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## 2026-27 EVENTS




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# Bruce Ekstrand Memorial Graduate Student Performance Competition

## Competition Finals

Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2026, 7:30 p.m.
Grusin Music Hall

*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 semifinal round, up to five finalists are chosen to compete in the grand finale before a panel of judges.*

## Supporting The Ekstrand Competition

The Bruce Ekstrand Memorial Graduate Student Performance Competition is generously supported by the Ekstrand family (Norma Ekstrand, Andrea Ekstrand, Brad & 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 help ensure the continuation of this competition, please make a gift to the Ekstrand Endowment online or call 303-492-3054.*

# 2026 Finals Judges

Theresa Bogard
Gregory Harper
Heidi Melton

# 2026 Semifinalists

Astrodon Quartet
Angela Bonello, soprano
Jeff Buchanan, guitar
Harold Gomez-Montoya, clarinet
Sofia Gonzalez-Ayala, flute
Connor Johnson, trumpet
Monica Lee, piano
Aimée McAnulty, viola
Ryan Montemayor, saxophone
Corey Nance, trombone
Katherine Riederer, soprano
Whitney Robinson, mezzo-soprano
BB Seidenberg, violin
Noah Solomon, trumpet
Tiffany Yin, piano

# 2026 Semifinal Judges

Jennifer DeDominici
Emily Gee
Logan Sorey

# Program

## Voi lo sapete from *Cavalleria Rusticana*

Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945)

## Stride la vampa from *Il trovatore*

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

## Hurr, hopp, hopp, hopp from *Hänsel und Gretel*

Englebert Humperdinck (1854-1921)

## Afraid, am I afraid? from *The Medium*

Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007)

*Whitney Robinson, mezzo-soprano*
*Diane Park, piano*

## Piano Sonata No. 2 (“Fire Sermon”)

Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928-2016)

I. Molto Allegro

## Kreisleriana, Op. 16

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

I. Äußerst bewegt
II. Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch

*Monica Lee, piano*

## Moon Song
Phillip Sparke (b. 1951)

## The First Voice
Frank Ticheli (b. 1958)

I. As the Sound of a Trumpet Speaking With Me

## Sketches in Red Clay
James M. David (b. 1978)

I. Singing

III. Stomping

*Connor Johnson, trumpet*
*Te Zhang, piano*

## Shams
Jean-Denis Michat (b. 1971)

I. Mordant

## Lilac Tears
Jennifer Jolley (b. 1981)

## Caprice No. 3
David Salleras (b. 1980)

## Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano
Edison Denisov (1929–1996)

I. Allegro

*Ryan Montemayor, saxophone*
*Hsiao-Ling Lin, piano*

## String Quartet in C Major, Op. 59 No. 3 “Razumovsky”

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

I. Introduzione, Andante con Moto – Allegro Vivace

## String Quartet No. 4

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

V. Allegro molto

*Astrodon Quartet*
*Zach Levin, violin*
*Dallas Noble, violin*
*Amelia Eckloff, viola*
*Tim Beccue, cello*

## Judge

# Theresa Bogard



**Theresa Bogard** is a distinguished American pianist renowned for her dynamic and versatile performances. She has made significant contributions to expanding the traditional piano repertoire, particularly through her focus on music by women composers and other lesser-known composers. Early in her career, she gained recognition for her performances of underrepresented works, and she has continued to integrate diverse and eclectic pieces into her varied concert programs.

A recipient of a Fulbright grant as a young pianist, Bogard was able to study historical performance practice and fortepiano at the Royal Conservatory of the Hague in the Netherlands. Her dedication to the study and performance of historical instruments was further solidified when she became a top-prize winner in the International Mozart Fortepiano Competition in Bruges, Belgium. She was recently awarded a second Fulbright to focus on discovering and collecting repertoire for solo piano and chamber music with piano by Brazilian women composers.

Throughout her career, Bogard has performed across the globe, with engagements spanning the United States, Europe, Asia and South America. She has played in 16 countries across five continents, with notable performances at prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall and the Ravinia Steans Institute, where she performed with renowned cellist Misha Quint. Her passion for world cultures is evident in her deep connection to Brazilian music. Since her first concert tour in Brazil in 2007, she has returned frequently, giving masterclasses and performances in major cities such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Goiania, Florianopolis, Brasilia, Porto Alegre and Curitiba, and has developed a profound admiration for Brazilian composers.

