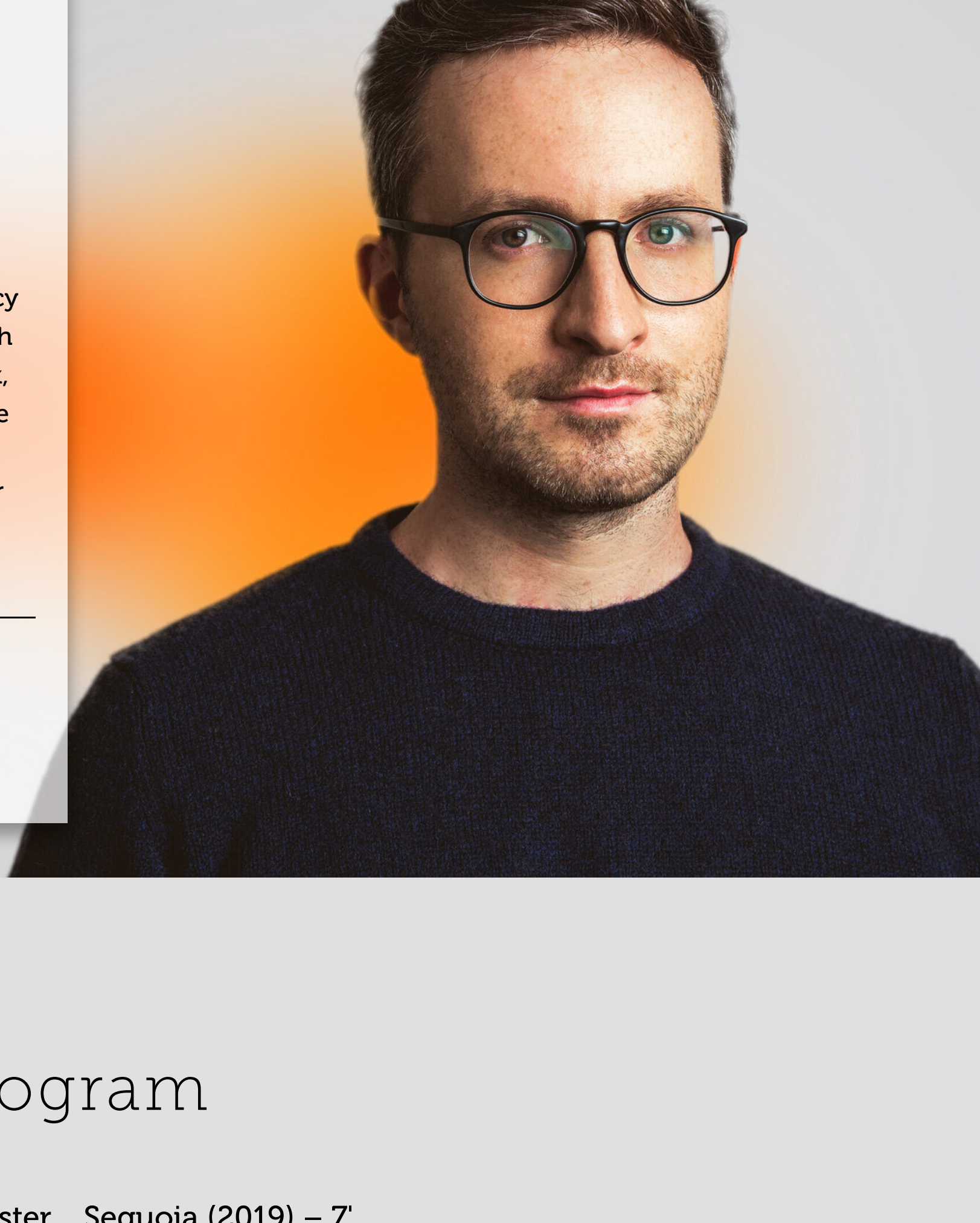


Don't Look Down

(featuring Conor Hanick)

Yaz Lancaster's *Sequoia* opens our season with ethereal, reflective sounds that remind us of the importance and intimacy of being together in the concert hall. Conor Hanick returns with the second ever performance of Chris Cerrone's poignant work, *Don't Look Down*, for percussion quartet and piano, named one of *The New York Times*' Best Pieces of 2020. Two years in the making, Max Grafe's *Shadow Theatre*, composed specifically for George, Samantha and Conor, will finally receive its premiere.

