

SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE AND DANCE  
OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

Jeffrey Heisler, saxophone  
and  
I-Chen Yeh, piano

*Transformations:  
The Art of the Transcription*

Friday, January 21, 2022 at 7:30 p.m.  
Varner Recital Hall

*Oakland University resides on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabe, known as the Three Fires Confederacy, comprised of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi. The land was ceded in the 1807 Treaty of Detroit and makes up southeast Michigan.*

*In recognizing the history and respecting the sovereignty of Michigan's Indian Nations, Oakland University honors the heritage of Indigenous communities and their significant role in shaping the course of this region. Further, we recognize the wrongs done to those forcibly removed from their Homelands and commit to fostering an environment of inclusion that is responsive to the needs of First Peoples through our words, policies, and actions.*

*The preservation and perpetuation of customs and traditions of Indigenous nations are essential to our shared cultural heritage. A deep understanding of Native peoples' past and present informs the teaching, research, and community engagement of the university in its ongoing effort to elevate the dignity of all people and serve as shared stewards of the land.*

Oakland University Faculty Recital  
Jeffrey Heisler, saxophone  
I-Chen Yeh, piano

*Program*

**Tzigane**

**Maurice Ravel**  
(1875-1937)

**Six Riffs After Ovid\***

**Michael Daugherty**  
(b. 1954)

- I. Maceo Parker (Pan)
- II. Buddy Holly (Phaeton)
- III. Joni Mitchell (Niobe)
- IV. Jim Morrison (Bacchus)
- V. Prince (Narcissus)
- VI. Aretha Franklin (Arethusa)

**Cello Sonata no. 1 in C minor, op. 32**

**Camille Saint-Saëns**  
(1835-1921)

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante tranquillo sostenuto
- III. Allegro moderato

All works arranged for saxophone and piano by Jeffrey Heisler  
\* denotes world premiere (version for saxophone)

### **Tzigane – Maurice Ravel:**

Around the time he heard the jazz band that inspired his Violin Sonata, composer **Maurice Ravel** struck up a friendship with British-Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Arányi. It was her captivating renditions of gypsy music that prompted him to write this colorful and bracingly virtuosic rhapsody in the gypsy style (the title *Tzigane* means “gypsy” in French). “This Tzigane must be a piece of great virtuosity,” Ravel told the violinist. “Certain passages can produce brilliant effects, provided that it is possible to perform them—which I’m not always sure of.” Although Ravel frequently consulted with d'Arányi while the piece was in progress, she reportedly received the finished score only a couple of days before giving the premiere in London on April 26, 1924. On that occasion, the music’s gypsy flavor was enhanced by the use of a modified piano called a luthéal, outfitted with a device that made it sound something like a Hungarian cimbalom or dulcimer.

*Tzigane* opens with a lengthy cadenza-like solo that explores the violin’s (and saxophone’s) sultry lower register. After what sounds like an extended warmup, the performer introduces a passionate, gypsy-flavored melody that grows increasingly animated and intense. As the music gradually climbs into the stratosphere, double-stops, roulades, pizzicato slaps, and other virtuosic accoutrements offer a foretaste of the pyrotechnical display that lies ahead. The improvisatory feeling of the music is a reminder that Ravel incorporated many of d'Arányi’s improvised embellishments into the score. The cadenza eventually subsides on a quiet double trill, to which the piano responds with rippling passagework. Out of this ethereal duet emerges the dance-like main theme, which Ravel presents in a series of bravura variations, chock full of surprises and culminating in a dazzling exhibition of acrobatic fireworks.

### **Six Riffs After Ovid – Michael Daugherty:**

*Six Riffs after Ovid* (2021) for solo oboe was commissioned by Bang on a Can, and premiered on a Bang on a Can Marathon on April 18, 2021 by oboist Titus Underwood. This version for saxophone is realized by Jeffrey Heisler.

My composition is inspired by *The Metamorphoses*, written by the Roman poet Ovid in 8 AD. Like *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* for solo oboe, composed in 1951 by the English composer Benjamin Britten, I have selected six characters from Ovid’s epic poem:

Pan, who played on a reed pipe; Phaeton, who rode the chariot of the sun and was struck down by a thunderbolt; Niobe, who lamented the death of her children and was turned into a mountain; Bacchus, who reveled at drunken feasts; Narcissus, who fell in love with his own image and turned into a flower; and Arethusa, who was turned into a fountain.

Transforming these characters from classical mythology into icons from American mythology, the six movements of my composition are musical metamorphoses with a modern twist:

MACEO PARKER (Pan) – Funky saxophone soloist with the band of James Brown, the “Godfather of Soul”

BUDDY HOLLY (Phaeton) – Pioneering rock ‘n’ roll legend who tragically died in a plane crash in 1959, at the age of 22

JONI MITCHELL (Niobe) – Innovative singer-songwriter who mourned the loss of her daughter, but found her lyrical voice

JIM MORRISON (Bacchus) – Lead vocalist for The Doors rock band whose hedonistic lifestyle led to his early death at age 27

PRINCE (Narcissus) – Flamboyant and androgynous singer-guitarist who could not resist gazing at himself when passing by a mirror

ARETHA FRANKLIN (Arethusa) – The “Queen of Soul” with a three-octave voice that soared above the heavens

