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ISOBEL MCARTHUR

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Polyester

and Pearls

Revisits the Pop Standards of Another Era

By Adam Goldstein

The Great American Songbook isn't inscribed in stone.

What was once musically new is now vintage; what was once the fare of Top 40 radio now has a place in the collective pop culture consciousness. Jeremy Reger and the cast of the upcoming musical revue *Polyester and Pearls* are more than happy to celebrate that changing of the musical guard.

The new, original show—written and arranged by Reger, associate professor of vocal coaching at the CU Boulder College of Music—features music by the pop impresarios of the 1970s, specifically the songwriters behind the era's hits. Burt Bacharach, Jimmy Webb, Laura Nyro, Carole King, the Carpenters and others all figure into the soundtrack of this cabaret show which offers audiences a stage plot partly inspired by the dynamic of the New York City venue 54 Below and the over-the-top, boisterous aesthetic of the era.

"We'll be performing on a cabaret stage in the College of Music's theatre with suggestions of the time period. We'll take the same approach with the costuming," Reger notes. "We're going to take the audience back to an era, one of the *Gong Show* and Carol Burnett."

This setting will help bring the most important element of the show—the music—to life in the proper context, Reger adds. For those who lived through the soundtrack of the '70s, the revue will offer a fresh take on familiar material. For those unfamiliar with the era, the production will serve as a crash course into a

specific chapter in the history of American music—one where songwriters and performers expanded on the folk/rock cues of the 1960s and found a new direction.

That instructive quality isn't just for young audiences, Reger shares. The show also serves as an educational experience for the cast of about 10 performers who are presenting the soundtrack of a specific era.

"We've written this show specifically for our students. In the musical theatre program, we're always trying to think of ways to help students with things they're going to encounter in their professional lives," Reger says, adding that songs like "Moon River," "Say a Little Prayer for You" and "Alfie" could very well be standard tunes for a performer tackling what he calls a "cruise ship revue." "We wanted to open it up and find pieces by all songwriters—women and non-white composers included."

The result is a one-act featuring a live band that will offer audiences and performers alike an important lesson in the shifting topography of what's considered the "classic" era in American songwriting.

"These songs, they're now what we would call the Great American Songbook," Reger says. "That used to be music by the Gershwins and Cole Porter—as time moves on, these take their place. This music is 50 years old now, and they're still such great songs."

*The CU Boulder Musical Theatre Program presents **Polyester and Pearls** Nov. 12-15 in the Music Theatre, Imig Music Building.*



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Artist Series 90th Season

Balances Past Masterworks and Future Innovation



By Adam Goldstein

Tradition has its roots in innovation, especially when it comes to the arts.

In assembling the lineup for the 90th season of CU Presents' Artist Series, Rudy Betancourt wanted to explore that link between established masterworks and the bold reinvention that's always marked great art. For Betancourt, who will begin his second season as the Artist Series director in the fall, that throughline is critical to understanding the history of the concert series as well as its future.

"Across the seven performances this season, we'll experience different performing arts forms—from dance to music to dramatic monologue. We'll be spotlighting music from the Baroque and modern eras, we'll be taking well-established cultural heritage and mixing it with technology. We'll be making it evident that there is an evolving relationship between tradition and innovation."

Adds Betancourt, "This season, we are combining innovation with respect for the past in order to create a new tradition."

Indeed, over nearly 100 years, the Artist Series has mixed the old and new, the cutting edge and the undisputed classics. For its 90th season, Betancourt builds on that foundation, relying partly on the works of Ludwig Van Beethoven as a connecting thread.

The season kicks off with Pinchas Zukerman and Shai Wosner performing Beethoven's violin sonatas. Victor Quijada's dancer-athlete troupe returns in November for a dynamic performance by RUBBERBAND. Mariachi Garibaldi de Jaime Cuéllar and Ballet Folklórico del Río Grande will celebrate the holiday season with *Campana Sobre Campana: Christmas in México!* in December. Australia cirque troupe Circa will unite with pianist Vitaly Starikov to perform Bach's *The Art of Fugue* in time for Valentine's Day 2027.

