

WINTER 2019

MFA in  
*music composition*  
CONCERTS

- *The City of Tomorrow*  
TUESDAY, 2/12, 8 PM
- *The City of Tomorrow & Anna's Ghost*  
WEDNESDAY, 2/13, 8 PM
- *Anna's Ghost & invoke*  
THURSDAY, 2/14, 8 PM
- *Anna's Ghost & invoke*  
FRIDAY, 2/15, 2 PM
- *invoke*  
SATURDAY, 2/16, 2 PM



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Fine Arts

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# The City of Tomorrow

Elise Blatchford, *flute*

Rane Moore, *clarinets*

Stuart Breczinski, *oboe and English horn*

Nanci Belmont, *bassoon*

Leander Star, *French horn*

# Anna's Ghost

Brian Shankar Adler, *percussion*

Ken Thomson, *saxophone and clarinet*

Red Wierenga, *piano, accordion, and rise*

Jim Whitney, *bass*

# invoke

Nick Montopoli, *violin and banjo*

Zachariah Matteson, *violin*

Karl Mitze, *viola and mandolin*

Geoff Manyin, *cello*

# The City of Tomorrow

**The City of Tomorrow** is a woodwind quintet with a fearless aesthetic and a commitment to 21st-century music. Gold medalists of the 2011 Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition, the ensemble has been presented in New York at the DiMenna Center, Trinity Wall Street, Spectrum, and at IN\TER/SECT, co-presented by Bryant Park and Chamber Music America. Their U.S. tours have included prestigious festivals and series, including the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Series in Chicago, the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival in Michigan, and Red Note New Music Festival in Illinois. The quintet's work has also been supported by residencies at the Banff Center for Arts & Creativity and the Avaloch Farm Music Institute. Their 2018-19 season includes residencies at Tufts University in Boston and the Vermont College of Fine Art.

Praised by the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* for her “superb command of color and nuance,” **Elise Blatchford** is the Assistant Professor of Flute at the University of Memphis Scheidt School of Music and interim Principal Flute of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra.

A chamber musician, soloist, orchestral musician, and teacher, Ms. Blatchford is a flutist who embraces the independent, the experimental, and the DIY. She is a founding member of the woodwind quintet The City of Tomorrow, which won the gold medal at the Fischoff International Chamber Music Competition in 2011. The quintet has commissioned new works from composers Hannah Lash and Brad Balliett, among others.

As a recitalist, Ms. Blatchford frequently programs music of the 20th and 21st centuries, and has been an invited guest at venues across the U.S., including Indiana University, University of Oregon, and Yale University.

A devoted and energetic pedagogue, Ms. Blatchford works to instill versatile musicianship in her students, so that they can create sustainable and varied careers. She has given master classes at New England Conservatory, Williams College, Longy School of Music, and Skidmore College, among many others. She holds degrees in flute performance from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and the San Francisco Conservatory.

A Powell Artist, Ms. Blatchford performs on a 14K gold handmade Powell flute.

Clarinetist **Rane Moore** enjoys an active performing schedule at home and abroad. An enthusiastic interpreter of contemporary repertoire, she is a member of the Talea Ensemble, Callithumpian Consort, The City of Tomorrow and Sound Icon. Ms. Moore has given numerous premieres of new works and appeared with Ludovico Ensemble, International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), Guerilla Opera, New York New Music, and the Bang on a Can All-Stars among many others. She is a frequent guest with Boston-based groups Emmanuel Music, Boston Musica Viva, Boston Modern Orchestra Project and the Boston Ballet Orchestra. She is also the principle clarinetist of the Boston Philharmonic and the Co-Artistic Director of Winsor Music. Ms. Moore has recordings on over a dozen labels including Tzadik, Pi, Wergo, and ECM records. Critics have praised her “enthraling,” “tour-de-force,” and “phenomenal” performances. [ranemoore.com](http://ranemoore.com)

The recently-announced winner of the 2018 Matthew Ruggiero International Competition, **Stuart Brezczinski** is a New York-based oboist, improviser, composer, and educator whose early interest in making unusual sounds on the oboe has developed into a passion for creating and sharing innovative audio with audiences of all backgrounds. A proponent of chamber and contemporary music, Brezczinski is a member of the City of Tomorrow, a woodwind quintet dedicated to the promotion and performance of contemporary works, and of Ensemble Mélange, a virtuosic sextet whose repertoire spans a myriad of genres. He performs regularly as a chamber musician with NOVUS NY, the Talea Ensemble, and Contemporaneous, and he has also performed with Bang on a Can, the International Contemporary Ensemble, the New York New Music Ensemble, and Signal. He received an honorable mention at the 2015 IDRS Gillet-Fox International Competition, and from 2012-2014 he was the oboist with Ensemble ACJW (now Ensemble Connect), a program of Carnegie Hall, the Juilliard School, and the Weill Music Institute in partnership with the New York City Department of Education.

Praised as “outstanding” by the New York Classical Review, bassoonist **Nanci Belmont** is the Second Prize winner of the 2016 Fernand Gillet-Hugo Fox Competition of the International Double Reed Society. A proponent of the music of our time, she is a member of The City of Tomorrow, a wind quintet dedicated to the performance and expansion of contemporary repertoire. In other contemporary chamber music ventures, Nanci has collaborated with the International Contemporary Ensemble, Argento Chamber Ensemble, and Talea Ensemble. As an orchestral musician, Nanci has performed with ensembles including the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, American Symphony Orchestra, and New York City Ballet. Memorable international experiences include performances of Peter Grimes in the United Kingdom for the Benjamin Britten Centennial and a European tour with Ensemble intercontemporain in collaboration with the Lucerne Festival.

