

UCLA SPRING GRADUATE COMPOSERS CONCERT
MAY 4TH, 2021
8PM, LIVESTREAM

Austin Ali (b. 1997) **Prelude to Gravity**

Valerie Stern, piano

Yifeng Yvonne Yuan (b. 1996) **Time to Begin**

Choreographer: Marianna Varviani

The Shapeshifter

Choreographer: Ryan Rockmore

Kenneth Glendon Brown (b. 1991) **He Is Lord (Hymn Arrangement)**

Kenneth Glendon Brown, piano

Shirunyu Li (b. 1992) **Four Pieces for Two Trumpets**

I. Opening

II. Toccata

III. Meditation

IV. Closing

Jonathan Tompkins, trumpet

Gabrielle Rosse (b. 1982) **Just for Today**

Gabrielle Rosse, piano

Théo Schmitt (b. 1991) **Polyphony I**

The Language of the Unheard

Choreographer: Wilfried Souly

Marcus Norris (b. 1991) **Block Party**

Darshaya Oden, singer

Jason Tyson, piano

Anthony Constantino (b. 1995) **Sinfonietta for String Orchestra**

Movement II

PROGRAM NOTES

Prelude to Gravity

In the mind of Isaac Newton, the mystery of gravity became solved when he realized the same phenomenon pulling a falling apple to the Earth also guides the moon in its orbit around our planet. Much like the force in the world of Star Wars, gravity bound everything in the entire universe together by the force of mutual attraction. That is, until Einstein came along, showing us that gravity may not be a force at all—rather, an apparent phenomenon of the curve of space and time themselves in the presence of matter.

Composers often like to say the notes they write have a kind of mutual attraction, a logic by which one tone may gravitate toward another. *Prelude to Gravity* experiments with this gravitational pull of notes, succumbing to it in some places and thwarting it in others. In sections of light character juxtaposed with heavy music, *Prelude to Gravity* explores musical gravity and opens the door to question the existence of the force itself.

May the Fourth be with you.

Four Pieces for Two Trumpets is written for intermediate to advanced-level duets. It introduces single contrasting material for each of the first three movements and an aggregation of the materials in the last movement. It is in a challenging range, with great melodic and rhythmic development.

He is Lord (Hymn Arrangement)

As a church musician, I frequently create my own solo piano arrangements or interpretations of traditional hymns. This is one example, a contemplative setting of the hymn *He Is Lord*, number 234 in the old red hymnbook “Hymns for the Family of God.” The words to this hymn, not sung in my performance, are reprinted below.

He is Lord, He is Lord!

He is risen from the dead and He is Lord!

Every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess

That Jesus Christ is Lord.

Polyphony I

I did not compose any of the melodies or rhythms in *Polyphony I*. I collected and assembled them to generate a dialogue with minimal transformation from the original sources.

My only goal is to demonstrate that human voices, regardless of language, timbre, and origin, create a natural polyphony.

Block Party

Long Beach Opera commissioned me to write a new song with the task of reflecting on 2020 in some way. This has been a particularly hard year for so many people. After participating in protests following the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, I initially imagined a short tragic piece. But, having recently written “My Idols Are Dead” (for string orchestra) and “I Tried So Hard for You” (for violin and piano), both reflecting on generational trauma cycles in the Black American community, I decided that it wouldn’t be good for my mental health right now to keep living in the trauma with my art. Especially while going through such a tough time.

Instead, Block Party takes a light-hearted view at social values through the lens of a young woman’s dating life. The story unfolds in a way that I think is unique to our time. As always, I tried to make it as unapologetically authentic as possible.

~Marcus Norris

Sinfonietta is a three-movement expansion of a standalone work, *Sinfonia*, which was written in 2018 for the Russian String Orchestra. In *Sinfonia*, the entire work is derived from a single chromatic five-note motive (E, D#, F, D, F#) that is constantly varied and developed, finally culminating with a 12-tone metric fugue. This second movement of *Sinfonietta* uses the same five-note motive in a diatonicized form (E, D, F#, C, G) which creates a haunting, blurred atmosphere as the music unfolds. Prominent violin and cello solos emerge from the texture, and the music reaches an intimate climax before evaporating into nothing.