



PRESENTED BY THE
UPSTREAM MUSIC ASSOCIATION

OPEN WATERS FESTIVAL

JANUARY 6–11, 2026

*CELEBRATING THE
FLOW OF NEW
AND IMPROVISED
MUSIC*



Canada Council
for the Arts

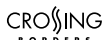
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WELCOME TO THE OPEN WATERS FESTIVAL OF NEW AND IMPROVISED MUSIC 2026. NEW MUSIC FOR THE NEW YEAR

WE RESPECTFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE OPEN WATERS FESTIVAL TAKES PLACE AT KJIPUKTUK, IN UNCEDED MI'KMAW TERRITORY.



FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

It is wonderful to again welcome you to the Open Waters Festival from January 6th to 11th 2026.

Upstream from the Mainstream is where we find ourselves at the Open Waters Festival, where artists explore the music at the source of inspiration, unencumbered by the concerns of mainstream music. There are infinite ways for music to be discovered and presented, just as there are multitudes of ways people may find their own paths through the ocean of musical sound that we share. It is my sincere hope that through listening beyond our familiar backwaters to the depths of shared imaginations, that we can find ways to celebrate one another in Peace and Friendship.

Our festival celebrates musical surprise across varied artistic currents converge and where plural approaches to musical in-the-moment and sonic surprises abound.

My conviction remains firm that musical adventure has the potential to expand our horizons for collective understanding, and my belief remains undaunted in the profound importance of live music in building communities. I hope that you are able to hear and enjoy something you never imagined!

I am once again deeply honoured to present the seventh annual Paul Cram Creation Award, where we celebrate an early-career Composer-Improvisor who has recently displayed remarkable artistic courage, conviction and commitment in our community. We commission from them a new work with the opportunity to have it performed by both professional orchestral and improvising musicians at the subsequent Open Waters Festival. This will be bestowed during our concert with Symphony Nova Scotia on January 8th 2026, where we will be featuring the 2025 PCCA recipient, Nicola Miller.

If you are new to Open Waters, please feel welcome at our new-music-for-the-new-year events, where we can help put away the holiday songs and make a fresh start with open ears and hearts, immersing ourselves in music that has yet to be heard— as Upstream's co-founder and longtime Artistic Director, Paul Cram, was fond of saying:

“Come on in, the water's fine!”

Lukas Pearse
Artistic Director
Upstream Music Association

FROM THE BOARD

Welcome to the 2026 Open Waters Festival. Upstream is now in its third decade and has presented this festival for the last 15 years. It represents the culmination of our efforts throughout the year to provide, as our artistic director indicates “new and improvised music from various varied sources.”

In the past year this core objective has seen us produce events featuring musicians from Europe and across Canada. The theme of multiple sources continues with this wonderful winter smorgasbord of daring and experimental music.

Upstream’s board renewal has continued this year with important follow-up work on marketing and communications and board governance. As a veteran on the Board, this is my second time in the Chair’s role but we look forward to a generational transition in the near future.

I’d like to acknowledge Gay Osler’s incredible contributions to the organization and underline with affection her well-deserved withdrawal from her vital assistance providing managerial services to the organization. I welcome Tessa Pেকেles to a similar function where she will work with our Artistic Director, Lukas Pearse, the imaginative genius of curation and production, in this festival and beyond.

Our productions benefit from the support of the Craig and SOCAN Foundations and from municipal, provincial and national government agencies interested in supporting arts and cultural activities. In addition this year we have exceeded our fundraising goal from our supporters . All of the support is greatly appreciated.

Presentation of this year’s Open Waters Festival is again made possible by the continuing support of the Dalhousie Fountain School of Performing Arts, its students, faculty and technicians.

And finally, you, the audience, are the most important part of our Upstream community and by supporting us in this festival and throughout the year you allow us to provide performance opportunities for musicians that are on the leading edge of creativity and innovation.

I encourage you to sign up for our newsletter, available on the Upstream Music Association website, and to promote it with your friends, as distribution to your social networks is our key method of exposing more people to our ongoing programming throughout the year. Please consider buying a festival pass or becoming a member to benefit from discounts and promotions and to enter more deeply into the swirling currents that challenge us every year.

Have an enjoyable and an exciting festival!

Chris Elson
Chair of the Board



FRITZ LANG'S METROPOLIS WITH IMPROVISED ELECTRIC SCORE

Tuesday Jan 6th @ 7:30PM / Alumni Hall, University of King's College

Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), directed by Lang and produced by Erich Pommer for Universum Film AG during the German Weimar Republic, is a landmark of silent cinema and an early masterpiece of science fiction. Conceived on an unprecedented scale, the film combined Expressionist design, modernist architecture, and elaborate special effects to depict a future city divided between an

industrial working class and a powerful elite. The dual role of Maria and her robotic double, played by Brigitte Helm, became one of the most iconic performances in silent film history. The production was famously costly and complex, straining UFA's finances, and the film's troubled reception led to drastic cuts shortly after its premiere. For decades, *Metropolis* survived only in fragmented and altered versions, until major restorations in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries sought to recover Lang's original vision. Approaching the film's centenary — nearly one hundred years since its 1926–27 production and 1927 premiere — this restored version of *Metropolis* takes on renewed historical significance as a defining artifact of interwar modernism and technological imagination. Its monumental cityscapes, mechanized rhythms, and allegory of social division established a visual and conceptual vocabulary that has shaped science fiction cinema from *Blade Runner* to contemporary dystopian film and media. At a moment once again marked by rapid technological change, automation, and widening social inequality, *Metropolis* remains uncannily timely, offering a powerful meditation on the promises and perils of modernity and the enduring question of how technological progress might be reconciled with human values.

Live improvised score with Evan Syliboy (electric guitar), Geordie Haley (electric guitar), Sam Wilson (electric guitar), Ali Enriquez (electric violin), Shawnee Paul (electric violin), Ryan Gray (electronic percussion), Lukas Pearse (electric double bass).

Evan Syliboy is an improvising musician from Millbrook First Nation, NS. He's composed and performed with Alan Syliboy & The Thundermakers since 2016, participated in many projects with Upstream Music Association and Breaking Circus, and composed music for documentary films by Nance Ackerman, Martha Stiegman and Bretten Hannam.

Guitarist, composer, educator and improviser **Geordie Haley** has created and performed original music for over forty years. Exploring many genres, Geordie has contributed to the musical fabric of the Maritimes and Ontario with ground-breaking improvisational ensembles. He has also been awarded with the artistic success of many of his students over the decades. In 2024 Geordie performed shows at the Sound Symposium in St John's, for MRTI in Fredericton, Bradyworks in Montreal, and Red Montrose in Toronto. He also shared a very successful tour of New Brunswick and Quebec with bassist Lukas Pearse, adding wonderful musicians at each stop. Geordie

was a featured soloist for 2025's Open Waters Festival, performing and premiering Tim Brady's Concerto for Orchestra "Balance". Recent releases include Eric Normand's DUR TEMPS POUR LES ROUGES and SLATS on the label The Watch That Ends the Night .

Sam Wilson is a performer-composer who studied and played within the jazz tradition during her formative years; improvisation and composition are at the heart of her practice with a sound that has evolved to incorporate elements of folk, contemporary chamber work, and pastoral jazz. As a creator she is prompted by the musical and natural environments here on the east coast in Nova Scotia/Mi'kma'ki.

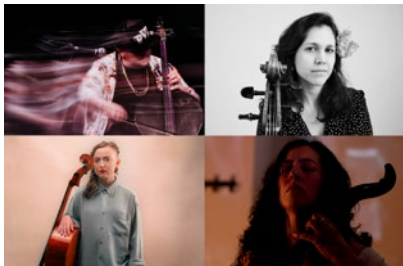
Ali Enriquez is a Cuban-Canadian multi-instrumentalist, singer-songwriter, and arranger from Havana, Cuba. She began her musical training at age five and later moved to Halifax with support from the Los Primos Project. Her background is rooted in classical and jazz studies at Dalhousie University and NSCC. Ali has performed extensively as a soloist, ensemble musician, and orchestral leader, serving as Concertmaster of the Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra and the Dalhousie Symphony Orchestra, and appearing with major Cuban symphonies. Her genre-blending work has been featured at international festivals. She debuted with *Se Vale Llorar* (2023), with her EP *Hidden* releasing January 2025.

Shawnee Paul began her musical journey at age six as a pianist, then learning the fiddle. She earned a Music Education degree in 2019 and a Bachelor of Education in 2021. She teaches music in Eskasoni and performs with Alan Syliboy and the Thundermakers, Blue Moose Band, and as a soloist.

