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2013-2014 Raise the Bar

PEAK Performances Programming History

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## Rushes

Office of Arts + Cultural Programming

PEAK Performances at Montclair State University

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Dr. Susan A. Cole, President  
Daniel Gurskis, Dean, College of the Arts  
Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director, Arts & Cultural Programming

# Michael Gordon | Rushes Ensemble

## Rushes

Composer **Michael Gordon**

Rushes Ensemble

**Dana Jessen**  
**Michael Harley**  
**Jeffrey Lyman**  
**Rachael Elliott**  
**Saxton Rose**  
**Lynn Hileman**  
**Maya Stone**

*Rushes* is commissioned by the New Music Bassoon Fund.

Agent for *Rushes*: Serious Music Media, seriousmusicmedia.com.

Duration: 1 hour, no intermission.

In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices.  
The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted.  
No food or drink is permitted in the theater.

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Montclair State's **Office of Arts & Cultural Programming (ACP)** presents and produces leading artists of the world in dance, music, theater, and opera. Under its signature series Peak Performances, ACP has produced works such as *Zinnias: The Life of Clementine Hunter* by Robert Wilson, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Toshi Reagon, and Jacqueline Woodson; *Dog Days* by David T. Little and Royce Vavrek; Harry Partch's *Oedipus*; and Ridge Theater's *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* by David Lang. In addition, ACP has commissioned works by Bill T. Jones, Kronos Quartet, Jan Fabre, Liz Lerman, Wayne McGregor, Laurie Anderson, Romeo Castellucci, Richard Alston, Susan Marshall, Fred Hersch, and David Gordon.

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To view our complete season and for more information, visit [peakperfs.org](http://peakperfs.org).



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# Peak Performances

THE 2013|14 SEASON

# Michael Gordon | Rushes Ensemble

## Rushes



March 29, 2014 / 8:00 p.m.  
Alexander Kasser Theater





## Program Notes

Years ago I pursed my lips and blew into a bassoon, and felt the entire instrument buzz as I droned on the very bottom note, a B-flat. I held the long conical piece of wood in my hands with admiration—it was covered with what looked like a New York City subway map of shiny metal keys running every which way. The bassoon had heft, and it was primal—the two reeds vibrating against each other produced a poignant and mournful sound.

It all came back to me on a cold sunny Thursday in January 2011. Five bassoonists set up in my living room. Along with 25 other bassoonists from far and wide, they had banded together and asked me to write a new piece. I'm not sure any of them imagined that my response would be an hour-long work for seven bassoons.

In earlier conversations with Dana Jessen, the American bassoonist who initiated this project, I had asked to look at all the influential bassoon music written in the 20th century. Dana showed up with just a small pile of music. I felt a little bit like Magellan. I knew there were worlds to find if I could just set sail.

During that Thursday afternoon, we explored a myriad of sounds, and my living room was filled with an exquisite buzzing of dark tones. I was particularly drawn to the short percussive attacks by all the bassoons in counterpoint with each other. The texture had the aural effect of a Seurat painting, and I began to write for the instruments as if they were participants in an extreme sport—a nonstop barrage of ethereal rapid-fire points of sound that seamlessly shifted from one instrument to the next. This architectural movement of sound, which runs throughout the entire piece of music, is a technique that I first used in *Timber*, a percussion work for six amplified simantras. I imagined entering these waves of moving sound and embarking on a journey through a stark monochromatic landscape that slowly revealed its hidden colors.

The score, with tens of thousand of notes, looks a bit like an Escher drawing or a very long weaving pattern for a loom. In June 2012, in Edisto Island, South Carolina, I met with the seven bassoonists of the newly formed Rushes Ensemble. As we rehearsed, I thought that the piece had become like the thick river winding its way through the marshes and reedy growth surrounding us. I had already settled on the name *Rushes*, both for its reference to the reeds and to capture the mental state it produced. Now, with the seven bassoonists fully immersed in the music, I felt the primordial flow of sound harkening back to the very first reeds.

