



TUES@7: IFCA Works for Strings
October 20, 2020 | 7pm EDT

The International Contemporary Ensemble presents an evening of exploring string works by members of the Iranian Female Composers Association. Ensemble musicians Josh Modney (violinist), Kyle Armbrust (violinist), Wendy Richman (violinist), and Michael Nicolas (cellist) will discuss each work with the composers, diving into compositional process and collaboration.

Program:

Rojin Sharafi: *sandbox* (2017)

Niloufar Nourbakhsh: *Veiled* (arranged for viola and electronics, 2019)

Homa Samiei: *Fate* (2019)

Interview with Anahita Abbasi and Josh Modney

Anahita Abbasi: *Situation IV / Io E iO* (2016, rev. 2017)

Bahar Royaei: *Tombstone* (2017)

Rojin Sharafi: *sandbox* (2017)

Sandbox is about playing in a small playground over and over again with specific sound materials, tools, and toys. Once you want to leave the sandbox you fall into another box. After a while you accept the loops and repetitions, they become your new reality. So you try to build your small box in the sandbox.

Niloufar Nourbakhsh: *Veiled* (arranged for viola and electronics, 2019)

I think it takes a lot of courage to stand up against something that everyone has accepted as normal. Personally, as an Iranian woman, I carry a lot of anger with me. The anger that comes from things I've witnessed happen to the women in my personal life, to larger scale growing up in a country that actively veils women's presence be it through a compulsory job or banning solo female singers from pursuing a professional career. I think for me, it's important to transform this anger into a collective force that is both beautiful and resilient. So *Veiled* is a tribute to Iranian women that made such transformations possible.

Homa Samiei: *Fate* (2019)

Fate is inspired by one of the poems by Ahmad Shamloo, a contemporary Iranian poet.

Fate is about our destiny and predestination. Sometimes we need to accept what we have. Sometimes, we need to be content with our dissatisfaction; we should say "Yes" to our disfavor.

Life is full of ups and downs, and maybe the world is not as fair as we wish...

Anahita Abbasi: *Situation IV / Io E iO* (2016, rev. 2017)

Dialogical Self Theory weaves two concepts, self and dialogue, together in such a way that a more profound understanding of the interconnection of self and society is achieved. Usually, the concept of self refers to something "internal," something that takes place within the mind of the individual person, while dialogue is typically associated with something "external," that is, processes that take place between people involved in communication.

The composite concept "dialogical self" goes beyond the self-other dichotomy by infusing the external to the internal and, in reverse, to introduce the internal into the external. As functioning as a "society of mind," the self is populated by multiplicity of "self-positions" that have the possibility to entertain dialogical relationships with each other.

Situations are a series of pieces with a set of circumstances in which one finds oneself.

Situation IV/Io eiO, is a "Dialogical Self" of a musician with themselves, a multiplicity of 'self-positions,' and infusion of the external and internal dialogues in different kinds of situations.

Bahar Royaei: *Tombstone* (2017)

سنگی برای سیمین
و مرگ را کودکی دیدم ...
سر اسیمه
که میگریزد از مرگ
(یدال رویایی ، هفتاد سنگ قبر)

A tombstone for Simin:
...and I saw the "death," like a child,
frightened,
running away from the death
(Yadollah Royaei, Seventy Tombstones)

There are sounds in the horizon. They are far, yet so close; They are known-unknown sounds: So intimate to the instrument to be known yet so reserved to be perceived by us. There are sounds in the horizon; and in the horizon of sound there is silenced noise. *Tombstone* is about Death as a child, who runs away from herself. It tries to deconstruct that noise with the viola's "known-unknown" timbres, and reconstruct the horizon with repetition, embracement of the body and deployment of errors. *Tombstone* is made economical by its materials. In each movement, the piece develops specific timbres through repetition. The repetitions are in gestures. Repetition of accents in all three movements are there to rebuild. The repetition is not there just to repeat, but to morph and re-shape. The gesture repeats to awake the visceral sounds of the body, the instrument's body. There is death; running away in the horizon, in the vibration, in the space; running away from itself (the known-unknown).

