

# Birmingham New Music Festival 2018

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Admission to all concerts is free

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Birmingham Art Music Alliance  
429 Greensprings HWY  
Suite 161 #323  
Birmingham, AL 35209

*We would love to see your photos of this year's festival!  
Tag them with #BNMF18 on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.*

# Birmingham New Music Festival 2018

## Concert 1: Electroacoustic

UAB Hulsey Recital Hall  
950 13<sup>th</sup> Street South, Birmingham AL 35233

Thursday, October 18

7:00 pm

***Liberal Hands and Spirits Free*** ..... Monroe Golden  
Osiris J. Molina, clarinet

***... about the size of a fist and located slightly to the left of ...***  
.....Holland Hopson  
Holland Hopson, live electronics

***Ce cE CE ceLLO*** ..... Joe L. Alexander  
Craig Hultgren, cello

***Wrong Number*** ..... Brian C. Moon  
Electronics

***Vapors of India*** ..... LaDonna Smith  
LaDonna Smith, 5-string violin solo  
(or duo with Davey Williams, electric sitar)

***Liquid Architecture*** ..... Joel Nelson  
Jacquie Cotillard, saxophone  
Charles Pagano, drums  
Scott Bazar, bass  
Brad Davis, electronics  
Joel Nelson, conductor

***Yjet e Berminghamit*** ..... Geni Skendo  
Geni Skendo, shakuhachi, bass flute, fujara  
Davey Williams, prepared electric sitar  
LaDonna Smith, erhu  
Holland Hopson, electronics

Information about the composers, performers, and music is in the bios section of the program.

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## Concert 2: Singles and Doubles

Hoover Library  
Hoover Library Plaza, 200 Municipal Dr.  
Hoover, AL 35216 United States

Friday, October 19

8:00 pm

***Dig My Grave*** ..... Matthew Scott Phillips

Maurice Nix, Bass  
Craig Hultgren, cello

***Obstinate Duet*** ..... David Mecionis

Geni Skendo, flute  
Brian Viliunas, clarinet

***Lament for Lost Children*** ..... Monroe Golden

Trent Bradford, Highland pipes  
Seth Noble, vibraphone

***Late Friday Afternoon*** ..... Michael Coleman

Geni Skendo, Flute  
Brian Viliunas, clarinet

***Incendiary Rhetoric*** ..... Alan Schmitz

Craig Hultgren, Cello

***Asimov Dreams*** ..... Geni Skendo

Geni Skendo, bass and alto flute  
Keith Beard, guitar

***Terra Nova*** ..... Tom Reiner

Angela Flaniken, viola  
Brian Viliunas, clarinet

***Orbital Variations*** ..... Shawn Crouch

Craig Hultgren, Cello

Information about the composers, performers, and music is in the bios section of the program.

# **Birmingham New Music Festival 2018**

## **Concert 3: BNMF Free Improvisation Night**

Arts Town # East Lake Station  
7611 1st Ave N  
Birmingham, Alabama

Saturday, October 20

6pm - 8pm

An evening of spontaneous and pre-meditated improvisations by Bama members. There will be solo, duo, trios and group improvisations using Shakuhachi, Shamisen, Electric Saxophone, Bass Flute, Electric Sitar, 5 string Viola, Electric Bass & Percussion.

### **Performers:**

Geni Skendo

LaDonna Smith

Andrew Raffo Dewar

Davey Williams

+ special guests

Information about the composers, performers, and music is in the bios section of the program.

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## Concert 4: The BAMA Players

Samford University Brock Recital Hall  
800 Lakeshore Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209

Sunday, October 21

2:30 pm

Hillary Tidman, flute  
Kathy White, clarinet  
Adam Bowles, piano  
Sarah Dennis, violin  
Pei-Ju Wu, violin  
Meridith Treastor, viola  
Laura Usiskin, cello

***The Memory Palace*** ..... Tom Reiner

***Beside the Still Waters*** ..... Mark Lackey

***Suite for Sarro*** ..... Bunny Beck

I. *Tango for trio*

II. *Serenity marked by discomfort*

***Regicide*** ..... W.F. Smith Leithart

***String Quartet No. 1: Vespers*** ..... Joel Scott Davis

II. *Antiphons - Benedictions*

## Intermission

*Program continued on next page*

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*The BAMA Players program continued*

**Life** ..... W.F. Smith Leithart

**Prelude No. 3 in G-minor** ..... Kenneth A. Kuhn

**String Quartet 4-3** ..... Matthew Scott Phillips  
III. *Largo*

**Septet** ..... Joseph Landers  
I. *Moderato, scorrevole*  
II. *Lentissimo, pensivo*  
III. *Allegro*

Information about the composers, performers, and music is in the bios section of the program.

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## Composer and performer biographies

### Composer program notes after bios

#### **Joe L. Alexander** – composer of *Ce cE CE ceLLO*

Composer, theorist, and tuba player, Joe L. Alexander joined the faculty of Mississippi University for Women's Department of Music in the Fall of 2016. He was previously on the faculties of Louisiana Tech University, Birmingham-Southern College, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Samford University, Judson College, the University of Montevallo, Lamar University, East Central University (Ada, Oklahoma) and James Madison University. He holds degrees from East Carolina University (B.M. in Music Education), James Madison University (M.M. in Theory/Composition), and the University of North Texas (D.M.A. in Composition, with extensive theory minor). He studied composition with Newel Kay Brown, Douglas Knehans, Martin Mailman, Cindy McTee, and James Riley; and tuba with Bruce Mosier, Ken Meisinger and James Michael Dunn.

Alexander is an Associate Professor and teaches Theory, Composition, Music History and Low Brass at Mississippi University for Women. He has served as Secretary-Treasurer for the Southern Chapter of the College Music Society; Secretary, Vice-President and President for the Southeastern Composers' League; Treasurer, Vice-President and President of the Mid-South Chapter of NACUSA; and chair of the National Advisory Council for NACUSA. Currently, Alexander serves as the National Treasurer for NACUSA. Under his direction, Louisiana Tech University hosted the 2005 and 2010 Southeastern Composers League Forum and the 2013 NACUSA National Festival.