This program is generously underwritten by The Gardener Foundation



Program

Yaz Lancaster *Sequoia* (2019) – 7'

George Nickson and Charlie Rosmarin, percussion

Max Grafe *Shadow Theater* (2020) 12'

- I. Toccata I
- II. Improvisation
- III. Monologues
- IV. Toccata II
- V. Passacaglia

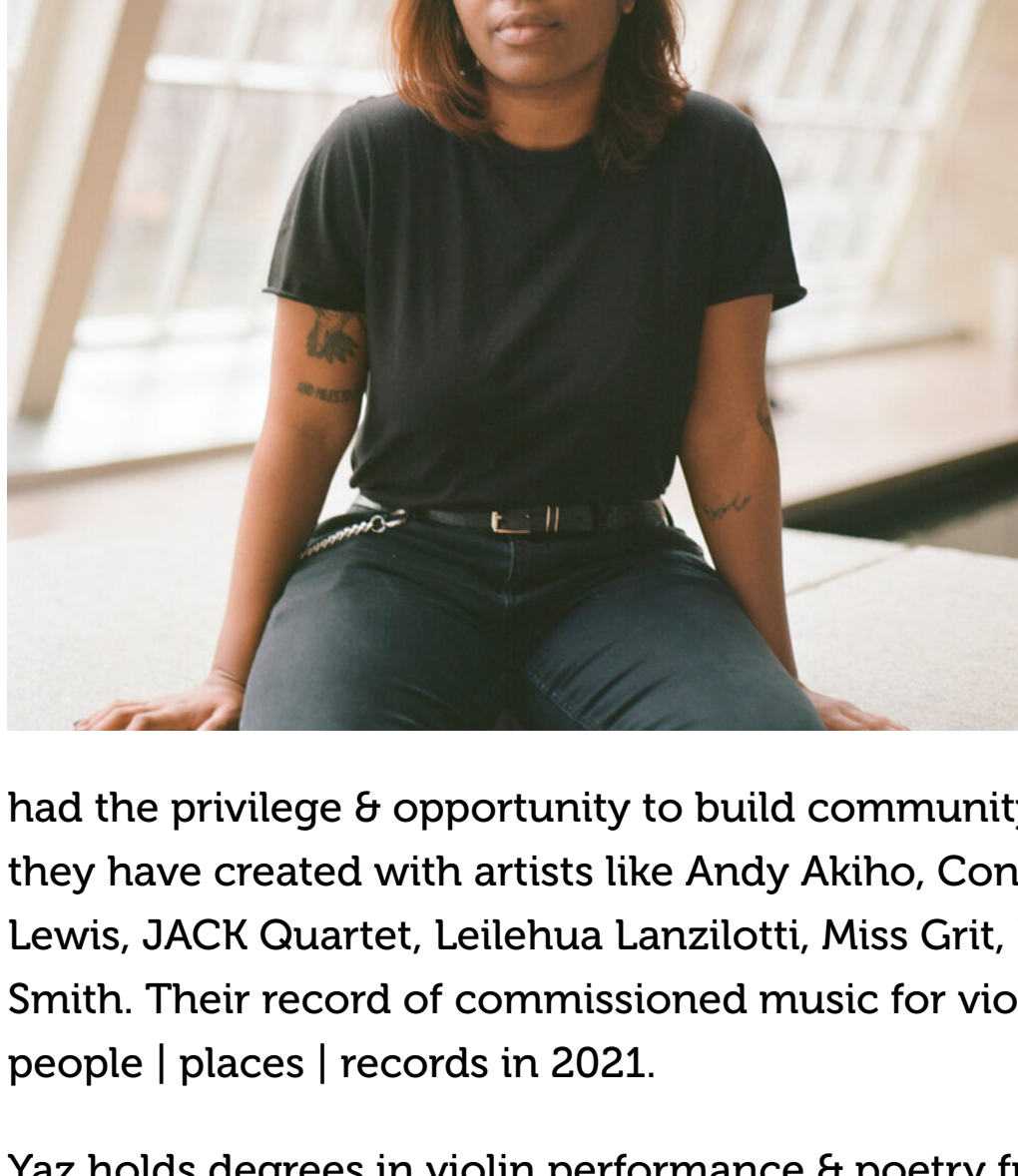
Samantha Bennett, violin
Conor Hanick, piano
George Nickson, percussion