In March, renowned actor John Malkovich will lead *Roll Over Beethoven*, a theatrical portrait of the late composer from a crucial stage in his life. April will feature a performance from percussion ensemble Third Coast Percussion and Pulitzer Prize-finalist composer/performer/electronic musician Jlin. And the 90th season will wrap with a visit from jazz masters Stanley Clarke and Hiromi celebrating the music of Chick Corea and beyond.

It's a lineup that fuses classical masters, contemporary dance icons and a towering figure from the stage and screen. For Betancourt, these diverse experiences point to a common theme of artistic progress, struggle and reinvention.

"The theme of the season from a high altitude is transformation through artistic reinvention," Betancourt notes, specifically highlighting the reappearance of Beethoven throughout the series. In addition to the season debut—featuring Zukerman, a returning master musician performing the violin sonatas—and *Roll Over Beethoven* which will frame the composer's loss of hearing in a dramatic framework, there are other nods to the late composer woven throughout the season.

Just as Beethoven had to evolve over his creative life—most notably, dealing with the loss of his hearing—the artists featured in the 90th season have drawn from established norms to create new directions. It's a season that offers what it means to make art—discovering and rediscovering the intricate balance between respect for the past and an unyielding commitment to pushing the boundaries of what's next.



CU ★ PRESENTS

Artist Series

Events 2026-27

8 OCT **Pinchas Zukerman & Shai Wosner**
Beethoven Violin Sonatas

8 NOV **RUBBERBAND**
Ever So Slightly Redux

18 DEC **Christmas in Mexico!**
Mariachi Garibaldi de Jaime Cuéllar
& Ballet Folklórico del Río Grande

13 FEB **J.S. Bach's The Art of Fugue by Circa**

21 MARCH **Roll Over Beethoven with John Malkovich**
Orchester Wiener Akademie
Martin Haselböck, conductor

2 APRIL **Jlin + Third Coast Percussion**
Vernacular

17 APRIL **Stanley Clarke & Hiromi**
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All performances take place in Macky Auditorium. The Nov. 8 and March 21 events are at 4 p.m.; all other Artist Series events are at 7:30 p.m.

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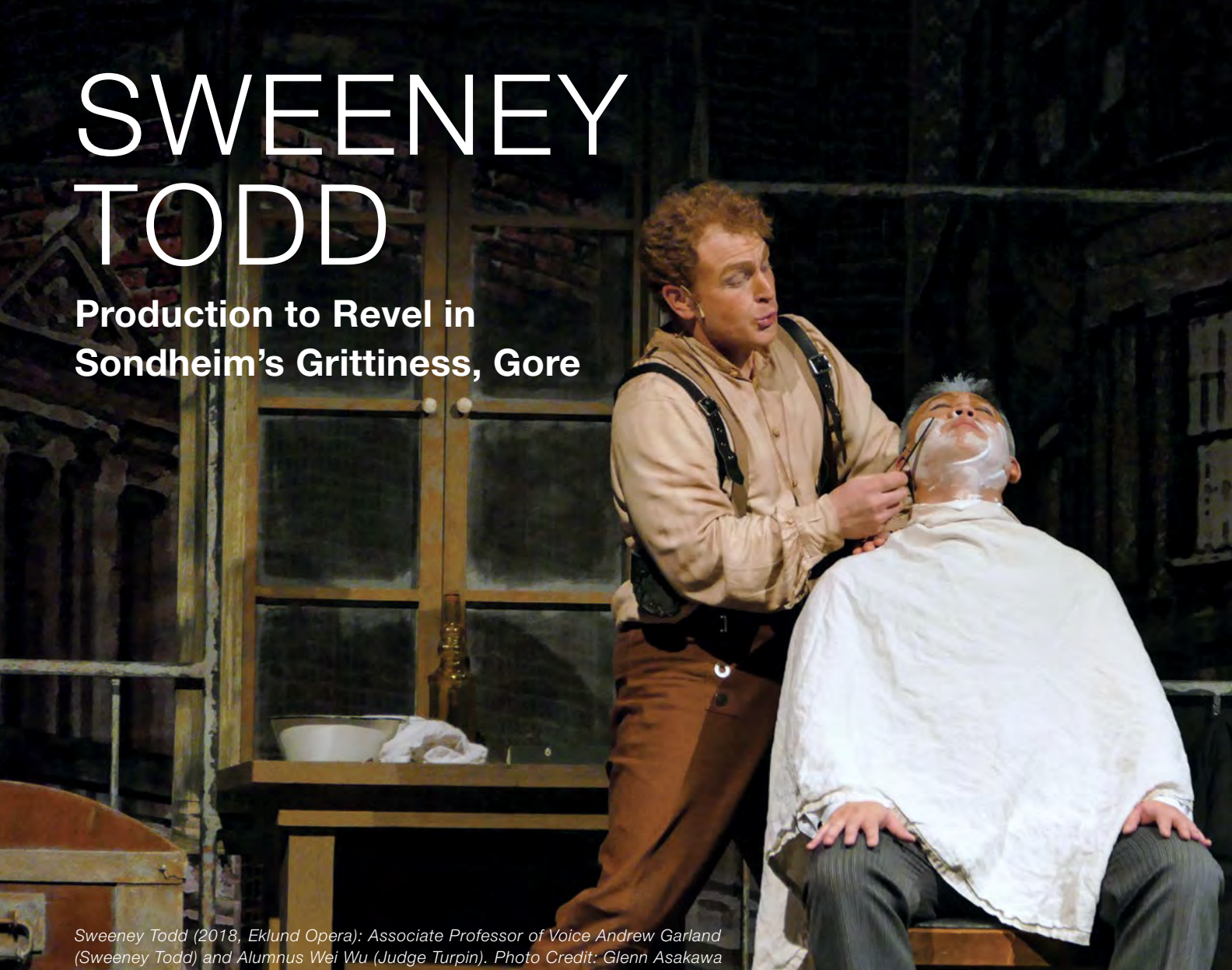