Nanci is passionate about creating meaningful and relevant musical experiences for all audiences. She works as a Teaching Artist with the Bridge Arts Ensemble, and has taken part in numerous performances in community venues and public schools as an alum of Ensemble ACJW- A program of Carnegie Hall, The Juilliard School, and the Weil Music Institute. In her roles as performer and educator, Nanci is driven by the desire to cultivate curious, lifelong learners in music. Nanci serves on faculty at the Longy School of Music of Bard College in Cambridge, MA.

As well as his current work with the City of Tomorrow, **Leander Star** holds positions as in the Oregon Ballet Theater Orchestra and the Portland Opera Orchestra. In Memphis, Tennessee, he plays regularly with the IRIS Orchestra and the Memphis Symphony Orchestra and teaches horn at Rhodes College and the University of Mississippi.

# Anna's Ghost

**Brian Shankar Adler** is a prolific drummer, percussionist and composer. Most at home playing a drum set augmented with percussive instruments from India and South America, critics have noted his majestic sound, and the mysterious, sensory nature of his compositions.

Born with the name Shankar, Adler was raised in an ashram. At the age of five he began his musical training, reciting classical Indian drum syllables and providing the heartbeat for chants on a mridang. Over the years, a strong inner compass led him from playing bhajans and Hindustani music to psychedelic groove based music, jazz, tango, Jewish music, new music and opera.

Upon graduating from New England Conservatory in 2005, Adler has resided in New York City. He has presented music in halls, clubs, and sacred spaces including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Symphony Space, Smalls, and the Kennedy Center. He has worked with: Bash the Trash, Bomba de Tiempo, Elizabeth Swados, Glen Velez, Guillermo Klein, Kamala Sankaram, Kate McGarry, LA Opera, Rick Baitz, Sheila Jordan, among others. He has been featured on WNYC's "New Sounds," Jason Bivin's book "Spirits Rejoice" and has written and performed on various film, commercial and theatrical scores including "Of Many," produced by Chelsea Clinton.

Invested in the continued output of creative music, Adler operates Circavision Productions, a boutique record label that has released ten records. Under this umbrella, Adler currently leads (Shankar), an ensemble dedicated to performing his original compositions and Human Time Machine, a percussion ensemble that uses hand signals to morph rhythms. Other Circavision projects include Four Across, Prana Trio and Helium Music Project.

Adler is currently on faculty at Brooklyn Conservatory, Vermont Jazz Center, and is a presenter at Vermont College of Fine Arts. In 2013, he published *A World of Percussion: Ten études based on rhythms from around the globe*.

**Ken Thomson**, a staple of New York City's contemporary music and jazz communities, is widely regarded for his ability to blend a rich variety of influences and styles into his own musical language while maintaining a voice unmistakably his own.

Thomson has a growing catalog of music written for chamber music and small orchestra, and has released a number of albums with groups that he has created. His latest effort combining the sounds of jazz and contemporary music, *Sextet*, garnered Top of 2018 awards from websites *Second Inversion* and *AnEarful*. His previous project, a five-piece group called **Slow/Fast**, was praised by *The New York Times* for its "intricate long-form composi-

tions,” and garnered a five-star review in *All About Jazz*. He has released full-length CDs of his compositions in 2013 with **JACK Quartet** (*Thaw*) and in 2016 with cellist Ashley Bathgate and pianist Karl Larson (*Restless*).

Ken plays clarinet for the **Bang on a Can All-Stars**, one of the world’s pre-eminent new music ensembles. He is the musical director for the **Asphalt Orchestra**, an 8-piece next-generation avant-garde street band. He plays saxophone and is one of the 4 composers in the punk/chamber/jazz band **Gutbucket**, with whom he has toured internationally to twenty countries and 32 states over twenty years. He also performs with **Ensemble Signal**, **International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE)**, **Novus NY**, and others. He is on faculty at the **Bang on a Can Summer Music Festival**.

As a leader and co-leader, he has performed extensively across the US and Europe at major jazz festivals including Jazz a Vienne, San Sebastian Jazz Festival, Warsaw Summer Jazz Days and the Saalfelden, London, Copenhagen, Rotterdam and Belgrade Jazz Festivals. He has recently been the subject of profile features in Downbeat and NewMusicBox. He is a Selmer Paris, Conn-Selmer and D’Addario Woodwinds Artist. [www.ktonline.net](http://www.ktonline.net)

**Red Wierenga** is a pianist, accordionist, respectronicist, improviser, and composer based in New York City. His longest creative association is with the Respect Sextet, called “a group which has released one of the most compelling recordings of the year” by the *Wall Street Journal*, and “one of the best and most ambitious new ensembles in jazz” by *Signal To Noise*.

He has performed and/or recorded with artists including The Claudia Quintet, Ensemble Signal, Salo, the Fireworks Ensemble, and David Crowell.

Wierenga builds and performs with new interfaces for electroacoustic improvisation, working with analog and digital synthesizers.