In addition to her performance career, Bogard is a highly respected educator. She has taught at major international music festivals, including the InterHarmony International Music Festival in Italy and the Sulzbach-Rosenberg International Music Festival in Germany. Her students have excelled in competitions and gained acceptance into top conservatories such as The Juilliard School, Eastman School of Music and Cleveland Institute of Music, among others. She is also a frequent adjudicator at regional, national, and international piano competitions.

Bogard's extensive discography spans a wide range of musical styles and includes recordings of solo piano works, chamber music, and historical performances on fortepiano. A Steinway Artist, she continues to be an advocate for both contemporary composers and the historical performance tradition, cementing her status as an influential figure in the classical music world.

## Judge

# Gregory Harper



**Gregory Harper** has been a member of the Colorado Symphony since 1997. He holds degrees from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music and the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Prior to joining the Colorado Symphony, Harper served as interim bass trombonist with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia in La Coruña, Spain. He has also performed with the Atlanta, Houston, Minnesota, Montreal and Seattle Symphony Orchestras. Harper can be heard as guest bass trombonist on the Minnesota Orchestra's 2014 Grammy Award-winning recording of Sibelius Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4, conducted by Maestro Osmo Vänskä.

An accomplished educator and clinician, Harper has been a featured guest artist at the 1998 International Trombone Association Workshop, the 2001 South Shore Low Brass Symposium in Middleboro, Massachusetts and the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival. He has taught trombone pedagogy at Colorado State University in Fort Collins and currently serves as adjunct professor of trombone at Colorado Christian University in Lakewood and Metropolitan State University of Denver. In addition to his performing and teaching career, Harper is an artist and clinician for Edwards Trombone Corporation.

**Judge**

# Heidi Melton



**Heidi Melton**, acclaimed for her “big gleaming soprano” (The New York Times) and hailed by La Presse as “the Wagnerian voice we have been waiting for since Flagstad and Nilsson,” has established herself as one of the leading dramatic sopranos of her generation. Known for her interpretations of the works of Wagner, Strauss and other late Romantic composers, she is a frequent guest at the world’s foremost opera houses and concert halls. In the 2025-26 season she performed Strauss’s *Vier letzte Lieder* with both the Littleton Symphony Orchestra and the Boulder Philharmonic.

Melton has appeared with many of the world’s major opera companies, including The Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Oper Frankfurt, Opernhaus Zürich, Canadian Opera Company, English National Opera, Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, Opéra National de Bordeaux, Bayreuther Festspiele, Seattle Opera and Teatro La Fenice.

A sought-after interpreter of the great Wagnerian heroines, Melton has portrayed Isolde (*Tristan und Isolde*), Sieglinde and

Brünnhilde (*Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, *Götterdämmerung*), Senta (*Der fliegende Holländer*) and Elisabeth and Venus (*Tannhäuser*). Her repertoire also includes Ariadne (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), Amelia (*Un ballo in maschera*), Santuzza (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Mescalina (*Le grand macabre*), Elsa (*Lohengrin*) and Gertrud (*Hänsel und Gretel*), among others.

On the concert stage, she has appeared with the Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Tonkünstler Orchestra (Vienna), Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya, Hong Kong Philharmonic, New World Symphony, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Aspen Music Festival Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony and Colorado Springs Philharmonic.

Melton's artistry has led to collaborations with many of the world's most celebrated conductors, including Valery Gergiev, Sir Simon Rattle, Fabio Luisi, Donald Runnicles, Alan Gilbert, Jaap van Zweden, Kirill Petrenko, Zubin Mehta, Karina Canellakis, Eun Sun Kim, Andres Orozco-Estrada, Kent Nagano, Marin Alsop, James Gaffigan, Markus Stenz, Robert Spano and Patrick Summers.

Notable career highlights include her debut with the Vienna Philharmonic performing the Immolation Scene from *Götterdämmerung* under Valery Gergiev at both the Musikverein and Carnegie Hall; her Bayreuth Festival debut as Sieglinde in *Die Walküre*; a BBC Proms appearance as Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser* with Donald Runnicles and the role of Isolde in *Tristan und*

*Isolde* with the Mariinsky Orchestra. Her discography includes *Tristan und Isolde* with the Mariinsky Orchestra (Gergiev) and Wagner's *Siegfried* and *Die Walküre* with the Hong Kong Philharmonic (van Zweden) on the Naxos label. She also appears on The Metropolitan Opera's commercially released *Ring Cycle* conducted by Fabio Luisi (Deutsche Grammophon).

