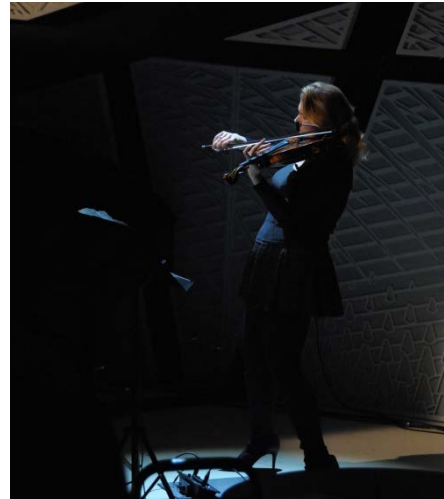


ERIC MOE'S *UNCANNY AFFABLE MACHINES* – "SIX SCENARIOS OF HUMAN/MACHINE INTERACTION" IS AN AUGUST 2018 RELEASE FROM NEW FOCUS RECORDINGS

New CD Features Performers Yihan Chen, Pipa; Lindsey Goodman, Flute; Jessica Meyer, Viola; Paul Vaillancourt, Drumset; and the Composer Himself on Piano



Eric Moe, photo by Mara Rago; Jessica Meyer performing Uncanny Affable Machines at National Sawdust in Brooklyn, NY, 2016, photo by Andrew Fingland

Ask composer Eric Moe, whose work has been described by others as “music of winning exuberance” and “maximal minimalism,” to describe his music, and he writes, “Although the surfaces and genres are varied, my works share a concern for rhythmic propulsion and a disregard for stylistic orthodoxies.” Winner of numerous honors and awards, Moe is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Music at the University of Pittsburgh and founder of that city’s Music on the Edge new music concert series.

Uncanny Affable Machines, Moe’s most recent recording project – to be released by New Focus Recordings on August 10, 2018 – bears this description out vividly with a group of six recent solo pieces that, in Moe’s words, “offer various scenarios of human/machine interaction. Each of them features a lone human performer negotiating intersecting worlds of mechanical and human” – three of them performing with a pre-recorded track. The five lone humans featured on the disc are Yihan Chen, pipa; Lindsey Goodman, flute; Jessica Meyer, viola; Paul Vaillancourt, drumset; and the composer himself, an accomplished performer, on piano.

In three of the pieces, the soloist contends directly with an inflexible mechanical partner. "In these," says Moe, "the electroacoustic parts often have an uncanny, superhuman rhythmic precision, but this is undercut by the nature of the manipulated sampled sounds, most of which have human-performed, bird-performed, or chaotic rhythms as part of their fabric. On the other side, the heroic human performer can be seen/heard herself as a 'soft machine,' to use William Burroughs's phrase, wielding a low-tech but incredibly sophisticated and powerful acoustic instrument. ***The relationship between human and machine, high-tech and low-tech, biology and silicon, is a close and cordial one.***"

- *Uncanny Affable Machines* (performed by Jessica Meyer, viola, with recording featuring samples of birds, kitchen utensils, environmental sounds, toy percussion instruments, and a splash of classic R&B) – "Performer and soundfile sound like they're in different worlds," says Moe, "but, as they swap material back and forth, it soon becomes clear that they're inextricably linked. After some adventures, they ultimately get crazy together and give birth to a new form of being." [Listen to clip on recording page](#)
- *The Sun Beats the Mountain Like a Drum* (performed by Yihan Chen, pipa, with recording featuring samples of world percussion and Delta Blues) "exploits extremes of expression and contrast," using the pipa's "large range of visceral performance gestures ... with an in-your-face presence" to duet with a recorded part that is a collage of stylistic and cultural traditions. "Some of its high adventure," says Moe, "lies in how these traditions collide, rebound, and are transformed and convoluted by one another." [Listen to clip on recording page](#)
- *Let Me Tell U About R Specials* (performed by Lindsey Goodman, flute, with recording featuring samples of extended flute techniques and wait-person speech) Moe describes as "a meditation upon a commonplace narrative – dining in a contemporary American restaurant." Moe uses typical phrases from a server, such as "I'm Patti, I'll be helping you out this evening" as the material for the electronic part. The flute part takes on a coloristic, narrative role, lending distance to and commentary on the experience. [Listen to clip on recording page](#)

The remaining three works on the disc "engage with the mechanical through the lens of conventional instrumental technique itself," as the New Focus label describes.

- *Cross Chop* (performed by Paul Vaillancourt, drumset) begins with a quotation from the Surfari's classic "Wipeout," and sets off on a perpetual-motion continuum evoking the surfing term of the title, "when a wind blowing sideways to shore disturbs the rhythm of the bigger waves rolling towards it, setting up a less predictable cross-rhythm." [Listen to clip on recording page](#)
- *Frozen Rain, Summer Dreams* (performed by Eric Moe, piano) begins with "an emotionally chilly prelude ... the plinking of ice pellets on crusted snowfields is evoked here by a (somewhat mechanical) pulsating high note which disappears with the beginning of *Summer*

Dreams, a song without words based on a setting of a poem by Bill Kushner that evokes the nature tropes of classical Chinese poetry." [Listen to clip on recording page](#)

- *And No Birds Sing* (performed by Eric Moe, piano) uses what Moe calls "a high tech virtual instrument," a grand piano tuned with 19 notes in each octave. "The improbability of such a machine existing as an acoustic instrument is part of its appeal. The microtonal tuning is driven by expressive needs: dividing the octave into 19 equal intervals offers a wider palette of both consonance and dissonance than the common 12-tone equal temperament." [Listen to clip on recording page](#)