He received his bachelor’s degree from the Eastman School of Music, studying with Harold Danko, Ralph Alessi, and Kevin Puts. After having studied at the Institute of Sonology in The Hague with Joel Ryan and Paul Berg, he received his Ph.D. from CUNY Graduate Center, where he was an Enhanced Chancellor’s Fellow and where his teachers included Jason Eckardt, Douglas Geers., and David Grubbs. He has taught at Baruch College and currently teaches at the Brooklyn College Center for Computer Music and works for the design-led music technology company ROLI.

Originally from the mountains of New Hampshire, **Jim Whitney** is currently a resident of Brooklyn NY. He is actively performing and doing session work as an acoustic and electric bassist, composing new music, and teaching privately. He can be heard playing jazz, bluegrass, rock, country, klezmer, funk, American roots, Brazilian, or any combination thereof. He recently completed

his debut recording "Dodecahedron", which features twelve of his original compositions.

Jim has been busy as a bass player in many musical contexts. His resume includes performances and/or recordings with many musical luminaries, including Bill Frisell, Tony Trischka, Anthony Braxton, David Grisman, Ray Anderson, Jamey Haddad, Richard Greene, John Scofield, Ricky Skaggs, and many more. He is also a long-time member of the acclaimed Andy Statman Trio. Jim has appeared with acting stars Meryl Streep, John Goodman, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Steve Buscemi and others as a member of the performance group Parabola. He was commissioned to compose several original works for The Wendy Osserman Dance Company's performances in 2003, 2005 and 2006. His musical travels have taken him to Europe, Japan, Singapore, Israel, Central America, New Zealand, Canada, and much of the USA. Jim has performed on several feature film soundtracks, including "Anomalisa" and "The Rookie". Younger generations have heard Jim's bass work on the award winning children's show "Blue's Clues", and the popular new children's show "Peg Plus Cat".



# invoke

Described by one pretty important radio guy as “not classical...but not not classical” (David Srebnik, SiriusXM Classical Producer), **Invoke** continues to successfully dodge even the most valiant attempts at genre classification. The multi-instrumental quartet’s other not-nots encompass traditions from across America, including bluegrass, Appalachian fiddle tunes, jazz, and minimalism. Fueled by their passion for storytelling, Invoke weaves all of these styles together to form a unique contemporary repertoire, featuring original works composed by and for the group.

Hailed by the Washington Post as a performer with "no-fail agility," **Nick Montopoli** is a versatile multi-instrumentalist and composer based in Austin, TX. As a founding member of the cross-genre ensemble Invoke, Nick has performed regularly around the country and has received numerous awards and competition prizes. In Fall 2018, Invoke released their second album, *Furious Creek*, featuring a set of songs written completely by and for the band. Nick performs as Concertmaster of the Round Rock Symphony and as a soloist, collaborator, and studio musician in a variety of projects. In addition, Nick works as a professional photographer, videographer, and sound engineer, and maintains a recording and production studio in the Austin area. Nick holds a BM and MM in violin performance, both from the University of Maryland, and an Artist Diploma from the University of Texas. [www.nickmontopoli.com](http://www.nickmontopoli.com)

**Zachariah Matteson**, from Kalispell, Montana, has been studying violin since the age of four, beginning his study in Russia. His teachers and coaches have included William Fedkenheuer, Irina Muresanu, David Salness, David Harrington and members of the Miró, Guarneri and ENSO quartets. As a founding member of invoke, a bowed and fretted string quartet, Zachariah has found great interest in pushing the boundaries of what is considered to be a classical ensemble, i.e. a string quartet, as well as exploring options to change the defined classical concert etiquette. Since it’s inception in 2013, invoke has participated as Emerging Young Artist Quartet at the Interlochen Adult Chamber Music Camp, as the Emerging String Quartet at Stanford (under the guidance of the St. Lawrence String Quartet) and was most recently the Young Professional String Quartet in Residence at the University of Texas at Austin. In addition to performing with invoke, Zachariah also enjoys cooking and eating Russian cuisine and exploring the Austin food culture with his brother, Zeb.

**Karl Mitze** received his Master's in Viola Performance from the University of Maryland where he studied with Daniel Foster. Originally from Dade City, FL, he received his Bachelor's of Music from the McDuffie Center for Strings in Macon, GA. He enjoys performing music of all genres from folk to jazz and as an active performer has had the opportunity to perform with and accompany such artists as the iconic Aretha Franklin, folk music innovator Marian McLaughlin and Ken Slowik of the Smithsonian Chamber Music Society, among others. Karl has had the honor to perform in Carnegie Hall, the New World Center, Esterházy Palace, and the National Gallery of Art among other pretty cool places. As a founding member of invoke, he sings, composes original music and performs on a variety of instruments. Recent accolades include winning First Prize in the Open Category of the M-Prize in Ann Arbor, Michigan. With invoke he was also selected as member of the Young Professional String Quartet at the University of Texas at Austin (2016-18) where he studied with the indomitable John Largess and the Miró String Quartet. Shorter, Maria Schneider, Walt Weiskopf, and Thad Jones.

**Geoff Manyin**, a native of Annapolis, Maryland, made his professional solo debut at 17 with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. He started playing cello at age 8, and grew up honing his playing with the guidance of teachers Evelyn Elsing, David Hardy, and Suzanne Orban. In 2016 he completed his Bachelor's Degree in Cello Performance at the University of Maryland, College Park, studying under David Teie of the National Symphony. Manyin has participated in the Brevard Music and National Orchestral Institutes. In addition to regularly performing at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, he has had the privilege of playing in such venues as the New World Center, the Music Center at Strathmore and the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, as well as the National Gallery of Art and the Embassy of Colombia, and overseas in Russia and Italy. Most recently, he graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a Masters Degree, where he studied cello under Joshua Gindele of the Miró Quartet. Manyin keeps busy freelancing in the Austin area, where he and invoke make home base.