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SWEENEY TODD

**Production to Revel in
Sondheim's Grittiness, Gore**



Sweeney Todd (2018, Eklund Opera): Associate Professor of Voice Andrew Garland (Sweeney Todd) and Alumnus Wei Wu (Judge Turpin). Photo Credit: Glenn Asakawa

By Adam Goldstein

It would be easy to make the antics of the macabre musical *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* cartoonish in terms of its gore and melodrama.

After all, the iconic 1979 musical with words and music by Stephen Sondheim centers on a murderous barber bent on revenge—one who acts as judge, jury and executioner of his victims. The musical, set in 19th-century London, features a title character drawn from Victorian penny dreadfuls who turns his victims into literal fodder for meat pies.

Plenty of directors have made the choice to push the dark drama to almost farcical levels—including Harold Prince who directed the original, 1979 Broadway production. In Prince's conception, characters stepped out of the brutal onstage action of the piece,

offering asides and shifting the dynamic toward the gruesome comedy of caricature.

Associate Teaching Professor of Musical Theatre Robert Westenberg doesn't want to take that approach for the production of *Sweeney Todd* that will run in Macky Auditorium in October. Westenberg, an accomplished performer and educator who's directing the production, is intent on drawing on the gritty reality of the setting, the premise and the characters to find the show's full impact.

"I think the show should stay connected and grounded the entire time. The songs, the scenes, the scope—I think that all needs to be deeply, humanly motivated and entirely believable," Westenberg maintains. "We mean what we say and we say what we do. I love the bloody, macabre, thickness of the plot. The stakes are high and we never step outside of that."

Plenty of artistic experience undergirds Westenberg's creative decisions. His credits speak for themselves—from his Tony Award-nominated role in the original production of *Into the Woods* on Broadway to his stint replacing Mandy Patinkin in the title role of *Sunday In the Park with George*. An impressive roster of national tours, film and television credits also make up his substantial resume.

Now dedicated to teaching, Westenberg is excited to bring his insights to bear on *Sweeney Todd*—a production he calls “a great show for the university level.” With a doubled cast that includes graduate students, Westenberg marvels at the artists he has on hand to bring his vision to life: “That speaks very highly of the College of Music program and the depth of talent here.”

The performers will have the chance to benefit from Westenberg's years of experience on stage and film as well as the insights gleaned from a personal friendship with Stephen Sondheim.

“I worked with Stephen and I got to know him very well,” Westenberg says. “It's going to be fun to bring that inside track to Steve and Steve's mind to the students, to offer perspective on what he thought and what he expected with certain moments and characterizations.

“I think that's going to be a joyful experience,” he adds.