### **Cello Sonata no. 1 – Camille Saint-Saëns**

In 1872, **Saint-Saëns** composed two major works for the cello: the Sonata op. 32 and the Concerto op. 33. Although he dedicated the chamber work to the cellist Jules-Bernard Lasserre, with whom he often performed, it was with Auguste Tolbecque (who was to give the first performance of the Concerto) that he premiered the piece on 7 December 1872, at the Société Nationale. In 1876, he performed the sonata again with its dedicatee at a concert in London. This tense, powerful work seems to recall the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. With its prevailing dark colors and vehement mood, the opening Allegro makes extensive use of the lower registers of both instruments. The second theme (a chordal melody in the upper register of the piano, while the cello seesaws between two notes) provides short-lived respite. The second movement introduces greater tranquility. It is based on a chorale, about which Saint-Saëns originally said: “The Andante of my first sonata for piano and cello is the result of an improvisation on the organ at the church of Saint-Augustin; the first and last sections of the piece are a textual reproduction of what I improvised.” The central part is more Romantically expansive in nature, before developing the chorale’s head-motif which, in the last section of the movement, is swathed in graceful arabesques. The tempestuous finale reintroduces the mood from the beginning of the work, while a glimmer of hope is introduced by its second theme, a broad cantabile phrase. However, the uninterrupted onslaught of the piano drives the sonata into a headlong dash towards despair.

### **Jeffrey Heisler, saxophone**

Award-winning concert saxophonist, pedagogue and soprano chair of the acclaimed Assembly Quartet, Jeffrey Heisler serves on the faculty of Oakland University as Associate Professor of Saxophone. Dr. Heisler holds degrees in Saxophone Performance and Music Education from Bowling Green State University (DMA, MM) and Central Michigan University (BME). Prior to his appointment at Oakland University, Heisler served on the faculties of Kent State University and Wayne State University.

Among Heisler’s significant accomplishments are a Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition Gold Medal, prizewinner in the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Chamber Music and Young Artist Competitions, and honors as “Outstanding Classical Soloist” in Downbeat Magazine. Heisler has concertized throughout North America, Asia, and Europe performing with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Michigan Opera Theatre, Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra, Benny Goodman Orchestra, John Philip Sousa Band, Toledo Symphony Orchestra, and Stuttgart Ballet Orchestra. In demand as a guest soloist and recitalist, he has appeared at the BGSU New Music Festival, Michigan Music Conference, CBDNA Conferences, North American Saxophone Alliance (NASA) Conferences, World Saxophone Congresses and many more.

An advocate of contemporary music, Heisler promotes the creation of new repertoire for the saxophone by commissioning and premiering works by composers such as David R. Gillingham, Jennifer Higdon, David Lang, John Mackey, Marc Mellits, Steve Reich, Marilyn Shrude, and Chen Yi. In addition, he has worked with the Pulitzer-Prize winning composer Ellen Taaffe Zwilich on a transcription of her violin work Episodes for soprano saxophone and piano, as well as collaborated with electronic music pioneer Morton Subotnick in creating a new version of his In Two Worlds for alto saxophone and interactive computer (MAX/MSP). Heisler has also performed the American premieres of Recit (Chemins VII) by Luciano Berio, RASCH II by Franco Donatoni, and Entführung (Abduction) by Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Heisler’s acclaimed debut solo album Gradient and the Assembly Quartet’s in search of stillness are released on the AMP Recordings label. Additionally, Heisler can also be heard on Centaur Records, White Pine Music, and Navona Records. Heisler’s research interests include arranging existing works from prominent composers for the saxophone. His adaptations for the saxophone are published by the Theodore Presser Co., Schirmer Music Co., SMP Press, and Edizioni Berben.

Heisler is a Selmer Paris and Lègère Reeds Performing Artist-Clinician.

### **I-Chen Yeh, piano**

A native of Kaohsiung, Taiwan, award-winning pianist I-Chen Yeh enjoys an international career as a solo and collaborative performer. Among her significant accomplishments include competition prizes throughout Taiwan, Japan, and the United States. A performer devoted to contemporary music, Yeh’s solo and collaborative performances strive to highlight a new and exciting repertory. Her passion for new music has led to collaborations with notable composers such as Pulitzer Prize winners Steven Stucky and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich. In addition she has commissioned and premiered works for solo piano and other chamber music by David Rakowski, Marc Mellits, Greg Sandow, Andres Carrizo, Timothy Stulman, David Gillingham, Andrea Reinkemeyer, Anthony Donofrio, and Jeff Weston.

Yeh has appeared at many world renowned music festivals, including the Aspen Music Festival, the Bowdoin Music Festival, Bowling Green State University’s New Music and Art Festivals, Eastern Music Festival, the Internationale Wiener Musik Seminar, Threshold Electroacoustic Festival, and the Ball State University New Music Festival. Recent concert appearances include performances at (le) poisson rouge (NYC), the Interlochen Center for the Arts, the Yamaha Performing Artist Center (Taipei, Taiwan), the Taiwan National Concert Hall, and many Universities and Conservatories throughout the United States.

Yeh holds degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music (BM), the Eastman School of Music (MM), and Bowling Green State University (DMA). Her primary teachers include Laura Melton, Angela Cheng, and Thomas Schumacher. She has also performed in master-classes led by internationally renowned pianists such as Stephen Hough, Nelita True, Robert Levin, John Perry, and James Giles. Yeh is an active member of Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), where she served as coordinator of the Ohio junior and senior division piano competitions. In addition, she is a member of several professional chamber music ensembles, including the Heisler/Yeh Duo with saxophonist, Jeffrey Heisler, the Primary Colors Trio (saxophone, piano, and percussion), and an exciting new piano duo with pianist Jiung Yoon. Currently, Dr. Yeh serves on the faculty of Oakland University (MI) as Instructor of Applied Piano and Coordinator of Instrumental Collaborative Piano.