**Program notes:** *Ce cE CE ceLLO* was commissioned by the cellist, Craig Hultgren, and premiered on November 14, 2000, at the Birmingham Art Music Alliance's Electroacoustic concert held at Birmingham-Southern College. The electronic part consists of prerecorded cello sounds which were manipulated using the the Sound Forge software program. The composition was made possible through a generous Technical Assistance Grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

#### **Scott Bazar** – guitar

Guitarist, composer, improviser, filmmaker Scott Bazar has been actively producing and performing since 1989. Known for his guitar and bass work in the bands Barkers of the wrong Tree, Plutonian Buritto, DOG, Disco Vato and Pig Chicken Suicide Scott also performs on invented instruments such as The

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Electric Pitchfork ,Eggtooth and Book N. His interests also lie within film and animation eventually merging the two into his improvisational workshop Pico Dorado. <https://www.scottbazar.com>

## **Bunny Beck – composer of *Suite for Sarro***

Bunny Beck composes contemporary classical music and jazz. Her recent works include “Suite for Sarro” for string trio, “Fantasy for Saxophones” for sax quartet, “Two Rivers and An Ocean” which is a tone poem in three movements for percussion, and jazz composition “Breathe”.

Bunny holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in Music Composition from the Vermont College of Fine Arts where she studied primarily with Andy Jaffe, Roger Zahab and Rick Baitz.

The New York based composer is a pianist and recording artist. A selection of her compositions can be heard on PARMA Recordings albums “From the Spirit” and “Abrazo: The Havana Sessions”.

Among other music organizations Bunny is a member of the New York Composers Circle and Chamber Music America.

She is delighted that one of her works has been selected by BAMA as part of the Birmingham New Music Festival.

**Program notes:** “Suite for Sarro” tells a story inspired by circumstances experienced by my friends Iris and Christ Sarro who had been married for many years.

Christ, a fabulous dancer, was declining from a condition that affected him physically and cognitively, so every night Iris made sure they danced at home because they loved to dance and dancing together was a connection of intimacy.

“Tango for Trio” represents their dancing during which, because Christ is tiring, the tango music changes to a simple Americana style folk melody - suddenly Christ falters! - Iris’ reacts with fear - she then regroups and gently asks Christ “shall we continue?” No longer dancing, Iris sits listening as the tango begins again.

Sadly and suddenly, while I was writing “Tango for Trio”, Christ died. “Serenity Marked by Discomfort” is a representation of the flux of Iris’ emotional experiences both during and in the aftermath of the loss of a loved one.

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## **Keith Beard** – guitar

Keith has been performing live concerts since 2013 including the Alabaster Cityfest, the Shelby County Arts Council, Moonlight on the Mountain, and the Chet Atkins Appreciation Society Convention in Nashville, TN. He has also been the regular substitute guitar player for the Best of Birmingham band Act of Congress where together they performed at Workplay Theater and the Best of Birmingham 2016 celebration at The Club. He can also be found providing the ceremony music for Alabama brides throughout the year.

## **Adam Bowles** – piano

Pianist Adam Bowles is a dedicated performer of newly composed art music who also remains an active and passionate interpreter of established solo piano, chamber music, and vocal repertoire from the Twentieth Century and earlier. Dr. Bowles frequently performs throughout the country with the Luna Nova ensemble – of which he is a founding member. Through Luna Nova, Dr. Bowles regularly participates in formal concerts, master classes, and a variety of educational outreach activities. Dr. Bowles is also an active member of the Birmingham Art Music Alliance, having served as Treasurer and Vice President of Membership. He also serves as grant-writer for the Alabama Music Teachers Association. Recently, Dr. Bowles has served as adjudicator for competitions such as the Lois Pickard Piano Competition and the NFMC Young Artists Competition and gave a presentation on NFMC Solo Festival Repertoire for the Birmingham Music Teachers Association in the fall of 2010. He holds degrees from Eastman School of Music (BM) and New England Conservatory (MM), and received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Teachers have included Milton Stern, Barry Snyder, Jacob Maxin, and Eugene and Elizabeth Pridonoff. Dr. Bowles is currently on the faculties of the Birmingham-Southern College and Conservatory, where he has taught piano, keyboard harmony, theory, and accompanying. Students of Dr. Bowles have won prizes at competitions hosted by such organizations as the Alabama Music Teachers Association and others. At the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Dr. Bowles accompanies the vocal and instrumental students for lessons and recitals. He is recorded on the Living Artists label and was recently featured on a CD of music by Argentinian composer Valdo Sciammerella, “Rosas de Pulpa Rosas de Cal.”

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## **Trent Bradford** – bagpipes

Trent Bradford plays Irish and Scottish bagpipes and has taught music in the Birmingham City School system for the last 26 years. He pipes for various ceremonies and events throughout the year and plays in the band Hooley, a Birmingham mainstay for Celtic music for the last 20 years. Trent attended the University of Montevallo, graduating with a Bachelor of Music in 1993 and a Master of Music Education in 1997.

## **Michael Coleman** – composer of *Late Friday Afternoon (2014)*

Michael Coleman received his doctorate from the University of Maryland and holds degrees from the University of New Orleans and the University of South Alabama, studying with Lawrence Moss, Jerry Sieg, and Carl Alette. He has participated as composer/pianist in numerous new music programs and festivals in the U.S and Russia and has also had works performed in Costa Rica, France, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. Recent awards include the “AN ART Artistry” Prize in the International Composition Competition “The contemporary piano 2018” held in Athens, Greece. Other recent awards are “First Diploma” (National Category) in the 2018 Golden Key Competition and two Silver Medals in the 2017 Global Music Awards. Dr. Coleman has served as adjudicator on numerous composition and performance competitions, including the 2009 SCI/ASCAP Region I Composition Competition and the 2018 Gulf Coast Steinway Competition.

As pianist, Dr. Coleman has premiered his own works along with those by Merab Gagnidze, Kari Henrik Juusela, Jerry Sieg, and Sergei Zhukov. As part of the duo Tone Twister, he and tubaist Tim Jackson have performed a variety of original and contemporary works for tuba and piano. His Two Bagatelles were part of a 2007 CD release by pianist Jeri-Mae Astolfi through Capstone Records and his Seville Rag was on a 2016 CD by pianist Bobby van Deusen. His String Quartet No. 1 will be on a 2018 CD release by the Amernet String Quartet. Steinway Artist Kadisha Onalbayeva recently (June 6, 2018) performed Coleman’s The ‘96 Etude at Carnegie Hall and she premiered Arman (Piano Concerto No. 1) in 2016 with the Louisiana Sinfonietta under the direction of Dinos Constantinides. Dr. Coleman is on the faculties of Pensacola State College and the University of West Florida, and is the organist/music director at Zion Lutheran Church in Silverhill, Alabama.

**Program Notes:** Late Friday Afternoon (2014) was completed late Friday afternoon on March 21, 2014 and is written for flute and oboe. The work was commissioned by flautist Kathleen Diamond and oboist LaBarrin Wallace who premiered it on Pensacola ComposerFest X in September, 2014. The musical material in the work revolves around shifting arpeggiated chords in both

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instruments with brief moments of imitation and melodic development. The version performed tonight has been transcribed for flute and clarinet (replacing oboe) and this will be the premier performance of this new version of Late Friday Afternoon.

