

ELECTROACOUSTIC MUSIC  
STUDIOS @ EASTMAN (EMUSE)

# PORTRAIT CONCERT: ROBERT MORRIS

Thursday, April 11, 2024  
Hatch Recital Hall  
7:30 PM



**EASTMAN**  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

**PROGRAM**

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**Thunder of Spring over Distant Mountains (1973)**

Robert Morris  
(b. 1943)

*Quadraphonic fixed-media*

*INTERMISSION*

**Musics of the Sphere (2022-23)**

*Six track fixed-media*

## PROGRAM NOTES

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### **Thunder of Spring over Distant Mountains (1973)**      Robert Morris

*Thunder of Spring Over Distant Mountains* (1973) is the first portion of a trilogy of compositions exploring acculturation in music. It is a forty-five minute quadraphonic electronic piece in two parts composed in the Yale Electronic Studio, which I directed from 1972 to 1977. Seven pieces of Southeast and East Asian music were taken as source material for the work and are subjected to varying degrees of electronic modification.

An opening prelude or overture presents overlapped segments of the source material in reverse order of their use in the piece, ending with "Eh-fan Chu" (Repeated Melody), a boisterous piece from Taiwan. Increasingly complex transformations of "Eh-fan Chu" comprise the first section (after the prelude) of the piece.

Following this, a section based on "Cremation Music" from the Balinese wayang kulit gamelan explores metallic sounds via ring and amplitude modulation.

The next main section of the piece uses "Goshoraku" (a piece of Japanese Gagaku court music) as source material. This section is quiet and peaceful with the source material in the background, as if overheard.

The fourth section is based on a rousing epic ballad from Celebes (Indonesia), "Sinrili," for male singer and rebab (spike fiddle); a short polyphonic codetta concludes this section.

The fifth section begins the second part of Thunder... It is comprised of three subsections modifying "Gaku" (a piece of dance music (mai) for flute and drums taken from the Japanese Noh play, Kantan).

A hectic climax ends abruptly with "Offering to the Guru Drakmar" (Tibetan Tantric-Buddhist chant with instruments) thus beginning the sixth section made from a superimposition of the fragments of the Tibetan "Offering..." over a long meditative passage.

In the last major section of the piece, portions of preceding sounds and processes are mixed together under a high rushing texture, combined with fragments of the seventh and last source material, "The First Wine Offering" (a piece of Korean court music, ah-ak).

An extended coda uses employs the Tibetan chant and the Wine Offering music, both of which are eventually transformed into a woodlike rustling from which only the instrumental interludes of the former remain to close the piece.

— Robert Morris

## PROGRAM NOTES

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### **Musics of the Sphere** (2022-23)

Robert Morris

*Musics of the Sphere* is a celebration of musics from all over the world. Over 150 excerpts of all types of music from Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe comprise the sounds in each track. These musics are presented as such (without modification) to partial and complete transformation via a host of computer music techniques. This composition is not the first of mine that addresses "world musics." It continues in the spirit of *Thunder of Spring* over distant Mountains and other works influenced by non-western music. *Musics of the Sphere* was premiered in 2022 in 3D spatial audio in the AlloSphere, an instrument/venue/concert space at the University of California at Santa Barbara, where loudspeakers are placed around and above and below the listeners. Performances at other venues have involved six speakers placed to the right, left, in front, in back, above, and (possibly) below the audience. A quadraphonic version is also available. This performance will situate the six channels of sound in Hatch Hall. I am grateful to Tucker Johnson for his help in spatializing the tracks in *Musics of the Sphere*.

— Robert Morris

## MEET THE ARTISTS

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**Robert Morris**, born in Cheltenham, England in 1943, received his musical education at the Eastman School of Music (B.M. in composition with distinction) and the University of Michigan (M.M. and D.M.A. in composition and ethnomusicology), where he studied composition with John La Montaigne, Leslie Bassett, Ross Lee Finney, and Eugene Kurtz. At Tanglewood, as a Margret Lee Crofts Fellow, he worked with Gunther Schuller. Morris has taught composition, electronic music, and music theory at the University of Hawaii and at Yale University, where he was Chairman of the Composition Department and Director of the Yale Electronic Music Studio. He was also Director of the Computer and Electronic Studio, Director of Graduate (music) Studies, and Associate Professor of Music at the University of Pittsburgh. In 1980 Morris joined the faculty of the Eastman School of Music where he presently teaches as Professor of Composition with additional affiliation within the theory department. (He was chair of the Composition Department from 2008-11 and 1999-2005. Before that he was a member of both the composition and music theory departments.) Other teaching posts have included positions at the Philadelphia College of the Performing Arts, the Governor's School for the Arts held at Bucknell



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University, the University of Pittsburgh Computer Music Workshop, and the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood.