*The CU Boulder Eklund Opera and Musical Theatre programs present **Sweeney Todd** Oct. 23-25 at Macky Auditorium.*

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Opera and Musical Theatre Events 2026-27



23-25 OCT

Music and Lyrics by
Stephen Sondheim
Book by Hugh Wheeler
Macky Auditorium



12-15 NOV

A 1970s Songbook
Music Theatre



5-7 MARCH

Music by
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte
Macky Auditorium



14-18 APRIL

By Roger O. Hirson
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Music Theatre

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Dual Anniversaries

Open Artist Series Season

By Henry Michaels

When the stage lights brighten and the expectant pre-concert hush falls over the audience in Macky Auditorium on Oct. 8, it will mark a significant occasion for CU Presents: The opening of the 90th Anniversary of the Artist Series. And just in case one momentous anniversary is not sufficient, this concert actually marks *two*. That's because for organizations around the world, the 2026-2027 season is being dedicated to the bicentennial of Ludwig van Beethoven's death in March 1827.

There are no finer artists with whom to celebrate these dual anniversaries than violinist Pinchas Zukerman and pianist Shai Vosner. Over the course of his more than half-century career, Zukerman has cemented a legacy as one of the world's preeminent musicians. Whether it be as a virtuoso violinist and violist, a devoted pedagogue, a conductor or a recording artist—his more than 100 albums have resulted in an impressive 21 Grammy nominations and two wins—Zukerman is a musician whose reputation precedes him in any venue. He also has a long history with this venue, having performed on the Artist Series in 1978, 1986 and 1994. A fitting choice for this anniversary season!

Zukerman's partner for this performance is Shai Vosner, a pianist who has been lauded by NPR's *All Things Considered* for



his "keen musical mind and deep musical soul." An avid recitalist and chamber musician, Vosner performs regularly on stages spanning the globe. His lengthy list of orchestral appearances includes performances with the BBC orchestras, LSO Saint Luke's, the Vienna Philharmonic and the orchestras of Atlanta, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Toronto. Particularly noteworthy during this Beethoven bicentennial season are Vosner's chamber arrangements of Beethoven's symphonies which have been performed and recorded by Emanuel Ax, Leonidas Kavakos and Yo-Yo Ma.



In honor of the Beethoven bicentennial season, Zukerman's and Vosner's program will feature three violin sonatas by the man himself. Beethoven composed a total of 10 violin sonatas and this concert will feature a symmetrical selection: The First, Fifth and Tenth Sonatas. The Violin Sonata No. 1 in D Major and Violin Sonata No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24—known by the nickname of "Spring"—both date from Beethoven's Early Period, while the Violin Sonata No. 10 in G Major, Op. 96 is widely considered to be the final work of his Middle Period. These three remarkable works are suffused with all the beauty, the drama and the wit that is to be expected from the man who is perhaps classical music's most revered composer.

Pinchas Zukerman and Shai Vosner perform on the Artist Series at Macky Auditorium on Oct. 8.



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Poiesis Quartet

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Program

To Unpathed Waters, Undreamed Shores

(2021) 22'

Michi Wiancko (b. 1976)

- I. Pelagic Within
- II. Dream of the Xerces Blue
- III. Central Park Microbial
- IV. Invisible Eviction
- V. Crying, Together
- VI. Follow the Water
- VII. Rise Up

Tapestry of the Beloved Beatified (2026) 18'

Jeff Scott (b. 1967)

Intermission

String Quartet no. 7, "Surfacing" (2025) 15'

Kevin Lau (b. 1982)

String Quartet No. 1, "Calvary" (1956) 16'

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson (1932-2004)

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Rondo: Allegro vivace

Program Notes

About the Program

"An artist's duty, as far as I'm concerned, is to reflect the times." These famous words of renowned African American musician-activist Nina Simone continue to ring with truth today. As humans, we are constantly investigating and responding to the conditions of society, and this program explores our inherently political lives with power, intimacy and sincerity.

The first half of the program invites hope:

Michi Wiancko, who reflects on the climate disasters that have devastated vulnerable populations, honors the resilience and eternal beauty of the natural world.