## **Jacque Cotillard** – saxophone

Jacque Cotillard is a multi-instrumentalist and Head of Representation for the performer Carl JR. Cotillard and Carl JR have no connection with the hacktivist group Anonymous. Cotillard composes and performs original material and hosts the flagship propaganda show The Earth Hotel and produces other programs on the media network of the same name.

## **Shawn Crouch** – composer of *Orbital Variations for solo cello*

Gramophone Magazine calls Shawn Crouch a “gifted composer” and Anthony Tommasini of the New York Times describes Crouch’s work as music of “gnarling atonal energy”. Shawn has received awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, The American Prize, ASCAP, Yale University, Meet the Composer and the Percussive Arts Society. He is the inaugural recipient of the Dale Warland Singers Commissioning Award given by Chorus America and the American Composers Forum. Shawn Crouch has had his works performed by among others; the Cleveland Orchestra, the American Modern Ensemble, Cantori New York, California E.A.R. Unit, Chanticleer, Del Sol String Quartet, the Esoterics, Eighth Blackbird, Lost Dog New Music Ensemble, newEar Contemporary Ensemble, Phoenix Chorale, Prism Quartet, Santa Fe Chorale, Seraphic Fire, the Yesaroun' Duo, and Volti. Shawn received his D.M.A. from the University of Miami Frost School of Music, his M.Mus from the Yale School of Music, and his B.Mus. from the New England Conservatory. Shawn Crouch currently teaches at the University of Miami Frost School of Music where he is Assistant Professor of Practice of Composition and Theory, and Director of the Ensemble Ibis New Music Ensemble.

**Program notes:** *Orbital Variations for solo cello* is a theme and variations that explores the harmonic gravitational pull towards a center pitch. There are seven themes that are first heard in the opening section and are explored in the preceding six variations. There is an acceleration and deceleration of the musical line throughout the work similar to orbital mechanics where a gravitational slingshot occurs when a spacecraft uses the gravity of a planet to accelerate. The work was written for Craig Hultgren.

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## **Brad Davis** – electronics

Brad Davis is a musician working with percussion and electronics. He has a special interest in experimental music and improvisation, particularly the use of chaos and feedback in electronic circuits. In the improv scene, he has worked with LaDonna Smith, Tatsuya Nakatani, Andrew Raffo Dewar, Arthur Doyle, and others.

## **Joel Scott Davis** – composer of *II. Antiphons—Benedictions from String Quartet No. 1: Vespers*

Joel Scott Davis is a composer, arranger, conductor, and multi-instrumentalist whose music has been hailed by critics for its “honest beauty” and expressive lyricism. His works have been premiered and recorded by the likes of Duo46, the Samford String Quartet, the Amernet String Quartet, the BAMA Players, the Shades Mountain Choir and Orchestra, and performed at such esteemed venues as Carnegie Hall, the Palais Ferstel in Vienna, and Harlaxton Manor in England. His film scores have been featured in international film festivals and national television broadcasts, and his Songs of Liberty cycle and String Quartet No. 1 were named as a semi-finalist and honorable mention for the 2016 and 2017 American Prize in Composition competitions, respectively. An alumnus of the Lilly Graduate Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts, Davis serves as Associate Professor of Music and Coordinator of Music Theory, Musicology, and Technology for the Division of Music Samford at University’s School of the Arts. Prior to his appointment at Samford, Davis held faculty positions at The Master’s University, Claremont Graduate University, and The University of Alabama at Birmingham. He holds degrees in theory and composition from Samford University and Claremont Graduate University, where he studied with James Jensen, Rebecca Remley, Bob Burroughs, Edward Zeliff, and Peter Boyer.

**Program Notes:** String Quartet No. 1: Vespers was composed between 2013 and 2015. Inspired by aspects of the Evening Prayer service, the work represents a journey from the first awakenings of the heart and quickening of the spirit to the closing benedictions and lingering joy after a time of worship, liturgy, music, and meditation.

The central movement of the quartet, “Antiphons—Benedictions,” consists of a series of variations based upon the liturgical chant *Veni Creator Spiritus*. This magisterial hymn has been employed throughout church history as an invocation of the Holy Spirit for the ordination of clergy in a variety of settings and denominations. Comprised of seven stanzas, the text petitions for divine aid amid human frailty. The first and fourth stanzas of the hymn read as follows:

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Veni, creator spiritus:  
mentes tuorum visita,  
imple superna gratia  
quae tu creasti pectora!

Come, Holy Spirit, Creator,  
visit the souls of your people;  
fill with grace from above  
the hearts that you have created.

Accende lumen sensibus,  
infunde amorem cordibus,  
infirmis nostris corporis  
virtute firmans perpeti.

Kindle a light in our minds,  
pour love into our hearts,  
strengthening the weaknesses of our  
bodies with perpetual vigor.

String Quartet No. 1 Vespers was composed for Jeffrey Flaniken, Caroline Nordlund, Angela Flaniken, and Samuel Nordlund of the Samford String Quartet, who presented the Northeastern premiere of Antiphons—Benedictions at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie on October 24, 2016. The piece is dedicated to two dear friends and mentors who graciously commissioned the work: Dr. Wilton Bunch and Dr. Victoria Dvonch.

## **Sarah Dennis – violin**

Sarah Nordlund Dennis grew up in Birmingham, AL, studying violin with Jeffrey Flaniken and Patrick Rafferty. She entered the University of Alabama early and graduated Summa Cum Laude with honors at age nineteen. She went on to study with Paul Kantor at the Aspen Music Festival and Cleveland Institute of Music, earning a Master's Degree in Violin Performance. In 2004, Nordlund Dennis won a position with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, where she performed for two years. After a year performing and teaching in New York City, Nordlund Dennis joined the Alabama Symphony in 2007.

Nordlund Dennis has collaborated with faculty of the University of Alabama and Cleveland Institute of Music including Dr. Bruce Murray and Paul Kantor in chamber concerts. She served on the faculty of Lutheran Summer Music from 2009-2013, where she performed with the Omega Quartet. She is a founding member of Birmingham-based Cahaba River Strings, and she has been part of the Amion Quartet and now the newly formed Birmingham Art Music Alliance Players performing new music in Birmingham. She began violin at age three in a Suzuki program in Rochester, NY, and has gone on to pursue Suzuki teacher training herself. She has taught with the Suzuki Talent Education Program in Birmingham since 2012.