Ryan Gray is an accomplished drummer, percussionist, composer, musical director and contemporary circus artist. After living in Montreal and South Africa, Ryan transitioned to circus arts, focusing on aerial straps and clowning. Since then, Ryan has co-founded *Breaking Circus*, a production company focusing on contemporary circus. Alongside his circus performances, Ryan composes music for himself and other artists, including full scores for all of the *Breaking Circus* productions.

Lukas Pearse has been deeply involved as a professional bassist and since 1990 in a radically wide variety of genres, spanning jazz, indie rock, hip-hop and folk to classical, experimental and free-improv. He regularly performs with celebrated Mi'kmaw group Alan Syliboy & The Thundermakers, and with Halifax's reggae royalty Jah'Mila. He is the Artistic Director of Upstream Music Association and of the Open Waters Festival of New and Improvised Music, and regularly appears at music festivals across Canada. From and very much of Halifax, he studied media art at NSCAD, double bass at Dalhousie, and electroacoustic music at Goldsmiths College, UK. He is an award-winning film composer, accomplished sound designer, and is passionate about music of all kinds.





CELLO LABYRINTH

Wednesday Jan 7th @ 7:30PM / Joseph Strug Hall, Fountain School of Performing Arts

In partnership with Scotia Festival and Everyseeker, we are delighted to bring you Cello Labyrinth. Internationally renowned Indigenous cellist and composer Cris Derksen teams up with three extraordinary cellists from the Maritimes,

India Gailey, Leandra Gold and Blanche Israël, for a multi-cello, multi-media evening of exploration, sharing, and experiment.

India Gailey (she/they) is a Juno-nominated cellist, composer, vocalist, and improviser who appears most often in the realms of classical and experimental music. Named by CBC as one of “30 hot Canadian classical musicians under 30,” India moves fluidly as a soloist, chamber musician, and collaborator with various disciplines to create works of exploratory art, touring across North America and Europe. She has worked with numerous living composers, including Nicole Lizée, Amy Brandon, Philip Glass, Fjóla Evans, Julia Mermelstein, and Michael Harrison. India’s album *to you through* (Redshift Records), was praised as “a truly exceptional display of unparalleled talent” (Take Effect) that “flows like poetry” (The Whole Note). She followed this with *Problematica*, a series of specially commissioned works blurring genre lines (People Places Records, 2024).

As a composer, India has written music for concert, film, dance, and theatre, often exploring environmentalism and magical realism in her work. In 2022 she composed music for Symphony Nova Scotia to illustrate Mi’kmaw poet Rebecca Thomas’s children’s book *I’m Finding My Talk*. In 2024 she premiered her own cello concerto *Butterfly Lightning Shakes the Earth* (Redshift Records) with Symphony NS and conductor Karl Hirzer, and the recording received an East Coast Music for Composition of the year and a Juno nomination for Classical Album of the Year. Another recent work was *Music*



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Across the Water at Scotia Festival, a site-specific quasi-theatrical piece involving over twenty musicians stationed in various locations around an oceanic inlet in Halifax. India is the recipient of numerous honours, including awards from Arts Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Talent Trust, the Canada Council for the Arts, Upstream Music, and Acadia & McGill Universities. She loves raspberries, large marimbas, and the smell of burning thyme.

Leandra Gold unfolds as the deeply personal and experimental solo project of Colombian-born singer/cellist **Natalia Bohorquez**. After two decades of building a classical music career and education, Bohorquez channels her curiosity, innovative spirit, multicultural background, and performance experience into Leandra Gold. Leandra Gold explores the intersections of immigration, identity and artistry. Her music, layering classical acoustic cello resonance with digital loops, harmonies and percussive textures, opens a portal into a universe where she can experiment beyond the classical music realm. This project is a platform where dualism, multilingualism and culture interplay, unearthing an authentic artistic self.

TOLEDANO is the solo project of Moroccan-Canadian cellist **Blanche Israël**. Drawing on her family's Sephardic Jewish roots from Northern Morocco, she reinterprets ancient Judeo-Spanish songs through cello, piano, samples, and improvisation.

A longtime collaborator of Wolastoqiyik artist and anthropologist Jeremy Dutcher (Polaris Prize, JUNOS, NPR Tiny Desk Concert), Blanche brings that experience of cross-cultural performance into her own exploration of heritage and identity.

At the heart of TOLEDANO is a reflection on lineage, guided by the lives of Blanche's 105-year-old grandmother and her 3-year-old daughter, both named Sultana. The project traces the emotional and cultural distance between their two worlds and searches for lost practices of care in an increasingly fractured world.

Through looping, sampling, and sound manipulation, TOLEDANO blends traditional Sephardic melodies with experimental textures to reflect on themes of memory, community, and displacement. The project connects Blanche's experience as a second-generation immigrant and solo parent in North America with the intergenerational stories of her ancestors.

The work also engages with Haketia, the endangered Judeo-Spanish language spoken by her elders, with fewer than 1,000 remaining speakers today. Inspired by songs of courtship, marriage, and motherhood, TOLEDANO examines how cultural practices of care and connection are transformed through migration and modern life.

Sonically, the project layers cello and voice to create immersive environments that evoke communal singing and shared ritual. Historically grounded yet forward-looking, TOLEDANO considers what it means to belong: to family, to place, and to history.

Cris Derksen, a Juno-nominated Indigenous cellist and composer, is internationally renowned for her genre-defying music that bridges the traditional and contemporary. Her work intricately weaves together her classical training and Indigenous heritage with modern electronic elements. Her strength lies in her diversity as a composer composing for dance, theatre, fashion, film/tv, podcast, and installation. Recent composer projects include: Canadian Pavilion for world expo as a soloist-composer, AKI, a 2025 TIFF

selection, and is currently writing a full length Ballet for Ballet Kelowna. Derksen has performed with most symphonies and chamber orchestras across Canada and has been commissioned by prestigious ensembles such as the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Thunder Bay Symphony, and with Orchestre Métropolitain under Yannick Nézet-Séguin Derksen had her Carnegie Hall debut where she performed her symphony *Controlled Burn*.



SYMPHONY NOVA SCOTIA

Thursday Jan 8th @ 7:30PM / The Stage at St. Andrew's

Featuring: Karl Hirzer (conductor, Vancouver)

Soloists: Cris Derksen, Mark Morton,
Charna Matsushige & Victoria Dubois,
Eileen Walsh

Meditation (1996), Robert Bauer – soloist Eileen Walsh, Clarinet

Battery Charge (2025), Garrett Niall

Chalkboards (2025), Benjamin Fraser

qilillilil (2025), Amy Brandon

Impromptu (1996), Sofia Gubaidulina – soloists Charna Matsushige (Violin),
Victoria Dubois (Flute)

Intermission

For a Few Moments, Sitting Where You Are (2025), Nicola Miller (Paul Cram Creation Award) – Soloists Doug Tielli and Meghan Gilhespy

Controlled Burn (2023), Cris Derksen

Symphony no. 1 (1963), Avro Part

Meditation (1996), Robert Bauer

Meditation has had various scorings over the years, from a duo to a fully notated work for orchestra. This evening's performance looks back to the work's origins. In 1996 the Upstream ensemble and Symphony Nova Scotia collaborated for the very first time and *Meditation* was a part of that concert. The idea behind the piece is quite straight forward. It is a series of quiet chord progressions that move from a point of tension to a point of resolution. Over this fluctuating but essentially gentle background, a soloist improvises in and around the chords. In 1996 the soloist was bass clarinetist Jeff Reilly, in 2019 it was oboist Suzanne Lemieux, and this evening we feature Symphony Nova Scotia clarinetist **Eileen Walsh**.

Robert (Bob) Paul Bauer is a respected Canadian composer, broadcaster, performer, conductor, arts administrator, educator and adjudicator. He worked for CBC Radio for 30

years as a recording engineer and music producer until his retirement in 2006.

Bauer has always been an advocate of new Canadian music. As such, he continuously promoted Canadian composers in his work with CBC radio. He is one of the founders of three of Canada's leading new music concert presenters - *ArrayMusic* in Toronto, *Upstream Music Association* and *Musikon Concert Society*, both in Halifax. He was also a co-artistic director of the *Oscillations Festival of Electroacoustic Music*. Bauer served for 30 years on the Atlantic regional council of the *Canadian Music Centre*.

His work as a composer was recognized early with a *Canadian League of Composers Award in 1971*. He has also received several *East Coast Music Awards*.

He has worked in numerous musical forms, primarily chamber music, jazz ensembles and electro-acoustic music, but he has also composed some orchestral works. Bauer's works for solo guitar and electronics are considered ground breaking in Canadian composition.

