



School of **MUSIC**

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA / COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

Undergraduate Composition Recital

Cole Spencer, Owen Nestor, Nicholas Chalise,
Evan Thomas, Liam Ames

Monday, November 3, 2025
7:20 p.m.
MUB 101

Program

I Think Roses Are Beautiful

Cole Spencer
(b. 2004)

Abraham Sulin, Gilon Kravatsky, Philip Shuler, Harrison Zunkel,
Luigi Vechiatto, Owen Nestor, horns

Smörgåsbord (for horn quartet)

Owen Nestor
(b. 2006)

Philip Schuler, Cole Spencer, Harrison Zunkel, Cole Colhouer, horns

Supernova (Preview)

Nicholas Chalise
(b. 2005)

Nicole Corbett, soprano
Gavin Gallagher, baritone
Preston Jarvis, piano
Noelle Potenzini, flute
Owen Leath, bassoon
Wellarose Jimenez, Ellie McGahagin, violins
Benjamin Aiken, cello

“Save Me”

Evan Thomas
(b. 2001)

Sophia Derias Tawadrous, voice
Ethan DeAngelis, piano

From the Mountains Above

Liam Ames
(b. 2006)

II. Hills and Valleys

III. Cathedrals

IV. Old Town

Program Notes

I Think Roses Are Beautiful

*Who, amongst all else, finds the Rose so beautiful?
I admire from afar their gentle dance amongst turbulent breezes,
Cast upon them are the winds of the soul,
as I am content to watch them flutter, alone, amongst still morning trees*

*Who, amongst all else, finds I so dismal?
To pick in pursuit of beauty is to be killed,
But to be ignored amongst scattered trees is inconsolable,
And both lives leave me unfulfilled.*

*Gaze upon the fields of trees,
There lies a myriad leaves etched with a myriad pleas,
But, in the end, one still sees
What could have been.*

—Cole Spencer

Smörgåsbord (for horn quartet). *Smörgåsbord*, as the title suggests, has a lot going on. This piece showcases a variety of styles and genres—including symphonic fanfares, jazzy riffs, Latin-inspired grooves, and lyrical, romantic gestures. My intention with this composition is to not only explore the expressive potential of the horn quartet (an ensemble I find surprisingly agile and versatile), but to also present musical styles not typically associated with this instrumentation. Rather than isolating the quartet in a stylistic vacuum, I wanted to offer a diverse sonic landscape—one I invite you to sample and savor from the *Smörgåsbord*, if you will.

—Owen Nestor

Supernova (Preview). *Supernova* is a two-person modern musical tragedy following the immediate aftermath of a long-distance couple making the decision to break up via telephone. The show begins with the line “So what are you saying?,” poignant and forward, putting the audience in the middle of the action, prompting the characters to begin an argument over the miscommunication that has plagued their relationship for the last four years. The roots of the couple’s struggles are illuminated through recorded voicemails, cataloguing the catalyst of their fight: growing in different directions.

The preview performance you are witnessing tonight marks the first time that Boy and Girl’s story will be presented in front of an audience. Though their story may be new, their struggles are as timeless as the universe in which they find themselves. We hope that this sonification of heartbreak leaves you wrestling: Is love enough, or are we just foolish enough to chase after the shine of a shooting star already burned out?

—Music by Nicholas Chalise. Lyrics by Nicholas Chalise and Morgan Vanderlaan

Program Notes *(continued)*

GIRL: THINK THIS THROUGH... HE
CHOSE YOU.
WASTED WOMB... EMPTY
ROOM.

BOY: SHE KNOWS YOU WOULDN'T
END WHAT THIS WAS, IF IT
DOES, WOULD YOU STILL
LOVE HER?
SHE KNOWS YOU WOULDN'T
DARE, WHAT OF ME?
NOTHING'S FAIR, I'D STILL
DREAM OF HER...

