

*Composer Portraits*

# Enno Poppe

JACK Quartet  
Yarn / Wire

---

Saturday, February 23, 8:00 p.m.

---



*Composer Portraits*

# Enno Poppe

JACK Quartet

Yarn / Wire

Saturday, February 23, 8:00 p.m.



*Rad* (2003)  
for two keyboards

Enno Poppe (b. 1969)

Laura Barger and Ning Yu, *keyboards*

*Schweiss* (2010)  
for cello and electric organ

Kevin McFarland, *cello*  
Laura Barger, *keyboard*

*Tier* (2002)  
for string quartet

JACK Quartet

INTERMISSION

On-stage discussion with Enno Poppe and Kevin McFarland

*Tonband* (2008/2012) **world premiere**      Wolfgang Heiniger / Poppe  
for two keyboards, two percussionists, and live electronics  
Yarn / Wire



This program runs approximately one hour and 45 minutes, including a brief intermission.

Major support for Composer Portraits is provided by  
the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts.

Composer Portraits is presented with the friendly support of  ernst von siemens  
music foundation

*Please note that photography and the use of recording devices are not permitted. Remember to turn off all cellular phones and pagers before tonight's performance begins. Miller Theatre is wheelchair accessible. Large print programs are available upon request. For more information or to arrange accommodations, please call 212-854-7799.*

---

# About the Program

---

## Introduction

Born in the small town of Hemer in western Germany in 1969, Poppe writes music that is at once natural and weird (as perhaps nature is). A piece by him will generally start out from a very small idea, or perhaps more than one, which will then be progressively varied, extended, and repeated, following rules of change similar to those by which, say, a fern frond unfurls and grows. But, as Poppe has observed, what is interesting about a fern frond may be a twist that has come about because of some defect in the replication. Between pattern and accident, clarity and chaos, safety and danger, is life.

Two of Poppe's early works—17 Studies for Violin (1993) and Theme with 840 Variations for piano (1993–7), both written when he was still a student in Berlin—each explore the possibilities of a two-note motif, which is transformed every which way in terms of pitch and rhythmic shape. Everything he has written since may be conceived as a steady, continuing outcome of this way of working, moving into microintervals and theater, into electronics and larger instrumental formations.

This evolving output goes on through a triptych of ensemble pieces written for Klangforum Wien and the Ensemble Modern between 1999 and 2004, and recorded on the Wergo label: *Holz* (Wood), *Knochen* (Bone), and *Öl* (Oil), the titles evocative of different musical substances derived from similar material. Later works include theater pieces (*Interzone*, after William Burroughs, on Kairos, 2004), orchestral scores (*Keilschrift*, 2006), and further compositions for medium-sized ensemble (*Speicher I–V*, 2009–12).

## *Rad*

Composed in 2003 for a premiere at one of the most prestigious European new-music festivals, Donaueschingen, this big, twenty-minute work pushes forward on two eminent tracks: that of music for two pianos, where its predecessors would have to include Pierre Boulez's *Structures* and Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Mantra*, and that of works that denature piano sound, such as John Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes* or, again, Stockhausen's *Mantra*. Cage changed the piano by placing objects between the strings; Stockhausen did so electronically, ring modulating natural piano sounds with sine tones. Poppe

---

works with electronic keyboards that produce sampled piano sounds in many different tunings. The title is the German word for “wheel.” The piece is about reinventing it.

Poppe’s own note continues:

“*Rad*: a piece at once improvisatory and structurally complex. At the center: freedom in treating the pre-formed components and flexibility within these building blocks themselves. A network of relationships develops out of, on the one hand, the emergence of characters through the act of playing and, on the other, the occurrence of regular sequences. Any particular event is not complex in itself but by virtue of its multiplicity of connections.

“The piece is a kind of systematic summary of my years of working with micro-intervals. There are a total of a hundred different scales, some of which are used for only a few seconds. The constant retuning makes possible an almost inexhaustible supply of pitches. The types of scales include:

- Tempered scales with step sizes from 1.66 to 0.1 semitones, including scales such as that of 0.96 semitones that contain no octaves;
- Scales with equal frequency intervals that become ever narrower in higher registers (segments of harmonic spectra);
- Chord progressions;
- Combinations of different scales, so that each key is associated with a number of notes.

