



presents

Iowa Composers Forum
2025 New Music Festival

Daniel Swilley, Director

Back to the Bass Licks

Paul Dice

Mac Brandt and Vincent Valadez, double bass

Operative MS39

Daniel Swilley

Matt Andreini, marimba

Palace of the Winds: 2. Euros: Bringer of Autumn

Robert Martin

Northern Iowa Flute Choir

Aspen Armstrong, Kai Eilers, Aldo Escalera, Katie Flaherty, Hannah LaCroix, Caleb Little,
Erika Meredith, Caitlyn Nemechek, Grace O'Keefe, Janie Owens, Bethany Peck, Annika
Poeppe, Emerson Reimer, Sadie Ryan, Jennifer Valenzuela, Bethany Winget, Brooke Yulga,
flutes

Abigail Wendland, conductor

In Memoriam: Sacajawea

Greg A Steinke

Violette Quartet

Aldo Escalera, Hannah LaCroix, Jennifer Valenzuela, Bethany Winget, flutes

The Soul of Spring

Timothy Laubach

The Calzones

Emily Paul, flute; Rhys Little, oboe; Abby Voshell, clarinet; Kate VanGorp, bassoon;
Patrick Mooney, horn

Davis Hall, at Noon

Saturday, October 11, 2025

2025: Grief-Hope

Michael Kimber

Michael Kimber, viola

Bell and Whistle

Denise Knaack

Brett Copeland, tuba; Hannah Porter Occeña, flute

Alaskan Tableaux

Greg A Steinke

Bells Brass

Dora Roorda, trumpet; Abigail Holschlag, trumpet; JD Denniger, horn; Jackson Elliott, trombone; Aidan Anderson, tuba

Intermission

Ingrained

Jonathan Wilson and Esther Lamneck

Esther Lamneck, taragato

Palindrome of Loss

Peter Olaf Swanson

Peter Olaf Swanson, cello

*Cowboy Jesse James**

Max Stalder

Lisa Neher, Mezzo-soprano

Prairie Memory

Jonah Elrod

She Conjures

Lisa Neher

Jessica Saunders, voice; Minji Kwon, piano

The Raven

Timothy Laubach

Tyler Walker, soprano sax; Benjamin Ruiz, percussion;
Esdras Mejia Par and Timothy Laubach, piano

* - Winner of the ICF 2025 Student Composers Competition, middle school division

Davis Hall, at Noon

Saturday, October 11, 2025

Bios and Program Notes:

Paul Dice

Back to Bass Licks for double bass duo

Biography: Paul Dice studied composition at the Boston Conservatory with Joel Kabakov, privately with John Clement Adams, and with Lou Harrison in California and Florida. He has composed for Western symphonies, chamber ensembles and soloists; Chinese, Japanese, Javanese and Philippine instruments; metal sculpture, and a host of other instruments. His music is primarily inspired by movement and sounds found in nature, and techniques and practices used in other art forms or cultural traditions that he adapts for use in his own music. Having been performed in China, Vietnam, Russia, Australia, Europe, and the U.S., his music has been awarded with a Dunhuang Cup (China), a Silver Medal from the Global Music Awards, numerous grants and commissions, being shortlisted for the 2022 Red Jasper Awards; and performances at the Beijing Modern Music Festival, Carolina Chamber and TUTTI festivals and numerous arts centers, conservatories, universities and other venues throughout the world.

Program notes: Paul Dice spent his late teens and early twenties playing bass guitar in rock and jazz bands across the U.S. In the 1980s, he became fascinated by the expressive nature of the guqin, an ancient seven-string Chinese zither known for its subtle tonal nuances and wide range of techniques. He began studying guqin scores and recordings and soon incorporated the instrument into his compositions for Chinese music ensembles. *Back to the Bass Licks* blends melodic grooves from Dice's bass guitar background with his favorite guqin passages. In this version for two double basses, the instruments expand on both guqin and bass ideas, often trading roles as Dice explores ways to merge the distinct musical worlds. The guqin and bass version of *Back to the Bass Licks* won a Dunhuang Cup and premiered at a national guqin conference in Nanchang, China, in 2016. It was also performed at the 2017 Beijing Modern Music Festival. Both the score and a performance video were published by the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing.