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music and the Curtis Institute of Music, Melton is a winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, the Sara Tucker Award and the Hans Gabor Belvedere Competition.

Melton proudly shares her expertise with Turn The Spotlight, a foundation working to identify, nurture, and empower leaders—and in turn, to illuminate the path to a more equitable future in the arts. Turn The Spotlight offers mentorship by and for exceptional women, people of color and members of other equity-seeking groups in the arts

**Finalist**

# Whitney Robinson



**Pianist**

# Diane Park



# Biographies

**Whitney Robinson**, mezzo-soprano, has been praised for her "vivid stage presence and voice." She has performed with leading opera companies including Virginia Opera and Opera Saratoga, where she appeared in several consecutive seasons. Most recently, she sang the role of Mrs. Lovett in Eklund Opera's *Sweeney Todd* at the University of Colorado Boulder. Robinson was recently a finalist for Arts Song Colorado. Additional credits include performances with Central City Opera, College Light Opera Company, Odyssey Opera, Opera Cecilia, Operativo, Opera in the Heights, Opera Louisiane and the Virginia Arts Festival.

In addition to her performing career, Robinson maintains an active teaching studio and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in vocal performance and pedagogy at the University of Colorado Boulder, studying under Nicholas Perna and Jennifer Bird- Arvidsson. Robinson earned a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance from the University of Houston and a Master of Music in opera performance with a concentration in vocal pedagogy from the New England Conservatory, where she was also an Artist Diploma candidate.

Originally from Long Island, New York, **Diane Park** began her studies as a pianist from a young age at the Manhattan School of Music's Precollege, under notable teachers such as Solomon Mikowsky and Miyoko Lotto. She received a bachelor's degree in music education with a primary in piano at the Eastman School of Music, with Vincent Lenti. She then earned a master's degree in piano performance and pedagogy at Southern Methodist University, where she studied with Catharine Lysinger. While in Dallas, she placed as a finalist for the statewide TMTA solo competition.

Most recently, Park graduated with a second master's degree in collaborative piano at The Juilliard School, with Jonathan Feldman and Lydia Brown. She then continued working at Juilliard as a staff pianist, while teaching class piano as an instructor. At the moment, Park is studying with Margaret McDonald and Alexandra Nguyen at the University of Colorado Boulder for a doctoral degree in collaborative piano.

# Program Notes

## Voi lo sapete from *Cavalleria Rusticana*

Voi lo sapete is from Cavalleria Rusticana written by Italian composer Pietro Mascagni. The libretto, written by Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti and Guido Menasci, and was based on a short story by Giovanni Verga. In this scene Santuzza confesses to Lucia the story of how she was seduced and then abandoned by Lucia's son, Turiddu, for his ex-lover Lola, who was already married to another man. Through the reflection of this betrayal, Santuzza vividly conveys both the depth of her love and the tragedy of her situation as a ruined woman.

## Stride la vampa from *Il trovatore*

Stride la Vampa is from Il Trovatore composed by Verdi. The libretto was written by Salvadore Cammarano and was originally based on the Spanish play El trovador written by Antonio García Gutiérrez. This scene comes right after the famous “Anvil Chorus,” wherein, Azucena recounts the wrongful imprisonment and execution of her mother by the house Di Luna to all the workers in the forge. As she gazes into the molten fire, the traumatic memories of her mother being abused, marched out in black, and then burned at the stake dance in the fire before her. The fire continues to grow bigger and bigger until it reaches the heavens. This fire also stokes the revenge in Azucena’s heart, and her vengeance will come to fruition.

## Hurr, hopp, hopp, hopp from *Hänsel und Gretel*

Hurr, Hopp, Hopp, Hopp or the Witch’s Ride from Engelbert Humperdinck’s Hänsel und Gretel features die Hexe or the witch, who has lured Hänsel and Gretel into her gingerbread house and used her magic to ensnare them. During this number, the witch revels in her cleverness and delights in the fact that she will soon be eating both children for supper. She boasts of her victory and imminent feast as she teases the children, playing with her food! This opera’s libretto was written by Humperdinck’s sister, Adelheid Wette, and based on the fairy tale from the Brothers Grimm.

