

## 5.12 LitFest: We Crossed the River Performance Presented by University of Pittsburgh & Music on the Edge

Soprano **Anna Elder** is a native of Pittsburgh, PA and currently performs with the new music ensembles Kamratōn and wolfTrap. Most recently, Anna was a featured artist at The Tanglewood Music Center. She has also appeared with Pittsburgh's Alia Musica, Nat28, Opera On Tap and The Eclectic Laboratory Chamber Orchestra. Anna was the lead vocalist with Squonk Opera for three years and premiered *Go Roadshow* and sang in the Off-Broadway version of *Mayhem and Majesty*. Ms. Elder intends to push the limits of the human voice and enjoys commissioning new contemporary works that take her there.

Pianist-conductor **Brian Gilling** has distinguished himself as an exceptionally versatile musician and collaborator. Brian has worked with orchestras and opera companies in Europe and across the US. Brian is the pianist and co-founder of the award-winning Lila Quartet. He serves as the music director, pianist, and conductor for NAT 28 — a new music group based in Pittsburgh that champions local composers, explores social justice issues through its programming, and performs extensively across southwestern Pennsylvania. Brian received both undergraduate and graduate degrees from the Carnegie Mellon University School of Music in Pittsburgh.

**Nicholas Huneycutt** is a freelance percussionist and educator located in the greater Pittsburgh area. Currently, Nicholas keeps busy as a founding member of NAT 28, a new music ensemble that features both Pittsburgh area composers and musicians. You can see him playing the drum set all across Pittsburgh with his brass funk group, The Employees of Funk. Nicholas holds both a Master's Degree and an Advanced Musical Studies Certificate in Music Performance from Carnegie Mellon University.

Recently nominated for a Grammy® Award for her solo performance on *Conspirare's* album, *Pablo Neruda: The Poet Sings*, mezzo soprano **Laura Mercado-Wright** embraces versatile opportunities in the world of professional singing including opera, choral, chamber music, and even the blues. She has appeared in performance with the MET Chamber Orchestra, the Boston Pops, Tanglewood Music Festival, Ensemble Signal, Convergence Ensemble, Fort Worth Opera, Fort Worth Symphony, The Chamber Music Society of Fort Worth, Austin Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles New Music Festival, and many others. She holds the Bachelor of Music degree from the University of North Texas and the Master of Music degree from the University of Maryland, magna cum laude.

Violinist **Jennifer Sternick** is an active and enthusiastic freelance musician. She performs professionally as a soloist and as a member of symphony orchestras, pit orchestras, chamber ensembles, and new music ensembles. Routinely holding leadership positions, Jennifer has been the Concertmaster of Berks Sinfonietta since its inception in 2014, has held the Concertmaster chair of the Pittsburgh Civic Orchestra from 2012 until 2017, and was most recently appointed Concertmaster of the Washington Symphony Orchestra in 2019.

**Roger Zahab** (music director) instigates complex relations through his activities as composer, violinist, conductor, teacher and writer. His work has been performed throughout North and South America, Europe and Asia. As a violinist, Zahab has given more than a hundred first performances and championed music by a wide range of composers from John Cage to Eric Moe, Kwabena Nketia and Tison Street to Judith Weir and Christian Wolff. Recordings as violinist and composer are available on the Truemedi, Albany and Koch International Classics labels. Current faculty positions include: University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Senior Lecturer and Director of the University of Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and Music on the Edge Chamber Orchestra Vermont College of Fine Arts: Founding core faculty

### Collaborators:

**Cynthia Croot** is Assistant Professor and Head of Performance at the University of Pittsburgh. She earned her MFA in Directing from Columbia University. U.S. directing credits include *Perseverance Theatre*, the Colorado Shakespeare Festival and the Stonington Opera House as well as productions in NYC at PS122, *HERE*, *Town Hall*, *The Ontological-Hysteric Theatre*, *Symphony Space*, and the Guggenheim Museum. She was a 2007-2009 Fellow of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Directors. Croot is also Resident Director of the NYC-based theatre company *Connie's Avant Garde Restaurant*, staging experimental audience-immersive and site-specific work around the country.

**Angie Cruz** is the author of three novels, *Soledad* and *Let It Rain Coffee*, a finalist in 2007 for the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, and, most recently, *Dominicana*. She has published work in *The New York Times*, *VQR*, *Gulf Coast Literary Journal*, and other publications, and has received fellowships from the New York Foundation of the Arts,

Yaddo, and the MacDowell Colony. She is founder and editor in chief of Aster(ix), a literary and arts journal, and is an associate professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh.

**Aaron Henderson** is an associate Professor in the Department of Studio Arts at the University of Pittsburgh. His videos and installations have been presented at the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Wexner Center, and many other museums and galleries in the United States, Europe and Asia. His projection designs have been presented at Lincoln Center, the Andy Warhol Museum, the Institute of Contemporary Art (Boston) and theaters and festivals around the world.

**Eric Moe's** music has been variously described as "maximal minimalism", "Rachmaninoff in hell", and "music of winning exuberance". Although the surfaces and genres are varied, his works share a concern for rhythmic propulsion and a disregard for stylistic orthodoxies. Active as a pianist and keyboard player, Moe writes music he enjoys playing, and otherwise plays music he wishes he'd written. Moe is a professor of music at the University of Pittsburgh and the co director of Music on the Edge.

**PITTSBURGH**

**2021**

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