The program features two of our most meaningful commissions: Jeff Scott, commissioned through the Caramoor Center, highlights the well-documented history of LGBTQ+ artist-activists Marsha P. Johnson, Harvey Milk, Silvia Rivera and Jeanne Manford. With exhilarating and complex textures featuring sections of spoken chant, in Jeff's words, "their stories rise through the music not as relics of struggle but as luminous presences." Following intermission, Lau's Quartet No. 7—which was inspired by a familial trauma, when the composer's newborn son was diagnosed with a rare liver disease—navigates the parallel processes of recovery and growth, surfacing from the depths of strife and hardship with a renewed exuberance.

We end with Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson's inimitable "Calvary" quartet, which has been in our quartet's repertoire from our very first time playing together. Based on the African American spiritual of the same title, this work tells the story of Jesus' crucifixion, signifying the resistance and deliverance of Black

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Americans in the past, present, and future. Ultimately, this program is an artistic lesson in resilience and strength, providing us with an opportunity to mourn, celebrate and grow together. A better world is possible, and it starts here.

Tapestry of the Beloved Beatified (2026) 18'

Jeff Scott (b. 1967)

Jeff Scott's *Tapestry of the Beloved Beatified* honors queer radicals in history, including Marsha P. Johnson and Harvey Milk, by canonizing them as saints. The music uses a range of musical traditions from Africa, including dance rhythms, spoken prayer-like text in languages between Yoruba and Latin, and mimicry of the mbira, a traditional West African finger-plucking instrument. There are emotions ranging from violence and sadness to hope and celebration. It's a really beautiful and reflective work!

Program note by the Poiesis Quartet

String Quartet no. 7, "Surfacing" (2025) 15'

Kevin Lau (b. 1982)

My last three string quartets were composed virtually back-to-back over a period of two years. Perhaps naturally, I came to see the Seventh Quartet as the final instalment in a trilogy of sorts, which began with the fantastical Fifth ("The Train to Improbable Places"), followed by the considerably darker Sixth ("...like the stars in the firmament"). In my mind, the Seventh offers dramatic closure to the musical and existential questions posed by these previous quartets, while simultaneously paving the way for new horizons. The title was inspired by a sensation I can only describe as a kind of defiant euphoria. It is the feeling of emerging from the abyss into a bright, almost impossibly open space. At times, there is a violence to this surfacing, like a gasp of air after being underwater for too long. As a metaphor for healing, it is also fragile and by no means linear, requiring both hope and resolve to sustain.

The quartet opens with the simplest of motivic units: a rising semitone, followed by the same pattern a whole step lower. Housed within the framework of a loose passacaglia, this pattern comes to dominate the entire work via a series of variations that escalate in intensity and scale as the music unfolds. Punctuated by airy silences, the initial statement of this motive takes the form of a "poppy" chord progression, on top of which an operatic first violin soars. Subsequent variations build in energy, culminating in an explosive fugal exposition that borrows freely from baroque

idioms—the first of several stylistic left-turns into the past. Far from being ironic or nostalgic, these deviations have a searching quality, emblematic of the tension between memory and present. At times, the memory turns nightmarish; a lyrical, child-like episode in the work's central section becomes increasingly fragmented and anguished. But near the end, a new melody surfaces; set against a joyous, Celtic-influenced accompaniment, this melody—which I have dubbed the "Robin" theme—draws the music into a rejuvenated landscape just before the piece's resolute final measures.

The creation of my Seventh Quartet took place a month after an experience which left an indelible mark on my identity and sense of purpose. In the second month of his life, my son Robin was diagnosed with a serious disease that necessitated a liver transplant—eventually made possible by my wife, who donated a portion of her liver to save his life. After half a year spent in the hospital, our family returned home intact, filled with relief and gratitude—but also battered and haunted by what we had endured. While I often prefer to keep my artistic and personal worlds separate, I cannot help but view this piece through the lens of physical and emotional recovery—one in which virtuosity, by turns searing, defiant, and joyous, lays the groundwork for catharsis.

I am grateful to the Poiesis Quartet for commissioning this work. Their electrifying presence and transcendent interpretations are a perfect complement to the spirit of "Surfacing."