Christopher Cerrone *Don't Look Down* (2020) 17'

- I. Hammerspace
- II. The Great Empty
- III. Caton Flats

Conor Hanick, piano
George Nickson, Charlie Rosmarin, Scott Crawford, and Isaac Fernandez Hernandez percussion

YAZ LANCASTER



Yaz Lancaster (they/them/theirs) is a Black transdisciplinary artist. They are most interested in practices aligned with relational aesthetics & the everyday; fragments & collage; and anti-oppressive, liberatory politics. Yaz performs as a violinist, vocalist

& steel-pannist in a wide variety of settings including DIY/indie venues, contemporary chamber music, and steel bands. Their work is presented in many different mediums & collaborative projects, and often reckons with specific influences ranging from politics of identity & liberation to natural phenomena and poetics.

Most recently, they have been developing the pop/post-genre duo laydown with Canadian guitarist- producer Andrew Noseworthy. Yaz has

had the privilege & opportunity to build community in the US, Canada, Europe & Trinidad and Tobago—they have created with artists like Andy Akiho, Contact (with Evan Ziporyn), Contemporaneous, George Lewis, JACK Quartet, Lellehua Lanzilotti, Miss Grit, Rohan Chander, Skiffle Steel Orchestra, and Wadada Leo Smith. Their record of commissioned music for violin/voice & electronics AmethYst is forthcoming on people | places | records in 2021.

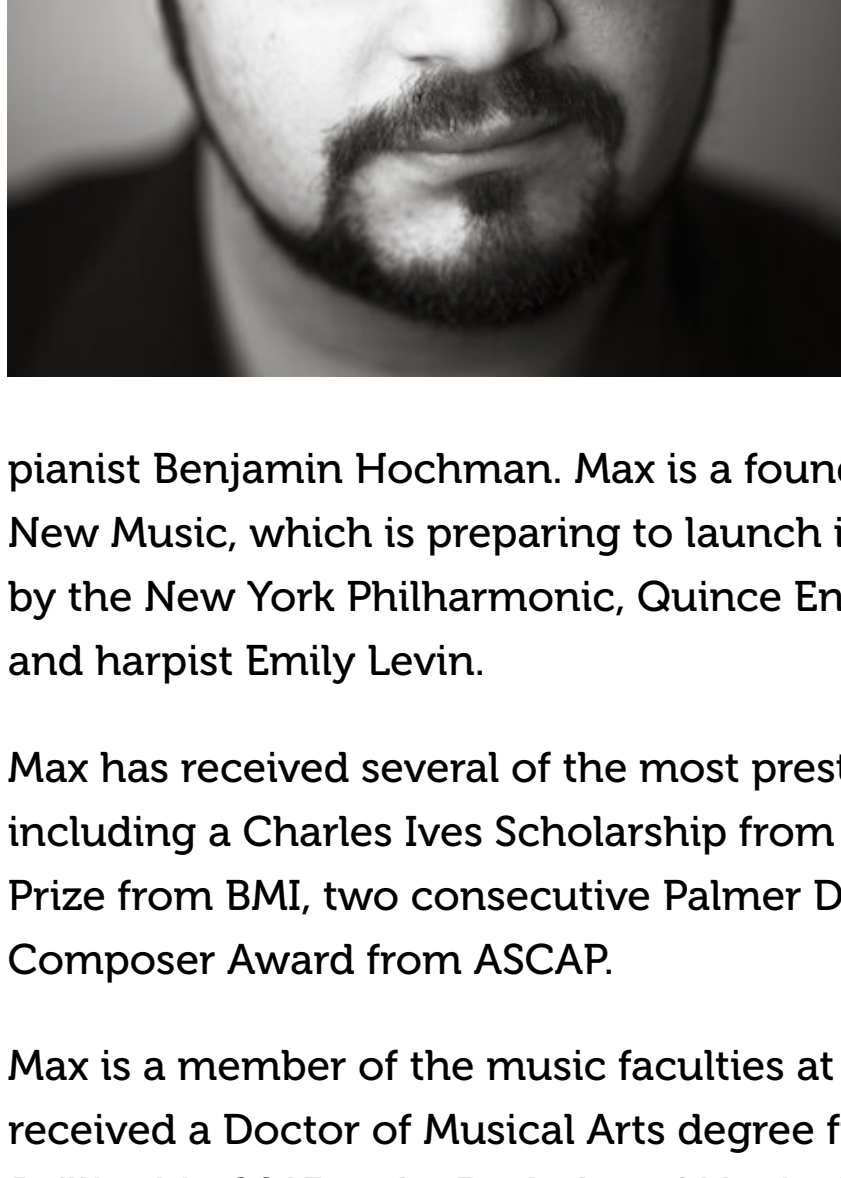
Yaz holds degrees in violin performance & poetry from New York University where they studied with Cyrus Beroukhim, Robert Honstein & Tyrance Hayes (among others). They are the visual arts editor at Peach Mag & a contributing writer at ICYIL. Yaz loves chess, horror movies, & bubble tea.