## Afraid, am I afraid? from *The Medium*

Afraid, am I afraid? from The Medium, written and composed by Gian Carlo Menotti, depicts Baba, also known as Madame Flora, who is a professional charlatan of a medium, as she uses her daughter and her servant to deceive her patrons. During this aria Baba is drunk and although she plays a Medium, she fears that the malevolent spirits from her passed are all too real as they come to punish her. Through out this piece Baba attempts to reckon with her growing fear, and eventually uses her lullaby "Black Swan," which she sang to calm her daughter earlier in the opera to try and bring herself peace. However, she continues to perceive danger in the night and it is soon too much to bear alone. After she gives herself over to the fear completely, she turns to God to forgive her sins.

# Texts and Translations

## Voi lo sapete from *Cavalleria Rusticana*

Voi lo sapete, o mamma,
*O mother, you know*

Prima d'andar soldato,
*That before he went for a soldier*

Turiddu aveva a Lola
*Turiddu had sworn*

Eterna fè giurato.
*Eternal faith to Lola.*

Tornò, la seppe sposa;
*On his return, he found her married,*

E con un nuovo amore
*And sought with a new love*

Volle spegner la fiamma
*To quell the flame*

Che gli bruciava il core:
*Which burned in his heart:*

M'amò, l'amai.
*He loved me, I loved him.*

Quell'invidia d'ogni delizia mia,
*But she, envious of my only delight*

Del suo sposo dimentica,
*And forgetful of her husband,*

Arse di gelosia...
*Burned with jealousy …*

Me l'ha rapito...
*She stole him from me …*

Priva dell'onor mio rimango:
*And I am left disgraced;*

Lola e Turiddu s'amano,
*Lola and Turiddu are lovers,*

Io piango, io piango!
*And I am left to weep.*

*Text and translation provided by opera-arias.com*

## Stride la vampa from *Il trovatore*

Stride la vampa! -
la folla indomita
*The flame crackles!*
*The unrestrained mob*

Corre a quel fuoco -
lieta in sembianza;
*runs to that fire, their faces all happy!*

Urli di gioia - intorno
echeggiano:
*Shouts of joy re-echo around;*

Cinta di sgherri -
donna s'avanza!
*surrounded by killers,*
*a woman comes forward!*

Sinistra splende -
sui volti orribili
*Sinister, shining on the horrible faces,*

La tetra fiamma -
che s'alza al ciel!
*the ghastly flame rises, rises towards heaven!*

Stride la vampa! -
giunge la vittima
*The flame crackles! The victim arrives,*

Nerovestita, - discinta e scalza!
*dressed in black, disheveled, barefoot!*

Grido feroce - di morte levasi;
*A fierce shout of death is raised,*

L'eco il ripete -
di balza in balza!
*its echo repeated from hill to hill!*

Sinistra splende -
sui volti orribili
*Sinister, shining on the horrible faces,*

La tetra fiamma -
che s'alza al ciel!
*the ghastly flame rises, rises towards heaven!*