Eric Moe writes music he enjoys playing, and otherwise plays music he wishes he'd written. The coming season holds a song recital featuring his music and that of David Del Tredici by Rob Frankenberry, tenor, and Moe as pianist (fall date to be announced, NYC). He is featured at a CD release party for Hayes Biggs, performing Biggs's *E.M. Am Flügel* for solo piano (November 7, 2018, at Tenri Cultural Institute, NYC), and performs the premiere of David Del Tredici's *Monsters* with Rob Frankenberry (March 27, 2019, at Casa Italiana, NYC). In addition, the Da Capo Chamber Players perform his *Strenuous Pleasures* for strings, winds, piano, and percussion (February 2, 2019, at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, PA, and March 14, 2019, at Merkin Concert Hall, NYC), and Moe joins Christine Brandes, soprano, for performances of selections from his *Sonnets to Orpheus* and *Tough Songs* (October 10, 2018, at Hertz Hall, Berkeley, CA, and March 30, 2019, at Pomona College, Claremont, CA).

Eric Moe, composer of what the New York Times has called "music of winning exuberance," has received numerous grants and awards for his work, including the Lakond Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a Guggenheim Fellowship; multiple commissions from both the Fromm and Koussevitzky Foundations; the Barlow Endowment, Meet-the-Composer USA, and New Music USA; fellowships from the Composer's Conference and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts; and residencies at MacDowell, Montalvo Arts Center, Yaddo, Bellagio, Camargo, VCCA, UCross, Aaron Copland House, Ragdale, Hambidge, Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians, and the American Dance Festival, among others.

Tri-Stan, his one-woman opera on a text by David Foster Wallace, was hailed by the New York Times as "a tour de force" that "subversively inscribes classical music into pop culture." A recording is available from Koch International Classics. *Strange Exclaiming Music* (Naxos) was described in Fanfare as "wonderfully inventive, often joyful, occasionally melancholy, highly rhythmic, frequently irreverent, absolutely eclectic, and always high-octane music." *Kick & Ride* (bmap/sound) was a WQXR album of the week: "...it's completely easy to succumb to the beats and rhythms that come out of Moe's fantastical imaginarium, a headspace that ties together the free-flowing atonality of Alban Berg with the guttural rumblings of Samuel Barber's *Medea*, adding in a healthy dose of superhuman strength." Other all-Moe CDs are available on New World Records (*Meanwhile Back At The Ranch*), Albany Records (*Of Color Braided All Desire, Kicking and Screaming, Up & At 'Em, Siren Songs*), and Centaur (*On the Tip of My Tongue*).

As a pianist, Moe has premiered and performed works by a wide variety of composers. His playing can be heard on the Koch, CRI, Mode, Albany, New World, and Innova labels in the music of John Cage, Roger Zahab, Marc-Antonio Consoli, Mathew Rosenblum, Jay Reise, Ezra Sims, David Keberle, Felix

Draeseke, and many others in addition to his own. His solo recording *The Waltz Project Revisited - New Waltzes for Piano*, a CD of waltzes for piano by two generations of American composers, was released in 2004 on Albany. Gramophone magazine said of the CD, "Moe's command of the varied styles is nothing short of remarkable." He founded and currently co-directs Pittsburgh's Music on the Edge new music concert series. Moe studied at Princeton University and U.C. Berkeley and is currently the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Music at the University of Pittsburgh. www.ericmoe.net

Yihan Chen was a prize winner of the 1995 Freedom and the 1989 Art Cup International Chinese Instruments Competitions. She has performed at major international festivals worldwide, including such as Spoleto Festival, Lincoln Center Festival, De Création Musicale de Radio France, Le Festival d'Avignon, and she has appeared at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Library of Congress and other leading venues. www.yihanchenmusic.com

Lindsey Goodman is a soloist, recording artist, chamber collaborator, orchestral musician, educator, and clinician. An advocate for living composers and electroacoustic music, Lindsey has premiered over one hundred new works. In addition to her solo albums *reach through the sky* (New Dynamic Records) and *returning to heights unseen* (Navona Records), she is featured in solo, chamber, vocal, and orchestral performances on a wide variety of recordings. www.pnme.org/lindsey-goodman-flute

Jessica Meyer is a versatile composer and violist whose passionate musicianship radiates accessibility, generosity, and emotional clarity. As a soloist and member of the award-winning and critically-acclaimed contemporary music collective (counter)induction, Jessica has premiered pieces for solo viola internationally – expanding the repertoire for viola by championing new works while also composing her own. <https://jessicameyermusic.com>

Paul Vaillancourt is Professor of Percussion at Columbus State University in Columbus, GA, and has been a featured soloist with orchestras and ensembles and at festivals worldwide. He has performed with many contemporary music ensembles including Bent Frequency, Sonic Generator, Furious Band, The Fountain City Ensemble, the piano/percussion duo, STRIKE with pianist Jeff Meyer, and as a founding member of the newly-formed Zohn Collective. <https://zohncollective.com/paul-vaillancourt>

Eric Moe - *Uncanny Affable Machines*

New Focus Recordings FCR212

Release date: August 10, 2018

Cross Chop – Paul Vaillancourt, drumset (9:33)

Uncanny Affable Machines – Jessica Meyer, viola (9:45)

And No Birds Sing – Eric Moe, piano (9:04)

The Sun Beats the Mountain Like a Drum – Yihan Chen, pipa (8:57)

Frozen Rain, Summer Dreams – Eric Moe, piano (8:21)

Let Me Tell U About R Specials – Lindsey Goodman, flute (9:56)

New Focus Recordings album page: <http://www.newfocusrecordings.com/catalogue/eric-moe-uncanny-affable-machines/>

Available from [Amazon](#), [iTunes](#), and [Arkiv Music](#)

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