# Composer Bios

**Devin Barone** [DVB] (b. 1996) is a composer of music of all kinds, specifically interested in exploring concepts, gesture, narrative storytelling, and motivic development as well as rhythm, groove, polystylism and texture.

DVB's concert works have been featured at the 2013 Tennessee Valley Music Festival and in the NYSSMA Manual ed. 32. And his electronic work in 2018 at the Frontwave New Music Festival, Electroacoustic Barndance, and OUA-EMF in Japan.

Barone is currently studying for his MFA in Music Composition at the Vermont College of Fine Arts with Carla Kihlstedt, Mike Early and Don DiNicola. He previously studied at SUNY Fredonia with Paul Coleman, Jamie Leigh Sampson, and Rob Deemer and at Bay Shore High School on Long Island with Ed Schaefer.

'Which Day is the Good Day?' is a kind of absurdist piece that comes after two intensive/personal projects and losing motivation when not much else felt as representative of my personality. It utilizes samples of voices from different aspects of my life that caught my attention either for their content, or purely sonically. The quintet reflects various moods and ideas that react to or inform the voices and vice versa with the winds acting as my voice in the mix in a way. The piece comes in and out of meaning to say something specific and exploring sound for sounds sake, creating a new meaning from both together, to me at least.

**David Blonstein** is now entering his third semester as a student at VCFA. Starting his musical journey as a performing pianist, he developed a passion for music composition that remains unwavering. He cites many different sources as influences, including the work of film and video game composers, jazz and r&b, and the music of the impressionists. He aims to become a film and game composer himself one day.

Contrast is the name of the game with this one. Here, the listener is presented with two different soundscapes. One: serene, contemplative, and informed by nature's fluidity. The other: boisterous, upbeat, and given to tightly organized structures. Even still, the two share more than just harmonic language. The listener may notice several motifs and rhythmic ideas that take root in the former, only to blossom in full in the latter.

**Bridget Carson** is an educator residing in Independence, Kansas. This work, *In Media Res*, is an experiment with using a literary structure to organize the presentation order of musical ideas. Her study with John Fitz Rogers this semester has honed her proportional sense and her precision. She is extraordinarily grateful to the entire VCFA community for its support, especially her mentors, Diane Moser, Roger Zahab, Andy Jaffe, and John Fitz Rogers. She would be remiss if she also did not declare her thanks to Tim Miller, VCFA Alumnus, for his continued guidance, and to her family, husband Bill, children Wally and Esther, sister-of-choice Heather and her daughter Dottie, for their persistent support without which none of this work could have been possible.

**Nicholas Aaron Creed** is fancy like Johann Sebastian Bach. That's it. He is Fancy.

I did not write for an ensemble in residence this semester, but I wrote a few Choral works. One of them will be done at the Choral Workshop. If you didn't go, then SHAME on you!

I love my family, My Talented and Beautiful Wife, Elyssa, and my Children, Greyson (7) and Emmeryn (3).

**Quincy Davis**—For my first woodwind quintet composition, I chose to explore and try "stuff" out. I aspired to join together two contrasting musical worlds: jazz and European classical. Both worlds I love, but I mostly live in the jazz world when I am not trying to be a cool VCFAer.

Thus, I thought this would be a great opportunity to explore both worlds. Composers and groups who always have a heavy influence on my writing are Bela Bartok, Maurice Ravel, Yellowjackets, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Singers Unlimited, Take 6, Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Shoenberg, Wayne Shorter, Steely Dan, Duke Ellington, Brian Blade & Fellowship, Benny Golson, Dmitri Shostakovich and Herbie Hancock. Other styles of music that are highly influential in my writing are gospel music and R&B, both of which were a major part of my upbringing.

I share all of these influences because I believe many of them can be heard in *Ten Explorations for Woodwind Quintet and Drumset*.

Thank you to Michael Early for your help, even in the midst of a new person coming into your life. Congrats!

**Megan DiGeorgio** is a violist, composer, and educator based in the Washington, D.C. area. As a violist, she has performed at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, several Smithsonian Museums, and for Pope Francis during his 2015 United States visit. She has participated in the National Orchestral Institute and Festival, National Music Festival, the National Symphony Orchestra's Summer Music Institute, and has been heard on the NAXOS American Classics label in the National Orchestral Institute Philharmonic. As a composer, her music was most recently heard at the New Music DC Conference at Georgetown University, and by the Susquehanna Symphony Orchestra. She maintains a full studio of viola and violin students at the International School of Music in Bethesda, Maryland. She also freelances as a violist and composer, and sings professionally in the Schola Cantorum at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle. Currently, she is the acting head of Marketing and Communications for the Boulanger Initiative, a Washington, D.C.-based organization dedicated to promoting the music of women, trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming composers. She holds a Bachelor of Music from Catholic University and a Master of Music from University of Delaware, both in viola performance.

