

The University of Pittsburgh Department of Music presents

Steel Collective, ft. Ryan McMasters

Music on the Edge 2026 Season

Sunday, February 1st, 2026 • 2:00 PM
Frick Fine Arts Auditorium, University of Pittsburgh

PROGRAM

<i>Dalé Dalé</i> (2020)	Naama Perel-Tzadok
<i>De toutes flours (Machaut in the Machine Age II)</i> (1993)	Eve Beglarian
<i>Paint It Black</i> (1988)	Michael Gordon
<i>Bb, in Isolation</i> (2022)	Danny Fratina
<i>we share our arrows;</i> (2024)	Ryan McMasters

Ryan McMasters, double bass

PROGRAM NOTES

Dalé Dalé

In *Dalé Dalé* I engaged two musical elements, the glissando and the tremolo, as the main idea of the piece. These two elements are inspired by the characteristics of the Yemenite women's singing and the use of their vocal cords. The piece takes these two elements and expands them: the tremolo presents the center of the piece, as the player had to play it with one finger only on another open string, which results in some acoustic effects and an unstable sound. The piece moves gradually from the lowest open string to the highest, in tremolos and glissandos, with the use of microtones, unpitched notes, and unmetered measures. All the above create the sensation and experience of progressing from a stable to an unstable place; from grounded and known to the unknown and unexpected, and all in a way that captivates the audience. – NPT

De toutes flours (Machaut in the Machine Age II)

Machaut in the Machine Age II is one of a series of pieces responding to the art of Guillaume de Machaut (1300-1377.) This one is working with a few samples from an old LP recording of the ballade *De toutes flours*. I made the piece for the duo Basso Bongo (Robert Black, contrabass & Amy Knoles, MIDI percussion) at the height of the AIDS crisis. The poet and translator William Mullen came up with this version of the medieval French:

*Of all my garden's many fruits and flowers
none is left me but a single rose.
Not one, of all the rest that once were ours,
weathered Fortune's blasting: Fortune who knows
how to undo her bloom,
blast her hue and her perfume.
If by your wicked tricks my rose should fall,
desire another love I never shall.*

The piece can be performed by a solo bass player with a pre-recorded track as well as by a duo where the electronics are performed live. – EB

Paint It Black

I met Robert Black at a music festival in Buffalo, New York, in 1985, where I heard him play for the first time. I realized then that there was a lot more to the double bass than bass. When he asked me to write a piece for solo bass, I wanted to take advantage of the very long strings, the very high notes and the very low notes — all at the same time. I tried to expand the idea of a solo bass piece: Could the bass play bass to itself? At a syncopated speed? In *Paint It Black*, I tried to make the bass sound like two instruments. I called the piece *Paint It Black* as a tribute to Robert. – MG

Bb, in Isolation

Dealing with limitations of genre, performance behavior, and various modalities of forced minimalism, *Bb, In Isolation* is an experiment in liminality, where conventionally presumed boundaries between sociality/isolation and composition/improvisation are put to test. To emphasize creative immediacy, no compositional information is given in advance to the musician on stage—they are seeing the music for the first time at the same moment you, the audience member, are hearing it. The performance begins immediately after the sheet music is revealed to the player. Inspired by conditions of isolation commonly experienced today, and the new forms and formats of music-making this can generate, this piece explores the contingencies of isolated improvisation and social composition. – DF



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we share our arrows;

we share our arrows; is a piece for multiple double basses or single bass and electronics, inspired by the poetry of Hilda Doolittle and dedicated to my friend and teacher, Robert Black. – RM

Will you glimmer on the sea?
Will you fling your spear-head
On the shore?
What note shall we pitch?
We have a song,
On the bank we share our arrows—
The loosed string tells our note:

*O flight,
Bring her swiftly to our song.
She is great,
We measure her by the pine-trees.*

– H.D., Moonrise

About Ryan McMasters

Dr. Ryan McMasters is a composer, performer, and music theorist living and working in Pittsburgh, PA. His primary research interests include algorithmic computer music, open source and equitable technologies for music creation, the history and aesthetics of No Wave and Industrial Metal, and the poetry, prose, and music of Hilda Doolittle.

As a composer, Ryan's work focuses on the incorporation of noise and distortion in traditional and non-traditional forms. Recent commissions include The Pittsburgh Philharmonic, soprano Anna Elder, and an evening-length electro-acoustic opera for SpacePants. As an extension of his research into algorithmic music, Ryan has developed 'oread,' a programming language for performers that opens up the potential to apply algorithmic processes to live performance.

He is the artistic director and primary composer for the Pittsburgh based new music ensemble WOLFTRAP, who have performed on the Pittsburgh Festival of New Music, Beyond: Microtonal Pittsburgh, and the c:ompiler series. WOLFTRAP recently released their first album, "rock shells." To critical acclaim in the new music community. Ryan is also a member of Bombici, an electro-acoustic band that blends traditional Balkan folk music with modern pop and dance.



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