sequoia (2019)

for any even # of percussionists + fixed media/electronics, 6-7min, written for Western Carolina University

The redwood species contains the largest and tallest trees in the world. These trees can live thousands of years. This is an endangered subfamily due to habitat losses from fire ecology suppression, logging, and air pollution. Since logging began in the 1850s, 95% of old-growth coast redwoods have been cut down.

MAX GRAFE



(b. 1988) writes music characterized by "jagged declamations and muffled filigree" (Gramophone) with the aim of striking a distinctive balance between the stylistic immediacy of modernism and the dramatic power of romanticism. Max's music has been performed by a wide range of prominent and emerging ensembles—including the New York Philharmonic, Contemporaneous, Yarn/Wire, Quince Ensemble, New Thread Quartet, and Flux Quartet—and has been featured at numerous music festivals across the country, including the Tanglewood Music Center, the Resonant Bodies Festival, and the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. Current and upcoming projects include collaborations with Hypercube, enSRQ, Decoda Ensemble, bassoonists Cornelia Sommer and Kathleen McLean, and

pianist Benjamin Hochman. Max is a founding member of New York-based composer collective ICEBERG New Music, which is preparing to launch its fourth season. Max's music appears on commercial recordings by the New York Philharmonic, Quince Ensemble, Duo Entre-Nous, pianists Jenny Lin and Mika Sasaki, and harpist Emily Levin.

Max has received several of the most prestigious awards available to emerging American composers, including a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a William Schuman Prize from BMI, two consecutive Palmer Dixon Prizes from the Juilliard School, and a Morton Gould Young Composer Award from ASCAP.

