CU X PRESENTS 2023-24 Season



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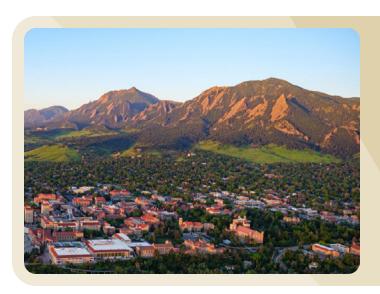
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CU > PRESENTS is the home of performing arts at the University of Colorado Boulder. The mission of the University of Colorado Boulder College of Music

is to inspire artistry and discovery, together.







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Read full land acknowledgment.

SoundWorks

Featuring ~Nois and Composer Fellows' Initiative

Egemen Kesikli, artistic director Annika Socolofsky, faculty coach 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 Grusin Music Hall

Program

RuPaul's Drag Race Allstars Season 2: Alyssa vs. Phi Phi

Jesse Lausé Libretto adapted by Jessie Lausé Kailyn Martino, soprano (Alyssa) Jenna Clark, mezzo (Phi Phi) Benjamin Boskoff, tenor (Alaska) Samuel Wetzel, baritone (Katya)

The Spare Room with the Shag Rug

Ilan Blanck Kailyn Martino, soprano (student) Gloria Palermo, mezzo (grandmother) Adam Wells, baritone (tutor)

Fragments

James Morris and Nnamdi Nwanko Eric Botto, tenor (Damien)

The Undreaming

Egemen Kesikli and Zachary Foster Adam Wells, baritone (Emil) Samuel Wetzel, baritone (Otto)

Woodland Rags

Josh Maynard Rivercross Rag Cyprus Rag David Reid, piano

-Intermission-

There are Hints of Juniper in the Sky After it Rains

Holly McMahon Holly McMahon, piano

Stilling

Abby Kellems ~Nois Saxophone Quartet Hunter Bockes, János Csontos, Jordan Lulloff, and Julian Velasco, saxophones

All for Another Day

Josie Arnett ~*Nois Saxophone Quartet*

Rubber Shoe

Isabel Goodwin

- I. The Clog of a Generation
- II. A Shoe that Floats!
- III. "Ugly Can Be Beautiful, Too"
- IV. Sport Mode
- V. Profits Over People
- VI. Haute Couture
- VII. Vogue

~Nois Saxophone Quartet

Program notes

Text that is bold and underlined is a hyperlink and can be clicked or tapped for more information.

RuPaul's Drag Race Allstars Season 2: Alyssa vs. Phi Phi

Jesse Lausé

Libretto adapted by Jessie Lausé

RuPaul's Drag Race Allstars - Season 2: Alyssa vs. Phi Phi is based on historical events that took place over the course of episodes 4 and 5 of *RuPaul's Drag Race Allstars - Season 2*. One intention of this scene is to illustrate that queer people, or any demographic depicted on television, for that matter, are not a monolith. They can be garishly unreasonable, endlessly charismatic or simply very gay. Regardless of their depiction, each individual is uniquely layered with thoughts, feelings, and experiences both alike and unlike our own.

In order to harness the spectacular candor of well-crafted reality television, the libretto is adapted as directly as possible from the language used in the scene. *RuPaul's Drag Race* is a drag performance reality competition, and at this point in the show's chronology, Alyssa Edwards has just been eliminated. As the remaining queens recuperate in the work room, one of them, Phi Phi O'Hara shares her most unforgiving thoughts on Alyssa's performance in the competition. Little does she know, Alyssa is waiting behind a one-way mirror listening to her harsh conversation, and Alyssa is about to reclaim the space and reenter the competition.

The Spare Room with the Shag Rug

llan Blanck

Based loosely on my family history (though as my great-aunt likes to remind me, and as many have said, "never let the truth get in the way of a good story"), *The Spare Room with the Shag Rug* deals with communication across time, space, and language. As the Wisconsin born-and-bred son of Mexican immigrants and the descendant of Holocaust survivors, these ideas hold a

central place in my life and identity. I am grateful to have had this opportunity to write music in the languages of my family, based on my opera-loving great grandparents, Leah and Osher Grynberg, who, despite having passed over a decade ago, continue to inspire my life and music with their strength and love.