*Text and translation provided by opera-arias.com*

## Hurr, hopp, hopp, hopp from *Hänsel und Gretel*

Ja, Gretelchen,
*Yes, Gretelchen,*

wirst bald ein Brätelchen!
*you will soon be a little boy!*

Schau, schau!
*Look look!*

Schau, wie schlau!
*Look, how smart!*

Sollst gleich im Backofen hucken,
*You just have to sit in the oven,*

und nach den Lebkuchen gucken!
*and look for the gingerbread!*

Bist du dann drin, schwaps!
*Are you in there then, swab!*

geht die Tür,
*is the door,*

Dann ist fein Gretelchen
*Then fine Gretelchen is*

mein Brätelchen!
*my Brätelchen!*

Das Brätlein, das soll sich verwandeln
*The sausage should turn*

in Kuchen mit Zucker und Mandeln!
*into cake with sugar and almonds!*

Im Zauberofen mein
*In the magic oven,*

wirst du ein Lebkuchen fein!
*you will be a gingerbread!*

Schau, schau, wie schlau!
*Look, look, how smart!*

Hi hi, hi hi
*Hi hi, hi hi*

Hurr hopp hopp hopp,
*Hurr hopp*

Galopp lopp lopp,
*hop , gallop lopp lopp,*

mein Besengaul,
*my broom,*

hurr hopp nit faul!
*hurr hopp not lazy!*

So wie ich’s mag,
*As I like it,*

am lichten Tag
*in the light of day*

spring’ kreuz und quer
*jump*

um’s Häuschen her!
*around the house*

Bei dunkler Nacht,
*At dark night,*

wenn niemand wacht,
*when no one is watching,*

zum Hexenschmaus
*to the witch feast by*

am Schornstein raus!
*the chimney out!*

Aus fünf und sechs,
*From five and six,*

so sagt die Hex',
*the witch says,*

mach sieb'n und acht,
*make seventy and eight,*

so ist's vollbracht,
*that's the way it is done,*

und neun ist eins
*and nine is one*

und zehn ist keins
*and ten is none,*

und viel ist nichts,
*and a lot is nothing,*

die Hexe spricht's!
*the witch speaks!*

So reitet sie bis morgens früh!
*So she rides early in the morning!*

Prr! Besen, hüh!
*Prr! Broom, huh!*

*Text and translation provided by opera-arias.com*

## Afraid, am I afraid? from *The Medium*

Afraid, am I afraid?
Madame Flora afraid!
Can it be that I'm afraid?
In my young days I have seen many terrible things!
Women screaming as they were murdered
And men's hands dripping with blood
And men haunted by knives
And little grotesque children drained
White by the voraciousness of filth
And loathsome old men insane with vice
And young men with cankers crawling
On their flesh like hungry lizards
This I've seen, and more,

and never been afraid
O God, forgive my sins,
I’m sick and old
Forgive my sins and give
me peace!
What ill wind shakes my hand?
What unseen ghost stands by
my side?
No, no, it cannot be the dead!
The dead, the dead
The dead never come back
They sink down in the dust
With no eyes to dream and
no silence to keep
A secrets to hide’
Gone, empty, nothing, nothing
“O black swan, where
Oh, where is my lover gone?”
Who is there?
“O black swan, O black swan. “
What? Nothing, but then if
there is nothing
To be afraid of why am I afraid
of this nothingness?
I must forget about it, laugh
at it
Yes, laugh at it!
O God, forgive my sins,
I’m sick and old

Finalist

# Monica Lee



## Biography

Born and raised in Singapore, **Monica Lee** is pursuing a DMA in piano performance at CU Boulder where she studies with Jennifer Hayghe. She holds the Chancellor's Fellowship, an award offered to the most outstanding incoming graduate student at the College of Music. Lee recently completed a master's degree in piano performance at the Eastman School of Music where she studied with Alan Chow. Prior to embarking on her musical studies, she received a bachelor's degree in philosophy, politics, and economics at the University of Oxford, and a master's degree in public policy at the University of Chicago; additionally, she held a pre-doctoral fellowship while at the University of Chicago.

She has played in master classes for Richard Goode, HieYon Choi, Spencer Myer, Kevin Kenner, Inna Faliks, and Daniel Shapiro, amongst others. She is a prizewinner of several national and international competitions, including the Memphis International Piano Competition and the Brevard Music Center Piano Competition, and recently won the Colorado Young Artist Performance category of the MTNA state competitions.

# Program Notes

## Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 64 ("The Fire Sermon")

Rautavaara, who was born in Helsinki in 1928, is one of Finland's most prominent composers. His Second Piano Sonata was composed in 1970 and is situated firmly within his neo-romantic era. Like many of Rautavaara's other works, the second sonata makes frequent use of symmetric scales, pitch inversions, and non-retrogradable rhythms. The first movement begins with a rapid, driven toccata-like texture, evolving via repetition into fiery clusters. The lyrical, cantabile second theme provides some respite; soon after, however, the tranquility is interrupted by the return of the toccata figurations. In Rautavaara's own words:

"Like many of my works, Piano Sonata No. 2, 'The Fire Sermon,' written in 1970, derived its musical energy from its subtitle; the magic words 'The Fire Sermon' stuck in my mind, repeating themselves like a mantra. There is no conscious link, however, with T.S. Eliot's poem of the same name or Buddha's famous sermon. All three movements observe the principle of continuous growth and the initial idea grows in extent, density and strength until the texture cracks (often into clusters), becomes dissonant, dissolves into a fog of sound or, as in the concluding fugue, goes overboard from pathos to trivial irony for a fleeting instant. The mysticism and devotion of the First Sonata have here given way to pessimism, to a repeated and frustrating struggle."

