

CU ★ PRESENTS

2023-24 Season



College of Music  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

## NEED TO KNOW FOR THE SHOW

- Refrain from using electronic devices **during** the performance. Feel free to view this program on your device at **any time prior to** the performance, **during intermission** or **after the performance ends**.
- Photography and video recordings of any type are strictly prohibited during the performance.
- Smoking is not permitted anywhere. CU Boulder is a smoke-free campus.

**CU ★ PRESENTS** is the home of performing arts at the University of Colorado Boulder.



The mission of the **University of Colorado Boulder College of Music** is to inspire artistry and discovery, together.



CU Boulder acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories and ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Ute and many other Native American nations. Their forced removal from these territories has caused devastating and lasting impacts.

**[Read full land acknowledgment.](#)**

# SoundWorks

7:30 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2024

Grusin Music Hall

## Program

**sometimes it's nice to just feel like a noodle:**

**snap in half/boil the ocean/flip at a wall**

Rain Michael

*Holly McMahon and Rain Michael, piano*

*Madison Tallman, Karena Pruitt, Isabel Goodwin, Alex Loran and Lucy Rogers,  
low winds*

## Two Piano Suite, Op. 18

James Morris

I. Fantasy Waltz

II. Funeral March

*Abby Terrill and James Morris, piano*

## Naakishchiin ana'i for flute and marimba (adapted for violin and piano)

Raven Chacon

*Michiko Theurer, violin*

*Abby Kellems, piano*

## Living Space

Michiko Theurer

*Guided by Nicholas Felder, Abby Kellems, Egemen Kesikli, Holly McMahon,  
Rain Michael and Michiko Theurer*

**—Intermission—**

# Musica Ricercata

György Ligeti

- I. Sostenuto – Misurato – Prestissimo
- V. Rubato. Lamentoso
- VI. Allegro molto capriccioso
- VII. Cantabile, molto legato
- VIII. Vivace. Energico
- XI. (Omaggio a Girolamo Frescobaldi) Andante misurato e tranquillo

*Keenan Powell, piano*

# Broken Reef

Blake Clawson

*Er-Hsuan Li, piano*

# Pancake Opera

Libretto by Blair Snyder

Music by Holly McMahon

*Camila Rodriguez, voice*

*Holly McMahon, piano*

# Program notes

## sometimes it's nice to just feel like a noodle: snap in half/boil the ocean/flip at a wall

Rain Michael

Originally conceptualized as a piece for great bass recorder with piano accompaniment, *noodle* grew into an exploration in aleatoric techniques, group improvisation, and variations for any combination of low winds and piano(s).

## Living Space

Michiko Theurer

*Living Space* was born at a Tiny Studio Salon, one of the parties I hosted in an apartment that was definitely not intended to hold twenty-plus people. I invited my friends to hum the resonance for any sound that caught their ears, and played a little improvisation that echoed back to me from our densely packed studio apartment like the sound of a cathedral.

Your invitation for this piece:

*Listen around you and inside you for any sound that resonates with you.*

*On your next exhalation, hum that sound for the full length of your breath.  
(Don't worry if the sound you make is different from the sound you heard.)*

*Repeat as often as it brings you joy.*

In this iteration, I've invited the performers to reimagine beloved sounds as constellations of stars, and to offer these sounds to all of us as an invitation to resonance. We would be honored if you would join us in bringing this space to life.



# Broken Reef

Blake Clawson

The germinal idea for *Broken Reef* came from an unfinished sketch in one of my composition journals. I had drafted a few phrases for solo piano several years ago, but never developed the music further. One of the shorthand harmonies in the sketch was a double polychord: D-sharp/F-sharp/G-sharp. This caught my attention, and eventually developed into the harmonic language of *Broken Reef*.