Jonah Elrod

Prairie Memory for stereo fixed media

Biography: Dr. Jonah Elrod is a composer whose works are inspired by and engage with issues surrounding our environment and human perception of the natural world. He often utilizes data collected from cycles and signals from the earth and incorporates them into his music. His music has been performed at many new music festivals including the Society of Composers, Inc. National Conference, CAMPGround23 International New Music Festival, the Hot Air Music Festival, the Texas New Music Festival, the John Donald Robb Composers Symposium, the ABME International Conference, the New Music on the Bayou Festival, Click Fest at Ohio University, the Central Washington University New Music Festival, the TUTTI Festival, the New Music Gathering, and the New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival. In August of 2025 he will begin serving as an Assistant Professor of Music at Grand Rapids Community College. <https://www.jonahelrod.com/>

Program notes: This piece is a 10-minute concert version of a multimedia installation created in the summer of 2019. The installation was portable and placed in a variety of spaces. Buildings and other man-made structures now occupy areas that used to be prairie. This installation was meant to bring prairie sounds back to spaces where they have been absent for a long time. The original installation was performed at Luther College in a large stairwell in the Main Building, a large hallway inside the Regents Center, inside the Center for Fine Arts, and finally returned to the tall grasses located at Bentsdahl Commons.

Michael Kimber

2025: Grief/Hope/Resolve for solo viola

Biography: Michael Kimber has performed worldwide as a violist with the Atlanta Virtuosi, the Kronos Quartet, and other ensembles. Residing in Iowa City since 2004, he performed with Orchestra Iowa for twenty seasons and taught viola at Coe College for fifteen years. Previously he taught at the University of Kansas and the University of Southern Mississippi. His compositions have been commissioned and performed by the American Viola Society, Red Cedar Chamber Music, the Iowa City Community String Orchestra, and numerous others. His *Vanishing Woods* was premiered at Carnegie Hall. Vox Novus has twice selected his music for “Fifteen Minutes of Fame.” Polish violist Marcin Murawski has recorded seven CDs of Kimber’s music. His *Traveling Music* has been the theme music for Iowa Public Radio’s “Symphonies of Iowa” broadcasts since 2006. Kimber’s honors include the American Viola Society’s Founders Award and the International Viola Society’s prestigious Silver Alto Clef.

Program notes: During the pandemic I composed a solo viola work, *2020*, to express my emotions during that time. *2025* is an adaptation of that work. Both are intended to convey feelings of grief and hope. *2020* ended triumphantly; *2025* does not—yet

Denise Knaack

Bell and Whistle for flute and tuba

Biography: Denise Knaack earned her BA with majors in Music Education and Speech Communications from Simpson College and a MS Ed from Buena Vista University. She taught music in public schools for 25 years. Her assignments over the years included K-12 vocal music and beginning band, High School English and coaching speech. Denise is also a church pianist, organist and choir director. Knaack has a long history with the Forum as a public school music teacher. She had a strong commitment to including composition in the elementary general music curriculum. She began entering students in the ICF Student Composition Contest in 1994. In 2004 Knaack presented her elementary composition unit at the annual Forum festival. Knaack retired from teaching in 2008. From 2011- 2015 and 2019 – present Knaack served as the coordinator for the ICF Student Composition Contest. As a composer she focuses on music that is accessible to developing musicians.

Program Notes: The idea for *Bell and Whistle* came from a play on words of the familiar phrase “All the bells and whistles.” Rather than all of them, this piece has one of each: the flute being a sophisticated whistle and the tuba having the largest bell in the instrument world. What ensues is

a friendly competition between the two using counter melodies and call and response. The piece is written with the skill set of developing musicians.

