

COMING TOGETHER I have always asked myself what the work of the early minimalists would sound like if they had access to the technology of the present. I tried to answer that question with this performance of *Coming Together*. The work features an ever-present bass line of consistent sixteenth notes. Every performer reads off of the bass line and constructs their part from it. There are sections of ad-lib and sections where the players are instructed to play specific notes.

The bass line is usually played by piano, guitar, or bass. The never-ending and consistent nature of the bass line sounded a lot like a sequencer to me. That gave me the idea to approach Rychard Cooper, electronic music professor and modular synth virtuoso, to perform the bass line on his synth. This solved a couple of problems found with an entirely acoustic performance of this work. Firstly, timing is now 100% consistent and also the timbre of the bass line can evolve with the piece, playing to the strengths of modular synthesis.

The piece also includes a part for narrator, performed by Aria Gittelson. The text comes from a letter written by one of the inmates that was killed in the Attica Prison Riots. The prisoners captured the prison in an attempt to demand for better treatment. A few days later, state troopers assaulted the prison, killing over 50 inmates.

Having the bass line sequenced also opened up a whole host of opportunities in terms of synchronized multimedia. Vocal processing, projections, and lighting are clocked to the bass line and evolve throughout the piece. All of the multimedia have elements of randomization and, as a result, every performance of this piece is unique. This also has a pedagogical purpose to give ensemble members experience performing with multimedia, showing them possibilities of including multimedia in their own works.

We perform this work in honor of the composer, **Frederic Rzewski**, who passed away earlier this year.

A NOTE FROM THE CONSERVATORY

Because we are offering fewer concerts on campus this semester, our ticketing system is being revamped and we are not able to sell tickets for tonight's show. If you are able, we would love for you to support our program by opening the QR code on this page and giving to the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music.

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THE BOB COLE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC AT
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH AND THE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS PROUDLY PRESENT:



NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE

CAMERON JOHNSTON
DIRECTOR

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2021 7:30PM

GERALD R. DANIEL RECITAL HALL
PLEASE SILENCE ALL ELECTRONIC MOBILE DEVICES.

PROGRAM

EZMusic #1 (2021).....David Saldaña

Satyagraha (1979), “Finale” Philip Glass
arr. Cameron Johnston

Declaration (2017) Carolyn Chen

Coming Together (1972)Frederic Rzewski

Modular Synth—Rychard Cooper, Narrator—Aria Gittelson
Vocal processing, projections, lighting, and sequencing—Cameron Johnston

PERSONNEL NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE

Cameron Johnston—director

Eli Maxwell—flute
Teddy Nugent—horn
Matthew Enciso—trumpet
Ryan Lemanky—euphonium
Jason Griffin—piano
Yiqi Guo—piano
Noah Osterhoudt—mallets
Carlos Martinez Zepeda—guitar
An Binh Tat—violin
Ava Brackett—violin
Kris Rahamad—viola
Renee Fong—cello
Chris Visan—bass
Matt Justo—bass
Jessica Ulloa—bass
Aria Gittelson—voice
Joon Oh—voice
Jake Roman—voice
Joseph Hunter Lamar—voice

NOTES

EZMusic #1 (This piece will begin before the concert starts.) *EZMusic #1* was commissioned to promote the ensemble’s goal of championing the work of underrepresented and living composers. **David Saldaña** is an alumnus of the graduate composition program at CSULB and played a huge role in developing the culture of the New Music Ensemble and Laptop Ensemble. His work often features electronics and frequently uses microtones and non-western tuning systems.

This work is a text piece, meaning that the score is comprised of only a description of what the players are to do. As a result, it is highly improvisational and requires the performers to interact with their own playing and with each other in ways that are not found in traditional scores. Often text scores feature an element of *deep listening*, a term coined by Pauline Oliveros, which asks performers to be hyper-aware of their own playing and of the playing of others in the ensemble. This performance practice makes listening more important than playing.

SATYAGRAHA, “FINALE” This work is an arrangement of the closing section of **Philip Glass’** second opera *Satyagraha*. The opera follows Gandhi through his time in South Africa where he organized protests for Indian rights in the country. The word *Satyagraha* is Sanskrit, meaning “truth” and “insistence” and has become associated with Gandhi’s style of peaceful protest. It influenced Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s approach to protest during the Civil Rights Movement.

The decision was made to program this work as it does not get many performances compared to the other two operas in Glass’ *Portrait Trilogy*. *Einstein on the Beach* is celebrated as the greatest work of the Avant Grade in the 20th century and *Akhmaten* is programmed as the more “accessible” Glass opera. *Satyagraha* is the awkward middle child of the trilogy and I thought to give it more love.

This arrangement is based on the organ arrangement of the finale. Like most music by Glass and other minimalists, it features many repeats. I made the decision to write out each repeat so I could have finer control of the arrangement and create more variation in the work. Despite this the work is still repetitive, featuring only four motives. Ironically, this work has become the most tame on the program.

DECLARATION The text of *Declaration* is for “an untold number of untrained singers” perfect for an ensemble of mostly non-vocalists. A pedagogical goal I have is to challenge both the audience and the performers. What is music? What can a score be? How can organizing our musical ideas differently change the result? This work checks all of those boxes. Firstly, it forces non-singers to experience singing, giving them insight on the vocalist experience. Next, it mixes text with more traditional notation, giving the ensemble another example of how to organize music. The form is strictly defined, unlike many text pieces the ensemble performs. The piece gives no pitches and gives that choice to the performers, showing it is possible to create form, tension, and structure without the use of fixed notes. This work also incorporates movement and choreography for the performers, something that many musicians do not even consider. This work challenges the conception of music to the ensemble.

This selection is apart of Chen’s body of work titled “Music for Humans.” These pieces feature neither traditional instruments nor notation and instead treat people as the instruments. Most works in the category involve movement and some are site-specific.

Carolyn Chen is a Los Angeles based composer. She earned a Ph.D. in music from UC San Diego, and an M.A. in Modern Thought and Literature and B.A. in music from Stanford University, with an honors thesis on free improvisation and radical politics.