

# MUSIC AT NOON PROGRAM

MARCH 28, 2023  
University Recital Hall  
*Megumi Masaki, piano, voice & movement*  
*Keith Hamel, live electronics*  
**TRANSFORMATION**

## **Dōshite? どうして?**

For piano, SHRUG (Sensory Hand Responsive User Garment), voice, movement, images (2021)

Bob Pritchard  
(b. 1956)

## **AND BLEAK BLEW THE EASTERLY WIND**

For piano, live electronics and video (2022)

Ollie Hawker  
(b. 1994)

*Video by Katie Muir (b.1998)*  
*Concept/Development by Megumi Masaki*  
*Commissioned by Megumi Masaki with the support of Creative Scotland*

## **PIANO GAMES**

For piano, hand tracking and interactive video game (2020)

Keith Hamel  
(b. 1956)

University of  
Lethbridge



Faculty of Fine Arts

**UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC**

## **MEGUMI MASAKI || TRANSFORMATION**

### **Curator's message:**

As a Japanese Canadian artist, my work is connected deeply to community and how human rights and social justice issues can be communicated through music and multimedia performances to create narratives and tools for change.

As a performer, I am curious how sound, image, text and movement can interact to augment the piano and its surrounding space as a visual as well as musical instrument. I am particularly interested in exploring how different mediums can coexist to create new expressive potentials greater than the sum of their parts. This concert presents three original interactive piano + multimedia works created with/for me by composers Hamel (Vancouver), Bob Pritchard (Vancouver) and Ollie Hawker/Katie Muir (Glasgow). Each work is a result of diverse explorations into bringing music together with other mediums to enhance the perception of space and create a dialogue where sound, visuals, text and performance are dependent on one another. Each composer has collaborated with me in uniquely different ways to reimagine the piano and pianist's artistic expression through new technologies, and transform the listener's concert into an immersive, theatrical, and cinematic experience.

Keith Hamel and I are excited that our TRANSFORMATION Album Centrediscs Label CMCDVD 29322 has just been released! Available at the concert or soon online <https://cmccanada.org/product-category/recordings/centrediscs/>

Thank you for sharing this journey with us.

**Megumi Masaki**  
**Curator**

## PROGRAMME NOTES

**Dōshite? どうして?** for piano, SHRUG (Sensory Hand Responsive User Garment), voice, movement, images (2021) by Bob Pritchard honours and commemorates over 22,000 Canadians of Japanese heritage sent to internment camps in 1942 during WWII. With the permission of editor Roy Miki, text from Tsukiye Muriel Kitagawa's book, *This Is My Own*, has been incorporated into the piece, along with fragments of Japanese songs, connecting audiences with this particular Japanese-Canadian experience in Canadian history. The piece explores the disruption to – and the resilience of – Japanese Canadian communities of that time, and is offered as a form of apology.

Thousands of Japanese Canadians were sent to work on sugar beet farms in Manitoba. I grew up in Winnipeg with many of those survivors and am grateful to them for sharing their life stories with me. This concert remembers the historic wrongs committed against Japanese Canadians and links the past with injustices of today to seek more just societies across all communities and borders.

**Dōshite? どうして?** is performed by Megumi Masaki (piano, voice, movement) and Keith Hamel (live electronics). Costume by Alaia Hamer, sensors by Bob Pritchard, wifi communications by Daniel Tsui, Jin Han, Carol Fu, Esther Mutinda, Lily Shao. The creation of this work is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

**AND BLEAK BLEW THE EASTERLY WIND** (2022) for piano, live electronics and video by Ollie Hawker (composition), Katie Muir (video) and Megumi Masaki (concept/ development)

*“And bleak blew the easterly wind* is a eulogy for the Sphinx snow patch, Scotland's longest-lasting snow patch. Located on Braeriach in the Cairngorms, the Sphinx only melted away completely three times in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but has disappeared five times in the last 20 years. As a visual spectacle, the patch itself is small and humble, but as a symbol of the effects of the current climate emergency it is powerful and saddening.

Whereas a lot of environmental music takes the acoustic instruments as natural forces to be disrupted by electronic elements, we want to challenge this metaphor by having the electronic element consist of pure, untouched sine tones which are gradually disrupted and overtaken by the piano, the ultimate symbol of Western music and culture. To cast a similar lens on the history of Scottish folk music, the piano material is a deconstructed version of a traditional tune *The Road to Dundee*. Though I love Scottish folk music, we have a duty to address its colonial connections and explore how its past is connected to the present-day forces involved in the destruction of the world's natural habitats. This particular tune has a clear connection, as Charles Gray, who wrote the lyrics based on *Grim Winter Was Howlin'*, a line from which our title is paraphrased, was a British army captain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at the height of the empire's colonial and industrial power. In framing the tune and the piano as the disruptive force, the piece challenges ideas of the assumed naturalness of folk music.