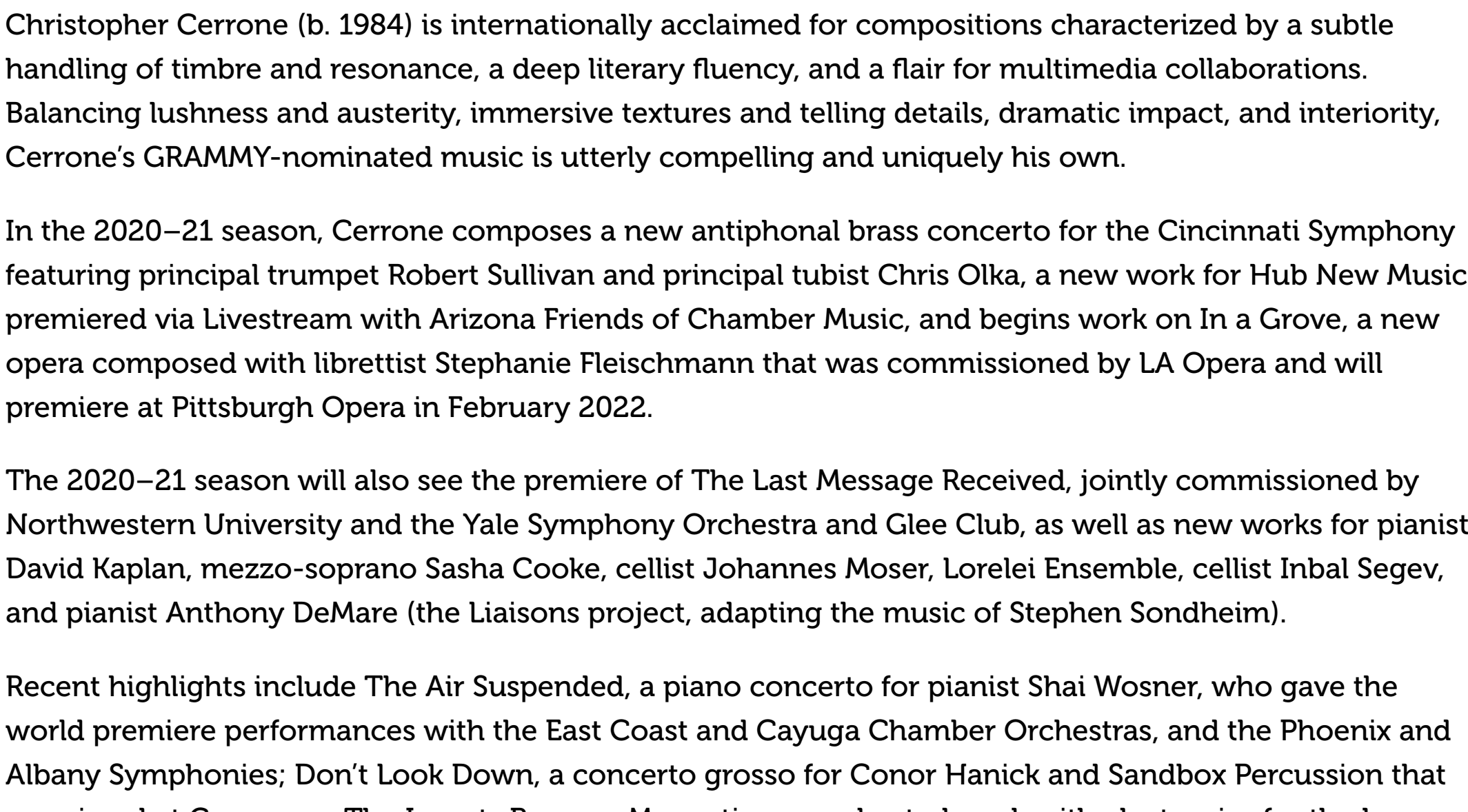
Max is a member of the music faculties at Montclair State University and the Kaufman Music Center. He received a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Juilliard School in 2018, a Master of Music degree from Juilliard in 2013 and a Bachelor of Music degree from the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University in 2011. Further studies have taken place at Mannes College of Music, the Freie Universität Berlin, the Aspen Music Festival and School, and the Tanglewood Music Center.