“The harmony is decisively affected by a device that generates sum and difference tones from the pitches that are played. The number of sounding pitches thus grows as the square of the number of played, so that a ten-note chord, using all the fingers, produces a hundred notes.

“Only piano sounds are used as sound material. I see myself in a tradition of composers who have seen the piano as a model instrument and piano music as a stock of musical prototypes. On the other hand, a double alienation is introduced: the performers lose their security because, since the scales are constantly changing, they cannot know what will sound when particular keys are depressed. And the exclusion of twelve-tone equal temperament, together with what is sometimes an extreme polyphony, produces a sound world only faintly reminiscent of the piano.

“Wheel: mechanical, circular motion. The brake was invented later.”

Circularity is indeed part of the story, but the work has also a huge thrust, up to the point where, in the words of Björn Gottstein, it suffers an electric shock.

## *Schweiss*

In 2009, for the Parisian ensemble 2e2m, Poppe put together a sequence of eleven pieces that dated back in part to his early student days, twenty years before: *Schrank* (Cabinet). Some of the curiosities contained therein are for groups of between six players and the full complement of nine; others are solos (for percussion, for flute) or duos, including this penultimate installment, for cello and electric organ.

*Schweiss* (Sweat) is a four-minute study in growth and embellishment that takes the cello from a low A to—still played on the bottom string—the A two octaves higher, partly helped on by an organ part that introduces quarter-tones to the mix, as well as changes of color.

## *Tier*

Poppe wrote his only string quartet (so far) in 2002 for the new-music festival in Berlin, where it was performed by the Kairos Quartet. The piece plays for fourteen minutes.

In a medium whose potential one might have thought by now to have been thoroughly explored, Poppe creates a sound world all his own, by virtue of lines that often oscillate irregularly within narrow registers, the four instruments meeting and parting constantly and irregularly, all of them playing in quarter-tones and avoiding vibrato (except for the glissando shivers that are notated). Some of these features—the wavering melodies, the quarter-tones, the absence of vibrato—might suggest the string playing of Islamic cultures, but, as usual with Poppe, the piece's densest memories are very soon of itself, as images (most obviously, a four-note upward scale segment) are generated and regenerated. Such recurrences give the sense of a form as tightly constructed as that of a fugue, and yet, because liaisons among the instruments are constantly on the move, and because the flow of events in any line can change at any moment, there is an impression of great randomness. Playing continuously, the piece has a slow section in the middle, beginning (led by the cello) after all four instruments have climbed above the treble stave—as they will do again in the extraordinary climactic section.

The title means “Animal,” and one may think that, earlier on, the cello has something of the hulking beast about it, lumbering along at the bottom of its register. However, the composer's note suggests we should feel an animal spirit in the whole entity:

“An animal: lives, moves, lives according to laws that we can analyze but not understand, has its own rhythm, its tempo; moves, sleeps; seeks food, reacts; waits, moves; dies without a fuss.

“A quartet that meanders is hard, because the points of reference keep chang-



ing. No rubato, but rhythmic cells of different lengths. No tonal system, but wandering central tones that slide and leap through quarter-tones. Glissandi and vibrato everywhere. Every sound is a living being.”

### ***Tonband***

This half-hour work, scored for two players on electronic keyboards and two percussionists, is the product of a collaboration between Poppe and the percussion-electronics wizard Wolfgang Heiniger, who has said that: “The piece grew out of joint experiments and extended improvisations. The fact that the technical basis of the piece is quite simple—a simple but maximally versatile circuit—facilitated cooperation. And perhaps the hallmark of a successful collaboration is that the contributions of the partners cannot be identified.”

Professor Heiniger has also explained why the piece is called *Tonband*, or “Recording Tape”: “During the experimental phase, we were both fascinated by how the resultant sounds seemed like a panorama of the electroacoustic music produced on tape in the 1950s and 60s. The title has to do with the fun of playing with these classic tape-machine sounds in a different genre.”

Originally written in 2008 for the Cologne group musikFabrik, the score has been revised for this evening’s performance.