Alongside the musical construction of this piece came its conceptual development. The first phrases conjured the image of an underwater scene, and after some consideration, I felt that the harmonic language and motivic material were evocative of the plight of coral reef bleaching. The music is sometimes shimmering, contemplative, and colorful, and at other times tense, pale, and desolate. This parallels the state of many reefs worldwide: often called the “rainforests of the sea” on account of the biodiversity they foster, reefs are beautiful and teeming with life when healthy, but as the effects of the climate crisis cause environmental stress, they fade and die. This death causes a ripple effect across oceanic ecosystems. My aim in the development of this piece was to blend the contrast of beauty and death into a unified sonic space to represent the tenuous survival chances the reefs face, and further, what this means for the biodiversity of the oceans.

# Pancake Opera

Libretto by Blair Snyder

Music by Holly McMahon

Writing *The Pancake Opera* was a profoundly joyful experience, and it could not have happened without the support of my good friend Camila Rodriguez, who told me she was willing to perform anything with me as long as it was as a pancake, and Blair Snyder, whose lyrics made this piece what it became: an oddly touching, dramatic account of the entire life cycle of a pancake, from its perspective.

Text:

The primordial ooze of my being is poured from the ladle. My form pools in the griddle, heated by the fire lit by the spark of life.

From near white to faint gold to tan - I stay like this for a moment too long, and fear I may lose my flavor, I may burn, and become almost crystalline.

The spatula is my salvation. It scrapes across the griddle and finds purchase beneath me, ripping and snapping the parts of me that are too slow to give way to its gentle pressure. Those parts are left behind, to burn and grow brittle from the unrelenting heat.

I am flipped and laid back down. The welcoming, welcoming heat, embracing me. Embracing me as the process begins anew.

Again and again and again, my siblings surround me. Our siblings. Greedy hands reach for us. My sibling and I are divided. My siblings and I are divided. Blades rain down, blades rain down around me as my siblings are torn apart. Torn apart by blades and brown liquid.

Thirty two. Thirty two chattering pearls grind down upon me. Again and again and again and again and again, they peel me from my impalement. My life, poorly spent, must end.

There is nothing. Nothing. The fear of the past is replaced with tranquility. Tranquility. It is done; this was my destiny, to become energy. My destiny. Destiny. Destiny. Destiny. Destiny. Destiny. Destiny. Destiny.

# Personnel

*Text that is bold and underlined is a hyperlink; click or tap for more information.*

## CU Boulder SoundWorks

**Egemen Kesikli**, director

**Annika Socolofsky**, faculty coach

**Nicholas Felder**, outreach coordinator

**Rain Michael**, stage manager

**Abby Kellems, Gracie Fagan and Josie Arnett**, social media

## Raven Chacon

Raven Chacon is a composer, performer and installation artist from Fort Defiance, Navajo Nation. As a solo artist, Chacon has exhibited, performed or had works performed at LACMA, The Renaissance Society, San Francisco Electronic Music Festival, REDCAT, Vancouver Art Gallery, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Borealis Festival, SITE Santa Fe, Chaco Canyon, Ende Tymes Festival and The Kennedy Center. As a member of Postcommodity from 2009-2018, he co-created artworks presented at the Whitney Biennial, documenta 14, Carnegie International 57, as well as the 2-mile long land art installation Repellent Fence.

A recording artist over the span of 22 years, Chacon has appeared on more than 80 releases on various national and international labels. His 2020 Manifest Destiny opera *Sweet Land*, co-composed with Du Yun, received critical acclaim from The LA Times, The New York Times and The New Yorker, and was named 2021 Opera of the Year by the Music Critics Association of North America.

Since 2004, he has mentored over more than 300 high school Native composers in the writing of new string quartets for the Native American Composer Apprenticeship Project (NACAP). Chacon is the recipient of the United States Artists fellowship in Music, The Creative Capital award in Visual Arts, The Native Arts and Cultures Foundation artist fellowship, the American Academy's Berlin Prize for Music Composition, the Bemis Center's Ree Kaneko Award, and in 2022 will serve as the Pew Fellow-in-Residence.