Partial Pressures is a short, one-movement work for string quartet. The term "partial pressures" is taken from kinetic molecular theory. While the composer is not knowledgeable about molecular theory, the idea of kinetic energy is very present in this piece. The material often feels frenetic or anxious, like its energy had nowhere to be released, as if it were pressurized. Many thanks to Jonathan Bailey Holland for his guidance this semester!

**Ethan Foote** is a musician, composer, and arranger whose work has fallen within jazz, classical, and folk idioms. He also writes and performs in the context of theatre, dance, and interdisciplinary art. Though he is primarily a double bassist and bass guitarist, Ethan also plays acoustic and electric six-string and 12-string guitars, and he's never quite given up his first instrument, the cello.

From the composer:

"Kairos," my third string quartet, takes its name from one of the ancient Greek words for time. It refers not to chronological time but rather to some critical, unique, all-important moment, or opening--the time *for* something. Beyond its origins in classical rhetoric, it appears as a concept in various forms in theology, philosophy, and science.

In this piece, as I think of it, something encounters itself, the way a dreamer does in a dream. It follows an enigmatic internal logic, traversing intersecting planes of perception. A few core pitch groups undergo successive transformations over the course of the piece, via processes of rigid contraction and chaotic release, achieving a kind of spatialization through drastic changes of proportion and focus. In shifting voices, the music speaks to itself, calls to itself, searches for

an opening, and awaits and anticipates its own appointed time.

I would like to thank my advisor, Roger Zahab, for the expertise and encouragement he offered, and, above all, for his perception; everyone at VCFA who made this performance possible; and my friends of longstanding, invoke.

**Leslie Frost** is a composer and passionate music educator who is endlessly fascinated by the connection between literature, history and music. Trained as a pianist and classical singer, Leslie is also a practitioner of Dalcroze Eurythmics who currently teaches music, movement and singing to students of all ages. Many of her compositions are musical re-imaginings of great works of children's literature which bring to characters and ideas to life.

Reminiscence of Dante for String Quartet is written in response to the translation of Dante's Inferno by Robert Pinsky. I was drawn to the musical quality of the language and imagery in this translation. The opening of Canto One (and basis for Mvt. I) begins with these words, "Midway on our life's journey, I found myself in dark woods, the right road lost." The music in this quartet was written to express not only the themes of Dante's epic poem (foreboding, destiny, love, hope, human suffering among them), but also the journey of Dante himself as a creative artist and product of his times.

The second movement, Terza Rima, is an attempt to musically imagine the influences on Dante in his world of 14th century Italy. My research led me to an idea from some scholars who believe that Dante did not invent the rhyme scheme of Terza Rima, but inherited it from Medieval Troubadours. In creating this work, I invented a musical version of Terza Rima, a love duet between Dante and Beatrice as well as a Medieval Estampie (dance) reimagined for string quartet. - Leslie Frost

**Andy Gagnon** is a percussionist, composer, and educator. He performs with and composes/arranges for The Renegade Groove, The Vermont Jazz Ensemble, and PURPLE feat. Craig Mitchell. He teaches music at Stowe Middle School. Andy lives in Waterbury, VT with his wife Leah, their dogs Spock and Kiwi, and Poppyseed the chinchilla.

**Julian Gerstin**—The goal of this piece is to push my jazz group to play more freely, while giving them material to work from. *Neritina communis ziczac* is a common Indo-Pacific snail. The designs on its shell vary from animal to animal but cluster around several striking motifs: thin stripes, wavy lines, dots, wide bands. "Ziczac" is likewise built around several motifs, which individual musicians will inevitably play in their own way. I am grateful to Diane Moser for helping me work through a number of attempts at breaking my jazz mold, and to the performers for realizing the piece.

**Paul Gilliland**—This semester marks the end of my journey at VCFA and the fulfillment of a lifetime goal to earn a Master's Degree in Music Composition. I would like to thank my wife, Sue, for her continuous support during these past three years and the entire faculty and staff at VCFA for making this such a magical journey of self-discovery as a composer. I would like to thank those advisors I had the honor of working with on this journey; Diane Moser, Mike Early, Don DiNicola, and especially Rick Baitz, who I have worked with for three of the last four semesters. This week's musical presentation MU51C 8Y TH3 NUM83R5, for string quartet, is a culmination of mathematical musical systems I have developed over the past two years. The piece combines the use an Astrological Birth Chart (based on the time, date, and location of this week's graduation); Fibonacci, Lucas, and Prime number sequences; and a number sequence developed from the Vortex Based Mathematics Rodin Coil. I used these resources to generate melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic motifs that inspired each section of the work as well as Golden Ratio formulas that defined the form of the work as well as specific moments within the five thematic sections. The discovery of mathematics in developing inspiration for musical composition has given me my voice in music and I look forward to many more years of further developing these systems.

Composer/Performer **Adam Kale**'s compositional approach is guided by his interests in western concert music, Persian art music, improvisation, hermetics, and electronics.

Active as a performer, Adam plays the Persian tar, Chinese guqin zither, classical guitar, and electric guitar. He is a traditional student of both Persian classical music and Chinese guqin music. Adam has received traditional artist grants from the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Adam studied with John Mallia during the Fall 2018 semester at VCFA, and would like to thank John for all of his guidance, patience, and support. Adam currently lives in Northampton Massachusetts with his partner Jacqui and their dog Cargo Jones.