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## **Monroe Golden** – composer of *Lament for Lost Children* and *Liberal Hands and Spirits Free*

Monroe Golden is a composer from rural Alabama, now living in New York, whose overtone informed music has been called “delightfully disorienting,” “lovely, sumptuous, yet arcane,” and “irresistible..., full of wit and beauty.” He has received an Individual Artist Fellowship from the Alabama State Council on the Arts, the MTA/MTNA Commissioning Award, and commissions from solo performers and groups. His work *Incongruity* (piano/fixed media) was the first prize entry in the Chicago-based UnTwelve Competition. Beyond his own artistry, Golden has actively promoted the innovative arts in his resident community. A founding member and three-term President of the Birmingham Art Music Alliance, he has also led the Birmingham Art Association, Birmingham Improv, Artburst, and New Arts Stage -- and implemented the inaugural Birmingham New Music Festival in 2014. There are three complete audio releases of his music: *A Still Subtler Spirit* (Living Artist Recordings, 2003), *Alabama Places* (Innova Recordings, 2007), and *Incongruity* (self-published, 2011).

**Program Notes for *Lament for Lost Children*:** Beyond the potential for overpowering an espresso machine, the Highland pipes intrigue me because they are (a) normally tuned in just intonation and (b), in practice, a microtonally transposing instrument – with written A usually sounding between Bb and B. Upon digging into Ceol Mor (sometimes translated as “art music”!) history and literature, I discovered Padruig MacCrimmon’s “Lament for the Children” (reportedly composed after losing most of his children in an epidemic). With global refugee crises and family separations at our own southern border, such a lament seemed appropriate as a basis. Original tunes are occasionally presented unaltered, but more often adapted to accommodate vibraphone and composite tuning systems. The only pitch commonality between the two instruments is written G on pipes (7th partial to drone A), which corresponds to Ab on the vibraphone.

**Program notes for *Liberal Hands and Spirits Free*:** *Liberal Hands and Spirits Free* is a quote from the lyrics of the Alabama state song which, though antiquated, reflect a generous and tolerant society that might yet one day be. The tune serves as basis for this set of tangential variations in extended Just Intonation, inspired by a performance of Ed Robertson’s quintessential choral setting. This presentation at the 2018 Birmingham New Music Festival is in acknowledgment of the bicentennial of Alabama’s statehood.

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## **Angela Flaniken – viola**

Angela Flaniken, a native of Alabama, is a member of the Samford Quartet and an active freelance musician. She has been on the roster of many orchestras, including the Cincinnati Symphony, Alabama Symphony, Columbus (Ohio) Symphony, Boston Chamber Orchestra, and the Louisville Orchestra. She received her training from the University of Louisville and Boston University.

## **Holland Hopson – composer of *...about the size of a fist and located slightly to the left of...***

Holland Hopson is a composer, improviser, and electronic artist. A multi-instrumentalist, he usually performs on clawhammer banjo and electronics. Holland often augments his instruments with custom-designed sensor interfaces and performs with his own highly responsive, interactive computer programs. Holland has performed in Australia, Europe and North America along with notable experimental and outsider musicians such as Macarthur Genius Award winners Anthony Braxton and George Lewis, live electronics pioneer David Behrman, sonic meditator Pauline Oliveros, mutant-trumpeter Ben Neill, network music trailblazer Tim Perkis, free-improv innovators LaDonna Williams and Davey Smith, noise-monger John Wiese, and others. Holland has held residencies at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, Florida; at LEMURPlex, Brooklyn; and Harvestworks Digital Media Arts, New York.

**Program notes:** *...about the size of a fist and located slightly to the left of...* is an improvisation using a custom software mapping of an off-the-shelf MIDI fader box. The typical position information of each fader/knob is ignored in favor of gestural information about how the control is manipulated over time. This transforms the controls into virtual bellows on a pump organ or something like the springs in a wind-up toy.

## **Craig Hultgren – cello**

Cellist Craig Hultgren remains active in new music, the newly creative arts, and the avant-garde. Recently leaving Birmingham after more than 30 years as a member of the Alabama Symphony, he now resides outside of Decorah, Iowa as the farmer-cellist. The New York Classical Review commented that he, "...played with impressive poise and sensitivity..." for Dorothy Hindman's 2016 chamber music retrospective at Carnegie Hall. At this point, almost 300 works have been created for him. A recipient of two Artist Fellowships from the Alabama State Council on the Arts, he was a member for many years of Thámyris, a contemporary chamber music ensemble in Atlanta. He is a founding member of Luna Nova, a new music ensemble with a large repertoire of performances available as podcast downloads on iTunes. Hultgren is featured in three solo CD recordings including *The Electro-Acoustic Cello Book*

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on Living Artist Recordings. For ten years, he produced the Hultgren Solo Cello Works Biennial, an international competition that highlighted the best new compositions for the instrument. He taught at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the Alabama School of Fine Arts, Wartburg College (Iowa) and Birmingham-Southern College where he directed the BSC New Music Ensemble. He is a founding member and former President of the Birmingham Art Music Alliance and was on the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Youth Orchestras of Birmingham and their Scrollworks program. Currently, he is Vice President of the Oneota Valley Community Orchestra Board of Directors in Decorah, and he will become Chair of the Board of Directors for the Iowa Composers Forum in 2019.

## **Kenneth A. Kuhn** – composer of *Prelude No. 3 in G-minor*

Kenneth Kuhn is an electrical engineer specializing in electronic circuit design who had the privilege of growing up with a great appreciation of classical music. His favorite composers include Anton Bruckner and Gustav Mahler. Over the years classical music enhanced mental skills valuable for his engineering career. Composing music and designing electronic circuits are very interrelated as each enhances the other.

He began composing music in his youth in the 1960s and taught himself how to compose by carefully listening to the many classical composers. Ken composes because, "There is music I want to hear but since no one has written it then I must write it myself." His compositions are of the neo-romantic genre where the music conveys grand concepts that transcend spoken language through rich melody and texture.

His retirement plans are to complete many drafts of piano and orchestral works he has accumulated over a lifetime. Ken resides in Vestavia Hills, Alabama and shares his house with a number of mischievous but lovable cats who otherwise would not have homes.

**Program notes:** The work opens with a dramatic theme in the style of 1940s piano music for movies. A lyrical subordinate theme provides contrast. The second part begins with a transformation of the dramatic main theme to a beautiful B-flat major flowing melody with a joyous and yearning subordinate theme reminiscent of the dramatic main theme. The music then builds to a concluding grand majestic version of the dramatic opening theme.