Battery Charge (2025), Garrett Niall

Garrett Niall (he/they) is an African Nova Scotian composer-percussionist from Punamu'kwati'jk (Dartmouth), Nova Scotia. He is pursuing a Bachelor of Music at the University of King's College & Dalhousie University, studying under Matthias McIntire in composition and Mark Morton in percussion. He has served as the principal percussionist in the Dalhousie Symphony Orchestra since 2023. Their works have been featured by the Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance, Open Waters Festival, Nuovo Contemporary Concert Series, and Dalhousie Theatre's showing of Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*.

Program Note:

A simmering one-movement concerto for adapted drum set and orchestra based on the physicality of musicmaking.

Proud to support Upstream Music!



**Krista
Gallagher, MLA**
Halifax Chebucto



kristagallagher@nsmla.ca



902-454-8365



@kristagns



Chalkboards (2025), Benjamin Fraser

Benjamin Fraser was twelve when his parents told him he couldn't be a Jedi when he grew up. So, Benjamin decided he was going to be a film composer. Since then, Benjamin has worked as the composer on many international award winning films including 2025 shorts *Sing to the Wind* and *The Unknown Soldier*. Additionally Benjamin wrote music for the Coca Cola commercial, *Auditorium 4*, as a part of the Refreshing Films program. He was selected to be a part of the New Generation Film Composers program where he studied with composer Maria Molinar and attended the Screen Music Program in Pavia, Italy where he studied with Alison Plante, and attended lectures from Carlos Rafael Rivera, Sonya Belousova and Giona Ostinelli. Outside of film, his pieces have premiered across Canada. From orchestral works to chamber music Benjamin's musical voice is becoming sought after. In 2025 he released a single, *Breathless*, and an EP, *simplicity*. Currently, Benjamin studies Composition with Amy Brandon at Dalhousie University, where he received the Judith A. Grant Bursary from the Nova Scotia Talent Trust.

Program Note:

There was before.

We were eager to become a foster family. We felt we had the means to be a safe space for kids who needed it. It was loudly terrifying and quietly hopeful. We were ready.

There was during.

Three beautiful kids joined our family and suddenly I was the eldest of eight. There was no end to the chaos. As we stretched our capacity to meet their needs, the limits of our hearts expanded as well. We exhausted ourselves falling in love with them, and rested in the knowledge that they found stability in our home. When the social workers decided to move the kids closer to their family, we didn't get to say goodbye. The kids thought they were leaving for the weekend, and suddenly their space was stolen from them, again.

There was after.

Standing in the aftermath of cruelty; standing in the silence; standing in their empty rooms with their orphaned belongings; we broke.

Later, we took a chalkboard and wrote out our feelings about becoming a foster family. We took turns going through Before, During, and After. This piece is a musical representation of that Chalkboard. The piece has three sections for each part of fostering. Before. During. After.

qilillil (2025), Amy Brandon

JUNO-nominated composer **Amy Brandon**'s pieces have been described as "gut-wrenching and horrific" (Critipeg), "otherworldly, a clashing of bleakness with beauty" (Minor Seventh) and "arresting, riveting music, highly original and individual" (Simon Cummings, 5:4). Recent works include a NextGen commission for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (*qilillil*, 2025), and works for Alarm Will Sound (*Incipit*, MICF 2025), cellist Jeffrey Zeigler (*Simulacra*, 2022), Orbit Ensemble (*Caeli Nullius*, 2024), and Ensemble ArtChoral (*Dust of the Water*, 2023). Her installations and acoustic works have

been presented at the ISCM World New Music Days, the Gaudeamus Festival (Screen Dive), Trinity College (Dublin), and the Winnipeg New Music Festival. She has received Canadian and international composition awards including the Leo Brouwer Guitar Composition Competition (Grand Prize 2019, adjudicated by Leo Brouwer), and was a 2020 JACK Quartet Studio Artist. She teaches composition at Dalhousie University at the Fountain School of Performing Arts in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick.

Program notes:

qilillilil (hill-lill-lill) is a fictional god of the underworld: she creates and inhabits black holes, parts of time and space where dimensions intersect, creating pockets of unreality.

Impromptu (1996), Sofia Asgatovna Gubaidalina (1931–2025)

Charna Matsushige (violin), **Victoria DuBois** (flute)

Among the first modern women composers to gain global recognition, she is known for her unique style—expansive in concept yet meticulous in orchestral detail.

“The art of music is capable of touching and approaching mysteries and laws existing in the cosmos and in the world.” – Sophia Gubaidalina

Born in Tatarstan, Russia, died March 13, 2025, Appen, Germany, Gubaidalina was a Russian composer whose works fuse Russian and Central Asian regional styles with the Western classical tradition. Her Tatar and Polish-Jewish parents were an example of Soviet-era assimilation - but also of the cultural intermixing common in the capital city of Kazan, both a crossroads and a metropolitan center, with a prestigious university that drew many Soviet-era intellectuals. She studied piano and composition, but at the time, all new musical works had to be approved by the powerful Composers' Union. Audacious innovations among composers tended to be stymied, and anything Western was strictly forbidden. Gubaidulina shifted her activity to improvised film scores starting in 1964 through the late 1970s, while public performances of her composed music were officially forbidden. She explored combinations of Central Asian and European instruments, as well as composing pieces for synthesizers, and had clandestine studies in Western serialism which influenced her compositional development.

Much of Gubaidulina's music is overtly spiritual. While her paternal grandfather was a mullah who translated the Koran, her parents were dutifully non-religious. When she was five, she visited a woman who displayed an icon of Christ in her home. Gubaidulina said she recognized God at that moment and the experience remained with her. “Somehow music merged naturally with religion,” she said, “and sound became sacred to me.”

She first traveled to the West in 1985, and in 1992 she moved permanently to Hamburg, Germany.

This work *Impromptu* was written especially for Irena Grafenauer and Gidon Kremer for the Schubert Year 1997, with the solo flute and solo violin accompanied by a string orchestra.

The formal structure of the work is determined in the west by music by Franz Schubert: his well-known and famous *Impromptu* for piano in A flat minor/A flat major op. 90 No.

4, or more precisely individual motifs from it. Some of these motifs, such as the falling triad passages in the flute, are used as source material (or even as a motto). Other motifs, such as the chromatic motif in the middle section of the Impromptus, appear hidden, like an unattainable boundary towards which the entire development strives. It is these two poles between which the musical action takes place.

For a Few Moments, Sitting Where You Are (2025), Nicola Miller

In moments of intense psychological distress, perception itself can shift. The familiar dissolves, time bends, and sound takes on startling new shapes. Using the orchestra as both the source of recognizable sounds and the agent of their distortion, *For a Few Moments, Sitting Where You Are* investigates broader questions about perception, musical structure, and the unexpected territories that extreme disorientation can reveal. This work recreates the soundscape experienced during a severe panic attack that I suffered while conducting Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Folk Song Suite* for a conducting course. In this disorienting state, time collapsed and stretched unpredictably. Vision became obscured as solid lines blurred into waving, pulsing patterns. The orchestra dissolved into a shifting mass of sound, with elements of the suite's *My Bonny Boy* Floating in and out of recognition. Small moments of clarity appeared only to vanish into larger waves of distortion. Melodies fragmented, individual instruments fused in texture, and the usual perception of musical time and space completely warped. Although terrifying in the moment, this sonic and emotional landscape proved quite rich when examined through a compositional lens. Performance anxiety affects many musicians and rather than simply depicting anxiety, this piece uses that shared experience to explore what happens when psychological pressure transforms how we perceive sound itself.

Saxophonist and Composer **Nicola Miller** is based on the South Shore of Nova Scotia, where she has become a vital part of the maritime creative music ecosystem. Weaving endless sonic curiosity into a jazz foundation, the music she plays and writes effortlessly traverses boundaries of style and approach. Miller has appeared in performances alongside a diverse cross-section of artists including Jan Roder, Nicholas D'Amato, Nicole Rampersaud, Charlotte Hüg, Terri Hron, India Gailey, Enrique Luna, Sam Wilson, Uri Caine, Tim Crofts, Glenn Patscha, and Nick Halley. She's been featured at the Guelph Jazz Festival, Open Waters, Halifax Jazz Festivals and also performed in contexts that span Berlin's Volksbühne and Jazz Am Helmholtzplatz to Acadia University's Physics Department. She is the winner of the 2025 Paul Cram Creation Award which will see her debut a piece for Voices and Symphony with SymphonyNS in January 2026 and is the winner of ArtsNS Emerging Artist Award for 2025. Her album 'Living Things' was nominated for Jazz Recording of the Year by MusicNS.