As in *Rad*, the keyboards’ tuning systems are subject to change, as are their tone qualities, but with the difference that what they play is not heard directly but only in that it transforms the sound of the percussion instruments, as picked up by microphones. The keyboards, as it were, filter the percussion sounds through a screen that is constantly changing in gauge (pitch, duration) and color—or rather, they filter the sounds through up to twenty different screens simultaneously, one for each finger. That massive complexity is, however, also a unity, for the piece has a monumental consistency of utterance. In another meeting of extremes, into this compellingly strange world will sometimes swim figures and chords and gestures that are familiar, even over-familiar. Things worn-out become refreshed.

There are five sections, of which the first is the longest and ends on cymbals. The second is a mad machine of overlapping and changing iterations and ostinatos, out of which the second percussionist dramatically escapes for a siren song. When this has faded, the fourth section, with its rapid woodblock pulsations near the start, seems to pick up again from the second. High chiming introduces the generally slow finale.

Program notes by Paul Griffiths

---

# About the Artists

---

## **JACK Quartet**

Ari Streisfeld, *violin*

Christopher Otto, *violin*

John Pickford Richards, *viola*

Kevin McFarland, *cello*

Praised for its “powerhouse playing” by the *Chicago Sun-Times* and its “extraordinary precision” by *The Boston Globe*, the JACK Quartet has quickly established a reputation for giving high-energy performances of today’s most demanding works for string quartet. In 2009, the quartet received an ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music. The quartet has performed at Carnegie Hall (United States), La Biennale di Venezia (Italy), the Lucerne Festival (Switzerland), and the Festival Internacional Chihuahua (Mexico), with future appearances at the Wittener Tage für neue Kammermusik (Germany), the Library of Congress (United States), and the Donaueschinger Musiktage (Germany). The commissioning and performance of new works for string quartet is integral to the JACK Quartet’s mission, leading them to work closely with many composers. Upcoming premieres include works by Johannes Schöllhorn, Martin Smolka,

Caleb Burhans, Peter Ablinger, and Alan Hilario. The quartet has lead workshops with young composers at Columbia University, New York University, Northwestern University, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Victoria, and the University of Washington. The members of the quartet met while attending the Eastman School of Music, and they have studied closely with the Arditti Quartet, Kronos Quartet, Muir String Quartet, and members of the Ensemble Intercontemporain. The JACK Quartet made their Miller debut in the 2009-10 season, performing in the Wordless Music Festival and Composer Portrait of the iconic Helmut Lachenmann. In 2011-12, they hosted a day-long music marathon during the Sounds of a New Century Festival and played the inaugural concert in Miller Theatre’s new Pop-Up series.

## **Yarn/Wire**

Russell Greenberg, *percussion*

Ning Yu, *piano*

Ian Antonio, *percussion*

Laura Barger, *piano*

Yarn/Wire is a chamber quartet that specializes in the performance of 20th and 21st century music. The unique



instrumental combination of two percussionists and two pianists allows the ensemble to interface with both traditional performance practice and emergent stylistic trends with ease. Founded in 2005, Yarn/Wire is admired for the energy and precision they bring to vital performances of today's most adventurous music. The results of Yarn/Wire's collaborative initiatives are pointing towards the development of a new and lasting repertoire, and partnerships with genre-bending artists such as Theatre of a Two-Headed Calf and David Bithell have led to the creation of work that is "spare and strange and very, very new." (*Time Out NY*). Yarn/Wire's 2010 debut release *Tone Builders*, recorded during a residency at EMPAC, showcases the ensemble's impressive versatility and documents a large and diverse portion of the ensemble's commissioning activities. In addition to the numerous world premieres of music written specifically for the ensemble, Yarn/Wire has presented a number of U.S. premieres by many of Europe's leading composers. Based in New York City, Yarn/Wire maintains an active performing and teaching schedule at festivals, chamber music series, universities and colleges across the country. Highlights of recent seasons include appearances at Make Music NYC, the Ontological-Hysteric Theater, Unruly Music Festival, 'April in Santa Cruz' Festival of Contemporary Music, Pixilerations Festival, North River

Concert Series, Southampton Chamber Music Series, University of Notre Dame, Stony Brook University, Columbia University, Dartmouth College, Goucher College, and Rutgers University. This concert marks their Miller Theatre debut.

