



University of North Texas  
College of Music

Senior Recital | Sunday, February 16, 2025 | 8:00 p.m. | Paul Voertman Concert Hall

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**Anderson Kurk and David McCaulley, composition**

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Soft Rains (2024) ..... Anderson Kurk  
(b. 2003)

Text by Sara Teasdale

Erica Menasco and Chris Wolfe, soprano  
Arthur Keast and Abigail Bahng, contralto  
Ramero Vargas and Noah Salem, tenor  
Jaden Jackson Cooper and Colin Busch-Kennedy, bass

A Dream Within a Dream (2024)..... David McCaulley  
(b. 2002)

Text by Edgar Allan Poe

Erica Menasco and Chris Wolfe, soprano  
Arthur Keast and Abigail Bahng, contralto  
Ramero Vargas and Noah Salem, tenor  
Jaden Jackson Cooper and Colin Busch-Kennedy, bass  
David McCaulley, piano

The Cave of Time (2025) ..... Anderson Kurk

Aaron Anderton-Coss, bass trombone

A Whit of Wit (2024) ..... David McCaulley

Maxwell Borah, alto saxophone

The Wurlitzer (2025) ..... David McCaulley

fixed media

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**Program two hundred ninety-three of the 2024–2025 season**  
**Photography and videography are prohibited**

Kraken Mare (2025) ..... Anderson Kurk  
I. Magic Islands  
II. Saffron Skies

The Mind's Eye (2023) ..... David McCaulley  
Hyacinth Quartet  
Oscar Morales and Ella Curb, violin  
Shanya Chynwat, viola  
Ethan Nelsen, cello

Morning Dew (2024) ..... Anderson Kurk  
Heirloom Wind Quintet  
Shane Salinas, flute  
Logan Pierce, oboe  
Nyla Ortiz, clarinet  
Emily Moore, horn  
Josh Diaz, bassoon

Sonata in Reminiscence (2025) ..... David McCaulley  
I. Stress  
II. Memories  
David McCaulley, piano

Dually Noted (2023) ..... David McCaulley  
I. Side 1  
II. Side 2  
Joseph Williams, Mackenzie McCulloch, and Robert Jones, trumpet  
Jackson Dillard, Bradley Oates, Alex Salazar, and Nathaniel Holland, horn  
David McCaulley, conductor

On the Horizon (2023–2025) ..... Anderson Kurk  
I. Tempest  
II. Petrichor  
Ian McGuire, Nick Cavallo, Travis Harris, Janny Lee, Ashlee Thompson,  
and Derek Jackson, tenor trombone  
Joseph Fremed and Duncan Lancaster, bass trombone  
Anderson Kurk, conductor

## Program Notes

### Soft Rains (2024) – World Premiere

How will the world remember us after we're gone? Sara Teasdale's *There Will Come Soft Rains* posits an answer to this question. After the end of World War I, the world was thrown into uncertainty and despair due to the Great Flu Epidemic of 1918. Many began to wonder if the world would even notice if we all disappeared. This text feels even more relevant in our own time, as we are rocked by pandemics, social injustices, and rising global tensions. The first-person perspective of the text gives it a distinctly human voice, making an unaccompanied choir the clear choice to depict Teasdale's writing. The simple melody and harmony represents the beautiful scenes of nature depicted in the text; once a catastrophic war is alluded to, the music builds to its climax.

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,  
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;  
And frogs in the pools singing at night,  
And wild plum trees in tremulous white,  
Robins will wear their feathery fire  
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;  
And not one will know of the war, not one  
Will care at last when it is done.  
Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree  
If mankind perished utterly;  
And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,  
Would scarcely know that we were gone.  
—Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)

### A Dream Within a Dream (2024) – World Premiere

Edgar Allan Poe's work captivates me, like I'm sure it does many others. The dark, twisted imagery, the ambiguous metaphors, and especially in this poem, the deeply introspective tone all serve to create a body of work that is still relevant to this day. When I read Poe's *A Dream Within a Dream*, I knew this would be the perfect text to set for my first vocal work for SATB choir and piano accompaniment. It has this grandeur and intimacy, this mystery about it that I loved and that I thought I could really express with my own musical style. In this piece, I aimed to express the different iterations and meanings of the word "dream" and how these meanings progress over the course of the text. There are moments of levity and moments of dark torment, all of which I hope deeply resonate with Poe's poetic style.