Controlled Burn (2023), Cris Derksen

Cris Derksen, a Juno-nominated Indigenous cellist and composer, is internationally renowned for her genre-defying music that bridges the traditional and contemporary. Her work intricately weaves together her classical training and Indigenous heritage with modern electronic elements. Her strength lies in her diversity as a composer composing for dance, theatre, fashion, film/tv, podcast, and installation. Recent composer projects

include: Canadian Pavilion for world expoAs a soloist-composer, AKI, a 2025 TIFF selection, and is currently writing a full length Ballet for Ballet Kelowna. Derksen has performed with most symphonies and chamber orchestras across Canada and has been commissioned by prestigious ensembles such as the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Thunder Bay Symphony, and with Orchestre Métropolitain under Yannick Nézet-Séguin Derksen had her Carnegie Hall debut where she performed her symphony *Controlled Burn*.

Controlled fires were a cultural part of the environmental cycles and maintenance of wildlife habitats that sustained the cultures and economies of the Indigenous people pre-contact. We used fire as medicine, getting rid of the underbrush, giving nutrients to the ground, on the west coast smoke fires would be burned over inlets to keep the water cool for fishing on a hot day. Everyday is a hot day now. We have a new term now: Fire Season. That did not exist 10 years ago. Canada was founded in 1867 and 7 years later The Bush Fire Act 1874- was created to ban Indigenous folks from using fire to keep the land healthy. The Bush Fire Act was created by folks who looked at tree's as money, who looked at water as money, who looked at resources as money. I talked with Amy Cardinal Christianson, a Metis woman who was raised in Treaty 8 territory who is a fire research scientist with the Canadian Forest Service. We talked about the sound of wild fires today versus the sound of fires pre-contact. Pre-Contact we would have heard sounds of the community, children and aunties laughing, the sound of joy, the feeling of safety. Now when we hear the sound of fires we hear the sound of military, helicopters and the roar of the fire, the sound of fear. This piece explores the loss of land due to fires, the loss of culture, the loss of relationship to fire.

Symphony No. 1 “Polyphonic” (1963), Arvo Pärt (b 1935)

It has been said that composers' music tends to become more complex with age, however Arvo Pärt took a very different path.

From 2011 to 2018, and again in 2022, the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt was the most performed living composer in the world, almost entirely on the strength of his much celebrated self-invented style of “tintinnabuli” an overtly spiritual approach inspired by both Gregorian chant and the sonic phenomena of bells. This compositional style was developed following a creative and personal crisis that led him to both renounce his previous compositional techniques. He reemerged with his new approach after nearly a decade of retreat from composition in 1976 following a dedicated study of Renaissance and Medieval music and a conversion to Orthodox Christianity. It remains globally celebrated.

THIS IS NOT THAT MUSIC

As a student and young artist, Pärt composed music for film and the stage, creating scores for over fifty movies. Although filmmaking and film music were not primary sources of inspiration for him, these compositions provided a medium for exploring serial and tonal techniques—an amalgamation that would later influence his collage works of the 1960s, including his Symphony No. 1.

Composed in 1963 shortly after the composer's graduation from Tallinn Conservatory, and dedicated to his composition professor, Heino Eller, it was premiered by the

Estonian Radio Symphony Orchestra on February 7, 1964. The Symphony is an exuberant and playful exploration of counterpoint, bursting with ideas. Its subtitle refers to polyphony, the simultaneous combination of multiple melodic lines. With elements that appear to be drawing upon serialism, jazz, birdsongs and military tattoo, it veers between strict discipline and visceral abandon.

Considering the company this piece shares in this program with premieres and work by emerging composers, it is worth reflecting upon how even the most well-known composers were once emerging artists finding their own paths. Taking risks is key in the search for a genuine voice, and it is only in retrospect that the throughline of a musical trajectory can be traced.

RECEPTION AND OPEN COMPANY

Thursday January 8th @ 9:00PM / Glitter Bean Café

Geordie Haley hosts OPEN COMPANY. A popular event for meeting other players from the festival. This is a chance for audience members and ensemble players to hear and participate in free improvisation.

Curated on the spot, trios and quartets will emerge to create spontaneous compositions the world has never heard! Hope to see you hear!

FOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE

Friday January 9th @ 7:30 / Joseph Strug Concert Hall

The New Music Ensemble (NME) at Dalhousie's Fountain School of Performing Arts (FSPA) defies categorization by traditional standards. The NME blurs the boundaries between composition and performance, old and new ways of playing, acoustic and

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electronic music, classical and contemporary styles, notated and improvised music, and welcomes collaboration across disciplines. This super creative group of FSPA student musicians explores the techniques, skills, and creative approaches of the 21st century contemporary classical musician and performs repertoire by living composers, brand new compositions by FSPA students, brand new group compositions co-created by NME members, as well as improvised music.

Kaleidophone by Eddie Sanoja

Cobra by John Zorn

Affine by Amy Brandon

On Life Itself Group Composition by Joshua Bowden, Celeste Cook, Jess Cheverie, Leo Cox, and Eddie Sanoja

Behind the Neon Group Composition by Alex Rose, Louis Webb, Kai Taylor, and Jamie Bryden

Joe's Jig by Leo Cox

Rooftop Runnin' by Jess Cheverie

Performers

Matthias McIntire (director), **Joshua Bowden** (piano), **Jamie Bryden** (electric bass), **Jess Cheverie** (electric guitar and voice), **Celeste Cook** (trombone) **Leo Cox** (electric guitar and electric bass), **Alexandra Rose** (voice), **Eddie Sanoja** (percussion and acoustic guitar), **Kai Taylor** (violin), **Louis Webb** (electric guitar).



MARIE-PIERRE BRASSETT

Friday January 9th @ 9:00 / Joseph Strug Concert Hall

Marie-Pierre Brassett, *L'Envers du monde*

L'Envers du monde (The reverse of the world) was created for a month-long residency at CEM in Chicoutimi, Québec. For this creation, the composer immersed herself in both acoustic and amplified sound, working on musical textures and atmospheres with talented

musicians. They all gathered around the analog synthesizer to explore the themes of night, forgetting, and reminiscence that run through this 50-minute concert. The source of inspiration for this creative residency found its setting in the poetry of Anne Hébert, particularly her poem "*L'Envers du monde*." The analog synthesizer allows the artist to create textures and atmospheres by working with slow frequency phasing, variations in intonation, and the interplay between "pure sound" and "noisy sound" made possible by the machine.

Born in Dolbeau in 1981, **Marie-Pierre Brassett** is a composer who has been active in the contemporary music scene for over fifteen years. Her works are performed regularly throughout Quebec and Canada, and she has collaborated with numerous

professional ensembles and performers (Trio Fibonacci, NEM, Orchestre Métropolitain, Choros, ECM+, Quatuor Bozzini, Fiolútröniq, Ensemble Prisme). A contemplative listening to the sonic environment profoundly shapes her creative work. Her music is characterized by a deliberate harmonic approach coupled with abundant melodic writing, all framed by expansive, organic forms. Her aesthetic—aiming for immediacy, clarity, and effectiveness—reflects a desire to establish an intimate relationship between the composer, the performer, and the listener. Marie-Pierre Brassset holds a doctorate in research-creation focused on contemporary opera, has taught as a lecturer at the Université de Montréal, and has written articles on contemporary music for various media outlets (Revue Circuit, PANM360, cettvilleétrange).

Musicians: **Marie-Pierre Brassset** (Keyboards, Synthetizers, Composition), **Cindy Tremblay** (Flute, Voice), **Guylaine Grégoire** (Accordion, Violin), **Isabelle Harvey** (Cello), **Valérie Lachance-Guillemette** (Saxophone).



DOUG TIELLI

Friday January 9th @ 10:00 / MacAloney Room

Settled and unsettling, hypnotic and surprising, from glacially slow to sinuously grooving, the voice and music of Doug Tielli trace a hidden line through a wide and subtle terrain. Filaments of classical, jazz, improvisation, folk and pop spin and wind around one another to weave a musical garment that is both warm and comfortable while also unfamiliar and amorphous.

Doug Tielli has been a fixture of Southern Ontario's music community as a multi-instrumentalist, song-writer, improviser and composer in a variety of ensembles such as The silt, Drumheller, and The Reveries, as well as pursuing his own singer-songwriter project. With songs, tunes, and compositions that freely span folk, pop, jazz and experimental music, Doug has released 5 solo recordings since 2011. He has performed and recorded with such artists as: Marshall Allen, Owen Pallett, Amy Millan, John Oswald, Evan Parker, The Constantines, Rheostatics, Baby Dee, Devon Sproule, Jennifer Castle, Tom Brousseau, and has had chamber works performed by Arraymusic, Contact Contemporary Music and Neither/Nor.