Rojin Sharafi

Rojin Sharafi is a sound artist and composer of acoustic, electro-acoustic, and electronic music. Her music crosses borders of different genres and keenly grabs from many musical buckets such as noise, folk, ambient, metal, and contemporary music. Her recent album *Urns Waiting To Be Fed* debuted in September via Zabte Sote / Opal Tapes labels and reviewed by *The Quietus* as "the unexpected" and "one of the most ecstatic and fiercely original hours of music." She has performed in festivals such as SET x CTM 2018 in Tehran, *Unsafe+Sounds* 2018, and *Hyperreality* 2019 both in Vienna. In addition, her work has been presented internationally in cities like Basel, Berlin, Gent, New York City, and Washington DC. In 2019, she was invited as an artist in residence at *Gouvernement* in Belgium and in 2020 she will begin a new residency through *Space21* and *Borderline Festival* in Athens and Kurdistan. She was awarded the 2018 Austrian female Composers prize at *Wien Modern Festival*. Rojin Sharafi is academically pursuing her masters in sound engineering and composition at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna where she is delving into a deeper research in digital music performance.

Niloufar Nourbakhsh

Described as "stark" by *WNPR* and "darkly lyrical" by the *New York Times*, a winner of the Second Annual Hildegard competition and a 2019 recipient of *OPERA America's Discovery Grant*, Niloufar Nourbakhsh's music has been commissioned and performed by *Nashville Symphony Orchestra*, *I-Park Foundation*, *National Sawdust Ensemble*, *International Contemporary Ensemble*, *Center for Contemporary Opera*, *Women Composers Festival of Hartford*, *Forward Music Project*, *PUBLIQuartet*, *Ensemble Connect*, *Akropolis Reed Quintet*, *Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival*, and *Calidore Quartet* at numerous festivals and venues including *Carnegie Hall*, and *Washington Kennedy Center*, *Mostly Mozart Festival*, *Seal Bay Festival of American Chamber Music*, and many more. A founding member and co-director of *Iranian Female Composers Association*, Niloufar is a strong advocate for music education and equal opportunities. In 2014, she worked as the site coordinator of *Brooklyn Middle School Jazz Academy* sponsored by *Jazz at Lincoln Center*. She is currently a *Teaching Artist* at *Brooklyn Music School* and faculty at *Molloy College*. Niloufar is a music graduate and a *Global Citizen Scholarship* recipient of *Goucher College* as well as a *Mahoney and Caplan Scholar* from *University of Oxford*. Among her teachers are *Lisa Weiss*, *Laura Kaminsky*, *Matthew Barnson*, *Margaret Schedel*, *Daniel Weymouth*, and *Daria Semegen*. She is currently pursuing her

doctorate degree in music composition under the supervision of Sheila Silver at Stony Brook University.

Homa Samiei

Homa Samiei is an Iranian composer and Pianist born in 1993. She is a Co-founder of Himeh Cultural House as well as the Najva Ensemble. Homa studied composition at the Art University of Tehran. She pursued her piano studies with Mohammadreza Amirghasemi and composition studies with Hooshyar Khayam and Karen Kayhani. She has appeared as the piano accompanist at various concerts. Her Theme and Variation in Shour for Persian Quartet was performed at the Tehran University of Art in 2014. Some of her notable musical activities include: composer and pianist in Raha(Free) album 2015; composer and pianist of Raha performance 2015; participant at the Lucca Contemporary Music Festival 2016 as a composer and pianist; composer and pianist of Karizmah performance directed by Mehdi Mousakhani 2017; composer of the "Coming Home" project, which was performed at Nightwood Theater, Toronto, and London, Ontario. 2018; one of the composers of The Art song Collaborative Project (ASCP) 2021. Samiei is currently pursuing her master's degree in community music at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Anahita Abbasi

Anahita Abbasi's music has been described by the Guardian and Classical Voice America as "a dizzyingly sophisticated reverie, colorful and energetic. It embodies tremendous timbral exploration and multilayered performance gestures". Her music has been commissioned and performed by distinguished soloists and ensembles such as M. Esfahani, International Contemporary Ensemble, Ensemble Modern, Quatuor Diotima, Mivos Quartet, and has been showcased frequently at numerous venues and festivals around the world among which: Mostly Mozart Festival, The Kitchen, Kennedy Center, Lincoln center, Time Span (USA), Darmstadt Ferienkurse (Germany), Tectonics (Glasgow), Akademie der Künste (Berlin), Klangspuren Schwaz (Austria), IRCAM – Manifeste Academy (France) among others. In 2017, Ms. Abbasi was nominated as one of the "women composers of our time" alongside K. Saariaho and I. Mundry. Aside from teaching composition and giving workshops on fundamentals of creation, she is also a founding member of Schallfeld Ensemble in Austria, as well as IFCA (Iranian Female Composers Association) in the U.S.; where she is curating concerts, creating platforms and advocating for young composers and acts as their ambassadors in presenting their music to others. Anahita Abbasi (1985) a world citizen, was born and raised in Iran. In 2005 she moved to Austria and pursued her bachelor's with C. Gadenstätter, B. Furrer and P. Billone; while working closely with G. Aperghis, F. Bedrossian and Ph. Leroux. Abbasi is currently residing in San Diego and finishing her Ph.D. under the supervision of Rand Steiger at the University of California San Diego.