Take this kiss upon the brow!  
And, in parting from you now,  
Thus much let me avow — You are not wrong, who deem  
That my days have been a dream;  
Yet if hope has flown away  
In a night, or in a day, In a vision, or in none, Is it therefore the less gone?  
All that we see or seem Is but a dream within a dream.  
I stand amid the roar Of a surf-tormented shore, And I hold within my hand  
Grains of the golden sand —  
How few! yet how they creep  
Through my fingers to the deep,  
While I weep — while I weep!  
O God! Can I not grasp Them with a tighter clasp? O God! can I not save One  
from the pitiless wave? Is all that we see or seem But a dream within a dream?  
—Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

### **The Cave of Time (2025) – World Premiere**

The Cave of Time for solo bass trombone is based on the 1979 book by Edward Packard. It was the first in a series of children's books known as Choose Your Own Adventure. Throughout the book, the reader will be presented with choices that lead to different storylines and endings. In this story, the protagonist wanders into a mysterious cave; each tunnel opens to a different period of history. In this musical adaptation of Packard's book, the bass trombonist will make decisions that lead to different musical passages based on each storyline. Various musical quotes are used to evoke the milieu of any certain time period or presence of historical figures who may appear. The use of graphic notation depicting scenes from the book allows the performer to provide their own unique interpretations. The twelve endings and improvisational elements mean that The Cave of Time will never sound the same twice. The piece was written for Aaron Anderton-Coss, a valued friend and colleague, to perform for his senior recital at the University of North Texas.

### **A Whit of Wit (2024) – World Premiere**

This piece for solo alto saxophone paints a fragmented portrait of a delightfully mischievous character. I was imagining this character that had this sort of "groove" about them, a sort of continuous, charming wit. But I also imagined this character as having this subversive mischief about them. So as this piece paints this portrait, it takes several twists and turns that subvert the established groove before eventually returning to the opening section. What was important to me, though, was that this subversion wasn't to a different and unimportant idea. Rather, I wanted this portrait to lean into another style that was perhaps just as (if not more) "groovy" than the previous section. In these different section, there are two constants though, that there are two motifs that permeate the whole piece. The result is a piece that, I think, has a lot of fun deviations and that doesn't take itself too seriously. For me, writing this piece was certainly a breath of fresh air and my hope is that it takes you on the exciting adventure that it took me on.

### **The Wurlitzer (2025) – World Premiere**

In my house growing up, there was a Wurlitzer upright piano. This piano was played by my great grandmother before being given to me, and it is this piano that I grew up playing and on which I developed my love for playing piano. This upright Wurlitzer certainly wasn't the best of its kind; it didn't have the most power or the best sound, but it did have a special, unique sound that I grew up with and grew to love. This fixed media piece aims to share that special uniqueness by using my own samples of notes and effects of the piano. I then used these samples to create a kind of "player piano" experience while also using electronic processing to really bring out what I always imagined the power this piano had. These days, Wurlitzers are long gone and more known for their jukeboxes, but my hope is that this piece captures some of that special power that piano held for me and undoubtedly many other people as well. This power is captured in resounding, bass-y octaves, flying arpeggios, and a darkly heroic melody.

### **Kraken Mare (2025) – World Premiere**

In the far reaches of our solar system, a moon larger than the planet Mercury orbits the ringed giant Saturn—a mysterious world cloaked in a thick, orange atmosphere. Titan has captivated astronomers for decades due to its abundance of hydrocarbon lakes and rivers. Kraken Mare for string quartet is named after Titan's largest lake. It's even larger than the Caspian Sea on Earth, crowning it as the largest lake in the Solar System. The first movement represents the strange phenomenon known as "magic islands," bizarre figures that appear and disappear from Kraken Mare's surface. One possibility is that these islands are not islands at all. Rather, they are columns of nitrogen bubbles rising from deep under the lake's surface. The fleeting and bubbly nature of these islands are depicted through a rhythmic flow of pizzicato notes, and sustained melodies that dip in and out of the texture. Titan's atmosphere is a hazy shade of orange encased in a thin blue veil. The reflection of the orange sky on the surface of the lake creates a beautiful shimmering effect. In the second movement, the strange yet familiar view of a lakeside on Titan is depicted by a simple, consistent melody that is contrasted by increasingly complex harmony and counter melodies.

