

Bruce Ekstrand Memorial Graduate Student Performance Competition

Adjudicators

Christopher Dragon
Alan Smith
Kelly Waltrip

2 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 3, 2019
Grusin Music Hall
Imig Music Building



College of Music

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

About the competition

Launched by then Dean Robert Fink at Bruce Ekstrand's suggestion and later renamed to honor the late vice chancellor for academic affairs and psychology professor, the Bruce Ekstrand Memorial Graduate Student Performance Competition awards cash prizes for professional development to outstanding graduate student performers. After preliminaries among individual departments and a semi-final round, up to five finalists are chosen to compete in the grand finale before a panel of judges and a public audience. Those attending this afternoon's competition may greet the performers at a reception in the conference room. The winners will be announced on stage.

A feature of this competition is the "Audience Favorite Award." Ballots will be collected and counted at the end of the evening, and the winner will be announced.

Bruce Ekstrand (1940-1996)

A member of the University of Colorado Boulder faculty and administrator for 30 years, Bruce Ekstrand was a champion of not only science and teaching, but also the arts at the university. He came to Boulder in 1966 to teach in the psychology department, was appointed Vice Chancellor for Research in 1984 and served as Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs from 1986 until 1995. Always a music lover and a fan of friendly competition, it was Ekstrand who suggested the College of Music launch its premier competition for graduate student performers in 1986. The competition was later renamed the Bruce Ekstrand Memorial Graduate Student Performance Competition in his honor.

Ekstrand was an outdoor enthusiast, and an avid cyclist and scuba diver. The Chicago native served on numerous local boards, including the Boulder Philharmonic, Boulder Chamber of Commerce, Boulder Rotary, Boulder County United Way and Boulder Community Hospital Foundation. He was honored by the CU Alumni Association for his achievements as an administrator and faculty member with the Robert L. Stearns Award in March 1995. He posthumously received the University Medal during Commencement 1996, and in 1997 a sculpture of poet Robert Frost near Old Main was dedicated to Ekstrand's memory.

Supporting the Ekstrand Competition

The Bruce Ekstrand Memorial Graduate Student Performance Competition is generously supported by the Ekstrand family (Norma Ekstrand, Andrea Ekstrand, Brand & Diana Ekstrand) and other College of Music donors.

To support the Ekstrand Competition, the Ekstrand family has generously established a permanent endowment to provide funding for student prizes and associated costs. To participate in this endowment or make contributions to the competition, please visit giving.cu.edu/Ekstrand or call 303-492-3054.

Program

- String Quartet No. 1 “Lyric” (1946) George Walker (1922-2018)
II. Molto Adagio
- String Quartet No. 8, in E minor, Op. 59, No. 2 (1806) Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
IV. Finale. Presto

Ivalas Quartet
Reuben Kebede & Anita Dumar, violins
Aimée McAnulty, viola
Pedro Sánchez, cello

- Concertino in E-flat Major (ca. 1850) Ernst Sachse (1808-1868)
Allegretto – Polacca
- Sonate für Trompete in B und Klavier (1939) Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)
I. Mit Kraft

Ryan Spencer, trumpet
Barbie Noyes, piano

- After you, Mr. Gershwin! (2004) Béla Kovács (b. 1937)
- Fantasie (1993) Jörg Widmann (b. 1973)
- La Forza del Destino - Prelude to Act III (1862) Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Randel Leung, clarinet
Nathália Kato, piano

- American Haiku (2014) Paul Wiancko (b. 1983)
Far Away
In Transit
Home
- Limestone & Felt (2012) Caroline Shaw (b. 1982)

Stephanie Mientka, viola
Jake Saunders, cello

- Klavierstücke, Op. 11 (1909) Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)
I. Mässig
- Piano Sonata No. 9, Op. 68 “Black Mass” (1913) Alexander Scriabin (1871-1915)