Shadow Theater

Shadow Theater is an exploration of one of my core artistic beliefs: that music as an art form occupies a dramatic or narrative space on a fundamental level, even more so than a sonic or temporal one. As the title suggests, a plotless play of sorts unfolds over the course of the piece whose only characters are the three instrumentalists, sometimes in intricate dialogue with each other, sometimes left to expound on their thoughts alone. The music itself provides the only narrative structure that this pseudo-play has, but in combination with the movements of the musicians—all performing on some of the most visually dynamic instruments in the western tradition—this makes for a dramatic experience just as compelling as a staged theater piece. Shadow Theater is dedicated to the memories of Christopher Rouse and Steven Stucky, who taught me to think of music, above all else, as a way to tell a story.

-Max Grafe

CHRISTOPHER CERRONE



Christopher Cerrone (b. 1984) is internationally acclaimed for compositions characterized by a subtle handling of timbre and resonance, a deep literary fluency, and a flair for multimedia collaborations. Balancing lushness and austerity, immersive textures and telling details, dramatic impact, and interiority, Cerrone's GRAMMY-nominated music is utterly compelling and uniquely his own.

In the 2020–21 season, Cerrone composes a new antiphonal brass concerto for the Cincinnati Symphony featuring principal trumpet Robert Sullivan and principal tubist Chris Olka, a new work for Grove New Music premiered via Livestream with Arizona Friends of Chamber Music, and begins work on In a Hub, a new opera composed with librettist Stephanie Fleischmann that was commissioned by LA Opera and will premiere at Pittsburgh Opera in February 2022.

The 2020–21 season will also see the premiere of *The Last Message Received*, jointly commissioned by Northwestern University and the Yale Symphony Orchestra and Glee Club, as well as new works for pianist David Kaplan, mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke, cellist Johannes Moser, Lorelei Ensemble, cellist Inbal Segev, and pianist Anthony DeMare (the *Liaisons* project, adapting the music of Stephen Sondheim).

Recent highlights include *The Air Suspended*, a piano concerto for pianist Shai Wosner, who gave the world premiere performances with the East Coast and Cayuga Chamber Orchestras, and the Phoenix and Albany Symphonies; *Don't Look Down*, a concerto grosso for Conor Hanick and Sandbox Percussion that premiered at Carmono; *The Insects Became Magnetic*, an orchestral work with electronics for the Los Angeles Philharmonic; *Meander Spiral, Explode*, a percussion quartet concerto co-commissioned by the Civic Orchestra of the Chicago Symphony and the Britt Festival; *Breaks and Breaks*, an acclaimed violin concerto for Jennifer Koh and the Detroit Symphony; a Miller Theatre Composer Portrait performed by Third Coast Percussion; *Will There Be Singing*, premiered by the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra; and *Can't and Won't*, commissioned for the Calder Quartet by the LA Phil.

Cerrone's opera, *Invisible Cities*, a 2014 Pulitzer Prize finalist, was produced by the Los Angeles Times as "A delicate and beautiful opera... [which] could be, and should be, done anywhere." *Invisible Cities* received its fully-staged world premiere in a wildly popular production by *The Industry*, directed by Yuval Sharon, in Los Angeles' Union Station. Both the film and opera are available as CDs, DVDs, and digital downloads. In July 2019, New Amsterdam Records released his GRAMMY-nominated sophomore effort, *The Pieces that Fall to Earth*, a collaboration with the LA-based chamber orchestra, Wild Up, to widespread acclaim. His most recent release is *The Arching Path*, released on In a Circle Records. Cerrone is also the winner of the 2015-2016 Samuel Barber Rome Prize in Music Composition.

Christopher Cerrone holds degrees from the Yale School of Music and the Manhattan School of Music. His work is published by Schott NY and Project Schott. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife, writer Carrie Sun.

Don't Look Down (2020)

Premiered via livestream on August at Carmoor on August 6, 2020

Commissioned by Elizabeth and Justus Schlichting for Conor Hanick and Sandbox Percussion, with additional support provided by Sandbox Percussion.

Don't Look Down is an accidental diary of having lived through the worst pandemic of the last hundred years. When I started writing this piece in February 2020, it would be inconceivable to imagine the world we live in now. The one thing that kept me sane during this period was clocking into work—that is, working on this piece. So looking back, it's not at all surprising the piece would wind up reflecting both the strangeness and the instability of the world we live in.