### **The Mind's Eye (2023)**

What does it mean to be alone? This is the question I pondered while I wrote this work for string quartet, but this question alone wasn't the only thing I considered. I placed this question in an imaginary situation where I imagined a character in a completely lonely and desolate environment, completely alone. Without any other humanity or civilization, what is the progression of this character's loneliness? I imagine them starting out in a distressed yet subdued state. But as time goes on, does insanity set in? Does their mind become their own worst enemy, where they begin to see and hear things that aren't there? This work explores this scenario, and I suppose it also comments on our human need for contact, companionship, and interaction. Throughout the entire work, there is a single 4-note motif that returns in many shapes and forms, by itself and with others. Everything in this piece stems from that 4-note motif, and perhaps it represents that singular character, surrounded by a terrifying, vast landscape of the unknown.

### **Morning Dew (2024)**

Morning Dew captures the fresh, yet nostalgic feeling of waking up at dawn and watching the sunrise on an exciting new day. The piece begins swiftly with a driving ostinato and a simple, cheery tune that captures the anticipation that comes with the early morning. The piece takes a turn to wander down a shaded, nostalgic path where fragments of memories drift in and out of the texture. Then, a return to the present, and a bright optimism that pushes the music forward. This piece originally premiered in 2024 on one of the University of North Texas's Spectrum Concerts.

### **Sonata in Reminiscence (2025) – World Premiere**

Although I've lived the majority of my life with the gift of playing the piano, I'd never sat down to write a serious composition for solo piano until this year. Having been written at the end of my undergraduate degree, I felt this first solo piano work should have much personal meaning for me. This piece is very much a reflection on my time in school as well as the time spent outside of school. The first movement, Stress, is my own musical personification of that word using some of my personal improvisational style. In this movement, you'll hear low rumbles of looming deadlines, panicked outburst of exasperation, intensely delicate textures of passionate writing, and frantic flurries of tight schedules. The second movement, Memories, takes a much different approach, instead taking a look back at the past (both musically and emotionally). This movement is filled to the brim with inspirations from the late romantic piano repertoire that I grew up playing and continue to play. You'll hear the forceful blocked chords of Rachmaninoff, the ethereal textures of Debussy, the flashy technique of Liszt, and the delicate melodies of Chopin. Although this movement contains much use of triadic tonal elements, I think it still certainly contains my own personal harmonic inflections and taste. This piece was very much composed from the heart, and I hope the listener will find community in the shared human experience of stress, and find peace in the sweet simplicity of memory.

### **Dually Noted (2023)**

The concept of duality is ubiquitous in storytelling. Whether it's duality in personalities, ideals, relationships, or even a turbulent duality within one person or thing, the idea of duality encourages us to explore not only how two things are diametrically opposed, but also how two things are often much more similar than a first glance would suggest. In this piece for three trumpets and four horns in two movements, you'll find much duality between instruments, melodic ideas, textures, effects, and harmonies. You might be on the lookout for how melodic ideas may start in one instrument but ultimately end up in another, or listen for how the two groups of instruments interact with each other and share and dismiss ideas. Or, you might want to just take in, as I taken in by, the sheer power that emanates from such a small group of brass instruments. This piece was written specifically for a collection of friends that I made during the course of my time at the University of North Texas, all of whom are great musicians and great strengths that I aimed to bring out in this work. This piece originally premiered in 2023 on one of the University of North Texas's Spectrum Concerts.

### **On the Horizon (2023–2025) – World Premiere**

Thunder booms in the distance, leaving deafening silence trailing behind. A violent storm breaks out. Steady rainfall and swirling winds whip through the air. Conditions seem to lighten for a moment, but churn anew. The storm slowly comes to a stop. Water trickles down from the trees and flows through the grass. Petrichor, the smell of the earth after rain, floods the senses. A break in the clouds reveals a distant horizon where the Sun begins to shine. Each movement is tied together by an ascending melody; it climbs upward as if it is reaching for the horizon itself. The first movement depicts the oncoming storm. In the second movement, the storm transforms into an unrelenting waltz that represents a hailstorm. The third movement is an optimistic ballad that shows the storm receding. This piece was originally written for the University of North Texas Trombone Consortium, who premiered the second movement, Hailstorm, under the direction of Professor Steven Menard. The first movement, Tempest, was premiered by the University of North Texas Tuesday Choir under the direction of Tim Wight. The third movement, Petrichor, will have its world premiere tonight. This piece has been nearly two years in the making and I would like to thank all those who have made each premiere possible.