Timothy Laubach

The Raven for soprano sax, percussion, and piano

Biography: Timothy Laubach is a sophomore Music Education student at Morningside University in Sioux City, Iowa. He went to Linn-mar High School for four years and graduated in 2024. There he was a big contributor to their band program in which he was a drum major for two years, and participated in their top band and jazz band, playing Horn and Trumpet. He was also very involved with the choir program. He was an All-State vocalist for two years and a participant in the varsity show choir and top choir for two years. Currently at Morningside University, he is in the Wind Ensemble, the Morningside Choir, and Morningside's chapter of the Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity, in which he serves as choral master.

Program notes: "The Raven" is a solo for soprano saxophone accompanied by piano and crotales/glockenspiel. It is inspired by Edgar Allen Poe's poem of the same name. The piano and the soprano saxophone represent the narrator's emotions mainly, and the crotales/glockenspiel take a main part in representing the raven itself. Towards the beginning of the piece, a mysterious feeling is felt as the raven is introduced. While the main themes cater to the two main subjects of the poem, "Lenore" has a slow and beautiful theme towards the middle of the piece. Towards the end, the narrator's rage is illustrated by an accented dotted rhythm in the piano. To wrap the piece up, the crotales, piano, and saxophone trade a grace note rhythm, representing the last line of the poem: "Nevermore!". Timothy wants to especially thank Dr. Walker for practicing diligently to play this piece. He hopes you enjoy "The Raven."

Robert Martin

Palace of the Winds: 2. Euros: Bringer of Autumn for flute ensemble

Biography: Robert J. Martin studied composition with Herbert Brun. His interests in composition and creativity resulted in completing an interdisciplinary doctoral thesis under Herbert Brun and Heinz von Foerster at the University of Illinois. Martin is an active composer; recent projects include *Homage a' Tom et Jerry* written for Ronda Bensen Ford, *The Owl and the Pussycat* for flute and harp, and *One Hundred Pieces in One Hundred Minutes: Homage to Hokusai's Mt. Fuji* for piano. Martin is also active in musical theatre and has been a principal in musicals staged by Carousel Productions and has also appeared with Maples Repertory Theatre. He is currently on the faculty at Truman State University and is a member of the Society of Composers, American Psychological Association, Iowa Composers Forum, and American Society for Cybernetics.

Program notes: *Palace of the Winds* is a musical representation of the gods of the four winds as they bring about each of the four seasons. This representation is in four movements: *1. Notus, Bringer of Summer*, *2. Euros, Bringer of Autumn*, *3 Boreas, Icy Bringer of Winter*, and *4 Zephurus, Bringer of Spring*. The piece begins with Summer and end with Spring so that the most playful and energetic movement can be last.

Lisa Neher

She Conjures for mezzo-soprano and piano

Biography: Dr. Lisa Neher (b. 1985, she/her, “NEER”) is an award-winning composer and new music mezzo on a mission to transform audiences through sound, story, and vulnerability. Described as a “supremely talented,” “visionary composer” (Willamette Week), “maestro of beautifully wacky noises” (Oregon ArtsWatch) and author of “liquid, impressionist piano writing and fluent melding” of voices (New York Classical Review), Neher’s compositions are inspired by the climate crisis, the tender love of family and friends, and the eerie mystery of deep ocean life. She has been commissioned and performed by the National Association of Teachers of Singing, Cincinnati Song Initiative, Third Angle New Music, FearNoMusic, Dinosaur Annex, New Opera West, Mirror Visions Ensemble, Alma Ensemble, Opera Elect, and Opera Santa Barbara, among others. Her awards include the LunART Competition, Flute New Music Consortium Competition, ICDA/ICF Choral Competition, Mirror Visions Ensemble Young Composer Competition and the Celebris Ensemble Choral Competition.

www.lisanehermusic.com.