Doug Tielli is joined by **Nicola Miller** (saxophone), **Nic D'Amato** (bass), **Mattias Macintire** (violin).



BORROWERS

Saturday January 10th @ 1:00pm / MacAloney Room

Borrowers is a collection of joyful, playful music, inspired by the warmth of sunshine, growing plants, and the simple, peaceful feeling that comes when everything seems to be going just right. Many of these pieces were written in the quiet moments between teaching kids, capturing the fleeting

beauty of life's smaller, yet profound, joys. The music is meant to evoke a sense of lightness and ease, like a sunlit afternoon when you have nothing to do but lay around on the grass. Unsurprisingly, but fittingly, their sound has been dubbed "sunshine jazz". The music is generally composed by Andrew, with the exception of some melodies he is borrowing. Borrowed pieces include songs written by friends and neighbours, ancient songs from the 12th century, and covers of pop tunes. Basically anything that gets caught in MacKelvie's head. The group doesn't hold anything too tightly so that they can find new ways to interpret these melodies and forms.

All of the musicians in Borrowers are long-time collaborators of **Andrew MacKelvie** (saxophone) in one way or another. They include **Sam Wilson** (guitar), **Ellen Gibling** (harp), **Gabriella Ciurcovich** (bass), and **Matt Gallant** (drums).



NICOLA MILLER, CHRIS DONNELLY AND NICOLAS D'AMATO

Saturday January 10th @ 3:00pm / MacAloney Room

Miller, Donnelly and D'Amato reshape the familiar contours of the jazz songbook into a form all its own. The ensemble approaches

classic standards as open canvases, stretching and bending melodies into ever-evolving organisms. Their interplay is fluid and conversational—sometimes tender, sometimes explosive—guided by deep listening and a shared commitment to discovery. Expect revered tunes to surface in surprising fragments, dissolve into free-form improvisation, and re-emerge transformed. The songs will be viewed through a prism of



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experimentation: adventurous, intimate, and alive in the moment.

Saxophonist and Composer **Nicola Miller** is based on the South Shore of Nova Scotia, where she has become a vital part of the maritime creative music ecosystem. Weaving endless sonic curiosity into a jazz foundation, the music she plays and writes effortlessly traverses boundaries of style and approach. Miller has appeared in performances alongside a diverse cross-section of artists including Jan Roder, Nicholas D'Amato, Nicole Rampersaud, Charlotte Hüg, Terri Hron, India Gailey, Enrique Luna, Sam Wilson, Uri Caine, Tim Crofts, Glenn Patscha, and Nick Halley. She's been featured at the Guelph Jazz Festival, Open Waters, Halifax Jazz Festivals and also performed in contexts that span Berlin's Volksbühne and Jazz Am Helmholtzplatz to Acadia University's Physics Department. She is the winner of the 2025 Paul Cram Creation Award which will see her debut a piece for Voices and Symphony with SymphonyNS in January 2026 and is the winner of ArtsNS Emerging Artist Award for 2025. Her album 'Living Things' was nominated for Jazz Recording of the Year by MusicNS.

Chris Donnelly's repertoire is an eclectic mix of jazz, improvisation, original compositions, and classical music. Chris used to be a Steinway artist and instructor at the University of Toronto, but left that all behind when he moved to Nova Scotia in January 2025. Unfortunately, the fact he was nominated for some Juno awards eons ago still follows him around to this day. Chris is currently living in Chester with his wife, two Yorkies, and multiple families of deer. He teaches at the local high school, enjoys playing music with friends, and will talk anyone's ear off about music and education.

Nicholas D'Amato is a bassist and educator, located in the Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia. He is a full-time faculty member at Acadia University's School of Music. As a bassist, Nicholas has performed on some of the world's most prestigious stages in more than forty countries. He grew up outside New York City, where he eventually led a twenty-year career as a performer and session musician before moving to Nova Scotia in 2011. He continues to tour and perform in conjunction with his teaching at Acadia.



MY BAD, EUROPA

Saturday January 10th @ 7:30PM / Sir James Dunn Theatre

An Afro Futuristic, Greek Tragedy Opera for hip hop ensemble and 16-piece chamber orchestra.

Created by Aquakultre, DJ Uncle Fester, Jon Hargreaves and Jeff Reilly

Overture	Interlude 3
<i>The Tools</i>	<i>My Bad, Europa</i>
Interlude 1	Interlude 4
<i>Good Hands</i>	<i>Emancipation and</i>
Interlude 2	<i>Incarceration</i>
<i>Am I Good?</i>	Epilogue

Aquakultre (The God, the man)

Uncle Fester (DJ), Jon Hargreaves (conductor)

Jeff Reilly (conductor, bass clarinet)

Mahalia Smith (Europa)

Jeremiah Sparks (narration).

Ibiko Pelle (drums), **Shuvanjan Karmaker** (electric bass).

Mark Lee (violin), **Charna Matsushige** (violin), **Matthias McIntire** (viola),

India Gailey (cello), **Gabriella Ciurcovich** (double bass).

Derek Charke (flute, bass flute), **Eileen Walsh** (clarinet, bass clarinet), **Andrew McKelvie** (soprano and alto sax), **Jackson Fairfax-Perry** (tenor and baritone sax), **Emily Bellman** (trumpet), **Andrew Jackson** (trombone), **Tom Richards** (trombone, sousaphone).

Tim Crofts (piano), **Erin Donovan** (vibraphone, percussion)

Bea Crowther (lighting), **Veronique Mackenzie** (drama and stage consultant),

Jeff Reilly (producer).

Aquakultre is the artistic voice of Lance Sampson — an uncommonly versatile singer, rapper, and storyteller from Halifax, NS. Since winning the 2018 CBC Searchlight competition, Aquakultre has released two Polaris-nominated albums and a multitude of genre-diverse, multi-media collaborations, establishing him as a significant musical and cultural presence. The live show is a warm-hearted party where all are welcomed by Aquakultre's big voice and bigger stage presence. Through all his works, via poetic lyrics and straight-up jams, Aquakultre is on a mission to share his love for his unique and beautiful corner of the culture. (www.aquakultre.com/community)

"A Veteran and OG of the Canadian Hip-Hop scene **DJ Uncle Fester** is always creating. A founding member of the Backburner Crew, Fes has worked on many award winning

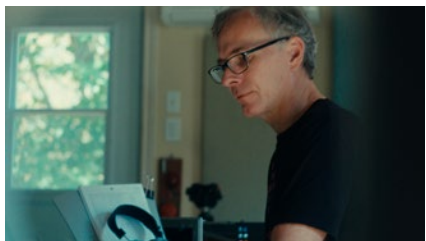


albums and with artists from all across North America. Recording, Engineering, Producing, Beat Making, touring and DJing for various MCs in Canada (Ghostface and Raekwon) as well as various bands are all ways in which Fes has spread his sound across the map. From working with Ali Shaheed Muhammad (ATCQ) on The award winning Extremities (w Fresh Kils) project, which blended live band recordings and musicians with a traditional hip-hop approach, all the way to arranging and mixing tracks on Chan Hays album "Here" featuring Conway, Roc Marciano, Benny The Butcher, El Camino, Pharoah Monch, etc. Also with underground heavyweights AP The Overlord, John Creasy, Roshin, Justo the MC and more, Fes continues to push his craft forward. With all this work already put in and no signs of slowing down, look for many upcoming projects to come"

Jeff Reilly is a musician with a broad and extensive scope of work. His approach to music blurs any simple distinctions between improvisation and composition, and he strives to do it with such integrity that we are reminded that these distinctions are moot. A twice Juno-nominated bass clarinetist as well as a composer, conductor, improviser, and producer, Jeff has appeared as a soloist with the Elora Singers, Symphony Nova Scotia, the Winnipeg New Music Festival, Elmer Iseler Singers, I Musici de Montreal, the Canadian Chamber Choir, Calgary's Luminous Voices, Ottawa's 13 Strings and across Canada, USA, Europe and Asia in the groundbreaking trios Blackwood and Sanctuary. In his 32-year career as a producer with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, he produced hundreds of concert recordings of classical, jazz, world and contemporary music, hundreds of studio sessions and over 25 CDs of Canadian jazz and classical music. Over the years 7 of his album productions have received Juno nominations. Jeff has composed dozens of works for orchestra, big band, jazz composer's orchestras, bass clarinet ensembles, choirs, cello duos, chamber jazz groups and for the ensemble Blackwood. His recent composition "Unfathomable Presence" for solo harp and orchestra was premiered by Ellen Gibling and Symphony Nova Scotia conducted by Karl Hirzer in January of 2024.