The title of the work takes its name from an article by the economist Paul Krugman, himself referring to the moment when the cartoon character Wile E. Coyote would look down and suddenly realize he'd fallen off a cliff, at which point he would actually drop. The first movement, "Hammerspace," is the world before: all grooving and relentless energy. The pianist hammers away at the high notes of the piano which have all been muted with putty. I imagined his part as like a drum solo performed in an echo chamber—the rhythmic muted notes create unique and fantastic sympathetic resonances with the lower strings of the instrument when the pedal is held down. A variety of percussion instruments support him, from the more traditional to drum set to other oddities like a bicycle pump and sandpaper block.

The piece "looks down" at the start of the second movement, "The Great Empty," when all of sudden, all of the energy stops and we are left with an uncertain and static soundscape: instead of playing the piano, the pianist "bows" the instrument by drawing fishing tackle over the strings. The percussionists play cheap harmonicas and blow over the tops of wine bottles alongside other instruments to create a dissonant and deliberately out-of-tune sound world.

The piano part that interjects halfway through is similarly out-of-tune: the pianist has placed small pieces of putty, causing the piano to sound as out of tune as the percussion instruments. The title of the movement is drawn from a photographic series that was shown in the *New York Times* of city centers devoid of people.

The final movement, "Caton Flats," refers to a construction site active on my block in Brooklyn. When I was working on this movement in my studio, my partner, Carrie, walked into the room and remarked that the music "sounds like the construction going on outside"! I loved the idea so much that I had to include it in the piece. I also loved the idea that the things that most drive us crazy—like noisy construction on our street—could become a thing of nostalgia when it's gone.

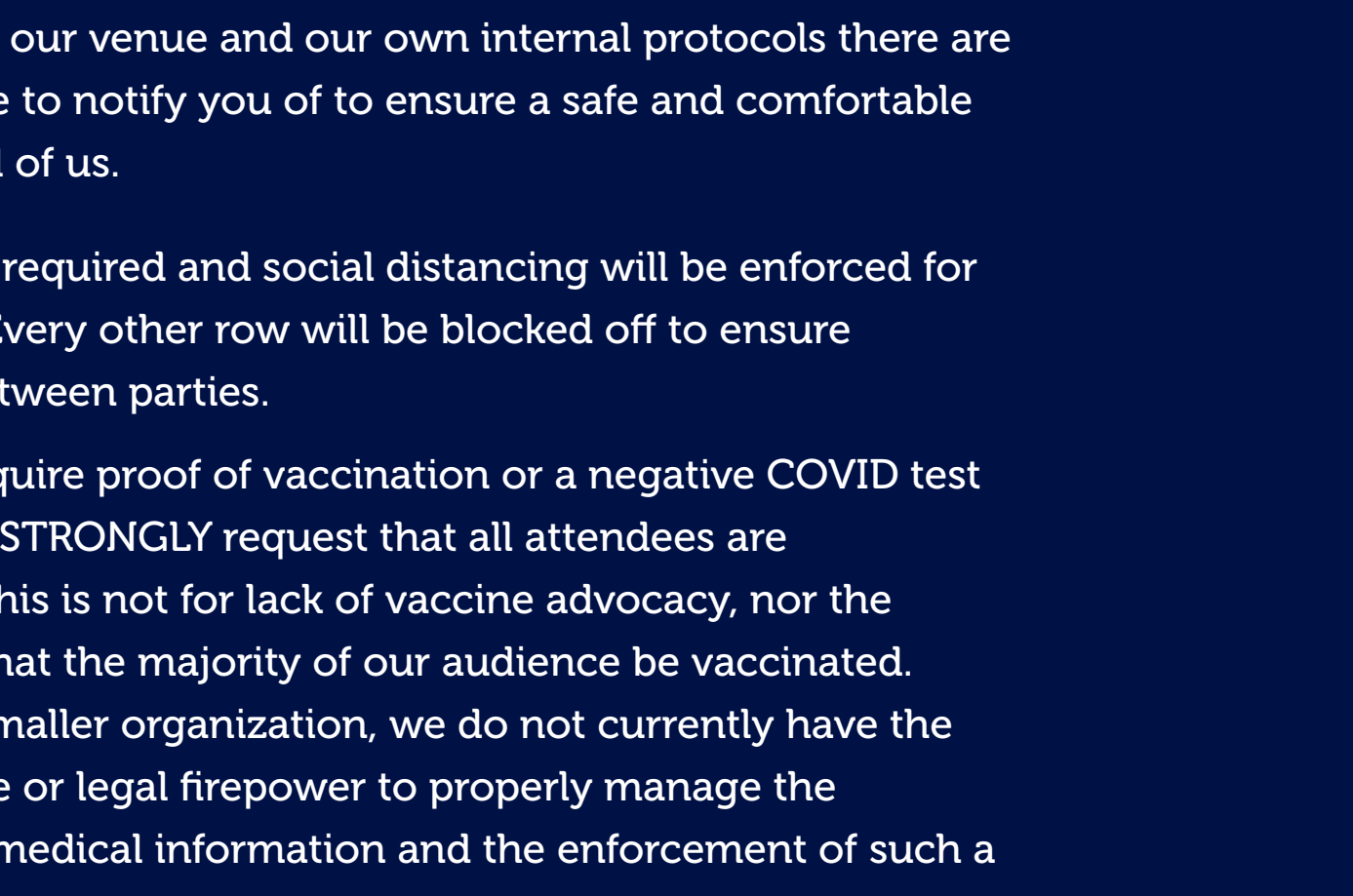
Don't Look Down was commissioned by Elizabeth and Justus Schlichting for Conor Hanick and Sandbox Percussion, with additional support provided by Sandbox Percussion.