Program note by Kevin Lau

About the Poiesis Quartet

Called a “vibrant young ensemble mid-liftoff” by The New York Times, the Poiesis Quartet has emerged as one of the most distinctive young string quartets of its generation. Formed at Oberlin Conservatory in 2022, Poiesis is the recipient of the 2026 Cleveland Quartet Award and the Grand Prize and Canadian Commission Prize at the 2025 Banff International String Quartet Competition. A 2025 performance at Caramoor was named one of The New York Times’ Best Classical Performances of the year, with the ensemble praised for its “multifaceted artistry.”

In the 2026-27 season, Poiesis maintains an expansive international schedule. Two European tours, in September 2026 and January 2027, include the Quartet’s Lucerne Festival debut and appearances in Essen, Berlin, Budapest, Hannover and Cologne. Across North America, the Quartet performs at Strathmore, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, and the Brevard Music Center, with additional engagements from Boulder, La Jolla, and Seattle to New York, Chicago, Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax and Salt Lake City. The Cleveland Quartet Award will also bring Poiesis to a consortium of eight prominent American presenters, including Carnegie Hall, over the coming seasons.

Poiesis pairs a rich, cohesive ensemble sound with a bold understanding of what the string quartet can be. Critics have celebrated the musicians’ “palpable chemistry and remarkable warmth” (San Francisco Classical Voice) and a collective sound “rich from top to bottom” (Cleveland Classical). Collectively queer, the Quartet brings its full identity to the stage through expressive performances and programs that place canonical works in conversation with contemporary voices.

The Quartet’s name comes from the ancient Greek concept of *poiesis*: the act of making or bringing something new into being. For Poiesis, that idea extends beyond commissioning music. It encompasses building lasting relationships with composers, creating new contexts for familiar repertoire, and making space for stories and identities historically underrepresented in chamber music.

That conviction was fully visible at Banff, where Poiesis—the only North American ensemble selected to compete—presented an entirely contemporary final-round program featuring music by Jerod Impichchaachaaha’ Tate, Brian Raphael Nabors,

Joe Hisaishi and Kevin Lau. In addition to winning the competition’s Grand Prize, Poiesis received the Canadian Commission Prize for its interpretation of Kati Agócs’s newly commissioned *Rapprochement*. The Quartet’s earlier distinctions include the Grand Prize and Lift Every Voice Prize at the 2023 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and the Gold Medal and BIPOC Prize at the 2023 St. Paul String Quartet Competition.

For Poiesis, commissioning is an act of relationship-building as much as repertoire-building. The Quartet commissioned Chinese Canadian composer Kevin Lau’s String Quartet No. 7, “Surfacing”, giving its world premiere at the Chautauqua Institution in 2025. Inspired by the fragile, nonlinear passage through trauma toward recovery, the work has become an important part of Poiesis’s touring repertoire.

That commitment also animates A Love Letter to the Queer Community, a project through which Poiesis commissioned five works by queer and trans composers of color connected to Oberlin. Premiered in March 2026, the project grew from the Quartet’s desire to collaborate with friends and give back to the community that helped bring its members together. Through these works, Poiesis centers friendship, reciprocity, experimentation, and artistic freedom while carrying the composers’ music to audiences far beyond its original community.

In July 2026, Poiesis and Caramoor presented the world premiere of Jeff Scott’s *Tapestry of the Beloved Beatified*, a new commission honoring four queer revolutionaries. Together, the Quartet’s work with Lau, Scott, and the composers of A Love Letter reflects an expanding body of repertoire concerned with identity, recovery, memory, and the possibility of a more inclusive future.

The Quartet’s recording projects reflect the same collaborative spirit. Its 2024 debut album, *as we are*, was released by Bright Shiny Things and features world-premiere recordings with mezzo-soprano Nancy Maultsby. Cleveland Classical praised the ensemble’s “bottomless depth,” while the album established Poiesis as an ensemble committed to giving new works a life beyond their premieres.

Poiesis is currently the Quartet-in-Residence at the Curtis Institute of Music through a fellowship program for young quartets of extraordinary promise. The Quartet formerly served as Graduate Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where it studied with the Ariel Quartet. Poiesis was also the 2025–26 Ernst Stiefel String Quartet-in-Residence at Caramoor and the 2025 St. Lawrence Emerging String Quartet at Stanford University. Previous residencies and festival experiences have taken the Quartet to Uruguay, Italy, France and Canada. In 2024, Poiesis won Concert Artists Guild's Louis and Susan Meisel Competition and joined the CAG roster.