Er-Hsuan Li, piano

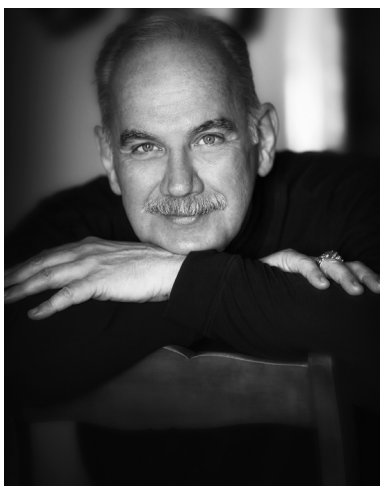
Judges

Christopher Dragon



Australian conductor Christopher Dragon is currently resident conductor for your Colorado Symphony. He joined the orchestra in the 2015/16 Season as associate conductor – a position he held for four seasons. For three years prior, Dragon held the position of assistant conductor with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, which gave him the opportunity to work closely with Principal Conductor Asher Fisch. Dragon works regularly in Australia and has guest conducted the Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and West Australian Symphony Orchestras. His 2015 debut performance at the Sydney Opera House with Josh Pyke and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra was released on album by ABC Music and won an ARIA the following year. Dragon’s international guest conducting includes the Orquestra Sinfônica de Porto Alegre, the San Diego

Symphony Orchestra and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. He has also conducted at numerous festivals including the Breckenridge and Bangalow Music Festivals, with both resulting in immediate re-invitations. At the beginning of 2016, Dragon conducted Wynton Marsalis' *Swing Symphony* as part of the Perth International Arts Festival alongside Wynton Marsalis and Jazz at the Lincoln Center Orchestra. Dragon began his conducting studies in 2011 and was a member of the prestigious Symphony Services International Conductor Development Program in Australia under the guidance of course director Christopher Seaman. He has also studied with numerous distinguished conductors including Leonid Grin, Paavo and Neeme Järvi at the Järvi Summer Festival, Fabio Luisi at the Pacific Music Festival and conducting pedagogue Jorma Panula.



Alan Smith

In a life devoted to music, words, performance, composition and education, pianist-composer-poet Alan Louis Smith creates, fosters and celebrates connections via those pathways. Among his many professional activities, he is the chair of keyboard studies and director of keyboard collaborative arts at the Thornton School of Music at USC, where he has served for thirty years, the coordinator of the combined piano programs at the Tanglewood Music Center where he also has served for thirty years and the music director of the Fall Island Vocal Arts Seminar where he mentors alongside his colleague, friend and muse, Stephanie Blythe. As a pianist, he enjoys performances with world-renowned musical artists in some of the world’s great musical venues and his compositions are performed worldwide.

His current and former students populate important posts around the globe as educators, performers, and inspirers of future generations of impactful and vital communicative artists.



Kelly Waltrip

Kelly Waltrip has served as executive director of the Denver Young Artists Orchestra Association since 2014. During her tenure at DYAO, the organization has been recognized for Excellence in the Arts, both locally and nationally. She served as General Manager of the Lexington Philharmonic from 2009-2014, where she was responsible for all aspects of artistic planning, educational programming and orchestral operations. She has built her career in arts management working with a range of institutions including the Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, the Detroit Symphony, Opus 21 and the Aspen Music Festival. In 2018-2019, Waltrip was instrumental in creating an Alliance between the Denver Young Artists Orchestra and the Colorado Symphony Association. She currently serves as Managing Director of the Alliance. Waltrip serves on the Youth

Orchestra Division Board of the League of American Orchestras, and previously served as Chair of the Colorado Symphony's Young Professionals Associate Board. She received her undergraduate degree in music from Western Michigan University, and her Certificate in Arts Management from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Semifinal judges

Donald McKinney, Jeremy Reger and Keith Waters

This year's semifinal competitors

- Bryan Chuan, piano
- Jacob Howard, trumpet
- Ivalas Quartet
- Hannah Kennedy, violin
- Jieun Lee, piano
- Randel Leung, clarinet
- Er-Hsuan Li, piano
- Stephanie Mientka, viola and Jake Saunders, cello
- Kristina Nelson, bassoon
- Brandon Tyler Padgett, baritone
- The Pearl Street Winds
- Elza Picasso, soprano
- Ryan Spencer, trumpet
- Michael Winkler and William Landon, trumpet duo



Ivalas Quartet

The Ivalas Quartet is composed of violinists Reuben Kebede and Anita Dumar, violist Aimée McNulty and cellist Pedro Sánchez. Ivalas has performed with the Calidore String Quartet, Imani Winds, Eugene Drucker, Danielle Belen and David Ying. The quartet has also been heard on WRCJ 90.9 FM and WDAV 89.9 FM. Accolades include first prize in the 2019 WDAV Young Chamber Musicians Competition, first prize 2018 Briggs Chamber Music Competition as well as semifinal rounds at both the M-Prize competition and Concert Artists Guild. The quartet has received fellowships at the Bowdoin International Music Festival, the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival and the Aspen Music Festival. Ivalas has been coached by the Emerson, Pacifica, Calidore, Brentano, St. Lawrence, Escher, Ying, Jupiter and American string quartets, as well as Paul Katz and Kirsten Docter. The Ivalas Quartet is the Graduate String Quartet in residence at CU Boulder mentored by the Takács Quartet.