**Sarah LeMieux**—The central section of "choice architecture" is a game for ensemble and audience, the object of which is to hothouse human insight by harnessing the extraordinary intuitive and listening powers of people who play music. When asked a question, each member of the ensemble chooses a musical answer with a predetermined meaning - then all members play their answers together, creating a blended answer for the asker to interpret as s/he sees fit.

My mom taught French folk and classical guitar, my dad played the blues, and my little brother kept everyone awake with the drums. After college at New

York University, I stayed in NYC as a session vocalist and guitarist, which afforded myriad opportunities to interpret, create and absorb many kinds of music. Mix that all together, add synagogue, and you get a nice little sourdough starter for original composition, to which I have been adding new things ever since.

I have been fortunate to have my compositions find many stages large and small, from the National Women in Blues Festival, International Festival of Arts and Ideas, and Infinity Hall, to the International Women Arts Day Festival, and radio stations all over. I also teach, and play with and compose for the award-winning groups The Girls from Ruby Falls, Sarah LeMieux Quintet and Madame Thalia's Vaudeville Review. I couldn't do any of it without my wonderful husband and amazing kids.

Many thanks to Roger Zahab for an illuminating and productive semester.

**Ben Lieberman** is a composer, guitarist and singer who lives and works in Ridgewood, Queens, with his partner, Emily, and two very ridiculous creatures some might (questionably) identify as cats, known formally as Alice Coltrane and Francesca Schubert (née Pretzel and Mustard). His musical interests span the gamut from emotive folk songs to psychedelic rock to microtonal chamber music.

There is a story that I first read as an eighth grader that has stuck with me for some twenty years now. It concerns the first dream that Carl Jung, the Swiss analytical psychologist and subject of my middle school "famous persons" project (the one where you dress up as the person and give a presentation to class, offensively bad accent and all) can recall having. I won't get much into it here. Suffice it to say, there is a meadow, a descent down a stone stairway into a subterranean chamber, and an encounter with a figure, terrible and awe-inspiring, standing upon a magnificent golden throne, gazing upward. Many years later, Jung found a name for this figure:

Atmavictu - the "breath of life," the creative impulse.

Atmavictu is a piece about recurrence and imitation, concealment and revelation. It is about stone stairways that lead to subterranean caverns, about childhood, dreams and waking, and finding peace with the unknowable. There is a bit about the harmonic series in there, too.

Atmavictu is dedicated to my mother, Wendy Fortunato, who, in addition to giving me a fantastic suggestion for a famous persons project, also first gave me music. Thanks, mummy.

I would like to thank my advisor, John Fitz Rogers, for his guidance, support, and boundless encouragement this semester. I would also like to thank everyone - faculty, students, and staff - who has made my time at VCFA so special. I will forever cherish my time here, the music I have heard, and the friends I have made.



**Vanessa Littrell** is a West Coast artist and teacher with extensive background in folk songs and musical theater. She is currently working on her second musical, "The Bridge" which is intended for production in the Seattle area.

In my lifetime I have told stories from many different angles. I have written songs from the high-voltage stance of a rock singer to the quiet ballads of a new mother. I have written songs in my own language, other languages, and languages that do not exist. My time at VCFA has given me the courage to know and be dedicated to my purpose as a storyteller.

A tremendous thank you to the entire faculty who supported my evolution from amateur musings into a thriving composer. I am particularly grateful to my four mentors: Carla, the keeper of the sandbox and the microscope; Mike who gently guides and promotes being true to self; Diane, part technical wizard and part spiritual shaman; Don who speaks to the inner artist and reminds her she is safe.

Finally, a big shout out to Nathan who has endured and encouraged my maddening and glorious artistic endeavors.

I graduate this week eager to go forth and bound into the tasks ahead of me. I confess it is hard to leave, knowing my cocoon time is over. But, as I wrap myself in the techni-color warmth of this place, I know the journey will be good. I have all of you as my companions and I am forever changed.

**Paul Lorenz** is an interdisciplinary artist whose work combines architecture, drawing, sound performance and music composition. Thank you, Rick Baitz, for guiding me through this final semester.

Huge thanks to John Mallia, Diane Moser and Carla Kihlstedt, plus the rest of the VCFA faculty, for making the journey over the past two years full of thought, experimentation, and brilliant challenges.

Etude for Bellows' is a study of human breath. The accordion breathes, as does the bass clarinet. The musical theme comes from a childhood memory and recent explorations in chord construction.

**Jan McBride** is a jazz pianist, composer and educator living in the San Diego area. Music is her passion and this masters degree means the world to her. VCFA has opened her mind to the incredible array of opportunities to use her musicality.

This semester I worked with Don DiNicola for a second semester. I was able to finally break through writing to film by actually connecting my improvisation and composition with the story on the screen. When Don told me - you

got it, Jan, I wept. Don has gone to the depths of my soul with me to heal the insecurities and lies I told myself that kept me small. Don is truly a mentor of mine. Thank you, my friend.

Thank you to all the faculty for their honesty, their incredible knowledge, and for giving me the joy of finding myself in music.

Carol, Sarah, Colin and Justin - I will miss you all. You make this place rock!!

Changes is my final submission in this program. With my emotions running on high as I composed this piece, I kept re-living the 2 years here and all the laughter, tears and love I have experienced.

The first movement is my Love Letter to VCFA. This place is a slice of heaven for a creative person and I have soaked it all into my heart. I will never forget this. The second movement is The Learning Curve. The constant, driving motif in the cello represents the drive I felt every day as I worked and grew as an artist. The third movement is Life is Good. As I completed writing this piece, I felt that all the sweat and tears have put me into a musically mature place to give my gift to the world.