**Wolfgang Heiniger** studied percussion, electro-acoustic music, and composition in Basel, Switzerland and Stanford, CA. His teachers included composer Thomas Kessler. Between 1995 and 2003 he was Director of Audio Design Studies at the City of Basel Music Academy. Since 2003 he has been professor of intermediate composition at the Hanns Eisler Academy of Music, Berlin. He is a founder of several electronic-music ensembles (Basel Electric Art Messengers and European PowerBook Orchestra) and curator of several festivals (Echt!Zeit, Festival Rümelingen). His compositions, which often involve dramatic and interactive elements including sensor systems and electro-acoustic instruments, are regularly performed by ensembles such as musikFabrik (North Rhine-Westphalia), ensemble mosaik (Berlin), and Ensemble Phoenix (Basel). Heiniger also acts as a sound director and performer of electronic music in productions in Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

---

# About Miller Theatre

---

**Miller Theatre at Columbia University** is the leading presenter of new music in New York City and one of the most vital forces nationwide for innovative programming. In partnership with Columbia University School of the Arts, Miller is dedicated to producing and presenting unique events in dance, contemporary and early music, jazz, opera, and performance. Founded in 1988 with funding from John Goelet, Brooke Astor, and the Kathryn Bache Miller Fund, Miller Theatre has built a reputation for attracting new and diverse audiences to the performing arts and expanding public knowledge of contemporary music.

## Miller Theatre Board of Advisors

Mary Sharp Cronson  
Stephanie French  
Margo Viscusi  
Mr. and Mrs. George Votis  
Cecille Wasserman  
I. Peter Wolff

## Miller Theatre Staff

Melissa Smey *Executive Director*  
Charlotte Levitt *Associate Director of Marketing and Outreach*  
Beth Silvestrini *Associate Director of Artistic and Production Administration*  
Brenna St. George Jones *Director of Production*  
Masi Asare *Manager, Institutional and Foundation Relations*  
Susan Abbott *Business Manager*  
Denise Blostein *Audience Services Manager*  
Vanessa Poggioli *Production Coordinator*  
Rebecca Popp *Marketing and Communications Associate*  
Rhiannon McClintock *Executive Assistant*

Aleba & Co. *Public Relations*  
The Heads of State *Graphic Design*

## Columbia University School of the Arts

Carol Becker *Dean of Faculty*  
Jana Hart Wright *Dean of Academic Administration*

## Columbia University Trustees

William V. Campbell *Chair*  
Mark E. Kingdon *Vice Chair*  
Philip Milstein *Vice Chair*  
Esta Stecher *Vice Chair*  
Richard E. Witten *Vice Chair*  
Rolando T. Acosta  
Armen A. Avanesians  
Lee C. Bollinger *President of the University*  
A'Leia Bundles  
José A. Cabranes  
Lisa Carnoy  
Kenneth Forde  
Noam Gottesman  
Joseph A. Greenaway, Jr.  
James Harden  
Ann F. Kaplan  
Jonathan Lavine  
Gerry Lenfest  
Paul J. Maddon  
Vikram Pandit  
Michael B. Rothfeld  
Jonathan D. Schiller  
Kyriakos Tsakopoulos  
Faye Wattleton



STEINWAY & SONS.  
*Steinway is the official piano of Miller Theatre*

# Thanks to Our Donors

Miller Theatre acknowledges with deep appreciation and gratitude the following organizations, individuals, and government agencies whose extraordinary support makes our programming possible.

## \$25,000 and above

Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts

National Endowment for the Arts

## \$10,000 - \$24,999

The Aaron Copland Fund for Music  
Mary Sharp Cronson  
The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation  
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs  
New York State Council on the Arts

Fritz Reiner Center for Contemporary Music  
at Columbia University  
The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation  
The Evelyn Sharp Foundation

Ernst Von Siemens Music Foundation  
Craig Silverstein  
Anthony and Margo Viscusi

## \$5,000 - \$9,999

The Amphion Foundation  
Ralph M. Cestone Foundation  
The Cheswatyr Foundation

Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation  
CLC Kramer Foundation  
Gerry H. F. Lenfest

Cecille Wasserman  
Anonymous

## \$1,000 - \$4,999

Richard Anderson  
Mary Duke Biddle Foundation  
Paul Carter  
Consulate General of Sweden in New York  
Hester Diamond and Ralph Kaminsky\*  
Marcella Tarozzi Goldsmith