-Chris Cerrone

Guest Artist

CONOR HANICK

Pianist Conor Hanick "defies human description" for some (Concerto Net) and recalls "a young Peter Serkin" for others (The New York Times). He has performed to acclaim throughout the world with some of music's leading ensembles, instrumentalists, and conductors, including Pierre Boulez, Alan Gilbert, Ludovic Morlot, and David Robertson. A fierce advocate for the music of today, and the "soloist of choice for such thorny works" (NYT) Hanick has



premiered over 200 works to date and worked with musical icons like Steve Reich, Kaija Saariaho, and Charles Wuorinen, while also championing important voices of his own generation including Caroline Shaw, Eric Wubbels, Nina Young, and Marcos Balter. Hanick has recently appeared with The Seattle Symphony, The Juilliard Orchestra, the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, the Lucerne Academy Orchestra for the New York Philharmonic Biennial, and been presented at Carnegie Hall, the Mondavi Center, the Kennedy Center, and the Metropolitan Museum. He collaborates regularly with Jay Campbell, Joshua Roman, Miranda Cuckson, and Augustin Hadelich and is a founding member of the American Modern Opera Company, with which he will be a co-director of the Ojai Festival in 2022. Mr. Hanick is the director of Solo Piano at the Music Academy of the West and a graduate of Northwestern University and The Juilliard School, where he serves on the chamber music and keyboard faculty. He is a Yamaha Artist.

Hello everyone! We are so excited to welcome you back in person!

In consideration of our venue and our own internal protocols there are few things we'd like to notify you of to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for all of us.

1. Masks will be required and social distancing will be enforced for the concert. Every other row will be blocked off to ensure distancing between parties.
2. We do not require proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test for entry, but STRONGLY request that all attendees are vaccinated. This is not for lack of vaccine advocacy, nor the expectation that the majority of our audience be vaccinated. Rather, as a smaller organization, we do not currently have the administrative or legal firepower to properly manage the collection of medical information and the enforcement of such a policy.
3. We want our audience to know that all of our performers are vaccinated.

We're confident that these measures will be able to provide a safe, welcoming environment for our beloved audience to come back to. Thank you for your support. We can't wait to see you on Monday!