Jon Hargreaves works as a composer/arranger and conductor across genres and the diverse forms of music making today, from Scotland (UK). In recent years, he has composed music for the Royal Scottish National Orchestra's educational project *Sounds of the Deep* (2025), and for 'Toqnasimk: Carrying the Burden together', one of the Pjila'si sessions for Symphony Nova Scotia (2024), as well as a 'Friday Afternoons' from the Britten Pears Trust. His work with artists in many subgenres of popular and traditional music has led to critical acclaim in the UK press. Jon co-founded the Octandre Ensemble with composer Grawemeyer award-winning composer Christian Mason in London in 2011, and as Co-Artistic Director he has been at the helm of many special performances and recordings. With its focus on composers whose music focuses on timbre and ritual, it is one of the most distinctive contemporary music ensembles in the UK, for example, giving the World Premiere performance of Frank Denyer's epic *The Fish that became the Sun* at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (2019). Jon recorded a disc of Cevanne Horrocks-Hopayan's music with members of the London Symphony Orchestra in 2021. From 2018-22 he was Co-Artistic Director of the Nevis Ensemble, a chamber orchestra playing a broad repertoire in a wide variety of settings, from the top of Ben Nevis to the remote isles of St. Kilda.





NEURAL SYNTHESIS NO. 19 DAVID TUDOR (REALIZED BY JOHN D.S. ADAMS)

Saturday January 10th @ 9:00pm / Sheila K
Piercey Studio

David Tudor (1926-1996) revolutionized electronic music through pioneering feedback-based compositions. As a virtuoso pianist, he premiered iconic works by Stockhausen, Feldman, Boulez, and Wolff while collaborating intimately with John Cage.

John D.S Adams is an improviser, producer and recording engineer based in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia. John had the privilege of working with David Tudor and John Cage from 1991–1996 with the NYC based Merce Cunningham Dance Company where he performed and toured with Tudor, assisting him with his complex musical scores and eventually realizing his music.

Neural Network Plus was given its premiere performance in November 1992 at the Paris Opera Garnier. The piece was composed using source material derived from a neural-network synthesizer conceived and built especially for Tudor by Forrest Warthman, Mark Holler and Mark Thorson. At the heart of the synthesizer is an Intel neural-network computer chip designed to model the human brain. Tudor was most interested in the analogue nature of the chip and the complexities that it possessed both in its use and its sound output. Tudor produced 10 half-hour ‘performances’ using only the neural-network synthesizer. These recordings are being utilized in tonight’s performance as source material for a specified array of processing equipment that the performer manipulates. Adams assisted Tudor in mounting premieres of his last two original compositions, Neural Network Plus and Soundings: Ocean Diaries. Before Tudor’s passing in 1996, Tudor requested that Adams fill in as a musician on several important performances, marking an important shift for Tudor—having other artists interpret his compositions. Inspired by Tudor’s approach to sound, Adams utilizes a continually morphing array of modular analogue electronic instruments to generate a free flowing and abstract sonic environment. Critical to Tudor’s aesthetic, is the sound system. Where the loudspeakers are positioned and how they interact with the acoustical space is fundamental to how he utilized them as an extension of his electronics. When performed with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Neural Network Plus used 16 speaker channels distributed throughout the performance space. Tonight’s performance will use 6 discrete speakers and is approximately one hour in length. Neural Synthesis is a solo version of Neural Network Plus commissioned by Merce Cunningham and performed by 2 musicians. Each subsequent performance of Neural Synthesis increments by one. Tonight is the 19th performance and is titled

Neural Synthesis No. 19. 2026 marks the 100th anniversary of David’s birth. “This performance is dedicated to my friend, mentor and musical inspiration David Tudor. I hope you enjoy immersing yourselves in this sonic landscape.” -John D.S. Adams





IMPROV TALK BACK

Sunday January 11th @ 12:00 pm / Sheila K Piercey Studio, Fountain School

Exploratory improvised performance and discussion facilitated by Upstream's Artistic Director, Lukas Pearse and featuring five OWF 2026 musicians who have never played together before. A chance to examine multiple approaches to creativity in the moment.



SHAPEVILLE

Sunday January 11th @ 1:00-5:45 / Studio 2 (Dal Arts Centre)

Concept & Choreographic Direction: **Jacinte Armstrong**

Creation & Performance: **Gillian Seaward-Boone, Kate Holden, Leah Skerry**

Audio Design & Performance: **Brandon Auger**

Computational Design: **James Forren**

Seamstress: **Alyson Samways**

Producer: **suddenlyLISTEN**

Thanks to Arts Nova Scotia towards the creation of this work.

Jacinte Armstrong (she/her) is an Acadian artist based in K'jipuktuk/Halifax, NS. Her work explores embodied practice through performance, choreography, collaboration, and curation, communicating the experience of the body in relation to objects, materials, environment, technology, and people. Her choreography ranges from intimate and imagistic to large-scale collaborations with dancers, architects, visual artists, radio producers, filmmakers, theatre-makers, computer programmers, and musicians. Her work has been presented locally, regionally, and across the country by dance, theatre, and music presenters, festivals, galleries, and in public art events. She is Artistic Director and co-founder of SiNS (Sometimes in Nova Scotia) dance, co-Artistic Director at suddenlyLISTEN music + performance, and performs regularly with Mocean Dance. From 2014-18 she was Artistic Director of Kinetic Studio, presenting an annual season of contemporary dance workshops and performances in Nova Scotia. Jacinte has worked with choreographers Sarah Chase, Tedd Robinson, Lois Brown, Cory Bowles, Sara Coffin, Susanne Chui, Veronique MacKenzie, Lisa Phinney Langley, Liliona Quarmyne, Serge Bennathan, Denise Fujiwara, Liz Kinoshita, Lin Snelling, Sarah Joy Stoker, Katie Ward, Dustin Harvey/Secret Theatre, and more. In 2023, she was commissioned by Mocean Dance to create an interdisciplinary, audience-inclusive piece called PLAY, and is currently working on SHAPEVILLE, a new installation-based work combining dance and Augmented Reality technology. Jacinte holds an MFA in Performance from NSCAD University and is a certified Laban Movement Analyst (CMA).

Brandon Auger (b.1978) is an artist and structural builder based in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Working with sound as a medium, his minimalistic work promotes the amplification of electronic idiosyncrasies and vibrational nuances in both acoustic and synthetic environments. Along with being an active member of suddenlyLISTEN and the improvising community in Canada, Auger's main project pnl(a), has be a 20+ year study of tape/electronic music having amassed several releases. Brandon is also one half of the microsound group Strata (w/cellist Norm Adams) and the founder of Northern Apparatus, an improvising trio with Andrew MacKelvie and Danielle Jakubiak. He has also worked greatly with members of Mocean Dance and Kinetic Studios, fusing his approach to sound with various choreographers in both compositional and improvised constructs. His compositions, installations, live performances and collaborative projects have spanned across both Canada and the U.S. Instagram – brandon.auger

James Forren is an Associate Professor of Architecture in Design and Technology at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. He utilizes computational, fine arts, and anthropological methods in the study of new materials and material technologies in architectural contexts. His research focuses on the production of architectural components and assemblies, concrete and composite technologies, and people's experiences with materials in industrial, design, and public contexts. His research has been published in scholarly journals and conferences including the *The Association for Computer Aided Design in Architecture (ACADIA)* and *The Association for Computer-Aided Architectural Design Research in Asia (CAADRIA)* and *Scroope: The Cambridge Architectural Journal*. His exhibited work has received awards at *Mongeometrija 2018* and *The S.ARCH (Sustainable Architecture) 2019* and *2020*. His current research is supported by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) New Frontiers in Research Fund

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patty.cuttell@halifax.ca
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Exploration (NFRF-E) program for the transdisciplinary project, “Gesture and Form: A Field-based Approach to New Methods of Architecture and Handcraft in Textiles Using Augmented Reality Technologies”; and through industry collaboration with the Canadian Precast Concrete Institute (CPCI) for the directed research project, “Soft Rock: Artificial Rock Technologies Explored as Soft Systems”.