## Kreisleriana, Op. 16

The 1830s was Schumann's most fertile creative period for the piano: *Papillons*, *Davidsbündlertänze*, *Carnaval*, *Fantasiestücke*, *Kinderszenen*, *Kreisleriana* (composed in 1838) and the *Fantasie* were all products of this decade. *Kreisleriana* was inspired by and named for E.T.A. Hoffman's literary creation, the Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler, a musical genius and a manic-depressive eccentric. In it, the dualities of Schumann's personality come to the fore: on the one hand, the impulsive side of himself which he named "Florestan;" and on the other, the dreamy side of himself which he named "Eusebius." By turns agitated and introspective, impetuous and tender, *Kreisleriana* was one of the many compositions Schumann wrote for Clara Wieck, the virtuoso pianist who he had fallen for. They would eventually marry in 1840, but the road to marriage was tempestuous and difficult: Clara's father, Friedrich Wieck, objected vehemently to their courtship. Circumstances therefore compelled Clara and Robert to remain apart; to his distant beloved, Robert wrote:

"I'm overflowing with music and beautiful melodies now—imagine, since my last letter I've finished another whole notebook of new pieces. I intend to call it Kreisleriana. You and one of your ideas play the main role in it, and I want to dedicate it to you—yes, to you and nobody else—and then you will smile so sweetly when you discover yourself in it."

Ultimately, however, afraid that it would further anger Friedrich Wieck, Schumann instead dedicated it to his "friend F. Chopin." Chopin allegedly found it impenetrable and commented favorably only on its title page. Nevertheless, to this day, *Kreisleriana* remains a masterpiece of Romantic piano literature.

Finalist

## Connor Johnson



Pianist

## Te Zhang



# Biographies

**Connor Johnson** is a soloist, composer and educator committed to championing new music for the trumpet in various settings including solo, chamber music and electroacoustic works. His performances as a soloist and chamber musician have received acclaim in national and international competition, winning prizes at the National Trumpet Competition, the Next Generation Trumpet Competition and the International Trumpet Guild's Ryan Anthony Memorial Trumpet Competitions. Johnson holds degrees in music composition (MM) and trumpet performance (BM) from Michigan State University, where he studied with Justin Emerich, Heather Zweifel, Zhou Tian and David Biedenbender. He is currently pursuing his DMA in brass performance and pedagogy at CU Boulder, studying with Ryan Gardner.

**Te Zhang** is a collaborative pianist currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) in collaborative piano at the University of Colorado Boulder, studying with Margaret McDonald and Alexandra Nguyen. He holds a Master of Music in collaborative piano from the Cleveland Institute of Music and a Bachelor of Music

in Music Education from the Xinghai Conservatory of Music. He previously served as a collaborative pianist for the choir at Case Western Reserve University. He has extensive concert experience, performing with instrumentalists and vocalists in recitals, chamber music concerts and other collaborative settings.

# Program Notes

## Moon Song

*Moon Song* opens with a flowing modal theme, which the soloist embellishes before the band takes centre stage. A central section brightens the mood with a new melody over the lightest of accompaniments; this is once again developed by the soloist until the original theme reappears, played by the band. This introduces a cadenza for the soloist which closes the movement.
*Program note by the composer*

## The First Voice

*The First Voice* for solo trumpet was composed in 1982 and premiered by the composer the same year. It remains the composer's most personal, inward-looking work. The title of the piece and of its movements are drawn from the Book of Revelation 4:1:

"...and the first voice which I heard,
like the sound of a trumpet speaking
with me, said, "Come up here, and I will
show you what must take place after
these things."

In the first movement, extended mute techniques, multiphonics, subtle timbral transformations, and disjunct linear writing are utilized to reflect speech. Like Revelation, the piece is intended to be puzzling and enigmatic.
*Program note by the composer*

## Sketches in Red Clay

*Sketches in Red Clay* is a set of three short etudes for solo trumpet that are inspired by the "electric" era of 1960's and '70's jazz fusion and specifically the works of legendary trumpeters Freddie Hubbard, Miles Davis and Randy Brecker. The first movement "Singing" utilizes a G drone which the trumpet exploits as an open lyrical space to explore with microtonal half-valve effects. "Stomping" embraces the rock and funk elements of the fusion sound with a powerful drum set accompaniment combined with the complex rhythmic techniques of contemporary jazz. The title is a reference to Hubbard's seminal album *Red Clay* and Davis' equally groundbreaking *Sketches of Spain*. This work was commissioned by the 2021 Next Generation Trumpet Competition and premiered by Steven Cunningham, professor of trumpet at Grambling State University.
*Program note by the composer*