Program notes

String Quartet No. 1 “Lyric”

George Walker composed his first string quartet in 1946, after graduating from the Curtis Institute of Music and making his solo piano debut with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra. One of the first African American graduates of the Curtis Institute, where he studied both composition and piano, Walker was also the first African American recipient of the Pulitzer Prize in Music. Walker wrote the second movement of his String

Quartet No. 1, which begins *Molto adagio*, in memory of his grandmother. The movement begins with the singing first violin, and the other instruments enter searchingly until the tonic key of F-sharp Major is reached. For some time there is an underlying calm about the music. However, in its middle section it begins to build with anxiety until a wailing octave section in the violins, juxtaposed with dissonant chords in the lower strings, releases the tension. Following the grief of this section, the remainder of the movement feels like acceptance, and the work

ends similarly to the way it begins. Much like Samuel Barber's *Adagio*, this quartet movement was arranged for string orchestra and retitled *Lyric*. It is better known and more often performed in the orchestral format, but still not nearly enough.

String Quartet No. 8 in E minor, Op. 59, No. 2

Ludwig van Beethoven wrote his String Quartet No. 8 in E minor in 1806. The second of his three Op. 59 quartets written for Count Andreas Razumovsky, the work was received with uncertainty. These new works were both difficult for musicians to perform and hard for audiences to comprehend, but to those who complained of their inaccessibility Beethoven replied, "They are not for you, but for a later age." The last movement of his Op. 59, No. 2 Quartet begins in C Major, and for much of the movement the incessant rhythm recalls

a galloping horse. The repetitive nature of the movement, even though it is in C major, makes it seem almost like Beethoven wanted to diabolically beat the rhythm into the heads of the audience members. This experience is heightened by Beethoven's use of crescendos that explode into *fortepianos* at the start of most phrases throughout the movement. Near the end of the piece, Beethoven subverts the audience's expectations again. There is a long buildup of energy within a *pianissimo* dynamic, followed by a crescendo and passionate explosion with extreme register range between the instruments. This is followed by a grand pause before it occurs a second time. After a second pause the music builds to one final, defiant *fortissimo* iteration of the main theme, and then launches into an even faster E minor coda, which brings the piece to a thrilling close.



Ryan Spencer

Ryan Spencer is a professional trumpet player, composer, arranger and educator. He has over 20 years of playing experience and is currently pursuing his Doctor of Musical Arts at CU Boulder in trumpet performance and pedagogy. Spencer plays with many ensembles around the Denver/Front Range area including the Colorado Symphony and several commercial bands. He is a member of the Denver Philharmonic Orchestra, Cheyenne Symphony, Colorado Brass and Denver Brass. He has studied trumpet with Alan Hood, Justin Bartels, Tom Booth, Terry Sawchuk and currently studies with Ryan Gardner. Spencer is fluent in music theory, aural skills training, composition and conducting techniques. He has taught and marched drum corps with Santa Clara Vanguard and Bluecoats. Outside of his musical endeavors, he enjoys camping, snowboarding and great coffee.

Program notes

Concertino in E-flat Major

Ernst Sachse was a trumpeter at the Weimarer Hofkapelle and there is some confusion among scholars about his exact birth and death dates. He held the title of Oberstabstrompeter, or “upper trumpet player” at the Weimar Court Orchestra, and was conducted by both Franz Liszt and J.N. Hummel, who composed one of the two most famous trumpet concerti. Sachse the composer is best known for a few brass solo pieces (notably for trombone) as well as two influential *étude* books for trumpet.

