

# *Yara* Ensemble

*Re-imagining the art of recital for  
21st century audiences*



**Yara Ensemble**

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## About **Yara**

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1. *Also spelled Iara or Uira, the Yara is a creature of native Brazilian mythology.*
2. *A water nymph, siren or mermaid. One of the forms commonly attributed to Brazilian orixá Yemanjá – the goddess of the seas.*
3. *A beautiful young woman associated with a body of fresh-water, with fair skin and green, seaweed-like hair, who occasionally could be found sitting on a rock combing her hair or basking in the sun. The song of the Yara is believed to be irresistible to men who, once under her spell, are lured to the waters depths to live with the siren forever. This legend was often used as the explanation for the disappearance of those who ventured alone into the forest.*

**Yara Ensemble** is an exciting and unique collaboration between Portuguese-Italian pianist Alexandra Mascolo-David and Brazilian-British-American mezzo-soprano Sarah Stone. With direction and choreography by Annette Thornton and digital media art by Eric Limarenko, **Yara Ensemble** performances weave music, movement, and art into an intimate and accessible narrative journey designed for 21st century audiences. Our goal is to create an immersive performance experience where the audience is engaged in the act of discovery. Entertaining while educating is at the core of the ensemble's mission.

Showcasing music of the Iberian Peninsula and the Americas, with an emphasis on newly commissioned works, **Yara Ensemble's** concerts combine classical, folk, and popular music unified by a narrative theme. Our recitals tell a story and are supported by diverse media, allowing audience members the freedom to sit back and enjoy without having to squint at programs in a darkened hall.



## Biographies

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### Alexandra Mascolo-David, *piano*



*"A splendid pianist—refined, searching and expressive, and her playing is loaded with insight and interpretative detail."*

So wrote *The Washington Post*, after Alexandra Mascolo-David's performance at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in the nation's capital. Alexandra has performed and led workshops and master classes in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Her New York debut recital at Carnegie Hall (Weill Recital Hall) in May 2004 was favorably reviewed in *The New York Concert Review*. She has devoted the last decade to exploring and unearthing the music of Portuguese and Brazilian composers, especially that of Francisco Mignone. Alexandra's performances of his *Valsas brasileiras* have been widely acclaimed, and her compact disc recordings of those works, as well as that of Mignone's 4 *Fantasiae brasileiras* for piano and orchestra with the Kalamazoo Symphony, under Raymond Harvey, have received rave reviews. In addition, Alexandra is a champion of new music, performing and recording works by living composers, some of whom have written and dedicated pieces to her. In 2017, Alexandra premiered David Maslanka's *Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Wind Symphony*, a work commissioned by a consortium of universities. Her collaboration with Maslanka began in 2007, when she performed and recorded his *Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Wind Symphony*, for Albany Records. Lately, Alexandra has found the courage to explore composing, inspired by *Yara Ensemble*. She has served on the piano faculties of Iowa State University and the Interlochen Arts Camp (MI). Currently she is Professor of Piano at Central Michigan University. Alexandra has developed workshops and curriculum addressing performance anxiety management, and the importance of an all-inclusive STEAM education. She loves dogs, good wine, aquatic sports, soccer, jewelry making, reading, and visiting art museums.

### Sarah Stone, *mezzo-soprano*



*Mezzo-soprano Sarah Stone's performance is "outstanding... charming... portraying conviction well beyond her years."*  
—*Bloomington Herald-Times*.

Praised for her "naturally warm, unpretentious, and appealing" voice, Brazilian-British-American mezzo-soprano Sarah Stone is comfortable in a variety of genres and has been featured in both North and South America with the Bay View Music Festival, Kentucky Opera & Louisville Ballet, Tanglewood Music Center, and Dorian Opera Theatre and the Traditional Jazz Band. Recognized for her versatility she is described as "a fearless performer" and "an imaginative actress with natural stage presence." An active proponent of contemporary classical music she has collaborated with composers Dan Powers, Vietnamese composer P.Q. Phan—premiering the lead role in his opera *The Tale of Lady Thi Kinh*, Brazilian composer Marcos Balter, and in 2013 she had the privilege of performing Missy Mazzoli's *Song from the Uproar*.

Sarah was raised in São Paulo, Brazil, where she played soccer professionally in her early twenties. A self-described "information junky," her research interests lie in Brazilian modernism, vocal technique, and the application of the arts in STEAM education. Sarah Stone serves as chair of the Fine Arts Department at the Kentucky Country Day School in Louisville, Kentucky, as well as a resident opera and music theater stage director at the Bay View Music Festival in Michigan.