The Poiesis Quartet comprises violinists **Sarah Ying Ma** and **Coco Mi**, violist **Jasper de Boor** and cellist **Drew Dansby**. Founded at Oberlin, the Quartet was mentored in its formative years by Sibbi Bernhardtsson of the Pacifica Quartet and members of the Verona Quartet. Its members' backgrounds span Oberlin and Juilliard, solo and orchestral performance, education and interdisciplinary work.

When not playing chamber music, the members of Poiesis love learning new languages, sharing ice cream cakes and taking long walks on the beach.

Members of the Poiesis Quartet perform on instruments and bows generously loaned by Jonathan Solars Fine Violins.

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23-25 OCT **Sweeney Todd**
The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

1-2 NOV **Takács Quartet**
Additional events throughout the year.

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13 FEB **J.S. Bach's The Art of Fugue**
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Takács Quartet Events 2026-27

13-14 Sept. 13, 4 p.m.
SEPT Sept. 14, 7:30 p.m.

4-5 Poiesis Quartet
OCT Oct. 4, 4 p.m.
Oct. 5, 7:30 p.m.

1-2 Nov. 1, 4 p.m.
NOV Nov. 2, 7:30 p.m.

10-11 Jan. 10, 4 p.m.
JAN Jan. 11, 7:30 p.m.

28-1 Feb. 28, 4 p.m.
FEB-MAR March 1, 7:30 p.m.

25-26 April 25, 4 p.m.
APRIL April 26, 7:30 p.m.

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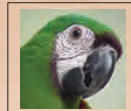


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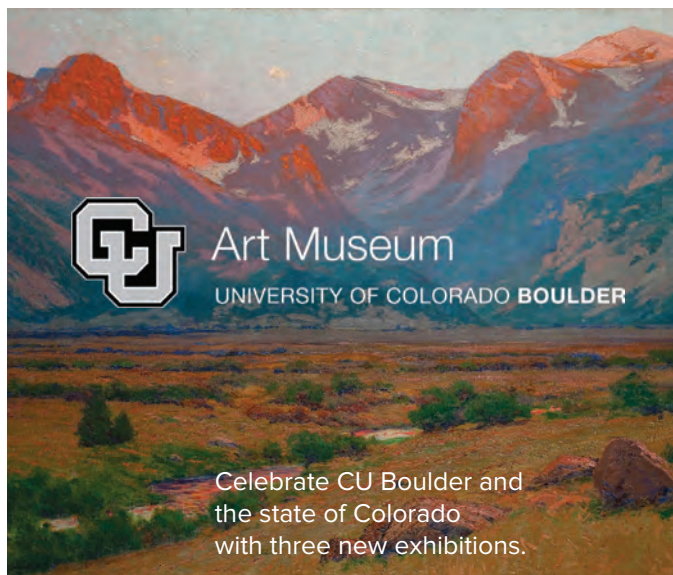
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CU Boulder Professor **Shanti Simon** Views Music As Connection

*By Christie Sounart
Originally published in the Coloradoan*

Last year, Professor of Conducting Shanti Simon joined the College of Music from the University of Oklahoma as director of bands where she oversees the band program, leads the wind conducting program and teaches undergraduate conducting. Previously, she served as flight commander and associate conductor with the United States Air Force Academy Band in Colorado Springs and the United States Air Force Band in Washington, D.C. Her leadership at CU Boulder is guided by music's power to bring people together, an insight she credits to her global travels.

You've traveled the world with the U.S. Air Force Band. What performance is among the most memorable for you?

The Air Force gave me an opportunity to do what I love as a profession and serve my country at the same time. My first performance was memorable because it was my first assignment in Washington, D.C. It was in 2011 for the National Tree Lighting at the White House with the Airmen of Note, one of the best jazz ensembles in the world. As a young trumpet player, I grew up listening to them on cassette tapes. And then, here I was, conducting this group for the president of the United States and the first family at the White House.

But what I think are the most memorable performances I did with the Air Force are the full honors funerals at Arlington National Cemetery. There are bands of all services out there 365 days

a year honoring our fallen heroes. Allowing families a space to feel emotions during a fragile time of their lives is really meaningful. I'll always remember the professionalism and care that was put into those funerals, and what it felt like to be honoring something much bigger than me or the bands.