His solo artworks are in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Smithsonian's American Art Museum and National Museum of the American Indian, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Getty Research Institute, the University of New Mexico Art Museum, and various private collections.

## Blake Clawson

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

## Rain Michael (they/them)

Multi-instrumentalist and composer Rain Michael is interested in subjective experiences around music performance and perception. Michael's music—which pulls from their studies in psychology, linguistics, leadership, and cognitive science—has been performed by the Colorado Wind Ensemble, and HOCKET, ~Nois, Duo Cortona, and others at CU Boulder SoundWorks concerts. Their piece *seeds to plant (in an unmarked grave)* was selected for performance in the 2023 Nief-Norf Call-For-Scores. Michael's current focuses surround aleatoric techniques alongside questions such as “How do I make a single note groove?” (with saxophones!) and “How many keyboards can I fit on a stage?” (at least 10). Outside of music, they enjoy hanging with friends and collecting stickers.

## Holly McMahon

Throughout her life, Holly McMahon has worked with and connected countless musicians across several genres including film, theater, dance and contemporary music performance. She continues to explore the use of new instrumentations and stylistic choices through her studies of music composition, music technology and piano performance at the University of Colorado Boulder. She is most celebrated for her works for solo piano, which typically feature carefully sculpted, running lines and evocative yet comfortable rhythmic textures.

## James H. Morris

James H. Morris is a pianist pursuing his DMA in piano performance at the University of Colorado Boulder. He currently studies with Jennifer Hayghe, the last student of the legendary artist-teacher Adele Marcus. Morris recently graduated from CU Boulder with his MM (2022) and Westminster Choir College of Rider University, earning BM degrees in both piano and theory/composition (2020). At Westminster Choir College, he studied piano with James Goldsworthy and theory/composition with Stefan Young.

Morris has attended festivals such as Interlochen Arts Camp studying with Robert Satterlee (2015), and Brevard Music Festival studying with Jihye Chang-Sung (2018). He was named alternate for the New Jersey MTNA Competition Young Artist division in 2019. An active composer, he participated in the inaugural season of the NATS Mentoring Program for Composers in 2020. He completed the second book of *12 Little Preludes* which were premiered by Jennifer Hayghe.

## Michiko Theurer

Michiko Theurer (pronounced toy-rer) is a multimedia artist and performer who received her DMA at CU Boulder in 2017, where she studied with Harumi Rhodes and Ed Dusinger. She is currently living in Boulder and completing her PhD in musicology (broadly defined) at Stanford. She loves hosting creative sharing parties, dancing around her apartment, and dogs.

# CALL FOR ELECTRONIC MUSIC

The annual **64-Bit Electronic Music Composition Competition** is soliciting original electronic music that lasts 64 seconds from non-composition major CU students.

Three finalists from each category will be chosen, and their music will be played at the SoundWorks concert at the ATLAS Black Box Theater. The audience will pick the two winners.

## COMPETE FOR \$200 IN TWO CATEGORIES: EDM and SOUND ART

### Open to:

Current CU graduate and undergraduate students  
(non-composition majors)

### Online Submission deadline:

11:59 p.m., Wednesday Jan. 31, 2024 at 11:59 pm.

### Performance and live voting:

7:30 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 14, 2024  
ATLAS Black Box Theater

### Apply at:

[tinyurl.com/Soundworks64](https://tinyurl.com/Soundworks64)

# Upcoming Events

*Event details are subject to change, but the CU Presents website will always be up to date. Click or tap below to explore your options.*



## Artist Series

*Tickets start at \$20*



## Eklund Opera

*Tickets start at \$15*



## Bachelor of Music in Musical Theatre Program

*Tickets start at \$17*



## Faculty Tuesdays and Guest Artist Recitals

*Free, no tickets required*





## Student Ensembles

*Free, no tickets required*



## Student Recitals

*Free, no tickets required*



## Educational Events

*Free, reservation requirements vary*



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