

CU ★ PRESENTS

2023-24 Season



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UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

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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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SoundWorks

with Boulder Altitude Directive and Renova New Music Ensemble

Egemen Kesikli, artistic director

Annika Socolofsky, faculty coach

7:30 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023

Grusin Music Hall

Program

parallel pursuance (past an unmarked grave)

Rain Michael

Boulder Altitude Directive

Singsong Chant

Indigo Farmer

Boulder Altitude Directive

Aeolian Harp

Mark Arnett

Renova New Music Ensemble

The Cricket Sang

Blake Clawson

Renova New Music Ensemble

— Intermission —

Gone

Gavin Kitchen

Cello Duo

Luka Vezmar

Marti Flickinger and Everlin Roark, cello

The Jackal's Farewell

Ned Graf

Quint Hill, baritone

Max Warnock, piano

1. hey, i know who you are

Gracie Fagan

2. Skyscape

Alan Mackwell

Program notes

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

parallel pursuance (past an unmarked grave)

Rain Michael

While writing this piece, I was constantly stuck on the thought that walking in the same direction as someone does not entail following or being led, but nonetheless involves two people occupying the same moment, barely displaced by space or time, and if there is a window or similar surface around, a mirror of the same point in time may be simultaneously observed.

Singsong Chant

Indigo Farmer

Singsong Chant has a lot of dissonances and screechiness but don't be fooled: at its core it is a story about love. To make the main theme sound tonally unhinged but still catchy, I approximated a chant I used to do as a kid using the pitches of our 12-tone system. In contrast with my intentions to make the main theme sound dissonant and off-kilter, the bassline and structure of the whole piece are inspired by Beethoven (and other romantic composers), particularly his use of sonata form and dominant/tonic relationships that give a feeling of going on a journey and then returning home with more triumph than before. There is a metaphorical reason I put the music that is more familiar and comforting to me on the deeper, structural level, and put the music that is stranger to me in the melodies/ on the surface to spice things up.

Sometimes my life feels like the way this chant sounds to me—a spontaneous burst of wild energy, unsure what its meaning or context is. When I feel this way I look back to all the people who have taught me—not with their words but through their actions (or music)—what love means, and it comforts me and shows me the best way to go forward. Maya Angelou says that “love liberates,” and I know it is true because my parents and grandparents always try to be kinder people every day so that their kids can feel free to be who we

are without shame or guilt. I know it too because I see my co-workers teach kids how to resolve conflicts and encourage them to open their hearts, and because my friend and roommate is brave enough to tell me personal stories about living in Iran this past year that give me the chance to empathize with the people who are suffering there, feel grateful for having democracy like I never have before, and understand we have to create freedom together and it has to be in the whole world. The underlying harmonies and structure of *Singsong Chant* tell the story of love liberating, and they look back to older music like I look back to all the people who have loved me and liberated me.

There is a part in the piece towards the end where the clarinet plays alone for a long time; this is the grief and vulnerability that come with finally opening up my heart after a long period of resisting and fighting. After that, the main theme returns in the home key but with more energy, and it can move and dance now at the end because it is liberated.

The Cricket Sang

Blake Clawson

The Cricket Sang is a brief poem by Emily Dickinson reflecting on the beauty of evening. Originally written as an expression of gratitude for my high school choral program, this piece reshapes Dickinson's image of twilight into a metaphor for the end of a season of life: as each one finishes their work, so we all go our separate ways. May we rest in gratitude for the road we have traveled. This is a simple song of appreciation, peace, and change.

Text by Emily Dickinson

The cricket sang,
And set the sun,
And workmen finished, one by one,
 Their seam the day upon.

The low grass loaded with the dew,
The twilight stood as strangers do
With hat in hand, polite and new,
 To stay as if, or go.

A vastness, as a neighbor, came, —
A wisdom without face or name,
A peace, as hemispheres at home, —
And so the night became.

Gone

Gavin Kitchen

Gone is a piece that I wrote to express the sadness and confusion of passing. In July of 2023, a close friend of mine took her own life. She was a percussionist, so I thought it would be fitting to write a piece for her. For most of the piece, I tried to imitate the sound of wind chimes which I associate with passing.