The video was inspired by Celtic funeral tradition, in which the body of the deceased is kept for seven days so that loved ones can travel from afar and say their goodbyes. First the ice melts, then the fog comes and envelopes the landscape, before it is visited by its old friends: the unpredictable wind, the dramatic rain, the stoic sun and finally the mournful moon.

*And bleak blew the easterly wind* was made possible by funding from Creative Scotland and support by *Iain Cameron*, snow-patch researcher.” Ollie Hawker

**PIANO GAMES** (2020) for piano, hand tracking and interactive video game by Keith Hamel. Piano Games is the third in a series of interactive works written for pianist Megumi Masaki. It is the first live video game controlled by the pianist and piano. In this work, the pianist, in addition to performing on her instrument and having sounds enhanced through digital audio processing, is also controlling a video game. The video game responds to the sounds of the piano and the positions of the hands on the keyboard. Within the game, the player is able to explore and interact with a variety of environments - some are in outer space and are hostile, and others are more colorful and evocative graphical worlds. At times, the pianist can make physical gestures with her hands to interact with the visual world. Piano Games represents a new kind of art form that merges the worlds of live music performance, interactive computer music and video games. The listener is transported to new worlds of beauty, fire and peace – unique and different for each performance.

## **BIOS**

**Megumi Masaki** is a pianist, multimedia artist, Professor of Piano and Director of the New Music Ensemble and Festival at Brandon University, and the Artistic Director of the Eckhardt-Gramatté National Music Competition. She is recognized as a leading interpreter of Canadian and contemporary music, and an innovator that reimagines the pianist, piano and performance space. She is particularly interested in exploring how different mediums and technology can coexist to create new expressive potentials larger than the sum of their parts. As a Japanese Canadian artist, her work is also connected deeply to community, acting on Truth and Reconciliation calls to action, and how human rights and environmental issues can be communicated through music and multimedia performances to create narratives that speak truth to power. In recognition of the significant impacts of her achievements, Megumi was appointed as a Member of the Order of Manitoba and elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Her research and collaborations explore new models of interaction and integration of sound, image, text and movement in multimedia works through new technologies, including hand-gesture-motion tracking to generate and control live-electronics and live-video, 3D visuals, piano controlled video games, e-textile sensors and artificial intelligence. 74 original works have been created together with or for Megumi and she has premiered over 180 works worldwide. She has released three documentary films and fifteen CD, DVD, LP and digital recordings that include solo piano, chamber music, electroacoustic and multimedia works. Megumi's double disc album MUSIC4EYES+EARS CD/Blu-Ray under the Centrediscs label, hailed as "deliciously ambitious" and "simply breathtaking" (Musicworks), was nominated for Classical Artist of the Year, Western Canadian Music Awards. Her latest album and documentary film TRANSFORMATION, with Keith Hamel, under the Centrediscs label was released on October 25, 2022.

Megumi is featured at major festivals and venues across Canada, as well as Japan, China, Taiwan, Philippines, Mexico, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Iceland, Netherlands, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, USA and the UK. A highly regarded teacher, Megumi is regularly invited to give lectures and masterclasses, to such international institutions as the Royal Academy, Oxford University, University of York, Trinity Laban, Shanghai Conservatory, Beijing China Conservatory, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz, as well as to universities across the USA and Canada. She is also on faculty at the Banff Centre, Chetham's International Summer School in Manchester UK, Musiktage am Rhein Germany, and the Casalmaggiore International Music Festival in Italy, where she also curates the CIME contemporary music concert series.

Committed to an inclusive Canadian music community and to centre people from equity-seeking groups, Megumi has served on the Manitoba Arts Council's Arts Advisory Panel, is an invited member of the National Witness Structural Change Group convened by Stó:lō scholar Dylan Robinson, and is an elected member on the boards of the Canadian Music Centre (CMC) National as a director-at-large, CMC Advocacy for Change Council, CMC Prairie Region, Canadian New Music Network and its EDI Committee. [www.megumimasaki.com](http://www.megumimasaki.com)