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## **Mark Lackey** – composer of *Beside the Still Waters*

Mark Lackey composes new music that is “buoyant, at times playful” with “a classical, yet unrestrained lyricism” (ArtsBham.com). As a composer of vocal, electronic, chamber, orchestral, and wind ensemble music, Mark Lackey has garnered premieres from many gifted artists including Rhymes With Opera, Fireworks, Eastman Wind Orchestra, Definiens Ensemble, Druid City Ensemble, cellist Craig Hultgren, Miolina NYC, violist Victor de Almeida, and violinist Courtney Orlando. He is immediate past president and current treasurer of the Birmingham Art Music Alliance. His music is available through Dorn Publications and Julian Date Music, and on the Potenza Music and Centaur Records labels. Honors include a public reading by the Alabama Symphony Orchestra and selection as finalist in the American Composer Competition of the Columbia (MD) Orchestra. Mark Lackey is also an energetic educator. As Assistant Professor at Samford University's School of the Arts, he teaches composition, music theory, and music technology. He earned the degrees Doctor of Musical Arts in composition, Master of Music in theory pedagogy, and Master of Music in composition from The Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University where his teachers included Christopher Theofanidis, Bruno Amato, and Nicholas Maw.

**Program notes:** My goal in composing *Beside the Still Waters* was to create a work of gentle expressiveness, even though I am using materials more often associated with modernism and dissonance. Those materials are, firstly, the Pierrot ensemble itself, a now-standard chamber group created by Arnold Schoenberg for his masterpiece *Pierrot Lunaire*, and, for pitch material, the use of sets – primarily a (015) set. The title is taken from the twenty-third Psalm.

## **Joseph Landers** – composer of *Septet*

Joseph Landers was born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1965. He studied with Frederic Goossen at the University of Alabama, Lothar Klein at the University of Toronto, and Alexander Goehr at Cambridge. Landers has been awarded fellowships by the Fulbright Foundation, the Tanglewood Music Center, the American Music Center, and the MacDowell Colony, where he was selected as the Margaret Lee Crofts Fellow in Composition for 1995-96. His orchestral work *Karangan* was selected as a finalist for the 1999 Alexander Zemlinsky International Prize for Composition. In 2000 he was awarded the Thor Johnson Memorial Commission for his *Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano*. The works of Joseph Landers have been featured on concerts series and festivals across the U. S. and abroad including the Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music, the AD\*Evantgard Festival in Munich, the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (U.K.), and the Gaudeamus Music Week (Holland), where his

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orchestral work *Nine forty-eight* was selected as a finalist for the 1997 prize in composition. His compositions for orchestra have been performed by the Alabama Symphony, the Florida Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio Orchestra, the Omaha Symphony, the Tuscaloosa Symphony, and the Lincoln Symphony, and various other orchestras under conductors including Christopher Confessore, Jahja Ling, Ransom Wilson, Bruce Hangen, Adrian Gnam, and Jac Van Steen. His music has also been performed by internationally acclaimed musicians including Lucy Shelton, Richard Killmer, Mariko Anraku, and Marcel Worms.

**Program notes:** The Septet was composed for and dedicated to the BAMA Players. Each of the three movements explores specific intervallic motives and instrumental combinations.

## **W. F. Smith Leithart** – composer of *Regicide* and *Life*

W. F. Smith Leithart is a senior at Samford University pursuing a degree in music composition. He studies composition with Mark Lackey. From an early age, Leithart became enamored with film and video game scores, both of which have greatly influenced his own music. He recently scored two indie films, *Unorthodox* and *Picture Perfect*, which have been shown at film festivals around the country. Leithart is a member of Birmingham Art Music Alliance (BAMA), Game Audio Network Guild (GANG), and International Game Developers Association (IGDA).

**Program Notes for *Regicide*:** This piece was written in the spring of 2017. Even after composing the piece in its entirety and giving it the title, *Regicide* (the murder of a king), I still did not really know what the piece meant. I spent hours poring over the score, racking my brain, and came up with nothing. It was not until several months of rehearsals leading up to the December premiere that the significance of the piece finally dawned on me.

I am the king. The regicide that occurs in this piece is my own murder, my own death. It is almost a third-person view of myself as I suffer a metaphorical death. The first section, introduced by a long, dramatic violin melody, is my own grief at witnessing myself being brought down so low. “How noble a hero,” I think to myself. “How terrible and tragic a death.”

After the first grand pause, the cello surprises the listener with a frantic ostinato that continues throughout the section. This is the realization of the true significance of my death. I have suffered my “tragic” martyrdom, and now it occurs to me that all is not how it should be. Maybe I was not so “noble” as I

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thought myself to be. As intensity builds, so does the epiphany of the relative insignificance of my downfall.

When this section concludes, there is more sadness, but this time it is illuminated by a ray of hope. Hope which comes with a new knowledge that, because I am not as important as I once thought myself to be, I can undergo this death and resurrection filled with assurance that there is a grander scheme than the arc of my own experience. There is a greater plan at work than my own individual sufferings. And for that reason, I can endure.

**Program Notes for *Life*:** Every time I play this piece, it means something different. I believe that is the beauty of it. The title, being rather generic, does not put the piece into the same kind of box that a more specific title would. Instead, it leaves the door open to all kinds of interpretations, just as the music leaves itself open to all kinds of possibilities. I would encourage the listener to stop reading at the end of this paragraph and listen before finishing this note. Listen intently, consider the figures and developments in this piece. Discern what the music means to you before you learn what it means to me.

This piece, originally composed as a response to a personal hardship, does not wallow in the grief of sufferings, but rather looks ahead to the result of the sufferings. At the time I wrote it, few things could offer me much comfort. But there are a few reassuring truths that I hold dearly which were constantly in the front of my mind during the process of creating this work. The first comes from the book of Hebrews: “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.” The second, the words of Paul: “We rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

It is because of these words that the piece’s meaning can be so fluid but also remain constant. It is a reminder of hope. A reminder that, no matter what happens to us, whatever difficulties we face, or how hopeless things might seem, we can always know that there is a saving power in which we can put our trust. There is a God, unfathomably greater than any of us, who uses the most challenging times in our lives to mold us into His image. That is the reason for suffering. That is what produces endurance, character, and hope. That is the meaning of Life.

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## **David Mecionis** – composer of *Obstinate Duet (2012)*

David Mecionis is a composer, instrumentalist and copyist whose work has spanned a wide range of genres. A self-taught musician, his autodidacticism began at an early age when he taught himself guitar, bass and drums, and he has toured with many bands—God Is My Co-Pilot, Domonique A, and Elliott Sharp's 'Dyners Club, among others—in the U.S. and Europe. Despite scant resources, David taught himself composition, notation and music theory, employing primary sources as well as intuition and initiative. His first fully-realized classical composition, Saxophone Quartet in E-flat minor, was premiered in October 2009 at SUNY Fredonia by the Coleman Prize-winning Mana Quartet. Since then, David has been composing modern chamber pieces and electronic music. In late 2016, he began working under the guidance of Raoul Pleskow, a highly regarded composer of the Wolpe and Wuorinen circles. A song-cycle dedicated to Mr. Pleskow—Die Sprechmasken von Hofmannsthal for tenor, English horn, bass clarinet, violin and electric guitar—will be premiered March 19, 2019 in New York City, for which David will play guitar. David is a New York City resident and is Concert Director of the New York Composers Circle.