Finalist

## Ryan Montemayor



Pianist

## Hsiao-Ling Lin



# Biographies

**Ryan Montemayor** (he/him) is a saxophonist and educator dedicated to broadening the inclusion of underrepresented voices in classical music. His scholarly interests center on the music of Manuel Ponce and expanding the presence of Latin American repertoire within the classical saxophone canon, research he has presented at the North American Saxophone Alliance Region 4 Conference. As a soloist and chamber musician Montemayor has been recognized as a laureate in the MTNA Young Artist Performance Competition, the Downbeat Student Music Awards, and the Fischoff and Coltman chamber music competitions.

Montemayor previously earned degrees from Texas Tech University and the University of Arkansas, where he studied with Professor David Dees and Dr. Sarah Hetrick. He is currently pursuing the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he serves as a teaching assistant in the saxophone studio and studies with Nathan Mertens.

Pianist **Hsiao-Ling Lin** joined the keyboard department faculty at the University of Colorado Boulder in the fall of 2011. Her active performing career has taken her to Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall, Isabella Stewart Garden Museum and Jordan Hall in Boston, the Chicago Symphony Hall and Chicago Cultural Center, Sendai Cultural Center in Japan, and the Rachmaninoff Hall in Russia. Her summer festival appearances include the Meadowmount School for Strings in New York, Caramoor Festival and the International Festival-Institute at Round Top. Since coming to the United States from Taiwan, Lin's performances have been broadcasted live over the TV and radio stations, and she has collaborated in recitals with many artists, including her distinguished faculty colleagues at the University of Colorado Boulder. Lin has held staff pianist positions at the Boston Conservatory, the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University, Northwestern University, and the Meadowmount School for Strings in New York.

Equally interested in promoting music of diversity and multiculturalism, Lin was appointed as the resident pianist for the Core Ensemble during 2009-2012: a chamber music-theater company that tours and gives workshops around the colleges and universities throughout the United States. Lin is heard frequently in her home state of Colorado. Outside of the University, she performs regularly with the Colorado Symphony, and the local chamber series with members of Colorado Symphony. Beginning Spring 2016, she became rehearsal pianist for the Colorado Symphony Chorus, working closely with distinguished conductor Duain Wolfe. Her live performances can also be heard on KVOD, KCFP, and KCFR. Lin earned her Doctor

of Musical Art Degree in Piano Performance and Collaborative Arts from Northwestern University under the guidance of James Giles and Elizabeth Buccheri; additionally, she holds Degrees from the New England Conservatory and DePaul University where she studied with Victor Rosenbaum, Irma Vallecillo and Eteri Andjaparidze.

# Program Notes

## Shams

Jean-Denis Michat is a French saxophonist, composer and educator who currently serves as saxophone professor at the Conservatoire de Lyon in France. *Shams*, Arabic for "the sun," blends French classical techniques with elements of North African musical traditions. Michat created this work in response to the French government's controversial debate on "national identity" at the time of the commission. Through the combination of these musical traditions, Michat explores the cultural influences that contribute to French identity and celebrates the diversity that shapes it. Michat writes, "I find myself thinking: if this North African sunshine has now become part of what constitutes French clarity and elegance ... well, then, we are incredibly lucky."

## Lilac Tears

Jennifer Jolley is a composer, conductor and educator who serves as associate professor of music theory and composition at Lehman College in the Bronx. Commissioned by duo Tim McAllister and Liz Ames for their ongoing "Project Encore," Lilac Tears pays homage to Prince's 2004 performance of

George Harrison's *While My Guitar Gently Weeps* at Harrison's posthumous induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Jolley draws inspiration from Prince's expressive performance, using the work to explore the emotional possibilities of the saxophone while highlighting the artistry of its performer. Jolley writes,

"*Lilac Tears* is my engagement of this phenomenal solo with the ambition to showcase Tim's skillful playing and the emotional depths that his playing inspires. It is an homage to the almost alchemical experience of great instrumentalists and a testament to my esteem for Tim in the comparison."