Fragments

James Morris and Nnamdi Nwanko

Fragments is an operetta that revolves around unrequited love. Damien, still confused about his breakup with his ex-girlfriend, expresses his emotions in this scene.

The Undreaming

Egemen Kesikli and Zachary Foster

The Undreaming explores themes of paranoia, the irreconcilability of interior and exterior experiences, and the delicate tension between psychopathology and art as its protagonist's sense of self is besieged by an increasingly unclear relationship to the reality he inhabits. Taking place during a single psychoanalytic session in the classical Freudian style, the action of the work follows analyst Emil König and analysand Otto Haas as the latter struggles to situate himself in a kaleidoscopic world in which nothing is quite as it seems.

Stilling

Abby Kellems

Stilling is inspired by the 2022 article "Global 'Stilling': Is Climate Change Slowing Down the Wind?" by Jim Robbins. The study of wind is a relatively new field, but as more tools are developed to measure surface winds and their effects, we're beginning to understand that the importance of wind has long been underestimated. It plays an integral role in plant growth and surface cooling, and also drives the Gulf Stream, which creates global climates. But wind patterns are changing- in some regions, the wind is picking up, destroying trees and exacerbating wildfires. In others, the wind is slowing down, or "stilling." And as the winds diminish, the Gulf Stream creates bigger storms and harsher droughts. With this in mind, *Stilling* explores the different qualities of wind: how it can be soft and strong, invigorating and fierce, stagnant or tempestuous, soothing or unnerving. It asks, *is it more unsettling when the wind is shrieking, or when it's still?*

Rubber Shoe

Isabel Goodwin

Rubber Shoe is a composition that finds its inspiration in an unexpected source, the iconic Crocs footwear. These recognizable shoes, distinguished by their rubbery texture and signature Swiss-cheese holes, have captured the hearts of millions. With the ability to be worn au naturel or customized to one's unique taste, Crocs have transcended their humble beginnings, and interestingly, their legacy has a special connection to the community here at CU Boulder: One of the co-founders, Duke Hanson, is a CU Boulder alum, having graduated with an MBA in 1985, meaning we have some big shoes to fill!

What began as a modest boating shoe has evolved into a symbol of modern self-expression, particularly among Gen Z. Crocs have also cemented their place in LGBTQIA+ fashion circles, gaining recognition for their comfort and huge array of styles, including yassified 3.5-inch-heeled Crocs and an awesome collaboration collection with community icon Lil Nas X. As a Crocs enthusiast myself, I couldn't resist composing a piece celebrating my love for Crocs for the amazing ~Nois Saxophone Quartet!

This composition highlights the dynamic connection between fashion and music — both potent forms of self expression that empower individuals and foster a sense of community. For many in the LGBTQIA+ community, Crocs represent self-acceptance and unapologetic individuality, something I, and many others, deeply resonate with. In *Rubber Shoe*, I aim to capture the shared journey of Crocs and the LGBTQIA+ community, emphasizing the importance of embracing our true selves and the transformative power of self-expression through fashion and music. Just as Crocs have evolved from practicality to cultural sensation, our stories and identities continue to grow. Just as Crocs have evolved from practicality to cultural phenomenon, our personal stories and identities continue to evolve, reminding us that, like a trusty pair of Crocs, our uniqueness is something to be celebrated.

Personnel

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Egemen Kesikli, artistic director Annika Socolofsky, faculty coach

Josie Arnett

Josie Arnett is a composer, pianist, singer and overall instrument enthusiast. She grew up playing a variety of instruments including piano, upright and electric bass, ukulele, banjo, cello, guitar and any other instrument she could get her hands on. Arnett started piano lessons at five years old and grew up playing the music of Bruce Hornsby, Billy Joel, The Beatles, and countless pop and rock songs. As a composer, she has been inspired by film music, minimalism, jazz and pop. She is currently based in Boulder, Colorado, and pursuing a Bachelor of Music in composition at the University of Colorado Boulder. She has written for a variety of ensembles, and has performed as a pianist and a singer. Several of her pieces have been performed at CU Boulder's Pendulum New Music Concerts. Arnett's music often centers around the emotional gesture of the music in order to encourage the audience to connect with the music on an emotional level, and she often incorporates ideas of psychology, visual art, film and nature into her music.