## **Annette Thornton, *director***



Annette Thornton (PhD, University of Colorado, Boulder) is Associate Professor at Central Michigan University where she teaches Music Theatre Performance Courses, Acting, Movement for the Actor, Music Theatre History, Dance History, and directs/choreographs the musicals. Selected directing/choreographing credits include: *The Full Monty* (Attic Theatre), *Blood Wedding* (KC-ACTF Certificate of Merit for Directing), *The Secret Garden*, *Into the Woods*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *42nd Street*, *Edges*, *Hair*, *Oedipus the King*, and *Oklahoma!* (KC-ACTF Certificate of Merit for Directing). In 2011 Annette played the role of Vivian Bearing in *Wit* at Bethel College (KS)

sharing the bill of Greer Visiting Artist Series with playwright Margaret Edson. Annette's scholarly interests include mime, mime performers, and music theatre. Her article, "Jane and Jerusha: Finding a Voice on the Musical Stage," was published in *Studies in Musical Theatre*. Her dissertation on Lotte Goslar, *Grandma Always Danced: The Mime Theatre of Lotte Goslar*, is the first full-length study of this important female clown/pantomime/ dancer. She is currently co-editing a book on Physical Dramaturgy to be published by Routledge. Annette has studied mime with Marcel Marceau and Meyerhold's Theatrical Biomechanics with Gennadi Bogdanov, and is a certified yoga teacher. She was the invited keynote speaker at Ohio State University's "Mime & Movement Theatre Symposium" (2014) organized by Jeanine Thompson. Annette is the immediate past-president of Association of Theatre Movement Educators.

## **Eric Limarenko, digital media artist**



Eric Limarenko (MFA, The Savannah College of Art & Design) is a multimedia artist who got his start in video at *The Home Shopping Network* working on set as well as in *Master Control*. In 2002, he moved to Michigan where he landed at Forest Post Productions. He served in the editorial department working with such clients as *Ford*, *FOX Sports*, *KFC* and *Quicken Loans*. He was also the lead creative editor on the children's series *Noodlebug*. In 2008, Eric was appointed the Sr. Avid Editor position at the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency for Team-Detroit where he worked on national campaigns as well as created daily elements for Ford's web presence. Currently he is

an Assistant Professor at Central Michigan University where he serves as Video Unit Head over the award-winning student run station, MHTV. Eric is the recipient of the 2016 Telly award for his film *Whatnots*, featuring his original score. His passions are still grounded in new media, discovering his own art by creating original music, motion graphics, and abstract video.

## 2018/19 Season: Multimedia program for voice and piano

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### “Sirens of the Sea: Love and Longing”

*This program was inspired by the Portuguese maritime discoveries of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, and by Saudade, the intense longing felt by both sailors and the loved ones left behind.*

**“Saudade” for piano** Alexandra Mascolo-David (b. 1962)

**“Ai, que linda moça” (Oh, What a Beautiful Maiden)** Ernesto Halffter (1905–1989)  
from *Seis Canções Portuguesas (Six Portuguese Songs)*

**Três Trovas de Coimbra (Songs from Coimbra)** Alexandra Mascolo-David

1. Vão-se os anos (Gone Are the Days)
2. Se eu soubesse ao ver o dia (Had I Known When I Saw the Day)
3. Olho, atento, o céu imenso (Intently I Watch the Immense Sky)

**Seven Preludes for piano solo** António Fragoso (1897–1918)

1. Muito vivo
2. Muito lento
3. Allegretto com graça
4. Allegretto molto
5. Calmo
6. Andantino
7. Vivo

**Trovas (Troubadour Love Songs)** Francisco de Lacerda (1869–1964)

1. Em cima do alto monte (At the Top of the Hill)
4. Desde que os cravos e rosas (Ever Since Roses and Carnations)
8. A alegria dos meus olhos (The Joy of My Eyes)
11. Não morreu nem acabou (It Is Neither Death, Nor the End)
14. Os meus olhos não são olhos (My Eyes Aren't Eyes)
19. É ter arte não falar (It's Art, Not to Speak)
20. Quero cantar ser alegre (I Want to Sing, Be Happy)
22. Amor que me traz presa (The Love that Keeps Me Prisoner)

**Portuguese Fado “Ai Mouraria”** Frederico Valério (1887–1961)

**Portuguese Fado “Coimbra”** Raul Ferrão (1890–1953)