Sachse’s *Concertino in E-flat* was originally written for solo E-flat cornet (soprano cornet, on which it is here performed) and brass band. This ensemble has changed over time in Europe and beyond; today’s modern brass band includes a variety of cornets, tenor horns, euphoniums, trombones, tubas and percussion. This complete work is a relatively short, single-movement piece in two sections. The *Alllegretto* begins with an exposition followed by

a triumphant fanfare entrance from the soloist. It continues in a *clarino* style of high trumpet playing while taking advantage of the chromatic capabilities of the evolving brass instruments of the 19th century. After a brief cadenza, it changes character with the *Polacca*, or Polish triple-time dance. The delicate melodic lines become more ornamented as the piece progresses to an exciting conclusion.

Sonate für Trompete in B und Klavier

Paul Hindemith was a prolific composer who was proficient on many instruments, but especially violin and viola. He composed 26 sonatas (at least one for nearly every instrument of the orchestra) in addition to large scale works for orchestra, band, and the operatic stage. His *Sonata for Trumpet and Piano* of 1939 was composed while in exile from Germany, prior to his relocation to the United States. It shares many compositional links with his opera *Mathis der Maler* and other sonatas composed around the same time. Hindemith was a proponent of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, a dispassionate German

artistic style that opposed the sentimentality and narcissism of the Expressionists. His challenging tonal language is unique, using a distinctive brand of harmonic progressions and melodic motives.

His trumpet sonata became something of a protest to World War II, as he witnessed the atrocities of war as his home country of Germany annexed Austria, invaded Poland and marched toward genocide. This brooding character is reflected in the dramatic arc of the piece. The pianist is an equal player here

rather than providing mere accompaniment; the virtuosic piano part at times is more challenging than the solo trumpet. The second and third movements of the work are an ironically wry march with a tense undercurrent and a funeral march that concludes with a lamenting chorale theme. The first movement which is presented here is marked *Mit Kraft*, or “with power.” This movement uses a symmetrical form to present contrasting ideas, leaning on three-note motivic constructs and a robust melodic character that shifts between dramatic moods.

Collaborative pianist



Barbie Noyes

Barbie Noyes received her Bachelor of Music degree in composition with a minor in French from Willamette University in 2013. During her undergraduate studies, Noyes traveled to Paris for studies in French language and cinema as well as music technology at IRCAM's ManiFeste academy for composers. In spring 2017, Noyes completed a Master of Music in collaborative piano at the University of Colorado Boulder, where she studied with Margaret McDonald and Alexandra Nguyen and continues now in her doctoral studies. At the University of Colorado, Noyes enjoys studying both instrumental and vocal repertoire and is in her third season of playing for the Eklund Opera Program. During the summers, Noyes has spent her time as a collaborative piano fellow at the Collaborative Piano Institute, Aspen Music Festival and Music Academy of the West. In November 2018, Noyes made her Carnegie Hall debut in Weill Recital Hall with oboist Kristin Weber.



Randel Leung

Hong Kong-born clarinetist Randel Leung, is a student of Professor Daniel Silver. Before pursuing his degrees in music, he completed a degree in marine studies. Leung has performed with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Macau Orchestra and the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong. He has appeared in numerous festivals including the Aspen Music Festival, Chautauqua Institution of Arts, Brevard Music Center, Taipei Music Academy and Festival, National Music Festival, Napa Valley Festival and Hot Spring Music Festival with full scholarship and fellowship. Leung is a member of the Pearl Street Winds woodwind quintet and principal clarinetist in the Longmont Symphony Orchestra.

Program notes

After you, Mr. Gershwin!

Béla Kovács has been hailed by critics and public alike as the finest Hungarian clarinetist of his time. He has served as principal clarinetist with the Hungarian State Opera Orchestra and the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra since 1956. Kovács is Professor of Clarinet at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest and the University of Music and Dramatic Arts in Graz, Austria. He has also composed a set of concert études for clarinet called "Homages" that are written in the style of a number of different composers. Kovács also plays jazz. His most widely known compositions are his tributes to composers of the past, for example *Homage to JS Bach*, *Salute Signore Rossini* and the one in today's programme, *After you, Mr Gershwin!*

After You, Mr. Gershwin! takes 1920s pop-jazz licks and transforms them via irregular rhythms. A blues-influenced melody crops up as the tempo comes way down; a number of little touches, such as glissando, slap tongue and short staccato spits on the instrument, are introduced before the tempo picks up again.

The melody alternates between Hungarian and American rhythms, with a decided proclivity toward the latter. The clarinet's opening flourish ends with a nod in the direction of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, the slower music has the feel of the bluesy moments in the Piano Concerto, and the piece ends with a bustling à la *An American in Paris*. It is worth noting that the piece is best played on a wooden floor to increase the effect of the clarinetist's foot stamping.