## Caprice No. 3

David Salleras is a Spanish saxophonist, composer and educator who serves as head of the chamber music department and saxophone instructor at the Conservatori de Música Isaac Albéniz in Girona, Spain. He studied at the Superior Music Conservatory of Barcelona before continuing his education in Paris under renowned saxophonists Jean-Yves Fourmeau and Nicolas Prost. Salleras' compositions draw heavily from tango, flamenco, jazz and classical traditions. His caprices are largely inspired by his improvisations and virtuosic playing. Caprice No. 3 in D Minor features two contrasting sections: a slow, expressive opening that highlights lyrical playing, followed by a virtuosic section showcasing scales and arpeggios centered around D minor. The contrast between these sections demonstrates both the expressive and technical capabilities of the saxophone.

## Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano

Russian composer Edison Denisov (1929-1996) initially studied physics and mathematics at Tomsk University before pursuing composition at the Moscow Conservatory in 1951, encouraged by Dmitry Shostakovich. Composed in 1970 for French saxophonist Jean-Marie Londeix, Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano combines serial composition techniques with elements of jazz. The work became an important contribution to contemporary saxophone repertoire, expanding the instrument's role in avant-garde music. Following its premiere at the Second World Saxophone Congress in Chicago, Londeix commented, "The Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano by Edison Denisov has opened the saxophone to avant-garde contemporary music in a way that no other piece had ever done."

Finalist

# Astrodon Quartet



## Biography

The **Astrodon Quartet** brings together four exceptional musicians dedicated to the art of the string quartet. Unified by their devotion to their craft and their commitment to community service, they strive to bring the highest quality of musical performance and education to communities of every socioeconomic status. They currently serve as the Graduate String Quartet in Residence at the University of Colorado Boulder, where they study with the renowned Takács Quartet. Previously, the Astrodon Quartet was the recipient of the 2025-26 Mount Vernon Virtuosi String Quartet Fellowship.

The quartet's first year together featured weekly community concerts throughout Baltimore and Washington, D.C., as well as weekly teaching at two Baltimore City Public Schools. The quartet recently participated in the 2026 Calidore Quartet Seminar and the 2026 Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance String Quartet Academy, where they worked closely with leading artists in the field. They are honored to have been coached by the Takács Quartet, Michael Kannen, Maria Lambros, Paul Katz, and members of the Calidore, Verona and Cavani Quartets.

# Program Notes

## String Quartet No. 9 in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3

Composed in 1806 as the final work in the three quartets commissioned by Count Andrey Razumovsky, Beethoven's Op. 59 quartets radically expanded the expressive and technical possibilities of the string quartet. By this time, Beethoven was struggling with increasingly severe hearing loss, a condition that had driven him into despair and social isolation. In 1802, he confronted the possibility of permanent deafness in the anguished document now known as the Heiligenstadt Testament, before resolving to continue composing. The C-major quartet seems to trace a journey from uncertainty toward an almost defiant affirmation of life.

The opening *Andante con moto* begins with a searching, chromatic introduction. Fragmented gestures and harmonies that resist resolution create an atmosphere of uncertainty, as though the music is struggling to find its bearings. This tension gives way to the brilliant C-major *Allegro vivace*, whose expansive melodies

and surging energy seem to burst into the open. The contrast between the two sections is striking: what begins in hesitation becomes a celebration of movement and possibility.

## String Quartet No. 4

Written in the summer of 1928, Bartók's Fourth String Quartet brings together the rhythmic vitality of folk music and a strikingly modern approach to harmony, texture and instrumental color. Its five movements are arranged in a symmetrical arch: the first and fifth share thematic material, as do the second and fourth, while the slow third movement forms the work's nexus. Across this structure, the music seems to travel from the abstract and tightly constructed world of the opening toward something increasingly physical and humanistic, culminating in a finale whose energy feels almost triumphant.

The fifth movement, *Allegro molto*, brings the quartet's journey to its culmination. Returning to the first movement's driving energy and familiar melodic fragments, the music gathers momentum through increasingly relentless rhythms and explosive exchanges. But what once felt abstract and tightly controlled now seems liberated. The folk-like character of the material comes to the fore, displaying true exuberance. The arch closes, but the music has changed: what began as an intellectual puzzle ends as a celebration of movement, sound and the human impulse to make music.



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