When deployed to the Middle East, what were your main duties?

I was deployed in 2016 for six months. My job was leading a band for the Air Force Central Command, and I worked closely with the public affairs officer to determine where the band could be most helpful to meet the Air Force commander's priorities. We were stationed in Qatar and went to Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan, Kuwait and Egypt.

Before I left, I wondered about the purpose of military bands in the region. It didn't take long for me to understand. The mission was twofold: First, to support the troops and bring a taste of home to the forward operating bases and second, to build relationships with our host nations and allies in the region. Every day, music was able to open doors to conversations and connections between people.

Can you give examples of this?

We would often learn the songs in the native languages of the countries that we were in. We would collaborate with other musicians, sometimes play on radio programs. We were not just representing the Air Force—we were representing the United States in these missions.

When we were at school performances, we knew these interactions with kids could have a long-term impact on how they view the United States. Once, the band was setting up in a cafeteria surrounded by windows. The kids were coming to the windows and looking in. They could not wait to get in. Then they had a wonderful experience singing along and, at the end, the kids came up and hugged the musicians, hugged someone in an American uniform. I looked at those interactions as a chipping away at the negative narrative and replacing it with a positive experience that really only music can do.

Another time, we went to a NATO base in Kabul, Afghanistan, to perform for the troops. One day, we were instructed to go to the Afghan side of the base. To do this, we had to get armored up and travel in an armored vehicle from one side of the base to the other. We set up in a hangar to create an atmosphere where the NATO and Afghan troops could share time together. When we first started the concert, the troops kept to different sides and didn't talk to each other. But by the end of the hour, people had gone to the other side and were having conversations. We gave them a chance to get to know each other as people through music.

Was there something about CU Boulder that inspired you and your family to move to Colorado?

The College of Music has a mission to develop its students as universal musicians. This resonated with me because, after my professional experience with the Air Force bands, I saw a disconnect between what I learned in my studies and what I ended up doing with the Air Force. Now, I want to try to bridge that gap so that we're preparing our students the best we can for the professional jobs that exist beyond CU Boulder.

What else should we know about your work here?

I'm thinking about crafting seamless concert experiences through innovative audience engagement. I want people to come to the concert hall and have something happen in the space that makes them want to come back. I've been exploring all kinds of things, from video to lighting to memorized performances where we take away chairs and stands.

What do you do when you're not conducting?

I have a wonderful husband, Jebodiah, who supports my career and everything I do, and two young kids. A lot of my time and joy is spending time with my family. I still serve in the Oklahoma Air National Guard as a public affairs officer. I also love hiking. I'm really excited that this will be my first full summer in this area.

What else should we know about you?

I love music, I love people and I love the connection that music brings for people. I've really found my place here at CU Boulder, and I plan to spend the rest of my career building on the legacy of this incredible program.



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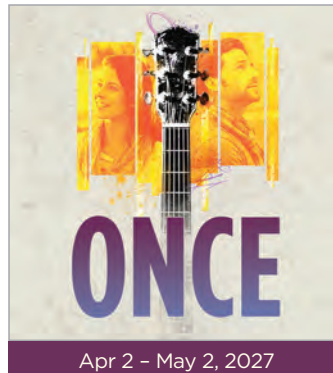
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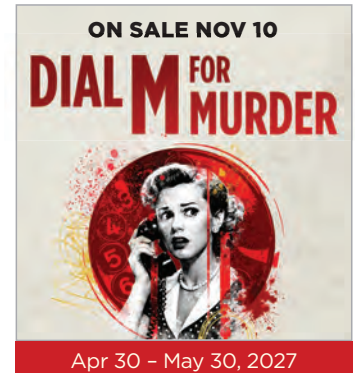
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MESSAGE
IN A BOTTLE



4/3/2027 at 4pm

Dairy Arts Center

featuring **Vadim Gluzman with CORE**

Bach's sublime E Major Violin Concerto, + Vasks, Heinichen, and a world premiere!

SANDS OF TIME

featuring **Mina Gajic with CORE**



5/28/2027 at 7:30pm

Dairy Arts Center

Mendelssohn's blazing Piano Concerto (1822), + Graupner and J.S. Bach!