**Lauren McCall** is a composer and music educator from Atlanta, Georgia. Her composition, Crossings, explores textural connections between electronic and acoustic sounds. She would like to thank Dr. John Mallia for his musical insight and mentorship this semester.

**Reverend TJ McGlinchey's** MFA thesis composition The Golden Moon is a suite of music based in folk traditions of music which TJ has grown up in or which he has been studying these past two years during the work he's completed for his MFA, Each of these four movements and the coda represent the towns and cities in Greece where he has discovered a new direction in listening to, writing, and playing music while on holiday in Athens.

Though delineated quite specifically for this specific ensemble, the instrumentation, dynamics, and tempos are otherwise all meant to be interpretable. This score and its specifications are string suggestions but not rigid definitions of what the piece is meant to be or how it is to be performed. The intention of the composer, by leaving large areas for improvisation and interpretation of the tempos and dynamics by the instrumentalists performing the suite, is that it ultimately be partially owned by the performers as a collaboration with the composer even if he should not be present for the performance. In this way, each performance is a unique iteration produced in part by the composer and in part by the instrumentalists performing at that moment.

The ensemble also represents the composer's concept of the "universal ensemble" or an ensemble which contains the elemental timbres required to form a

basic, balanced ensemble: voice, strings, percussion, wind, and a keyboard of some type. In the composer's vision, these timbres could be represented by any specific instrument in that family of instruments for any given performance of the suite. This suite is also an effort by the composer to attempt elicit an emotional response from his audience, the major theme of his process paper, without the aid of an emotively sung vocal part, instead opting for a reading of lyrical poetry ahead of each movement.

**Robert Monroe**—We all love, and who has not been at a distance from someone they love? And yet, even in that distance, we feel connection. When I was in Ireland, it was some comfort to look at the moon and understand that my mother was looking at the same moon, sometimes. Or listening to the same music, or reading a book like *Gilead* by Marilynne Robinson, that connects sun and moon and earth and parents and children and generations. Amidst our sense of connection, the world of nature vibrates, the moonlight connecting sun and moon and earth and sea, with all their waves and frequencies. I was nurtured by the music my mother and father emanated, in the home they made, and this piece is dedicated to them. And I think of Keats, whom W.J. Bate wrote about, and the poets who see in nature a dance of flux and constancy, the rhythms of tides and light and delight. We try to embody some of this in music, working with the elements of rhythm, frequency, contrast, modulation, voyage and return. Art and creativity remind us of our connection to the whole. This piece was formulated during winter and finished as glimmers of spring sprung and flowered. What a joy to hear such a fine ensemble of musicians, including Carla Kihlstedt, whose musicality has as many delights as a sea and landscape. Her patient faith in the creative process through which a whole resolves from apparent fragments nurtures us and we emulate. What a privilege to connect with the amazing community of composers and musicians here, and to have the chance to talk with and learn from all of our teachers and staff here. Thank you.

**David Pennise**—I am from Long Island, New York, and have experience composing music for chamber ensembles, as well as orchestral and symphonic ensembles. I have also worked on a few film projects. I received my undergraduate degree at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York where I earned a B.S. in Music with a Concentration in Music Theory and Composition. I am very happy to be a part of the VCFA community and am seriously enjoying working towards my M.F.A. in Music Composition. Last semester I studied with Rick Baitz and worked on film clips, chamber and symphonic compositions, a piece for *Anna's Ghost*, a songwriting project, electronic music, and more. As a composer I strive to learn from many styles and ultimately be myself.

"Rock-a-Bye Anna" is a salute to Anna's Ghost, appropriating the name of the ensemble in the title of the piece. It is an homage to VCFA's own residential spirit, Anna. The composition is upbeat, intense at times, and filled with personality.

**Tiffany Pfeiffer** is a vocalist, bandleader, educator and composer based in Burlington, Vermont, where she maintains a private teaching studio and enjoys the fresh air and vibrant community. Originally from Omaha, Nebraska, Tiffany studied voice and magazine journalism at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, and spent several years living and working in San Francisco, CA, and Brooklyn, NY. In 2008, she made her way to Vermont, in need of the rhythm of nature and a more sustainable lifestyle. She released her first original EP, *Amor Frio*, in 2010, and a short album of jazz standards, *Stampede of Love*, in 2016. Tiffany is looking forward to marrying her fiancé, Brian Carr, this June, and to the many creative and family adventures to come. She is deeply thankful to her mentor and advisor for the second time this semester, Carla Kihlstedt, for her invaluable perspective and endless inspiration, and for her entire "meteoric experience" in music and beyond at VCFA.

**Frederick Rawski** is a human rights lawyer and composer based in Bangkok, Thailand. Special thanks to Roger Zahab for sharing his expertise + providing inspiration and support during the semester.

#### **First Movement**

If half this ended, and half did not,  
I would both end and never end,  
Leaving half the grasper,  
Dead and half undead,  
Half the grasped destroyed,  
Half undestroyed.

#### **Second Movement**

I may believe that objects of the senses,  
Are the foundations of desire,  
But they are like invisible cities,  
Mirages and dreams.

- Nagarjuna\*

\*from the translation by Stephen Batchelor, *Verses from the Center*, Riverhead Books, New York (2000), p. 135.