Program notes: *she conjures* places us in 1666 in North Berwick, Scotland. Grissall’s mother has been burned for witchcraft and a mysterious spell of endless snow has fallen upon the land. With the help of her mother’s feathered familiar, Caraid, Grissall seeks answers and justice, with the help of a little magic of her own. This feminist tale of witches, crows, curses, revenge, and redemption is infused with Scottish folk music elements. With a dramatic libretto by Bea Goodwin, the work can be performed in concert as a song cycle or staged as an operatic scene. *she conjures* was commissioned by Catalyst New Music for their Fuse: Collaborations in Song project and premiered by Claire McCahan, mezzo-soprano, and Brendon Shapiro, piano in February, 2023. The version with alto flute was premiered in October 2023 by Evergreen & Oak Trio.

Max Stalder

Cowboy Jesse James

(Winner of the ICF 2025 Student Composers Competition, middle school division)

Program notes: This piece is about Jesse James, and American outlaw who was responsible for the train robbery in the American West. This piece is about his journey chasing, robbing, and fleeing from a moving train.

Greg A Steinke

In Memoriam: Sacajawea for flute quartet

Biography: Dr. Greg A Steinke is retired, former Joseph Naumes Endowed Chair of Music/Art and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Marylhurst University, Marylhurst, Oregon; Associate Director, Ernest Bloch Music Festival (‘93–97) and Director, Composers Symposium (‘90–97) (Newport, OR); served as the National Chairman of the Society of Composers, Inc. (1988–97). Currently an Independent Composer of chamber and symphonic music and author with published/recorded works and performances across the U. S. and internationally; speaker on interdisciplinary arts, and oboist specializing in contemporary music. Dr. Steinke is a past

national president of NACUSA (2012-19) and also currently serves on the NACUSA Cascadia, NACUSAor, NACUSAsf and NACUSA LA Chapter Boards.

Program notes: *IN MEMORIAM - Sacagawea* is a moving, elegaic tribute to Sacagawea, the brave Indian woman who led Lewis and Clark on their trek to the Pacific. It is a movement taken and arranged from the composer's *Wind River Country* for Woodwind Quintet, which is based on scenes in early Wyoming. Native American songs freely mix with composed material to provide a musical mosaic.

Peter Olaf Swanson

Palindrome of Loss for solo cello

Peter Olaf Swanson is a cellist, composer, and conductor based in the greater Kansas City area. He is currently Assistant Professor of Music at Benedictine College, where he teaches theory, history, strings, composition, and conducts the orchestra. His music has been heard at festivals across the United States and has received multiple awards and distinctions in both the United States and Canada. Recent highlights include multiple premieres of new chamber works in April 2025, and selections for the Festival of Contemporary Artists and Musicians in Washington and New Music on the Bayou in Louisiana. He studied with Brooke Joyce, Steve Smith, Robert Gibson, and Alejandro Ruty. He performs with innovative new music ensemble Catchfire Collective and with pianist Meagan Lacher as Duo 336. For more information, visit his website at peterolafswanson.com.

Palindrome of Loss, Op. 29 was written in the winter of 2024-25 and premiered by the composer in April of 2025 in Kansas. As the name implies, the piece is written as an exact palindrome, with all aspects of the music being identical backwards and forwards. The music goes through many moments of sudden change and searching before arriving at a short section in the middle where the notion of loss is most deeply experienced.

Daniel Swilley

Operative MS39 for marimba and stereo fixed media

Biography: Daniel Swilley (b. 1980) is a German-American composer of acoustic and electroacoustic music. His music and research have been presented at festivals and conferences such as June in Buffalo, SEAMUS, Toronto Electroacoustic Symposium, Understanding Visual Music Symposium, NoiseFloor, New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival, Electronic Music Midwest, Studio 300, Audiograft, Electroacoustic Juke Joint, College Music Society, as well as Society of Composer's Inc. Swilley holds degrees in composition from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (DMA), Georgia State University (MM), and Valdosta State University (BM). His primary composition teachers have included Heinrich Taube, Sever Tipei, Robert Scott Thompson, and Scott Wyatt. Swilley is an Assistant Professor of Music (Composition, Theory, and Technology) at the University of Northern Iowa.