Thomas and Christine Griesa  
Charles Hack and Angella Hearn  
Karen Hagberg and Mark Jackson  
Donella and David Held  
Mexican Cultural Institute of New York  
Philip Mindlin

Linda Nochlin  
Roland and Jeanine Plottel  
Annaliese Soros  
Virgil Thomson Foundation

*\*In memoriam*

## \$500 - \$999

Oliver Allen  
Mercedes Armillas  
Rima Ayas  
Claude Ghez  
Gordon and Mary Gould  
Carol Avery Haber/  
Haber Family Charitable Fund  
H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture

Mark Kempson and Janet Greenberg  
Roger Lehecka  
Paul Maddon  
Peter Pohly  
Mark Ptashne  
Christopher Rothko  
Ruth and James Sharp  
Timothy Shepard and Andra Georges

Karlan and Gary Sick  
J. P. Sullivan  
Cia Toscanini  
The Marian M. Warden Fund of the  
Foundation for Enhancing Communities  
Elke Weber and Eric Johnson  
Kathryn Yatrakis  
Anonymous

## \$100 - \$499

James and Gail Admiss  
Edward Albee  
Argento Chamber Ensemble  
Marilyn Aron  
Arno Austin  
Roger Bagnall  
Barbara Batcheler  
Michelle Becker  
Elaine Bernstein  
Alexandra Bowie  
Adam and Eileen Boxer  
Susan Boynton  
Louise Bozorth  
James Buckley  
Moshe Burstein  
Gerard Bushell  
Dino Capone  
Charlotte Catto  
Mike Coble  
Gregory Cokorinos  
Herbert Cohen and Daniel Cook  
Astrid Delafield  
Kristine DelFausse  
R. H. Rackstraw Downes

Carol Eisenberg  
Peter and Joan Faber  
Julie Farr  
Stephanie French  
June Goldberg  
Lauren and Jack Gorman  
Robert Gunhouse  
Maureen Gupta  
James Hanbury  
Barbara and Gerald Harris  
Bernard Hoffer  
Frank Immler and Andrew Tunnick  
L. Wilson Kidd, Jr.  
Sandra Kincaid  
Stephen and Bonita Kramer  
Barbara and Kenneth Leish  
Arthur S. Leonard  
Peter Lincoln  
Stephen Leventis  
Richard H. Levy and Lorraine Gallard  
Sarah Lowengard  
Anthony and Caroline Lukaszewski  
Gerard Lynch and Karen Marisak  
Marc Maltz

Michael Minard  
Jack Murchie  
Maury Newburger  
Susan Newman  
Mary Pinkowitz  
Miriam Pollett  
Trevor Rainford  
Carol Robbins  
Eliisa Salmi-Saslaw  
James Schamus  
Carol O. Selle  
Anita Shapolsky  
Fran Snyder and David Voremberg  
Gilbert Spitzer and Janet Glaser Spitzer  
Gayatri Spivak  
Peter Strauss  
Jim Strawnhorn  
Richard Tucker  
Janet Waterhouse  
C. Dennis and Ila Weiss  
Robert Zipf  
Anonymous



# Upcoming Events

**Sunday, March 3, 3:00 p.m.**

EARLY MUSIC

*American Academy of Arts & Letters (615 W. 156th St., between Broadway and Riverside)*

**House of Dreams**

Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra

Jeanne Lamon, *music director*

**Tuesday, March 12, 6:00 p.m.**

POP-UP CONCERTS

**It's Complicated**

Ensemble Signal

**Wednesday, March 13, 8:00 p.m.**

BACH, REVISITED

**Two x Four**

Jaime Laredo, *violin and conductor*

Jennifer Koh, *violin*

Curtis Chamber Orchestra

**Thursday, April 4, 8:00 p.m.**

COMPOSER PORTRAITS

**Rebecca Saunders**

Either/Or

Richard Carrick, *conductor*

**Saturday, April 6, 8:00 p.m.**

EARLY MUSIC

**Age of Indulgence**

Les Délices

[www.millertheatre.com](http://www.millertheatre.com) • 212-854-7799

[www.facebook.com/millertheatre](https://www.facebook.com/millertheatre) • @millertheatre on Twitter

2960 Broadway at 116th Street, MC 1801, New York, NY 10027