**Tyler Sherman**—It is said that we can only truly love in another that which we truly love in ourselves. In the last few years, there has been no greater onus for deep reflection than my life-walk with my beautiful person, Maya. There is no deeper joy than to open your eyes each morning to the sunlight illuminating the smiling face of someone who accepts you unconditionally, in all of your vulnerability. Over this past Summer, I witnessed her as she courageously allowed herself to heal from cancer. Now on the other side of that storm, our existence together has become richer and even more full of life. Our strengthened bond with each other's humanity has also produced a greater bond outward with humanity as a whole. It seems the most wonderful thing about love is that no matter how beautiful the experience is, it feels like you're only touching the tip of the iceberg.

This Suite is a Reflection of some of the many different inner experiences I have shared with the one I love over the past few months. I love you, Mook, and Thank You.

Special thanks to Andy Jaffe for his generosity of attentiveness, wise council and positive encouragement. I must say that I believe we too have just hit the tip of the iceberg!

Finally, much gratitude to Ken Thomson, Red Wierenga, Jim Whitney, and Brian Shankar Adler for their time and dedication in sharing their souls through the music!

**Paul Smith Stewart** is a composer, musician, and educator who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. He received a Bachelor's Degree in Interdisciplinary Music Studies from Berklee College of Music and is the Director of Performing Arts at Marin Catholic College Preparatory. Paul has recorded four albums and toured nationally with the groove rock band Still Time (When It Hits Records, 2007-2011). In addition, he has released two solo contemporary jazz EPs: Transitions (2017) and Renewal (2018).

The composition NewWorldNew is a historical fantasy piece set in three parts for string quartet, and includes digitally augmented field recordings. The two movements being performed for this concert are Big Trees which begins in the Indigenous societies of North America, and Light which follows their decimation through European colonization. The planned third movement, NewWorldNew, continues this narrative with the eventual dystopian collapse of the corporate oligarchy, and imagines a postcapitalist terrene in which human culture is reborn in harmony with the natural world.

Thank you to Ravi Krishnaswami for all of your advice, wisdom, guidance, critiques and support over the course of this semester!

**DJ Tetreault**—This piece a love letter to winter in Vermont, though I hope all those who know snow and short days can relate. I wanted to write music which reflected my experience in nature, not necessarily the sounds transcribed exactly, but the music that comes from the emotional experience of encountering these alabaster landscapes. The birdsong which enters during the latter third of the piece serves, I hope, to root the listener in a very specific place. Like all good music it aims to take the listener out of their hectic life and, if only for a brief moment, let them wander the snowy hills and frozen lakes.

A New Englander all of his life, DJ resides currently in South Burlington, VT. This is his last semester here at VCFA and he is blessed with the support of too many friends, mentors, and family to name here, but hopes they know his gratitude nonetheless.

**Barrett Tuttobene** spent much of his adult life as a touring musician, performing in places as far away as Russia. Now that his touring days are over, he has gone back to school to develop himself as a composer.

A native of the DMV (Washington DC, Maryland, & Virginia), **Prakash “Kash” Wright** holds a B.A. in Music Theory & Composition from McDaniel College and a M.A. in Jazz Studies from the University of North Texas. Since 2011 Kash has been part of the music faculty at Sewanee: The University of The South as a Teaching Associate Professor. Kash is also the pianist and leader of the Kash Wright Trio. The trio has recorded 3 albums, and played various venues across the United States. Kash is also the Assistant Music Director at New City Fellowship in Chattanooga, TN. For further information visit [www.prakashwright.com](http://www.prakashwright.com) and follow Kash Wright Trio on Facebook and Instagram.

The composition Sand Castle is a result of a self-challenge. The challenge was to write an "epic" score for a short film using only the string quartet as an ensemble. In comparison to a full orchestra, the string quartet is arguably limited in terms of power, color and texture, however it is my hope that a sense of size and grandeur can still be heard in the music that the quartet plays to accompany this film. Thank you for listening.

**Laura Young**—This composition was inspired by the December, 2017 Thomas Fire in Ventura County, California and is specific to my experience of fighting the fire and saving our home, outbuildings and most of the orchard at our ranch in Upper Ojai. At the time, this was the largest fire in California history.

The movement begins at sunset on a calm December evening as animals frolic. A transformer buzzes then explodes and the fire begins. The animals

panic and the fire intensifies. There is no water; dirt is thrown onto the fire with shovels as the wind increases. Propane tanks explode and palm trees are engulfed in a shower of sparks. The ranch is an island in a sea of fire when fire trucks finally arrive at a neighbor's ranch. The fire is mostly contained and in the pre-dawn we survey our ranch for damage. As the sun rises, we prepare for two more days of firewatch and learn of our neighbors and friends who have lost everything.

The Thomas Fire was a once-in-a-generation wildfire. However, in July, 2018 the Thomas Fire was surpassed by the Ranch Fire in acres destroyed. The Camp Fire in November, 2018 is the most destructive fire in history, and the Woolsey Fire also in November, 2018 was ranked seventh in destruction. It is generally held that global climate change, the cause of the seven-year drought and the summer of 2018 ranking as the hottest summer in California history, is behind the rash of superfires.

## MFA in Music Composition Faculty

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Jonathan Bailey Holland, *Faculty Co-Chair*

Rick Baitz

Don DiNicola

Andy Jaffe

Carla Kihlstedt

Ravi Krishnaswami

John Mallia

Diane Moser

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