication Recital Hall

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# NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL 2021

## CONCERT III

Music by  
Amanda Schoofs and Baljinder Sekhon

Black Snake Root: Bloom (2019)                      Amanda Schoofs and Kevin Schlei

Amanda Schoofs, voice  
Kevin Schlei, electronics

Gradient 2.0 (2012)    Baljinder Sekhon

Doug O'Connor, saxophone  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Percussion Ensemble  
Jeff Crowell, director

If Not Winter (2017)    Amanda Schoofs

Nick Zoulek, bass saxophone

Musica Casera (2014)    Baljinder Sekhon

Dieter Hennings, guitar  
McCormick Percussion Group  
Robert McCormick, director

## PROGRAM NOTES & COMPOSER BIOGRAPHIES

**Black Snake Root** is a partita for voice and electronics composed and performed by Kevin Schlei (software developer, electronics) and Amanda Schoofs (voice, electronics). Their partita synthesizes the human voice with radical music technology; the voice is only heard while filtered through innovative live-electronic processing (ipads/TC-11); and the electronics are only heard while multiplied by a parallel vocal presence. With vocoding, synths, analog beats, repurposed guitar pedals, feedback loops, live-sampling, and poetic lyrics, the sonic tapestry of *Black Snake Root*, interwoven and interdependent, transverses boundaries of genre and identity. Kevin Schlei and Amanda Schoofs premiered their evening-length work in 2019 on *Sensoria: Experiments in Sound and Performance*, at the *Jan Serr Studio*, in Milwaukee, WI. This evening's video excerpt, *Bloom*, is the fifth and final movement of their partita. This stunningly filmed video was created during their premiere performance by videographer Cristina Ossers (Doc My Art). The full performance video of *Black Snake Root* can be watched in full on Amanda's artist website: [soundantisound.com](http://soundantisound.com).

Scored for alto saxophone and five percussionists, **Gradient 2.0** was composed at the request of saxophonist Doug O'Connor and premiered by the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire Percussion Ensemble. The original version of this work was composed in 2008 and is scored for saxophone and prepared piano. In the original version, the piano and saxophone play an equal role; I was interested in the spectrum of sound created by the two of these instruments together. Extended techniques are employed in order to explore a common ground between the saxophone and piano. In this revised version, I sought to replace the various piano timbres with percussion instruments that have similar timbral qualities to that of the various prepared-piano sounds. I was working with two different spectrums throughout this piece: one that has the saxophone and percussionists on opposite ends with characteristics of both instruments intersecting in the middle, and another spectrum that contains all of the sounds from both of these instruments with similar sounds from each instrument occupying the same area of the spectrum. The percussion colors range from the noise of striking a paper bag to the smooth resonant tones of the vibraphone and the saxophone part requires a variety of slap-tongue techniques and growls. While this piece is an exploration of sound, my compositional approach was a process-oriented one that dealt with the evolution of, and relationship between, pitch and rhythmic material.

**If Not Winter** is a composition by Amanda Schoofs, created for saxophonist Nick Zoulek's unique artistry. A reimagining of *Hush*, a lullaby that Amanda wrote for her infant son, *If Not Winter*, finds its strength through intimate vulnerability. It is a solo composition for voice, and tenor, or bass saxophone. The performer both plays and sings with little separation (of self) between the two instruments. Drawing on ideas of memory, suffusion, presence, aspiration, and the sudden rawness of being human, *If Not Winter* saturates the listener with circular melodies. Nick Zoulek premiered *If Not Winter* as a solo for tenor saxophone in 2017 at *Bowling Green State University's New Music Festival*. After touring the piece on tenor, in 2020 he premiered the work as a solo for bass saxophone on *Sensoria: Experiments in Sound and Performance* in Milwaukee, WI. The video you are watching this evening was filmed in early 2020 in the *Jan Serr Studio*. The gorgeous videography is by artist Helen Holman. The video's audio engineering is by Nicholas Elert, with audio/video post-production by Nick Zoulek.

Scored for classical guitar and seven pitched percussion instruments, **Musica Casera** explores the timbral boundaries between guitar and keyboard percussion. Through the use of harmonics, bowed percussion, pitch bending, natural resonance, percussive striking, and fast strumming passages, this work highlights the similarities between these instruments. The title translates to "Homemade Music" and refers to the compositional process of experimenting with musical ingredients and the use of the composers' primary instrument family of percussion. While the guitar is a solo voice throughout the work, the entire ensemble contributes equally to a single sonic experience full of color and motivic development. *Musica Casera* was composed for guitarist Dieter Hennings for 2014 premieres by the University of South Florida Percussion Ensemble in Tampa, FL and the University of Kentucky Percussion Ensemble at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention.

**Amanda Schoofs** creates music that embraces presence and spontaneity while exposing the raw and intimate qualities of sound and the performing self. Her artistic practice extends through the American experimental music tradition and exists in the space between academic new music, hybrid arts, and DIY punk and noise practices. As an artistic activist her work challenges social justice disparities: sexism post #metoo, motherhood inequity, self-identity challenges, and gun violence. Her music has been presented throughout North America, Europe, and Australia. In 2015 her composition *Intimate Addictions* was curated by Pulitzer Prize winner Du Yun on the world-renowned MATA Festival at The Kitchen in NYC. Amanda's vocal performance of *Intimate Addictions* was hailed by the Wall Street Journal as, "fantastic theater," and described by I Care If You Listen as, "courageously elevating the evening to an entirely different level of sophistication." Amanda is founder and Artistic Director of *Sensoria: Experiments in Sound and Performance*, currently celebrating its fifth season. A proud Mills College alumna, she earned her MA from studying with luminaries: Pauline Oliveros, Roscoe Mitchell, Zeena Parkins, Joëlle Léandre, and Fred Frith.

"Clearly knowing the power of sonority" (Philadelphia Inquirer), the music of **Baljinder Sekhon** has been presented in over 600 concerts in twenty-six countries. From works for large ensemble to solo works to electronic music, Sekhon's demonstrate a wide range of genres and styles. Numerous commercial recordings of Sekhon's music have been released, including those on Albany Records, Parma, AMP, Klarthe, BCM&D, and Equilibrium Records. A portrait CD of Sekhon's music was released on Innova Records in April 2018. His works are regularly performed around the world, with performances in venues such as the Kennedy Center, Seoul Arts Center, Carnegie Hall, and the National Recital Hall of Taiwan. Sheet music of Sekhon's works is available internationally from Keyboard Percussion Publications, Glass Tree Press, Steve Weiss Music, Le Vent Music (Taiwan), AvA Musical Editions (Europe), and Southern Percussion (UK). Sekhon serves as Assistant Professor of Composition at Penn State University. He holds the PhD, MA from the Eastman School of Music and a BM from the University of South Carolina.

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