Fantasia

"I encourage composers to write the impossible" — Jörg Widmann

Jörg Widmann is a world-renowned clarinetist, composer and conductor. A colleague of Widmann once compared him to Mozart in terms of his jovial personality and his immense compositional output. He has written string quartets and other chamber music, solo clarinet works, orchestral works, and even a few operas. Widmann loves to test the limits of music composition.

Fantasia for Solo Clarinet was inspired

by *commedia dell'arte*, a theatrical form characterized by improvised dialogue and a cast of colorful stock characters. Widmann writes, “*Fantasia for Solo Clarinet* is my first real piece for my own instrument, the clarinet. It is largely based on the usual Romantic melodious sound, though with ironic side trips into dance, klezmer, and jazz ... With its eccentric virtuosity and its cheerful, fundamentally ironic character, it reflects Stravinsky’s *Three Pieces for Solo Clarinet* and the tonal innovations that appeared with Carl Maria von Weber, and takes them further in a new way.”

Fantasia for Solo Clarinet was premiered in March of 1994 by Widmann, himself. He even gave the American premiere of his own work in his audition at the Juilliard School.

La Forza del Destino - Prelude to Act III
Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi was an Italian opera composer. Verdi produced many successful operas, including *La Traviata*,

Falstaff and *Aida*, and became known for his skill in creating melody and his profound use of theatrical effect. Additionally, his rejection of the traditional Italian opera for integrated scenes and unified acts earned him fame. *La forza del destino* (The Force of Destiny), the 22nd of Verdi's operas, was completed in 1862 and introduced in St. Petersburg on Nov. 10 of that year. *La forza del destino* is one of Verdi's most ambitious scores. Its overture—which introduces us to the sinister motif signifying Fate—is one of his most memorable. The opera also contains some of Verdi’s most brilliant choral writing, including Act III’s stirring ‘Rataplan’ chorus, and several beautiful and intimate arias such as Leonora's ardent Act IV ‘Pace, pace mio Dio!’. There's comedy too with the scenes for the greedy monk Fra Melitone. Christof Loy's colourful and spectacular production reflects the kaleidoscopic nature of Verdi's opera, where intense personal dramas play out against a background of war, and in which religion plays an ambiguous role.

Collaborative pianist



Nathália Kato

Brazilian pianist Nathália Kato discovered her vocation in collaborative piano at a very early age and has been dedicated to this specialized skill ever since. She received her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees in Brazil. Kato has immense experience in orchestral and operatic activities, and has worked with such renowned conductors as Marin Alsop and Steven Mercurio. In 2015, Kato performed in both Spain and Portugal; in 2017 and 2018 she was awarded a full scholarship to attend the prestigious Aspen Music Festival. Currently, Kato is pursuing her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in collaborative piano from the University of Colorado Boulder, where she also finished her second Master of Music degree. Kato studies with Margaret McDonald

and Alexandra Nguyen, and holds a teaching assistantship for which she is one of the opera accompanists for the Eklund Opera Program working with maestro Nicholas Carthy.

Stephanie Mientka and Jake Saunders



As an active orchestral musician, Stephanie Mientka is a member of the Boulder Philharmonic and Colorado Ballet Orchestra, and is a regular substitute for the Colorado Symphony. She has performed actively with Deciduous Trio as founding violist and was involved in the commissioning of a number of new works for the ensemble. In addition, she frequently performs with Western Slope Concert Series, a program she now co-directs with violist, Andrew Krimm. Mientka holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado Boulder and a master's degree from Rice University in Houston, TX. While at Rice, she was a teaching assistant and led the ASTA viola studio blog for one year. Her principal viola teachers are Erika Eckert, Geraldine Walther and Ivo-Jan van der Werff. Mientka is currently pursuing the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts at CU Boulder and serving as a teaching assistant for the CU viola studio.