**Program Notes:** *Obstinate Duet (2012)* is built from a melodious 12-tone row. It owes its style to many early 20th-century 12-tone pieces, which I find have a certain élan and sense of discovery. In order to achieve a result in keeping with that period, I closely followed standard serialist procedures and employed none of the later, more advanced row operations. I was reading Gustave Flaubert's unfinished final novel *Bouvard and Pécuchet* at the time of composition and I may have been unconsciously influenced by it. The music seems to ponder itself, arguing and agreeing at turns, dabbling in meaningful activity while being—I hope—quite entertaining, much in the way we can view Messrs. Bouvard and Pécuchet in the course of their many excruciating endeavors. Hence the double meaning of the title: it's a duet on an ostinato figure, while also perhaps a character piece on the theme of Flaubert's hilariously obstinate heroes.

## **Osiris J. Molina** – clarinet

Dr. Osiris J. Molina is Woodwind Area Coordinator and Associate Professor of Clarinet at The University of Alabama. A native of Elizabeth, New Jersey, he has extensive experience as a soloist, chamber and orchestral musician. He is currently Principal Clarinet of the Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra, Second Clarinet with the Huntsville Symphony and performs regularly with the Alabama, Mobile and Chattanooga symphony clarinet sections, in addition to work with the Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Greater Lansing, and Bridgeport (CT) symphony orchestras. Dr. Molina holds degrees from Michigan State University

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(DMA), Yale School of Music (MM), and Rutgers University (BM), where he studied with Dr. Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, David Shifrin, Charles Neidich, Ayako Oshima and Dr. William Berz. Dr. Molina is a DMA Recitalist and a Selmer-Paris Artist. He performs on the Recital clarinet and the Privilege Bass Clarinet.

## **Brian C. Moon** – composer of *Wrong Number*

Brian C. Moon received his Master of Music in Composition from Birmingham-Southern College and his Bachelor of Arts in Music Technology from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. His composition instructors include Ron Clemmons, Jan Vicar, Traci Mendel, Charles Mason and Dorothy Hindman. For many years, Brian has been an active composer and member of the Birmingham Art Music Alliance, as well as an adjunct music instructor at Birmingham-Southern and UAB, where he has taught Ear Training, Computer Music, and Multimedia Productions. As for the local Birmingham band scene, Brian is singer/songwriter for the Maisleys and bassist for Delicate Cutters. Brian currently serves as secretary for the Birmingham Art Music Alliance.

**Program notes:** *Wrong Number* was created during my graduate composition studies at Birmingham-Southern College. I previously had a very memorable land-line phone number, and because it was so memorable and fun to dial (I can only assume this is the reason) I received an unusually high number of wrong numbers, and most often, an equally high number of mis-directed messages on my answering machine. This, combined with the fact that I would always try to have a unique out-going message on my machine (everything from Mr. T to a computerized voice speaking Spanish), I received some truly odd messages over the years. Source materials for this sound file include manipulated audio from the wrong number messages, common analog phone sounds, and selections from my outgoing messages. The piece was created using C- sound and Adobe Audition.

## **Joel Nelson** – composer of *Liquid Architecture*

Originally from the Birmingham, Alabama area, Joel Nelson studied music at the University of Montevallo and became a part of the vibrant music scene in the area. He started performing in many different bands and improvising with many of Birmingham respected improvisors. In 2016 he was accepted into Mills' college in Oakland, California where he pursued a master's degree in Improvisation and Literature. While at Mills he played in Willie Winant's Percussion Ensemble, Gamelan Ensembles, and performing compositions of new music. He also found himself trying to hack circuits, learn Supercollider and write music. He now lives in Oakland, California and is an active performer in the area.

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**Program Notes:** While in school at Mills College in Oakland, California, I became interested in devising a way for improvisers to perform in rhythmic contexts while retaining their own individual musical languages. This interest evolved into my intention for this piece, which is to create a score that presents a framework that musicians from vastly different backgrounds are able to come together and intuitively perform. In order to achieve this, I created a score that utilizes a variety of different styles of notation, including traditional notation, verbal instruction, and a variety of different graphic notation styles in order to allow for improvisors from a variety of different backgrounds to be able to make their own musical decisions within a constantly evolving rhythmic framework.

Particularly this piece was made in order to generate a larger musical network with the improvisors style and approach at the center of the process.

## **Maurice Nix – bass**

Maurice Nix is a native of Birmingham, Alabama and a graduate of Wenonah High School. As a vocalist at UAB, Maurice has been a member of the Concert Choir, Chamber Choir and Gospel Choir. He was a featured soloist with the UAB Jazz Ensemble and Faculty Jazz Quintet on their recent tour to South America. Maurice has been active in UAB Opera by securing one of the lead roles as King Balthazar in their 2016 production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. In the spring of 2017, Mr. Nix placed fifth at the Alabama NATS competition. Maurice has studied voice with Won Cho for 3 years and after graduation, plans to further his studies in graduate school and focus on Conducting and Music Education.

## **Seth Noble – percussionist**

Seth Noble is a percussionist and co-founder/director of the Iron Giant Percussion group. A graduate of the University of Alabama Birmingham's music program, Seth currently resides in South Eastlake, Birmingham where he works as the Director of Artistic Administration for the Alabama Symphony Orchestra. He has performed for and in collaboration with several Alabama arts organizations, such as the Birmingham Art Music Alliance, Sanspointe Dance Company, Clefworks, and the Alys Stephens Center's world premiere of Glenn Kotche's *Beautiful Confusion* with Third Coast Percussion. In the fall of 2015, Seth performed the New York premiere of Monroe Golden's *Vestiges* for solo vibraphone and fixed media as part of Vox Novus's Circuit Bridges series. Recently, Seth has begun performing music for signal-processed harmonium, mbira, and percussion under the solo moniker *cnida*.