Ilan Blanck

Ilan Blanck is a musician currently based in Fort Collins, Colorado. As a guitarist, he has toured across the country in '97 Toyota Highlanders and ugly purple Sprinter vans with no AC, opening for Grammy winners and mummies, singing songs about spreadsheets and playing in odd time signatures. As a composer, songwriter and arranger, he has written notes and words for podcasts, divas, high school choirs, orchestras and a LOT of bands (among others). Active in making music on stage as well as helping others behind the scenes, he is the associate manager of artist development at the Music District in Fort Collins, and works as assistant to Minneapolis super-producer Lazerbeak (Dessa, Lizzo). He holds a master's degree in music composition from CU Boulder.

Isabel Goodwin

Isabel Goodwin, originally from Dallas, Texas, has been immersed in music since childhood. They started experimenting with composition at the age of 10, writing simple recorder and xylophone melodies. Over the years, their compositions have been performed by respected ensembles like the Austin Symphony Orchestra, the Worcester Chamber Music Society String Quartet and most recently, the ~Nois Saxophone Quartet! Goodwin draws inspiration from a diverse range of influences, including modern film scores, classical works, and musical theater. Their Puerto Rican heritage also plays a significant role in shaping their musical and artistic sensibilities. Through their studies at CU Boulder, Goodwin has had the privilege of gaining many new composition opportunities. They had the honor of having their work read by the CU Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra, and received the 2020 Allan McMurray Wind Composition Award for their piano 4-hands piece, Pedro and Indigo. Additionally, they won the National Bassoon Meetup's Bassoon Artistry and Unconventional Collaboration Competition in 2020. In 2022, they were commissioned by the University of Wisconsin Madison to create a new piece for a flute quartet, marking a significant milestone in their career as a composer.

Goodwin is currently working toward Bachelor of Music (BM) degrees in both bassoon performance and music composition, with plans to graduate in December 2023. You can explore their musical creations on their website, **isabelgoodwinmusic.com**. They also contribute insights to the CU Boulder College of Music Admissions department through blog posts, offering a glimpse into their musical world. Goodwin also has two pet rabbits, Olive and Monty, who are their best friends in the whole world.

Abby Kellems

Abby Kellems is a composer, pianist and occasional tuba player based in Boulder, Colorado. Her work explores the images and intricacies of the natural world, and she focuses on creating musical experiences that facilitate a deeper relationship between listeners, performers, and the environment. She completed her Bachelor of Music in music composition at the University of Oregon, where she studied with David Crumb and Robert Kyr. Kellems is currently pursuing a Master of Music in music composition at the University of Colorado Boulder, where she teaches aural skills and studies with Annika Socolofsky and Michael Theodore. She is also a founding member of the Plein Air Sound Collective, an ecosystem of composers, performers, producers and other artists with the common goal of exploring the relationship between sound and environment.

Jessie Lausé

Jessie Lausé is a composer/performer/educator with a passion for creating interactive musical experiences that encourage diverse experimental thought. They frequently collaborate on multisensory experiences that empower performers and audiences to engage in radical artistic thinking as a starting point for necessary social change. Lausé is originally from central Kentucky and holds degrees from Butler University in Indianapolis (BS arts administration) and the University of Colorado Boulder (MM composition).

Their work has most recently been featured at the Yarn/Wire Institute Festival and will be featured at line upon line percussion's Winter Composer Festival in January. Other brilliant collaborators have included mark-maker Steph Parnes, choreographer Natalia de Miguel with the Michigan Dance Council, and ~Nois Saxophone Quartet. Lausé is also a member of the Plein Air Sound Collective, a group of sound artists dedicated to exploring the relationship between sounds and the spaces in which they inhabit. When not composing, Lausé spends their free time playing board games and watching *RuPaul's Drag Race* with their cats, Gubaidulina and Mr. Bear.