Kate Holden An award winning dance artist, Kate has had the pleasure of interpreting the works of many esteemed Canadian choreographers, including Peggy Baker, Roberto Campanella, Mélanie Demers, Robert Desrosiers, David Earle, Sylvain Emard, Sasha Ivanochko, James Kudelka, Laurence Lemieux, Emily Molnar, Andrea Nann, and Yvonne Ng; with performances across North America, France, Britain, Holland and Singapore. Kate spent five seasons as a company member of Dancemakers under the artistic direction of Michael Trent and was also a dancer with the Danny Grossman Dance Company for two seasons. Kate is a graduate of the School of Toronto Dance Theatre and Etobicoke School of the Arts. Kate is very active in the dance community an interpreter, rehearsal director, teacher, creator, and producer. With Kate Franklin, Kate Holden founded firstthingsfirst productions to commission and produce new contemporary dance works by Canadian choreographers. The company facilitated the creation and production of 10 new dance works between 2007 and 2013. Their production “with a trace” was nominated for ten Dora Mavor Moore Awards. Kate is a member of the Canadian Alliance of Dance Artists, and was on the board of directors of the Ontario Chapter from 2003 - 2008. In 2021, Kate moved with her family to the South Shore of Nova Scotia/Mi’kma’ki where she continues to play, create and explore

Originally from Nova Scotia, **Gillian Seaward-Boone** completed her professional dance training at l’Ecole de Danse Contemporaine de Montréal (EDCM). Upon graduating, she worked with Sinha Danse, Pigeons International and Sasha Ivanochko, before joining O Vertigo Danse as a full company member until the direction of Ginette Laurin. During her time with the company, she performed and taught extensively throughout Europe, Asia, and North America. Since returning to Halifax in 2013, Gillian has worked as an independent artist, performing the works of Alexis Cormier, Lydia Zimmer, Lisa Phinney and Vanessa Goodman (Votive Dance). Gillian has danced with Mocean Dance for seven seasons, performing works by Serge Bennethan, Marie-Josée Chartier, Sara Coffin, Sharon Moore and Parts+Labour_Danse, and was Rehearsal Director for Danielle Desnoyers, Heidi Strauss, Sara Coffin and Lydia Zimmer. She is currently working on a new creation by celebrated artists Rebecca Lazier and Janet Echelman, and will embark on the third and final phase of “Home Economics” in collaboration with Alexis Cormier, Genevieve Boulet and Sarah Murphy in September 2021. Gillian is a senior member of the modern dance faculty of Halifax Dance’s Intensive Training Program, Director of Production and Development at Halifax Dance and Co-Director of The Young Company of Halifax Dance.

Leah Skerry is a Halifax-based circus artist, producer and entrepreneur. She has produced works in collaboration with the national circus school in Montreal and independently in Halifax. Prior to pursuing performing arts professionally in Chicago, Leah co-founded Squiggle Park - An adaptive reading game helping millions of kids learn to read (Acquired in 2021). She went on to lead the accessibility in gaming initiative at Unity Technologies - a public game engine company. She is a graduate of Saint

Mary's University Sobey School of Business; Entrepreneur in Residence at Saint Mary's University; a mentor and associate of Creative Destruction Lab (CDL); and has been named one of 21 Emerging Leaders of Nova Scotia.

FOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS COMPOSTERS

Sunday January 11th @ 2:00pm / MacAloney Room

Come and hear a new generation of composers — new contemporary solo, chamber and electronic works by Dalhousie and Mount Allison Composition students, performed by Dalhousie performance students. Students of Dalhousie faculty Dr. Jérôme Blais, Amy Brandon, Chris Mitchell and Matthias McIntire.

V.D. Caswell - *String Quartet No. 1*

Shanti Sivarulrasa - *First Encounters*

Garrett Niall Horne - *Curious Arithmetic*

Young Liu - *Snaramia*

Benjamin Fraser - *The Dog and the Dragon*

Performers: The Rostova Quartet (**Shanti Sivarulrasa, Indi Tisoy Morales, Gabriel Galvis Rangel, and Lillian LeBlanc**), **Amelia Parker** (violin), **Garrett Niall Horne** (snare).



BARBARA PRITCHARD

Sunday January 11th @ 4:00pm / MacAloney room

Program note: *Memoir* (2025, for solo piano, by James Rolfe)

Memoir (2025) is an hour-long piece composed for Halifax pianist Barbara Pritchard. Making a work legible for listeners who may drop in for a few minutes or stay till the end was a challenge I'd never imagined. Mulling it over, I roped together two of my favourite keyboard composers to ask one playful question: what would the Goldberg Variations sound like if they had been composed by Morton Feldman? But the piece refused to play by those rules; instead, it unfolded

in cascades of repetition and development which push back against the apparent theme and variations of the opening. There's a diary-like aspect to its material, which is unassumingly melodic and diatonic, and navigates time in discrete sections, like journal entries. The long duration heightens the role that memory plays in how we hear music. *Memoir* was written at the request of pianist Barbara Pritchard, to whom it's gratefully dedicated, in recognition of her bringing my music and that of so many other composers to the attention of curious ears across Canada.



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Barbara Pritchard studied music at the University of British Columbia, Ljungskile Folkhögskola (Sweden), the Banff Centre for the Arts and the Eastman School of Music. Her solo career is focused on the interpretation of music from the 20th and 21st centuries, and she is known in particular for her dedicated and compelling performances of Canadian repertoire. She is highly regarded as a chamber musician and accompanist, and enjoys playing Baroque sonatas, modern musical theatre numbers, and almost everything else in between. For many years Barbara worked as a studio pianist for the string and saxophone students at the Fountain School of Performing Arts (Dalhousie University). She often appears in concert in Halifax not only in her own solo recitals, but also for concerts and events presented by colleagues. She has played several times in the Neptune Theatre pit orchestra, and is a proud member of Rhapsody Quintet. Barbara has appeared in performance across the country from Vancouver to St. John's. Her solo recital at the St. Lawrence Centre in 2015 was included in Music Toronto's listing of Top 10 Music Toronto Moments in 2015. Her performances have frequently been broadcast on CBC Radio, and she has recorded three critically acclaimed solo albums with Centrediscs. The final track from her CD *Piano Atlantica* (Clark Ross's *Last Dance*) was nominated for a 2011 Juno Award: Classical Composition of the Year. Barbara Pritchard lives in Halifax with her husband and two cats.

Toronto composer **James Rolfe** has been commissioned and performed by ensembles, orchestras, choirs, theatres, and opera companies in Canada, the USA, Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. He has been recognized with a Guggenheim Fellowship, the K. M. Hunter Music Award, the Louis Applebaum Composers Award, the Jules Léger Prize for New Chamber Music, Choral Canada's Outstanding Choral Work Award, and the Johanna Metcalf Performing Arts Prize. He is a composition instructor at the University of Toronto, and frequently works as a composer mentor. Rolfe's operas have been performed in Toronto, Halifax, Vancouver, Banff, Edmonton, and New York. *Beatrice Chancy* (1998, with librettist George Elliott Clarke) played to sold-out houses and rave reviews; *The Overcoat* (2018, with librettist and director Morris Panych) was premiered by Tapestry Opera with Canadian Stage and Vancouver Opera, and nominated for 10 Dora Awards. His collaborators include writers André Alexis, Anna Chatterton, Luke Hathaway, Steven Heighton, Camyar Chai, Alex Poch-Goldin, Dennis Lee, and Sophie Herxheimer, and choreographer James Kudelka. His solo CDs include *raW* (2011) and *Breathe* (2017, nominated for a JUNO Award) on Centrediscs, and *Wound Turned to Light* (2023, a songbook setting contemporary Canadian poets) on Redshift Records.





CAROLINE'S SWEEPER

Sunday January 11th @ 7:30 PM / Joseph Strug
Concert Hall

Michael Donovan (Composer)
Monica Pearce (Librettist)

Caroline's Sweeper follows Caroline Herschel, 18th-century comet huntress, as she discovers eight comets. Largely overshadowed by the success of her astronomer brother William Herschel, she was the first woman to receive a salary as a scientist and was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society. In this chamber opera, Caroline Herschel's life and work is unfolded through a series of vignettes exploring her astronomical discoveries.

Composed by Michael Donovan with libretto by Monica Pearce, *Caroline's Sweeper* was commissioned by Maureen Batt for Crossing Borders with support from the Canada Council for the Arts.

Thank you to astrophysicist Matt Russo and Dr. Margaret Z. Buhariwalla for your expertise and consultation.

Erin Bardua (Director), **Tara Scott** (Musical Director), **Jodie Alcorn-Miller** (Conductor), **Andrew Alcorn** (Set Designer), **Diego Cavedon** (Costume Designer), **Matt Downey** (Projections and Lighting Consultant), **Ben B. Creelman** (Live Sound Engineer), **Riley J. Valotaire** (Technical Coordinator)

Maureen Batt (Soprano) as Caroline Herschel

Tara Scott (Piano), **Richard Belding** (Bass), **Megan Chandler** (Double Bass), **Geordie Haley** (Guitar).