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## **Charles Pagano – drums**

Charles Pagano Interned at Creative Music Studio NY with Dave Holland, Bob Moses, Oliver Lake, Anthony Braxton, Ed Blackwell, Karl Berger, Leo Smith, Don Cherry. Currently playing with Steve Gilmore (Phil Woods Quartet), Jamison Williams, Plutonian Burrito (w/ Scott Bazar) and the occasional trio with Tatsuya Nakatani and Scott Bazar. Past musical compatriots include Beck, Stew (The Negro Problem), Kevin Ayers, Enrico Rava, James Emery (String Trio of NY), Cedric Lawson (Miles Davis), Larry Willis, Gene Bertoncini, Giacomo Gates, Ted Howe and Russ Kassoff.

## **Matthew Scott Phillips – composer of *Dig My Grave* and *String Quartet 4-3***

Matthew Scott Phillips is a Graduate of the University of Alabama at Birmingham (B.A.), Birmingham Southern College (M.M.) and of the University of Georgia (D.M.A). He has written for orchestra, chamber groups, independent film, live theatre productions, and multimedia presentations, and his music has been played from Brazil, to the United States, to Germany and the Czech Republic. The content of Matthew's compositions are centered around expressions of emotional states, the struggle to understand intellectual and philosophical concepts, the contrast between musical elements symbolic of individualism and those symbolic of social imperative, and of the conflicts between various aspects of the human psyche.

Matthew is the winner of the 2011 Alabama Music Teachers' Association Composition Commission Competition, and was among thirteen other American composers chosen in the summer of 2006, to study and compose music in the city of Prague under the tutelage of Ladislav Kubik. He has composed over 70 instrumental and vocal works including 3 string quartets, 5 symphonies, 3 piano trios, and a host of orchestral overtures, and smaller instrumental works for mixed ensembles. His repertoire includes music composed in serial, freely atonal, traditional, polytonal, pantonal, modal, and electroacoustic styles.

In addition to composition, Matthew has twice been a judge of the National Young Composers Competition, has given lectures on the music of Smetana, Chopin and Rachmaninoff, and taught classes in music fundamentals, musicology, music theory, music technology, and composition. He is also an active member and former Vice President of the Birmingham Art Music Alliance, an avid bass player in the Birmingham live music scene, and a qualified audio technician and occasional stage hand. Matthew lives in Birmingham Alabama, in the United States.

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**Program notes for *Dig My Grave*:** Dig My Grave was originally one of the nine “Angola Prison Spirituals” recorded at the maximum security prison facility in Louisiana, often called the “Alcatraz of the South.” It has gone through many different variations since, including arrangements by Blue Grass Artists, Blues and Gospel Singer Blind Lemon Jefferson, and a brief appearance on the Andy Griffith Show. This arrangement attempts to synergize these different iterations, as well as stay true to the sentiment and tone of the original.

**Program notes for *String Quartet 4-3*:** This is the third movement of my fourth string quartet, and as absolute” music does not have a specific program. It resolves musical, thematic, and harmonic conflicts established in the first movement, and sustained in the second. This resolution is at first attempted by a set of dances that ultimately fail, and is successfully completed only by the concentration of dissonance in the middle. After this dissonance, the first dance can then be played properly and smoothly transition to the closing chorale. This movement is intended to be the final movement of this quartet.

## **Tom Reiner – composer of *Terra Nova* and *The Memory Palace***

Tom Reiner is a music composer who has a day job as a professor of psychology at Troy University. He started college as a piano and composition major but later switched to psychology and would go on and earn his Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology from the University of Nevada, Reno. He has published articles on melody recognition. He is a member of the Society for Music Perception and Cognition. He studied music composition with Stephen Blumberg at California State University, Sacramento and with Joseph Spaniola at the University of West Florida. He has had works featured at Pensacola ComposerFest since 2011 and has been a member of the Birmingham Art Music Alliance since 2015. He was selected as the Alabama Music Teachers Association Commissioned Composer for 2016. Tom lives in Montgomery with his wife Shannon and their two Chihuahuas.

## **Alan Schmitz – composer of *Incendiary Rhetoric***

Alan Schmitz is Professor Emeritus of the School of Music, University of Northern Iowa. He received bachelor and master of music degrees from the University of New Mexico and the Ph.D. in music theory and composition from Rutgers University. Schmitz’s music is widely performed in the United States and has also been presented in Western Europe, Romania, and Russia. He has received awards, commissions, and grants for composition from several agencies including the Alaska Council of the Arts, the Iowa Arts Council, the

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University of Northern Iowa, and the Lila Wallace/Readers Digest Foundation. Schmitz has also published articles on composing for guitar.

Capstone/PARMA Records has released two CDs of music by Alan Schmitz: 90s Timeflow (chamber pieces) and Lyric Images (guitar music of Alan Schmitz performed by Todd Seeley). Another PARMA CD, which features works by Alan and two of his sons, Christopher and Eric, was released in 2016.

**Program notes:** Incendiary Rhetoric was inspired by the unprecedented political rhetoric and techniques of one of the candidates for the presidency of the United States during 2016. The piece is for solo cello with verbal interjections (quotes from the candidate) placed here and there throughout. The climax of the piece occurs when the performer loudly interjects the words "Nasty Woman" a number of times while playing a musical quote from Jimi Hendrix's Foxy Lady. The piece is intended to be both humorous and seriously relevant.

## **Geni Skendo – composer of *Asimov Dreams* and *Yjet e Berminghamit***

The Boston Globe calls Geni Skendo a "virtuoso," creating a unique blend of jazz, free jazz and world music. After a successful performing career in his native Albania, Geni moved to the US in 2003 to raise his jazz playing to a higher level. Studies at the Berklee College of Music and The New England Conservatory (MM) led to a deep, ongoing involvement with the Boston music scene. Geni performs with Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica (Best World Music Act, Boston Phoenix Readers' Poll, 2012), in both its quartet and big-band incarnations. The quartet utilizes Geni's full palette, while the big band relies heavily on Geni's powerful bass flute in its recreation of long-lost arrangements by the legendary Mexican arranger Juan Garcia Esquivel. Geni leads the Albanian/Jazz/Ambience group "Astronauts of Albania" and the free improvised chamber music group, Samurai Jazz Trio, consisting of shakuhachi, bass/shamisen and piano. Geni has released three CDs, most recently Acoustic Cowboy, featuring original compositions and new arrangements of songs from Olivier Messiaen, African pygmies and the Balkans.

**Program notes for *Asimov Dreams*:** A potpourri of Sci-fi Folk Songs

**Program notes for *Yjet e Berminghamit*:** Beautiful, Zen like melodies. skeleton compositions infused with free improvisation.