BOY: HOW DID WE GET HERE?
NO MORE TAKING CHANCES,
THIS IS WHAT I FEARED...
THAT WE MIGHT TAKE FOR
GRANTED EVERYTHING WE
ARE...
IT'S SET TO BE DEVoured
TONIGHT.

GIRL: FOUR YEARS DOWN THE
DRAIN...
WAVING WHITE FLAGS AT A
FUNERAL CORTÈGE.

BOTH: NEITHER OF US PREPARED.
CAUGHT IN SILENCE, ARE YOU
THERE?
I'M HANGING ON THE LINE.

DEAD BEFORE WE EVER SAID
GOODBYE...
COLD BEFORE I KNEW THAT
YOU WEREN'T MINE.

BOY: BROKEN BY THE FIGHT...
DISTANCE MADE US
WEAKER, NOW IT'S COME
TO LIGHT.
I MISS WHEN TIMES WERE
SWEETER... LOVE JUST
GONE TO WASTE.
THE BEST OF US...ERASED
TONIGHT.

GIRL: TRUST ALL WASHED
AWAY...
IN THE QUIET NOW, THE
LONELIEST OF PAINS,
I SEARCH FOR SOMETHING
TO CONSOLE...
NO WEDDING BELLS, NO
GROWING OLD...
ONLY MEMORIES TO
HOLD.

BOTH: IT PLAYED OUT LIKE THE
DOUBTS I TRIED MY BEST
TO QUELL.
THE DAMAGE DONE? IT'S
MUCH TOO SOON TO
TELL.

GIRL: THE NIGHTS OF NEEDING
NOTHING MORE FEEL SO
FAR IN THE PAST.
NOW, MOST DAYS, I'M
LEFT RESTLESSLY UNWELL.
I THINK BACK TO THAT
MAGIC NIGHT WHEN WE
WATCHED THE STARS
SHINE...

Program Notes (*continued*)

“Save Me”. This song is written for Medium-Low Voice and Piano, using text from a book of poetry that my brother-in-law Wrote. I used two poems as the setting for this song. The first, and longest, is the title of the song, "Save Me," a straightforward, and meaningful, testimony of salvation. This poem makes up the main body of the song and has a good internal structure that allowed me to write it in a more conventional Verse/Chorus style, with the common refrain being the title. The second poem, which I felt paired nicely with the context of salvation, is called "Mercy and Grace." This short and sweet section is more of a tag, a rumination. I think of it like the character in the song has matured in his faith and now has begun to think on the mechanism of his salvation, that being mercy and grace.

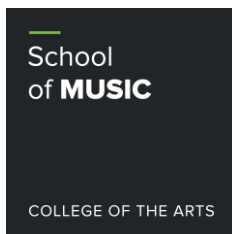
I find that most poems, written with the intent of being just a poem, tend to be lousy lyrics. The language being too flowery and full of itself, making it difficult for the music to elevate it, and leaving everything feeling oppressive. I do, however, really love my brother-in-law's poetry for lyrics. I may have a gripe with a rhyme or two, but that can be easily forgiven by the modern ear. What I love about his poetry is that it is simple. It expresses complex thought, yes, but the language isn't puffed up or full of itself, allowing the music to grab hold of the text, lift it off the ground, and begin to soar with it, instead of struggle against it. I hope you enjoy what I think is a powerful, yet simple, declaration of faith.

—Music by Evan Thomas. Lyrics by Dr. Joshua Thomas

From the Mountains Above. This summer I had the opportunity to take part in the UF School of Music study abroad program in Salzburg, Austria. Inspired by the European landscape, I wrote these three pieces after returning to the US in June. The entire work is modeled on the song cycle form and consists of 4 movements, each describing a different landmark and composed for a different type of guitar.

The title “From the Mountains Above” stems from Salzburg's unique geography. The city is imbedded in a valley and sits on the edge of the Northern Limestone Alps. The mountains present a unique view of the town, its historic buildings, and the countryside beyond it. You can find the album in its original format on any streaming platform.

—Liam Ames



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