Bahar Royae

Born and raised in Iran, Bahar Royae is a composer of concert and incidental music. A 2020 Fromm Foundation Composers Conference Fellow, Royae, received the 2019 Pnea Projects prize to make an electroacoustic piece for Clair Chase's Density 2036 part vi. Recognized as runner-up in National Sawdust's 2018-19 Hildegard Competition, in 2017 Bahar was awarded

from the Krourian Electroacoustic Competition in Iran, and won the Roger Sessions Memorial Composition Award the top composition prize at Boston Conservatory. Her concert music compositions both acoustic and electronic: are a mixture of timbral and sound-based atmospheric structures, interspersed with lyrical influences derived from her Iranian background(mostly Iranian lullabies). Bahar has studied with Dr.Marti Epstein and Dr.Felipe Lara. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in composition from City University of New York where she studies with Dr. Suzanne Farrin and Dr. Jason Eckardt.

About IFCA

The Iranian Female Composers Association (IFCA) was established in 2017 by three female-identifying Iranian composers, Anahita Abbasi, Niloufar Nourbakhsh, and Aida Shirazi. IFCA's mission is to support Iranian female composers throughout their careers and to inspire organizers and ensembles to commission female composers and engage with them for future collaborations. In 2017, Nourbakhsh started thinking of creating an association that builds a community between the first generation of active Iranian female composers, as she lacked a mentorship herself growing up in Iran. She started the work for the first concert to feature all Iranian female composers at National Sawdust and reached out to Anahita Abbasi and Aida Shirazi via social platforms. Their partnership grew and the three composers established IFCA together. IFCA currently has more than 40 composers as its members who live and work across the globe. Since 2017, IFCA's music has been featured at numerous festivals and venues including the Direct Current festival in Washington, DC and Mostly Mozart Festival in Lincoln Center.

About International Contemporary Ensemble

The International Contemporary Ensemble is an artist collective that is transforming the way music is created and experienced. As performer, curator, and educator, the Ensemble explores how new music intersects with communities across the world. The Ensemble's 36 members are featured as soloists, chamber musicians, commissioners, and collaborators with the foremost musical artists of our time. Works by emerging composers have anchored the Ensemble's programming since its founding in 2001, and the group's recordings and digital platforms highlight the many voices that weave music's present.

Credits

Commission Credits:

Anahita Abbasi's *Situation IV / Io EIO* (2016, rev. 2017) was commissioned by Marco Fusi, dedicated to Andrew McIntosh

Niloufar Nourbakhsh's *Veiled* (2019) was commissioned by Amanda Gookin for cello and live electronics. Viola arrangement originally written for Kimia Hesabi.

Recordings:

Bahar Royae: *Tombstone* (2017) performed by Kyle Armbrust

Audio: Alex Perialas
Video: Ron Branchini
Assistant to Audio & Production Staff: Chris Chen
Recorded at Pyramid Sound Studios in Ithaca, NY

Niloufar Nourbakhsh: *Veiled* (2019) performed by Wendy Richman
Audio: Maciej Lewandowski and Niloufar Nourbakhsh

Live Performance:
Audio: Maciej Lewandowski
Video: Ross Karre

Special thanks to:
We are grateful for the support of the NYC COVID-19 Response and Impact Fund in The New York Community Trust in making this program possible.

Performances and commissioning activities during the 2020-21 concert season are made possible by the generous support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, A.N. and Pearl G. Barnett Family Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Aaron Copland Fund for Music Inc., Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Francis Golet Charitable Lead Trusts, Amphion Foundation, Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung, The Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation, Pacific Harmony Foundation, Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University, The Casement Fund, BMI Foundation, as well as public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, the New York State Council for the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and the Illinois Arts Council Agency. The International Contemporary Ensemble is the Ensemble in Residence of the Nokia Bell Labs Experiments in Art and Technology. Yamaha Artist Services New York is the exclusive piano provider for the International Contemporary Ensemble.