The Jackal's Farewell

Ned Graf

Charles Dickens closes *A Tale of Two Cities* with a passionate soliloquy delivered by one of the novel's most intriguing characters. Sydney Carton, referred to as the "Jackal," is the epitome of a dissipated man, yet is from the first not irredeemable. After falling in unrequited love with the beautiful Lucie Manette, he promises to always help her in need. When Lucie's husband, Charles Darnay, is arrested and sentenced to death in the fever of revolutionary Paris, Carton takes his place in prison, sacrificing himself. *The Jackal's Farewell* attempts to capture the strange contrast between tragedy and joy in Carton's final moments, as he finds true peace only just before death.

1. hey, i know who you are

Gracie Fagan

I used to be an adventurer like you. Then I took an arrow to the knee.

2. Skyscape

Alan Mackwell

[Watch the skies, traveller.]

Personnel

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

Egemen Kesikli, artistic director

Annika Socolofsky, faculty coach

Blake Clawson

Blake Clawson is a composer, performer, conductor and educator based in Boulder, Colorado. Clawson's music spans many genres, but he specializes in contemporary classical and jazz. He has collaborated with both filmmakers and choreographers, and his award-winning pieces *Matara* and *Fantasy Arabesque* have received performances around the state of Washington, including a performance and award by Seattle-based Opus 7 Vocal Ensemble. Clawson is currently pursuing a master's in music composition at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he teaches aural skills and studies with Carter Pann. In 2020, Clawson received a Bachelor of Arts in music composition from Whitworth University, where he studied with Brent Edstrom.

Gracie Fagan (she/her/hers)

Gracie Fagan is a multimedia artist hailing from Lincoln, Nebraska. She has written for acoustic, electroacoustic and data-driven mediums in conjunction with dance, theatre, visual projection and lighting. Her works hinge upon examining the difference between human perception and reality, and comment on social and political justice. As a stark feminist and lover of psychology, Fagan's work drives forward a climate of collaboration beyond the arts and rests between the intersectionality of identity with heavy pop culture influences.

Indigo Farmer

Indigo Farmer is a composer who enjoys old and new music—she particularly likes long, dramatically structured pieces with plenty of triumphant and lurky moments. She first fell in love with classical music after hearing the third movement of Beethoven’s “Pathétique” sonata, and her mom bought her a CD set of all 32 sonatas, which she listened to over and over again. She liked these pieces because they were exciting and she could listen to a single one many times and there were always new details to notice. In college, Farmer worked on the Hidden Voices project, recording/researching music by Black women composers, where she explored music by Black women composers such as Lettie Beckon Alston and Mable Bailey. Some of her favorite music right now is pieces by her friends, Beethoven, Brahms and Mable Bailey.

Ned Graf

Ned Graf is a sophomore piano performance major at CU Boulder.

Gavin Kitchen

Gavin Kitchen is a percussionist, educator and composer from Murfreesboro, Tennessee and currently based in Boulder, Colorado. He sees writing and creating music as part of his musicianship that informs his playing and teaching. Because of this, he often seeks to create music that he can play. This often means it is for percussion or at least through the percussionist’s lens. He strongly believes in this writing style and sees it as an easy way to amplify his musical voice. Similarly, the subject of his music is often very personal and includes things that he has struggled with.

Alan Mackwell

Described as “an original composer with new ideas and a command of complex symphonic writing” (BroadStreet Journal), New Zealander-American Alan Mackwell (b. 1998) is an award-winning young composer and banjo player based in Boulder, Colorado. In his work, Mackwell seeks to explore a unique blend of atmospheres inspired by his experiences in the Permian Basin, northern New Mexico and Appalachian North Carolina using a highly resonant and bluegrass-influenced musical language, as well as the utilization of original field recordings and interactive/generative digital interfaces. Mackwell is also the recipient of a BMI Student Composer Award, which he won in 2022 for his string trio *Remains of a Permian Gas Station*.

Rain Michael

A native of Colorado, Rain Michael is a multi-instrumentalist and composer. Michael began taking piano lessons before the age of 4 and has since picked up more than a dozen instruments, both classical and of foreign traditions. They have performed with jazz, wind, orchestral and marching ensembles, all of which have served to cultivate a passion for composition. Michael is currently pursuing a BM in composition, a BA in psychology, a minor in linguistics and a certificate in cognitive science at CU Boulder, which influence both their compositions and interest in the subjective, psychological experiences involved in music performance.

Boulder Altitude Directive

Grace Law, flute

Gleyton Ladislau Pinto, clarinet

Jordan Grantonic, violin

Peyton Magalhaes, cello

Zerek Dodson, piano

Gavin Kitchen, percussion

Carter Pann, director

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