**Keith Hamel** is a Professor in the School of Music and an Associate Researcher at the Institute for Computing, Information and Cognitive Systems (ICICS) at the University of British Columbia. Keith Hamel holds a B.Mus. from Queen's University and A.M. and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard University. He also studied Computer Music under the supervision of Barry Vercoe at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Keith Hamel has written both acoustic and electroacoustic music and has been awarded many prizes in both media. His works have been performed by many of the finest soloists and ensembles both in Canada and abroad. He has received commissions from IRCAM (Paris), the Ensemble Intercontemporain, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Windsor Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver New Music Ensemble, the Elektra Women's Choir, musica intima, New Music Concerts (Toronto), Hammerhead Consort, NuBC, Standing Wave, Hard Rubber Orchestra, as well as from outstanding performers such as flutist Robert Cram, bassoonist Jesse Read, clarinetists Jean-Guy Boisvert and François Houle, saxophonists Julia Nolan and Jeremy Brown, trombonists Jeremy Berkman and Benny Sluchin, and pianists Douglas Finch, Megumi Masaki, Jane Hayes and Corey Hamm. Many of his recent compositions focus on interactions between live performers, computer-controlled electronics and interactive video. <https://www.opusonemusic.net/hamel.html>

**Bob Pritchard** teaches music technology at UBC, and works in acoustic, electroacoustic, and interactive media as well as with film/video, dance, and installation art. He has received several awards and commissions through the Canada Council, the BC Cultural Fund, the Ontario Arts Council and the CBC, and his works are performed and recorded internationally by top performers and ensembles. In 2007, his work *Strength* received a Unique Award of Merit from the Canadian Society of Cinematographers, and his short film *Crisis* is part of C. Robertson's cancer documentary *17 Short Films About Breasts*, which received five Leo nominations and is in international distribution. His work *Synapses* for solo oboe, dancer with interactive lightspine, and *Max/MSP* was the first of the Turning Point Ensemble Covid video commissions for 2020, and his piece *Dōshite?* recently commissioned by pianist Megumi Masaki for piano and *Max/MSP/Jitter* makes use of his Sleeve Hand Responsive User Garment (SHRUG) for audio processing and triggering. He is a full researcher with the UBC Institute for Computing, Information and Cognitive Systems (ICICS), a member of the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, and director of the UBC digital performance ensemble *Sonic UBC Laptop Sounds and Sensors (SUBCLASS)*. <https://www.opusonemusic.net/pritchard/>

**Tsukiye Muriel (nee Fujiwara) Kitagawa** was born in Vancouver on April 3, 1912 and was raised primarily in New Westminster. Working with other Nisei anxious about their futures as full-fledged Canadians with the right to vote and work in any profession, Kitagawa helped found *The New Age* in 1932, the first journal to regularly print the thoughts, emotions and ideals of Canadian-born Japanese Canadians. She was also part of a Nisei writing group, The Scribblers; a notable member of that group was Mark Toyama, writer of the poem *Only Powell Street Knows*. In 1939, after having married local Asahi baseball team star, Ed Kitagawa, Muriel began writing in the English language periodical, *The New Canadian*. Although Kitagawa did not publish a book during her lifetime, Roy Miki edited a posthumous collection of her writing called *This Is My Own: Letters to Wes & Other Writings on Japanese Canadians 1941-1948* (Talonbooks, 1985) which consists primarily of letters Kitagawa sent to her brother Wes Fujiwara, a medical student in Toronto, in the aftermath of the Pearl Harbour bombing of December, 1941. Miki provided a comprehensive introduction to place Kitagawa's writing in historical context with a particular emphasis on the fact that an overwhelming majority of the 21,000 individuals of Japanese descent who were uprooted and dispossessed on the West Coast were naturalized or Canadian-born citizens. Muriel Kitagawa died in 1974.

**Ollie Hawker** is a Glasgow-based composer and improviser primarily interested in ideas of digital nostalgia. He holds a Music degree from the University of Glasgow, and a Masters in composition from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where he was awarded the 2020 Kimie Composition Prize. He has recently received commissions from Sound Festival, Cryptic, and Live Music Now Scotland, and has performed his live electronic pieces at Sound Thought Festival, Radiophrenia and the Scottish Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. He plays in the bands Neuro Trash and Instruction Manual, and works as a music practitioner for the charities Paragon and Hear My Music. A recent example of his work, in which a Scottish folk tune is used to explore historical conceptions of melancholy, can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOXp4rxBfU>

**Katie Muir** is a Glasgow based multidisciplinary videographer, graphic designer and visual artist. Her practice centres around the climate anxiety felt by so many as we globally sit at the knife's edge of the climate crisis. In recent works she has been using archive materials to reflect on modern society's nostalgic cultural tendencies paired with modern climate issues to emulate the everyday eeriness of world changing around us. Since graduating from The Glasgow School of Art in 2020 with a degree in Communication Design, her work has been featured in Design Wean's Show Off, Rumpus Room's Act+Adapt Climate Actions Edition, and she was named a Local Heroes Design One-to-Watch.

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