

**UCLA SPRING UNDERGRADUATE COMPOSERS CONCERT**  
**APRIL 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2021**  
**8PM, LIVESTREAM**

Kian Ravaei (b. 1999)

**Advertisements**

**IV. Camels are for Men who Think for Themselves**

Kian Ravaei, voice & electric guitar

**V. Notice to the Public**

Justin Birchell, baritone; Joseph Seyedan, guitar

**Ideal Conversation**

Julia Johnson, voice; Valerie Stern, piano

Toby Menon (b. 2002)

**Berceuse**

Alex Barsom (b. 2000)

**A Jelly-Fish**

Tivoli Treloar, mezzo-soprano; Veola Sun, piano

Robby Good (b. 2000)

**Bacchus (*Rescore*)**

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Advertisements

Most songs in the Western art music tradition set poetry to music. Part of what makes poetry so special is that it can have meanings and implications that are deeper than the words on the surface. When Robert Frost writes about “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,” we are well aware that he is speaking metaphorically about decisions.

Now, isn't the same thing true of advertisements? They say one thing on the surface, but they intend to communicate something deeper. They ask “Are you beach body ready?”, but they mean to say that you're not desirable unless you're skinny. They show a bright picture of an elegantly dressed gentleman smoking a Camel cigarette, intending to communicate that Camels are a symbol of wealth and status.

The goal of an advertisement is to plant a desire. To make us feel like we lack something, be it beauty, love, or security. To undermine our sense of material contentment and keep us in a lifelong cycle of buying new stuff.

We are meant to be passive recipients of advertisements, because when we're not paying attention, we're not privy to their subversive messages and sleights of hand. Advertisements are most effective when they're in the background, when we absorb them with an uncritical ear.

The reason I wrote this song cycle is not to elevate advertisements to the level of art, but to use art to convey some truth about advertisements that cannot be conveyed any other way. My aim is to bring advertisements into the foreground, into the center of our awareness.

The final movement of this suite sets what I believe to be an ideal advertisement—which is not really an advertisement at all. It is a notice to the public which simply states what is being sold, how much it costs, and where it can be purchased. There is not a whit of rhetorical cunning. It is an earnest and straightforward statement that dignifies consumers by treating them as rational agents capable of making their own commercial decisions.

### Ideal Conversation

This song takes its words from one of many early American books of etiquette and “manuals of politeness.” Much of the advice in these books aim to suppress the voice—by dictating how loudly one may speak, for example, or by controlling what words emerge from the voice. It is sad but unsurprising that most of this advice is directed toward women, and even more sad and unsurprising that many of the rules set forth in these century-old manuals continue to be enforced.

### Berceuse

*Berceuse* is, for me, a step into the unfamiliar world of composing in microtonal tuning systems. Rather than our usual twelve-note division of the octave, *Berceuse* is tuned such that an octave can be divided into nineteen equal steps; 19-Tone Equal Temperament. Many harmonies in this tuning may sound soft and familiar, others jarring and discordant. In *Berceuse* I aim to first find a comfortable harmonic language that then serves as a jumping off point to explore the unfamiliarities 19-TET has to offer.

### **A Jelly-Fish**

Marianne Moore's economic, yet pointed use of language is beautifully effective in this poem. The form and syntax of this poem are reflective of its own meaning, as the image of a jellyfish which Marianne Moore paints is just as veiled as the language she uses to describe it. As with many imagist and modernist poems, I am drawn to the freedom of interpretation that such direct language is capable of producing - in such a small and focused image, we sense there are great and diverse implications. While this poem is about a jellyfish on the surface, essentially something which is difficult to grasp, it may be a self-referential statement on the aesthetic which Marianne Moore and many other modernists employ of vastness in brevity, and how that may be inherently difficult for an artist to capture and create, as well as difficult for an audience to identify. This poem has therefore guided me to compose music with the same ethos, which I found to be a novel, yet invaluable process.

### **Bacchus (*Rescore*)**

This score was my entry into the Marvin Hamlisch International Music Awards, where each entrant was given the same animation and was asked to compose their own score. This year, the animation was Bacchus, a story of a woman who encounters a mysterious spirit that leads her into another world.

### ***A Jelly-Fish***

*Marianne Moore (1887-1972)*

Visible, invisible,  
A fluctuating charm,  
An amber-colored amethyst  
Inhabits it; your arm  
Approaches, and  
It opens and  
It closes;  
You have meant  
To catch it,  
And it shrivels;  
You abandon  
Your intent—  
It opens, and it  
Closes and you  
Reach for it—  
The blue  
Surrounding it  
Grows cloudy, and  
It floats away  
From you.