Morris is the recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the A. Whitney Griswold Foundation, the American Music Center, the Hanson Institute of American Music, and the American Council of Learned Societies. In 1975 he was a MacDowell Colony fellow, and in 2008, a Djerassi artist. He has been guest composer at many festivals and series of new music including: the ISCM Festival of Contemporary Music (Paris, 1975; Boston, 1991); the International Conferences of Computer Music (Rochester, 1984; Urbana, 1987); "Composer to Composer" (Telluride, 1990); Composer's Symposium (Albuquerque, 1991 and 2009); Contemporary Music Festival (Santa Barbara, 1992); The 1993 Kobe International Modern Music Festival in Japan; The Heidelberg Contemporary Music Festival (Heidelberg College, 2005); The New Music Festival 2009 (Western Illinois University); Center for Research in Electronic Art Technology (University of California, Santa Barbara, 2009); New Music Festival, MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music (Bowling Green State University, 2010), New Music on the Point (2015), The University of South Florida at Tampa 2016 New Music Festival, Residency at Ohio University, Athens (2018), Distinguished Guest Composer at the 2018 Mizzou International Composers Festival, Guest Composer at the 2021 Livewire 11 Rewired Festival of New Music, and Guest Composer at the Beijing Modern Music Festival at the Central Conservatory of China. He has received numerous awards and commissions including those from the Pittsburgh Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Yale University, Speculum Musicae, Brave New Works, The Jack String Quartet, The Momenta String Quartet, The Society for New Music, Alienor Harpsichord Society, Hartt College Festival of Contemporary Organ Music, National Flute Association. His many compositions have been performed in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Morris's music is recorded on CRI, New World, Music Gallery Editions, Neuma, Music and Arts, Fanfare, Centaur, Open Space, Innova, Yank Gulch, Albany, and Attacca.

Morris has written music for a wide diversity of musical forms and media. He has composed over 180 works including computer and improvisational music. Much of his output from the 1970s is influenced by non-Western music and uses structural principles from Arabic, Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, and early Western musics. While such influences are less noticeable in his more recent works, the temporal and ornamental qualities of Eastern music have permanently affected Morris's style. Moreover, Morris has found much resonance among his musical aesthetics, his experiences in hiking (especially in the Southwestern United States), his study and appreciation of Carnatic Music of South India, and his reading of ancient Indian, Chinese, and Japanese Buddhist texts.

## MEET THE ARTISTS

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Among his present compositional projects is a series of the works to be played outdoors in a natural setting. Eight of these works are complete and have been performed throughout the United States: *Playing Outside* (2000), *Coming Down to Earth* (2002), *Oracle* (2005), *SOUND/PATH/FIELD* (2006), *Arboretum* (2007-8), and *Sun, Moon, Earth* (2012), *Four Gardens* (2018), *sound, trees, meadows* (2022).

In addition to his music, Morris has written four books and over 50 articles and reviews which have appeared in the *Journal of Music Theory*, *In Theory Only*, *Music Theory Spectrum*, *Journal of the American Musicology Society*, and *Perspectives of New Music* contributing to theories of musical analysis and aesthetics, compositional design, and electronic and computer music. Morris has also contributed to the study and analysis of Carnatic music of south India and helped develop a theoretic foundation for Chitravina N. Ravikiran's concept of Melharmony. Morris was the recipient of the "Outstanding Publication Award" of the Society for Music Theory in 1988 for his book, *Composition with Pitch-Classes: A Theory of Compositional Design*, published by Yale University Press, and in 2001 for his article "Voice Leading Spaces" in *Music Theory Spectrum* 20/2. His most recent book, *The Whistling Blackbird: Essays and Talks on New Music*, was published by the University of Rochester Press in December of 2010. In 2017, The Society for Music Theory Executive Board awarded Morris with Lifetime Membership "in recognition of truly outstanding contributions to the field of music theory." Morris is presently Co-editor of *Perspectives of New Music* and Contributing Editor of *The Open Space Magazine*.

In 2014, *Perspectives of New Music* published a special issue (52/2) entitled *Perspectives On and Around Robert Morris at 70* with a three CD recording of *Compositions and Performances in Celebration* (PNM/OS compact disc). A Festival of the music of Robert Morris was held at Spectrum in New York City on September 15-18, 2016 including four nights of concerts of his music including performances by Augustus Arnone and Margaret Kampmeier, pianists, *Collide-O-Scope* and the JACK quartet, with preconcert interviews (with Joshua Mailman).

Robert Morris will retire after 44 years of teaching from Eastman on June 30, 2024.

## ELECTROACOUSTIC MUSIC STUDIOS @ EASTMAN (EMuSE)

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Mikel Kuehn, director

Logan Barrett, Cory Brodack, Tucker Johnson, Ko Muramatsu,  
& Connor Simpson, teaching assistants

## UPCOMING EASTMAN SERIES CONCERTS

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Tickets for all series concerts can be purchased at [EastmanTheatre.org](https://EastmanTheatre.org)

### EASTMAN RANLET SERIES

## Takács Quartet

Kilbourn Hall

Sunday, April 14, 2024 at 3:00 PM

In a highly anticipated return to Eastman's Ranlet Series, the Grammy Award-winning Takács Quartet present a program of 'the natural world', featuring Haydn's "Sunrise" Quartet, Beethoven's 8th String Quartet, inspired while contemplating the starry skies and the music of the spheres, and a new work by Phoenix-based composer, Nokuthula Ngwenyama.

### BARBARA B. SMITH WORLD MUSIC SERIES

## Oumou Sangaré

Kilbourn Hall

Friday, April 19, 2024 at 7:30 PM

Global superstar, Oumou Sangaré, fuses her distinctive Malian sound and voice with elements of blues, folk and rock resulting in a timeless body of work free from borders and genres. Sangaré's vocals soar above driving grooves and inescapably danceable rhythms for a show that is sure to have you on your feet!

## UPCOMING STUDENT ENSEMBLE CONCERTS

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All student performances are free unless otherwise noted.

## Musica Nova

Kilbourn Hall

Friday, April 12, 2024 at 7:30 PM

Music of Lindberg, Saariaho, and Read Thomas

*We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the "Great Hill People" and "Keepers of the Western Door" of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.*



For the most up to date information on Eastman concerts and events, scan this code to visit our online calendar.



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