Cellist Jake Saunders engages diverse communities through inclusive programming and distinctive collaboration. Saunders is artistic director of 208 ensemble, the first professional ensemble in Idaho dedicated to the performance of music by living composers. Saunders performs regularly with Playground Ensemble and the Boulder Altitude Directive. Saunders has held principal positions with Symphony Tacoma and the Opera Idaho Orchestra and has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Utah Symphony and Boise Philharmonic. Saunders has attended music festivals in the United States and abroad, including Ensemble Evolutions at the Banff Centre, Blackbird Creative Lab and the Music Academy of the West. Former chamber music mentors include members of the Cleveland, Takacs and Cavani Quartets, as well as International Contemporary Ensemble and eighth blackbird. Saunders is currently a teaching assistant to David Requiro at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he is pursuing the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in cello performance.

Program notes

Limestone & Felt

“*Limestone & Felt* presents two kinds of surfaces—essentially hard and soft. These are materials that can suggest place (a cathedral apse, or the inside of a wool hat), stature, function, and—for me—sound (reverberant or muted). In *limestone & felt*, the hocketing pizzicato and peeling motivic canons are part of a whimsical, mystical, generous world of sounds echoing and colliding in the imagined eaves of a gothic chapel. These are contrasted with the delicate, meticulous, and almost reverent placing of chords that, to our ears today, sound ancient and precious, like an antique jewel box. Ultimately, felt and limestone may represent two opposing ways we experience history and design our own present.” —Caroline Shaw

Caroline Shaw is a New York-based musician—vocalist, violinist, composer and producer—who performs in solo and collaborative projects. She was the youngest recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2013 for *Partita for 8 Voices*, written for the Grammy-winning Roomful of Teeth, of which she is a member. Recent commissions include new works for Renée Fleming with Inon Barnatan, Dawn Upshaw with Sō Percussion and Gil Kalish, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s with John Lithgow, the Dover Quartet, TENET, The Crossing, the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, the Calidore Quartet, Brooklyn Rider, the Baltimore Symphony and Roomful of Teeth with A Far Cry. Shaw has studied at Rice, Yale and Princeton, currently teaches at NYU and is a Creative Associate at the Juilliard School. She has held residencies at Dumbarton Oaks, the Banff Centre, Music on Main and the Vail Dance Festival. Shaw loves the color yellow, otters,

Beethoven Opus 74, Mozart opera, Kinhaven, the smell of rosemary and the sound of a janky mandolin.

American Haiku

Comprised of three movements *Far Away*, *In Transit* and *Home*, *American Haiku* is “a richly-textured duo that incorporates Appalachian fiddling, percussive patterns and Japanese folk-inspired melodies.” Commissioned by violist Ayane Kozasa, the work explores both Kozasa and Wiancko’s Japanese-American heritage. *American Haiku* was premiered by Ayane Kozasa and Paul Wiancko at the S&R Foundation on October 24, 2014.

The music of Paul Wiancko has been described as “dazzling” (Star Tribune) and “vital pieces that avoid the predictable” (Allan Kozinn), in which “gestural stabs and interlocking melodies swirl and gel, revealing a wealth of colors and textures” (Pop Matters). Chosen as one of Kronos Quartet’s “50 for the Future”, Wiancko has been invited to be composer-in-residence at the Caramoor, Spoleto USA, Twickenham, Newburyport, Portland, and Methow Valley Festivals. Recent commissions include works for the Aizuri, Parker, St. Lawrence, Kronos and Attacca Quartets, yMusic, violinist Alexi Kenney, Banff Centre, Bargemusic and the Raleigh Civic Symphony. Wiancko’s 25-minute quartet LIFT is featured on the Aizuri Quartet’s album *Blueprinting*, which was nominated for a Grammy Award and named one of NPR’s top 10 classical albums of 2018.



Er-Hsuan Li

Er-Hsuan Li is a highly accomplished pianist, having performed worldwide throughout Europe, Asia, and the United States. Li holds a special interest in contemporary music and has premiered new works both as a soloist and as a member of the Contemporary Music Ensemble at Northwestern University, where he worked under the direction of Alan Pierson and Ben Bolter. Li's previous mentors include Solomon Mikowsky, Alexander Moutouzkine, James Giles and Professor Alan Chow; currently, Li is pursuing his Doctor of Musical Arts under Andrew Cooperstock. A native of Taiwan, Li has performed on the stages of renowned venues including Carnegie Hall, Harris Theater in Chicago, Mozarteum in Salzburg and the Taiwan National Concert Hall. His performance credits include the Salzburg Music Academy in Austria as well as other prestigious festivals in St. Petersburg, Madrid and Miami. He holds degrees from Northwestern University and the Manhattan School of Music.