Joshua Carter Maynard

Joshua Carter Maynard is a composer from Colorado Springs and is currently studying a Bachelor of Music in composition at the University of Colorado Boulder. Maynard's choral compositions and arrangements have been performed by elite chamber, a capella and jazz ensembles at multiple choral festivals and CHSAA competitions. His twelve-part Latin piece *Lux Aeterna* was performed by the AAHS Chamber Singers at the Colorado Music Educators Association conference in January 2020. The choir was accepted into the conference after their CHSAA-Superior-rated performance of Maynard's *Green* *Mountain* at the Westside Honor Festival in November 2018. Additionally, Maynard's orchestral piece *Winterdove* was performed by the Denver Playground Ensemble at the University of Denver's Gates Hall in June 2020 and again at CU Boulder's September 2021 Pendulum New Music Concert.

Maynard and his pieces have been awarded five Superior CHSAA ratings. Maynard directed music for multiple productions and sang in Honor and All-State level ensembles on the following stages: Carnegie Hall, the United States Polaris Center, the Pikes Peak Center, the Ent Center for the Performing Arts, the Colorado Bellco Theatre, David Filsinger Hall, the Kennedy Space Center and Broadmoor Hall. In February 2020, he sang in the Colorado All-State Choir at the Buell Theatre. Maynard is also the founder of the Kadet Chorale, the first honor choir at the Air Academy.

Maynard is also a decorated Eagle Scout and published author of two fantasy novels. As an International Thespian Honor Society member, he has performed lead roles in *Fiddler on the Roof, Les Miserables, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and *Mamma Mia*.

Holly McMahon

Holly McMahon is a sophomore at the University of Colorado Boulder, pursuing a degree in music composition. She is currently studying composition with Micheal Theodore and piano with Andrew Cooperstock. She won third place in the 2021 National Federation of Music Clubs Junior Composer Contest in 2021, and participated in the National Federation of Music Clubs American Composers festival in 2018, 2019 and 2022 (on the piano). She has also studied piano performance with Stephanie Cheng, of the University of Denver, as well as jazz, clarinet performance, piano accompaniment and composition with various other instructors.

James H. Morris

James H. Morris is a pianist pursuing his DMA in piano performance at the University of Colorado Boulder. He currently studies with Jennifer Hayghe, the last student of the legendary artist-teacher Adele Marcus.

The Composer Fellows' Initiative (CFI)

The Composer Fellows' Initiative (CFI) segment of CU NOW inspires the CU College of Music composition students to explore the medium of opera through professional mentorship of visiting CU NOW composers and librettists. Their micro-operas take shape under the guidance of industry titans and are then rehearsed, staged, costumed and performed within the summer festival of CU NOW. CFI student composers have been recognized as up-and-coming young talent by the American Opera Project, Washington National Opera American Opera Initiative, and Glimmerglass Festival. CFI runs on a biennial basis with the next session to culminate during 2024 CU NOW.

Leigh Holman, Artistic/General Director, CU NOW Nicholas Carthy, Music Director CU NOW Bud Coleman, CFI Managing Director and Stage Director Jeremy Reger, pianist and former CU NOW Music Director

~Nois

Founded in 2016, ~Nois has become one of the premier ensembles in the United States by combining contemporary classical music and improvisation in unique concert experiences. Heralded as "fiendishly good" by the Chicago Tribune, ~Nois has been awarded top prizes at prestigious chamber music competitions including the Fischoff and the M-Prize competitions. Since its founding, ~Nois has given more than 100 performances in 22 states from coast to coast and has premiered more than 60 works. ~Nois' recent commission, *I Tell You Me*, by Annika Socolofksy was called "grotesquely gorgeous" by the Chicago Tribune and the premiere performance was included in their list of "Chicago's Top 10 moments in classical music, opera, and jazz that defined 2021."

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