—*Michael Gordon*  
*New York City, January 2014*

## About the Artists

**Michael Gordon, composer**

Michael Gordon writes music that merges subtle rhythmic invention with incredible power embodying, in the words of the *New Yorker's* Alex Ross, “the fury of punk rock, the nervous brilliance of free jazz, and the intransigence of classical modernism.” Over the past 25 years, Gordon has produced a strikingly diverse body of work, ranging from large-scale pieces for high-energy ensembles to major orchestral commissions to works conceived specifically for the recording studio. Transcending categorization, this music represents the collision of mysterious introspection and brutal directness. His orchestral and chamber works include *Rewriting Beethoven's Seventh Symphony*, *Sunshine of Your Love*, *Potassium*, *Industry*, *The Sad Park*, and *Trance*, among others. Works for theater and opera include *What to Wear*, *Acquanetta*, *Lost Objects*, and *Van Gogh*. He also has had numerous collaborations with artists in other media, most frequently with filmmaker Bill Morrison and Ridge Theater.

**Rushes Ensemble**

Making their debut in 2012, the Rushes Ensemble consists of bassoonists Dana Jessen, Michael Harley, Jeffrey Lyman, Rachael Elliott, Saxton Rose, Lynn Hileman, and Maya Stone. A new force in contemporary music, this unique septet of bassoonists is dedicated to expanding and diversifying the future of bassoon repertoire through commissioning projects and collaborations. Taking its name from Michael Gordon's *Rushes*, the ensemble released the premiere recording of *Rushes* on Cantaloupe Records in March 2014. Recent engagements include performances at the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center in New York, the November Music Festival in 's-Hertogenbosch, University of Michigan's Stamps Auditorium, Amsterdam's Ostadetheater, The Hague's Korzo Theater, and a Belgium National Radio Broadcast performance at the Concertgebouw Brugge.

**Rachael Elliott** lives in Durham, NC, where she teaches bassoon at Duke University and leads a community bassoon band. She is a founding member of the new music group Clogs, with whom she has toured throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia and recorded five albums. Other ensembles include Dark in the Song, Heliand Consort, and the Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble, in addition to her freelance orchestral work. Her debut solo album, *Polka the Elk*, was released in 2011. bassoonproject.org

**Michael Harley** enjoys a diverse career as a teacher, performer, and music advocate. At the University of South Carolina he teaches bassoon and occasional courses in music history and contemporary music, coaches chamber music, and is artistic director of the award-winning Southern Exposure New Music Series. Harley is a founding member of the acclaimed chamber orchestra Alarm Will Sound (AWS), called “new music luminaries” and “one of the most vital and original ensembles on the American musical scene” (*New York Times*). A versatile musician, Harley has been featured as a soloist with AWS as both a bassoonist and singer. He has played in diverse venues on five continents, ranging from nightclubs and bars (Le Poisson Rouge and the Roxy in NYC) to Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Barbican (London), and the Hermitage Theatre (St. Petersburg) and with groups including the indy rock group Dirty Projectors and the orchestras of Charleston, Columbus, Fort Wayne, and South Bend, the South Carolina Philharmonic, and the Long Bay Symphony (Myrtle Beach), where he is principal bassoon. Current chamber projects include the pioneering bassoon groups Dark in the Song, the experimental chamber ensemble LotUS, and Trio

Chiaroscuro (flute, bassoon, and piano). Harley has degrees from the Eastman School of Music (DMA), the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (MM), and Goshen College (BA, English and music). His teachers include John Hunt, William Winstead, and Gwendolyn Rose. He lives in Columbia, SC, with his wife, flutist Jennifer Parker-Harley, and daughters Ella and Lucia.

**Lin Hileman** is dedicated to reinvigorating concert music through the performance of post-classical contemporary and experimental music, orchestral and chamber music, and electronic music, as well as interdisciplinary works. She has performed as a soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States, the UK, and Latin America and as a guest bassoonist with Clogs, Alarm Will Sound, and the Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble. Hileman makes up one half of the bassoon duo Tuple and is a member of the contemporary bassoon collectives Dark in the Song and Rushes Ensemble. Equally at home with traditional repertoire, she is principal bassoonist of the Binghamton Philharmonic Orchestra and bassoonist with the Swannanoa Chamber Music Festival. She has performed with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and the Syracuse and New Haven Symphony Orchestras and has been a frequent performer at the annual International Double Reed Society conference. Hileman is currently associate professor of bassoon at West Virginia University, where she also is co-director of the WVU Summer Double Reed Camp and a member of the Laureate Wind Quintet. She holds degrees from the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor (BM), Yale University (MM), and the Eastman School of Music (DMA), where she was awarded the Andrew G. Bogiages Memorial Prize in Bassoon in 2004. Her teachers include John Hunt, K. David Van Hoesen, Frank Morelli, Christopher Millard, and Richard Beene.