Program notes: *Operative MS39* (2024), for marimba and stereo electronics, was composed for percussionist Matt Andreini. The work began as an experiment with patterns and magic squares and pairing the generated materials with glitchy electronic sounds - sounds that make me think of

robots, modems, and wire-taps, etc. The goal became to tease at the image of a robot spy - operative from an intelligence agency's robot division. The "MS39" in the title makes reference to the magic square manipulations. The magic sum (MS) of the square I worked with is 39. *Operative MS39* is a continuation of the composer's work into computer-assisted algorithmic composition and the use of simultaneous compositional methodologies within a work. The piece makes use of several approaches to isorhythm, rhythm fractioning (Schillinger), set theory, interval cycles, serial processes (rotation), and sonification. The piece was composed with the aid of the software Supercollider and Max.

Jonathan Wilson and Esther Lamneck

Ingrained for taragato and stereo fixed media

Biography: **Dr. Jonathan Wilson's** works have been performed at the Ann Arbor Film Festival, European Media Art Festival, the Experimental Superstars Film Festival, the Big Muddy Film Festival, ICMC, SICMF, SEAMUS, NYCEMF, NSEME, Napoleon Electronic Music Festival, Iowa Music Teachers Association State Conference, and Midwest Composers Symposium. He is the winner of the 2014 Iowa Music Teachers Association Composition Competition. Jonathan has studied composition with Lawrence Fritts, Josh Levine, David Gompper, James Romig, James Caldwell, Paul Paccione, and John Cooper. In addition, studies in conducting have been taken under Richard Hughey and Mike Fansler. Jonathan is a member of Society of Composers, Inc., SEAMUS, ICMA, Iowa Composers Forum, and American Composers Forum.

Biography: The New York Times calls **Esther Lamneck**, "an astonishing virtuoso". She has appeared as a soloist with major orchestras, with conductors such as Pierre Boulez, with renowned chamber music artists and an international roster of new music improvisers. A versatile performer and an advocate of contemporary music, she is known for her work with electronic media including interactive arts, movement, dance and improvisation. Dr. Lamneck served for more than three decades, as full professor at NYU, Steinhardt and artistic director of the NYUNME. She appears at music festivals worldwide. Her albums feature improvisation and electronic music and include "Cigar Smoke"; "Tárogató "; "Winds Of The Heart"; "Genoa Sound Cards"; "Stato Liquido"; "Trasfigurazioni"; "Sky Rings"; "Small Parts of a Garden"; "Tarogato Reflections" ; etc. Computer Music Journal calls her "The consummate improvisor." New York Music Daily, "Surrealistically Captivating.."; "Esther Lamneck has fascinating chops and ideas" jazz- [weekly.com](http://www.weekly.com); <http://www.estherlamneck.com/>

Program notes: "Ingrained" is a collaborative work with Esther Lamneck that refers to the formation of a part of the essence of the inmost being, which is reflected in the nature of the composition itself and "ingrained" in the tárogató, the principal sound source of this work. The sonic environment of this composition arises from the performer's improvisation with the electronics. The performer's sounds are captured by the computer and transformed through granular synthesis by capturing typically 5-6 seconds of audio from the microphone. The grains in these buffers are a part of the essence of the musical instrument, and multiple aspects of those grains can be manipulated in real time. Throughout the composition, the technician records and transforms more of the performer's sounds. These electronics complement the fixed media, which is based on prior recordings of the performer's improvisations, which were transformed through granular synthesis.

The Iowa Composers Forum (ICF) was founded in March of 1987 in Des Moines, IA by seven composers who wished to create an environment for the performance and dissemination of music composed by Iowans. Over the intervening years, The ICF has presented more than 100 concerts and tour recitals of works by member composers. These concerts have featured the performances of over 800 works of new music, including works by student composers from the elementary, middle, high school, and collegiate level. The ICF has commissioned many new works, both unilaterally and in partnership with other organizations such as the Iowa Music Teachers Association and the Iowa Choral Directors Association. The ICF sponsors its own annual student composition competition, open to students studying at the collegiate level and earlier.