Presentation by **Dr. Margaret Z. Buhariwalla**, Postdoctoral Fellow in Astronomy and Physics, Saint Mary's University.

Please visit maureenbatt.com/crossingborders for a digital program that features the libretto and artist biographies for the full team.



Crossing Borders is a concert series founded by Maureen Batt in 2015 that features contemporary music by living Canadian composers and musical artists from around the world. With themes of compassion, contemplation, beauty, loneliness, darkness, healing, and warmth, the pieces presented in this series mirror both modern societal



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views and ancient cultural contexts through the lenses of humour, hope, and nostalgia. Its mission is to celebrate new, Canadian works, while also honouring people and voices from our past, connecting the past-present-future through shifting lenses and layers. Art song is a featured genre on this recital series, but programs also often include opera, musical theatre, and electronics. Tonight's performance marks Crossing Borders' 18th world première.

Composer, singer and musicologist **Michael Donovan**'s experience as a musician encompasses a wide range of musical styles and forms of expression. Donovan's performing career as a classical singer and his PhD in deep ecology and music have informed his work as a composer. Performed vocal and chamber works include a re-writing of Schubert's *Die Winterreise Schubertnow: The Journey Outward* (2016) and *Ode to A Nightingale* (2018). Donovan's chamber opera *Memories Beyond The Grave* was premiered in Halifax in 2023 (Upstream Music Association) and remounted in 2025 and co-presented by Open Ears and NUMUS in Kitchener, Ontario. Upcoming: a world premiere of a new song cycle for 9 singers and piano titled *Songs By Animals* on poems by John Sobol, with Cecilia Concerts in 2026. Currently, Donovan is collaborating on the creation of a secular oratorio with Nova-Scotia based poet Sue Goyette. Donovan was honoured to collaborate with librettist Monica Pearce on the creation of Caroline's *Sweeper*, and excited to see it come to life at Open Waters Festival 2026.

Monica Pearce is a Canadian librettist and composer specializing in opera, chamber music and everything toy-piano-related. She was born in Prince Edward Island, Canada, began her professional career in Toronto, and is currently based in Lansing, Michigan. Monica is active as a librettist and has worked with composer Cecilia Livingston on a Dora-nominated opera on the life of Anne Frank entitled *Singing Only Softly*. Most recently, she wrote the libretto for Sophie Dupuis' opera *The House Rules of Order of Shirreff Hall: Penelope's Story*. Monica's written works have been performed by Banff, Opera Laurier, Essential Opera, Loose Tea Theatre, Bicycle Opera Project, Opera Nova Scotia, Vocalypse Productions, Caution Tape Sound Collective, and the Toy Piano Composers.

Maureen Batt, soprano, is a recording artist, artistic director, and educator. Maureen's career focuses on celebrating music by living composers through her opera company Essential Opera, her concert series Crossing Borders, and her award-winning discography which includes two-time ECMA-winning *Lighthouse* (with Grej); JUNO-nominated *Breathing in the Shadows*; *Durme, Durme: Four Ladino Folk Songs*; *Aunt Helen*; *Mirror, Mirror*; and *Lady of the Lake*. Her latest releases with Essential Opera are *Etiquette* and *December*. She has performed throughout Canada, and in the United States, Italy, and Colombia. She has a Master of Music from the University of Toronto, a Bachelor of Music from Dalhousie University, and a Bachelor of Arts in languages from St. Thomas University. She serves on the national board for the Canadian Music Centre. As an educator, Maureen specializes in embodied voice and gender affirming voice work. In her various leadership positions, she is an advocate of accessibility and inclusion.





MICHAEL CLOUD DUGUAY WITH MANY WORLDS

Sunday January 11th @ 9:00PM / Joseph Strug
Concert Hall

Michael Cloud Duguay is a Peterborough, Ontario-based musician, producer, and composer situated at a focal intersection within the national creative music landscape. Known for his prolific and far-reaching collaborative projects as well as his singular and highly innovative approach to record production on various boundary-pushing projects, Duguay also consistently records and releases albums of his own material. Rooted

in experimentalism, his work merges a unique rendering of compositional totalism, expansive sound worlds, and uninhibited genre-fluidity and frequently explores the intersections of memory, nostalgia, and location. As a producer, MCD regularly creates in unconventional recording spaces outside of traditional studio environments, often in remote settings. This has included churches, abandoned barns, lighthouses, and outdoor locations in remote regions like the Arctic Yukon, rural PEI, and Newfoundland's Fogo Island + Great Northern Peninsula. His interest in sustainable recording has resulted in four albums produced entirely with solar power. MCD is also the musical director of critically-acclaimed chamber-drone ensemble, Scions, leads the Halifax-based electroacoustic ensemble Talismanic Episode Assembly, fronts the motorik psych-rock group Valleyspeak, co-operates the independent Canadian record label, Watch That Ends The Night, and has been the recipient of dozens of national and international artist grants and residencies. Artists that MCD has worked with include: Quinton Barnes, Fittonia, The Burning Hell, Liam Cole, Many Worlds, Steven Lambke, Georges E. Sioui, Cason McHone, Jake Nicoll, Alex Lukashevsky, Kay Silver, and many more. Open Waters 2026 audiences will hear the premier of 'Song for Omar', composed while MCD was artist in residence Gamli Skóli in Hrisey, Iceland in January, 2023, arranged by Andrew MacKelvie, and performed by members of Halifax-based ensemble, Many Worlds along with Duguay and vocalist Zoe Leger. 'Song for Omar' was composed as a promise to a Hrisey local in exchange for a secret recipe and inspired by the polar stratospheric clouds filling the sky above that island.

Many Worlds is an ensemble brought together by Andrew MacKelvie. In 2012 MacKelvie was struck by a drunk driver, and the accident left him immobilized for months. The trauma of the accident led him to a persistent contemplation of the infinite possible outcomes of every moment and choice. The ensemble's name comes from the Many Worlds Theory of quantum mechanics, a splitting of reality into infinite possible outcomes. What does this mean for an improvising musician? What is free will, if from every decision every possible outcome unfolds across an infinite amount of realities, blossoming just beyond our perception? Many Worlds' compositions encourage chance, pattern, and coincidence to arise. Its improvisational philosophy is for the performer to let go and serve the composition of whatever reality they inhabit.

Andrew MacKelvie is an improviser, saxophonist, composer, and educator from

Halifax, Nova Scotia. For many years Andrew led the ambient improvised music ensemble New Hermitage. They recorded several albums and toured across the country. More recently he helped to create the band SCIONS. Their debut record, *To Cry Out in the Wilderness*, came out in 2024 to critical acclaim. They have their first European tour in the fall of 2025. Artists he has performed or recorded with include Jerry Granelli, Lido Pimienta, Aquakultre, Erin Costelo, Michael Cloud Duguay, Quinton Barnes, Major Funk, Roxy & the Underground Soul Sound, Bethany Fulde, the 6 Star Review, and many others. A brief moment, but career highlight, was improvising with Angel Bat Dawid at the inaugural EVERYSEEKER concert in Halifax, Nova Scotia. MacKelvie can be heard on ECMA winning albums by Erin Costelo and Jerry Granelli. He has garnered multiple Music Nova Scotia awards for his work as a session musician with a variety of Halifax artists across genres, including his own in the Classical Music Recording of the Year category for the record, *New Hermitage + Jeff Reilly*. He is also on the Juno nominated Jerry Granelli record, *What I Hear Now*, which featured Canadian saxophonist Mike Murley. In January 2020, Andrew was the inaugural recipient of Upstream Music Association's Paul Cram Creation Award. The award came with a commission to write for Symphony Nova Scotia. MacKelvie's piece *Treize Treize*, debuted in 2023 and was a concerto for improvising saxophone and drum kit.

Song for Omar Ensemble: **Michael Duguay** (keyboard, composer), **Andrew MacKelvie** (alto & soprano saxophones, synth arranger), **Andrew Jackson** (trombone), **Jackson Fairfax-Perry** (tenor saxophone, synth), **Tom Richards** (trombone, organ), **Ellen Gibling** (harp), **Ross Burns** (guitar, percussion), **Gabriella Ciurcovich** (bass), **Doug Cameron** (percussion), **Zoe Leger** (voice).



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In addition to gratefully acknowledging the support of the Board of Directors of Upstream Music Association, I would like to thank my friends, family and some key committed music community members who have contributed in so many ways behind the scenes to help bring the Open Waters Festival 2026 to life:

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