Program notes

Klavierstücke, Op. 11

Arnold Schoenberg was a principal member of the Second Viennese School, which was a branch of composition characterized by expansion of tonality and the development of “expressionism”, which sought to present the world subjectively, and distort perception in order to evoke a more pure emotional effect. *Klavierstücke* Op. 11 (1909) demonstrates Schoenberg's use of atonality — a complete break from tonal center. Free atonality and expressionist style are shown through frequent contrasting gestures in tempo, dynamics, and characters throughout.

In the first movement, the initial tempo marking *Mässig* (at a moderate speed) is contrasted with a triple pianissimo *viel schneller* (much faster) at the first rapid gesture. Immediately following this, Schoenberg directs the player to press down the right hand keys silently while playing

an F augmented seventh chord in the left hand, producing special overtones. Although the idea of fragmentation is clearly perceived, an identical form of the opening motif returns frequently throughout the movement. In-depth analysis is contrary to the elements of expressionism within this piece. As a subjective experience, I leave the listeners to make their own unique emotional discoveries.

Piano Sonata No. 9, Op. 68 “Black Mass”

Scriabin's late work Sonata No. 9, Op.68 (1913), nicknamed “Black Mass”, was conceived during a politically and culturally tumultuous period in Russian history. Fears and uncertainty leading up to the October Revolution of 1917 were reflected in the unusual and often dark spirituality which had become present in the minds of the Russian people. Elements of mysticism, devil worship, sadism and other blasphemous rituals can be heard and seen

throughout the “Black Mass”. Scriabin’s interest in the mystical is demonstrated through unusual French terminology scattered throughout. The opening inscription *légalitaire* suggests mystery and unease. After the first climax, the term *avec une longueur naissante* (with a fatigued nascence) appears to signal a significant change of mood. The most poetic statement appears after the sweet sounding development section, where Scriabin indicates *avec une douceur de plus en plus caressante et empoisonnée* (with an ever increasing caressing and poisoned sweetness).

There are several distinct musical elements which are important to point out, as they lead

the listener through cloudy layers of mood and character. In the opening motif, chromaticism and continuous use of tritones (the “devil’s interval”) suggest the idea of Satanic worship. Frequent use of trills and repeated notes in the low register create a “mumbling” effect and add to the anxiety inherent in the piece. While there are multiple climatic moments in this sonata, the main climax only appears towards the end, where all the energy is released in a final explosion. At the end of our journey through the “Black Mass”, the opening motif returns, and finally we rest on a conclusive, mysterious tritone.

Previous winners

1986-87

Theresa Lynn Bogard,
piano and fortepiano

1987-88

Tracy Bidleman, soprano

1988-89

Barry Johnson, baritone

1989-90

Rebecca A. Berg, soprano

1990-91

Yalun Zhang, baritone

1991-92

Nan-Joo Rhee, piano

1992-93

Maureen Sorensson,
soprano

1993-94

Robert L. Best, Jr. baritone

1994-95

Julianne Best, soprano with
Emi Kagawa, piano

1995-96

Takako Nagano, marimba

1996-97

Kathryn Tremills, piano

1997-98

Mairi Dorman, cello

1998-99

Eric Phelps, cello

1999-2000

Sarah Barber, mezzo-
soprano

2000-01

Javier Montilla, flute

2001-02

Nacht Quartet

2002-03

Yuan-Jen Cheng, piano

2003-04

Marcin Arendt, violin

2004-05

Jeong-Kwon Kim, tenor

2005-06

Hae-Jung Shin,
mezzo-soprano

2006-07

Conundrum Duo
(Robert Glaubitz, tenor
and Carey Harwood, guitar)

2007-08

Cobus du Toit, flute

2008-09

Melissa Lotspeich, flute

2009-10

Christie Hageman, soprano

2010-11

Owen Zhou, piano

2011-12

Shih-Han Chiu, bassoon

2012-13

Michael Brook, viola

2013-14

Andrew Ramos, piano

2014-15

Altius String Quartet

2015-16

Kellan Toohey, clarinet

2016-17

Andrew Brown, cello

2017-18

Kristin Weber, oboe

2018-19

Kaleb Chesnic, flute

Founded in 1920, the CU Boulder College of Music offers a wide range of programs for undergraduate and graduate study, uniquely combining advanced musical training with professionally oriented experiences and the rich resources of a leading research university. Learn more at colorado.edu/music.