**Dana Jessen** is in high demand as a chamber musician, improviser, and new music specialist. She is the founder of Splinter Reeds, a San Francisco–based reed quintet, and has performed with prominent groups such as the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Ensemble Dal Niente, Calefax Reed Quintet, Callithumpian Consort, Anthony Braxton's Tri-Centric Orchestra, and the Amsterdam Contemporary Ensemble. As the founder and artistic director of the New Music Bassoon Fund, Jessen led the commission of *Rushes*. Her recordings can be heard on Cantaloupe, RIOJA, Evil Rabbit, and the New World record labels. She holds an MM in bassoon performance from the New England Conservatory of Music and an MM in improvisation from the ArtEZ Hogeschool voor de Kunst. She lived in Amsterdam for three years as the recipient

of a J. William Fulbright Fellowship and a Huygens Scholarship Programme Fellowship researching contemporary and improvised music. She is currently a lecturer at the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music.

**Jeffrey Lyman** has been associate professor of bassoon at the University of Michigan since 2006; prior to that, he held positions at Arizona State University and Bowling Green State University. His principal teachers include Bernard Garfield of the Philadelphia Orchestra and Richard Beene and Hugh Cooper of the University of Michigan. In the field of new music, he has published several articles, recordings, and web pages on recent compositions for bassoon from the former Soviet Union and Mexico, and his studies on the great pedagogues of the 19th century have culminated in several releases collected as the *Jeffrey Lyman Edition* from TrevCo Music Publishing. Recent projects include video recordings of trios and duos for oboe, bassoon, and piano with Nancy Ambrose King and Martin Katz, as well as performances with the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Detroit Symphony, and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. His edition of the first complete English translation of the *Nouvelle Méthode de Basson* by Étienne Ozi has just been released by TrevCo Music.

**Saxton Rose** is bassoon professor and director of the contemporary music ensemble at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, principal bassoonist of the Winston-Salem Symphony, and member of Zéphyros Winds, an acclaimed New York–based wind quintet. Recent performances include engagements as concerto soloist with the National Symphony of Colombia in Bogotá, the National Symphony of Panamá, the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Caldas, Fayetteville Symphony, and

the Winston-Salem Symphony. This past season he performed recitals in Mexico, China, Belgium, The Netherlands, and in Berlin at the Philharmonie. As principal bassoonist of the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra from 2003 to 2008, he performed at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, in the Casals Festival, and on tours to Europe and throughout Latin America. Rose studied at the Cincinnati College–Conservatory of Music and graduated with highest honors from the class of Stefano Canuti at the Conservatorio Agostino Steffani in Castelfranco Veneto, Italy.

**Maya Stone** is a champion of contemporary music. She has commissioned and premiered several works by American composers, including William L. Lackey, Spencer Lambright, Paul Osterfield, and Stephen Gorbos. Recent projects include solo bassoon in Black Gospel music, which includes collaborating with additional composers Raymond Wise, Mark Lomax, and William Menefield. She gives recitals and master classes around the US each year and performs at the International Double Reed Society Conference. Stone is also the second bassoonist with the Huntsville Symphony. She has held visiting professorships at the University of Missouri in Columbia and Bowling Green State University in Ohio. She has held the position of assistant professor of bassoon at Middle Tennessee State University, and in 2004 she held a visiting professorship in double reeds at Austin Peay State University. Stone earned a DMA in bassoon performance from the University of Texas at Austin in 2010, an MM in bassoon performance and woodwind specialty from Michigan State University in 2003, and a BM in music education from SUNY Potsdam in 2001. Her teachers include Kristin Wolfe Jensen, Michael Kroth, Barrick Stees, and Frank Wangler.