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## **LaDonna Smith** – violin and composer of *Vapors of India*

LaDonna Smith is an American avant garde musician from Alabama. She is a violinist, violist, and pianist. Since 1974 she has been performing free improvisational music. As a performer, she has toured the USA, Canada, Europe, including Russia and Siberia, China, Japan, Korea and India. She has produced numerous concerts in Alabama including Birmingham Improv and the 2010 the improviser festival, which was a month long festival held in five cities across the U.S. She is an educator and serves on the Board of Directors of I.S.I.M., the International Society of Improvised Music. She co-founded TransMuseq Records, in collaboration with Davey Williams and they were publishers of the improviser from 1980-2010. The improviser international journal of free improvisation is archived on the web.

**Program notes:** "Vapors of India" The diverse and rich cultural eccentricities of India have excited my imagination for many years. Somehow, the mysteries of Hinduism, the sādhus and gurus, the musical traditions, the amazing geographical contrasts, the languages, the extreme climates, the animals, the jungle, the desert, the banana plantations, the Himalaya's, the stone temples.. All of this is music behind my eyelids, as I imagine a world so distant, and yet now we have touched it's heart and cracked it's mystery with earth-shrinking technology. In this piece, I would like to manifest some sounds and drones, and perhaps carry the audience with me to a place outside the room, indeed the body, if just for a few minutes (10<" ) ....

## **Hillary Tidman** – flute

Hillary Tidman, flute, has been the assistant principal flutist of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra since 2013. A native of Washington, DC, Hillary earned her Bachelor of Music in Flute Performance from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Her primary teachers include Walfrid Kujala, John Thorne, Aaron Goldman, and Richard Graef.

## **Meredith Treastor** – viola

Meredith Treastor, originally from Santa Fe, New Mexico, joined the Alabama Symphony Orchestra in 2015. Prior to moving to Birmingham, she taught viola classes in underserved schools in New York City and was the event coordinator for the Weill Cornell Music and Medicine Initiative, organizing symposiums at Juilliard as well as hospital outreach performances for the terminally ill. An avid performer of new music, Meredith performed frequently as the principal violist of AXIOM and soloist with the New Juilliard Ensemble. She was hailed by the New York Times as "soulful yet refined" and "appropriately rough and folksy" for her New York premiere of Donald Crockett's 'to airy thinness beat' at the Museum of Modern Art. She has been the Principal Violist of numerous

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orchestras including the Aspen Philharmonic, Juilliard Orchestra, Juilliard Lab Orchestra, and Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, and has performed regularly in venues including Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, David Geffen Hall, and Jordan Hall. Meredith received her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees at Juilliard as a student of Misha Amory and Masao Kawasaki.

## **Laura Usiskin – cello**

Cellist Laura Usiskin has performed throughout North America and Europe in such venues as Alice Tully Hall, Palazzo Chigi Saracini, Weill Hall, Barge Music, and many others. A member of the Bayberry Quartet, Usiskin is a devoted chamber musician in demand as a performer and educator throughout the country. In 2017, Usiskin released *Reimagining Bach*, a solo album that features music of J.S. Bach as well as two commissioned works. Usiskin has held tenured orchestra positions in the New Haven Symphony, Jacksonville Symphony, Orchestra Iowa, and is on faculty at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham-Southern College, Alabama School of Fine Arts, and STEP Birmingham. Through UAB, she founded the series “Chamber Music @ AEIVA,” which presents free concerts connecting music with visual art. Usiskin graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor of Arts in Neuroscience and Behavior from Columbia University, Master of Music from The Juilliard School, and Doctor of Musical Arts from the Yale School of Music, where she was awarded the Aldo Parisot Prize for a cellist showing promise in a solo career. [www.lorausiskin.com](http://www.lorausiskin.com)

## **Brian Viliunas – clarinet**

Clarinetist and conductor Brian Viliunas is an Associate Professor of Music at Samford University, where he teaches clarinet, music classes, and conducts all orchestral activities. He studied at Northwestern University, Rice University, and completed his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at Arizona State University. Brian was a Fulbright scholar to Norway, twice competed in the Carl Nielsen International Clarinet Competition, and won Third Prize in the International Clarinet Association Young Artist Competition. He has been a member of the Youth Orchestra of the Americas, where he performed principal clarinet on their DVD recording of Verdi’s Requiem with conductor Plácido Domingo. He has also performed with Lorin Maazel, Benjamin Zander, Carlos Miguel Prieto and Andrew Litton. He has given performances across the United States, fourteen countries, and on three continents. He has played with orchestras in Houston, Racine, and Alabama, and also the Bergen Philharmonic while living in Norway. Previously the principal clarinetist for the Phoenix Opera, Brian is currently the principal clarinetist for the Arizona Opera. Brian’s first solo CD is entitled *Agents of Espionage*, and he has recently recorded a second CD

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featuring the Brahms Sonatas, Poulenc Sonata, and Carmen Fantasy. He is a Buffet Artist, and plays R-13 Greenline clarinets.

## **Davey Williams – guitar**

Williams began on guitar at age 12. He played in rock bands in high school, and studied with blues musician Johnny Shines from the late 1960s until 1971. Early in the 1970s Williams played in the University of Alabama B Jazz Ensemble and the Salt & Pepper Soul Band. He also started working with LaDonna Smith around this time, and founded a musical ensemble/recording project called Transmuseq. He toured the U.S. and Europe in 1978. Early in the 1980s he worked in a blues band called Trains in Trouble, then joined Curlew in 1986, who released several albums on Cuneiform Records through the 1990s.

In the 1980s he also worked with Col. Bruce Hampton and OK, Nurse, and in the early 1990s played in a punk rockband called Fuzzy Sons. Concomitantly with Fuzzy Sons, Williams played in an improvisational three-piece called Say What?, and worked with Jim Staley and Ikue Mori. Williams has appeared live at some 1,500 concerts worldwide.

## **Pei-Ju Wu – violin**

Taiwanese-American violinist Pei-Ju Wu joined the first violin section of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra in 2013 and is appointed Principal 2nd Violin of the Des Moines Metro Opera in 2018. Prior to moving to Birmingham, Pei-Ju was a member of the San Antonio Symphony, and performed frequently with the Houston Grand Opera, Fort Worth Symphony and Dallas Chamber Symphony. She was the former concertmaster of the Woodlands Symphony and Opera in the Heights, and a guest concertmaster of the Huntsville Symphony. In addition, Pei-Ju toured with the Star Wars in Concert orchestra during its 2010 North America tour and performed with Peter Gabriel's New Blood North America tour.

An avid educator, Pei-Ju Wu maintains a private violin studio in Hoover, Alabama, and is a faculty and artistic advisor at the Suzuki Talent Education Program (STEP) Birmingham. Pei-Ju studied with Kathleen Winkler, Roman Totenberg, Shirley Givens and Rodney Friend, and received her degrees from Boston University and Rice University.