

UPCOMING EVENTS

ANTHONY WILLIAMS, TROMBONE
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 AT 7:30 P.M.
BENGTSON AUDITORIUM, RUSSELL HALL

SCHOOL OF MUSIC WELCOME EVENT
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 AT 6 P.M.
RUSSELL HALL

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AVAILABLE ONLINE AT [MUSIC.UNI.EDU/EVENTS](https://music.uni.edu/events).

In consideration of the performers and other members of the audience, please enter or leave a performance at the end of a composition. Cameras and recording equipment are **not permitted**. Please turn off all electronic devices, and be sure that all emergency contact cell phones and pagers are set to silent or vibrate. In the event of an emergency, please use the exit nearest to you. Please contact the usher staff if you need assistance.

This event is **free** to all UNI students, courtesy of the Panther Pass Program.

The University of Northern Iowa honors the ancestral stewards of the land on which our university rests. Through the work we do every day to live our mission, the University of Northern Iowa aspires for you to see a community that: honors Native and Indigenous People and culture, lives the 7th Generation Principle, does good for the people and communities we serve, and embraces stewardship of our mission and land. Please see our full stewardship statement at president.uni.edu/stewardship-statement.

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SCHOOL OF MUSIC

NICK MAY, SAXOPHONE

WITH
ALEX LI, PIANO

PROGRAM

- White Socks?!* Sebastian Zhang
(b. 2003)
- on queer survival* Stuart Beatch
(b. 1991)
- Silence Still = Death* Nathan Froebe
(b. 1983)
- Where Will My Flowers Go?* Darius D. Edwards
(b. 1999)
- Echo Dash* Jennifer Higdon
(b. 1962)
- Anders als die Andern* Ingrid Stölzel
(b. 1971)
- You, Me, Us* Spencer Arias
(b. 1990)
You Broke My Heart
You Taught Me How to Fly
You + Me = Us

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Saxophonist **Nick May** is sought after as "a highly expressive, virtuosic, and fresh performer" (David Del Tredici, Pulitzer Prize and Grammy-winning composer) that "brings his personality to every performance - full of genuine joie de vivre!" (Javier Oviedo, Classical Saxophone Project). Since his solo debut at the age of eighteen with the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra, May's career has taken him throughout the United States, Singapore, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, appearing recurrently as a guest artist and recitalist. Additionally, May has garnered prizes at many prestigious national and international competitions with recent Carnegie Hall performances.

He has performed as a soloist and been featured with numerous ensembles, including the Arapahoe Philharmonic Orchestra, Omaha Symphony Orchestra, Lincoln Symphony Orchestra, Tallgrass Chamber Choir, Classical Saxophone Project, Mid-America Freedom Band, Baker University Jazz Combo and Big Band, Kansas Wesleyan University Wind Ensemble, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Orchestra, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Wind Ensemble.

May has premiered works and collaborated with today's most eminent and emerging composers including Kevin Day, Jennifer Higdon, Kenneth Fuchs, Tyler Harrison, Peter Dayton, Ingrid Stölzel, Spencer Arias, Nathan Froebe, Zachery S. Meier, Kurt Knecht, Evan Boegehold, John Kosch, Christina Ensign, David von Kampen, Suhan Tuyliyev, Iván Enrique Rodríguez, Peter Dayton, Xenia St. Charles Iris Llyllyth, Aaryn S. Ricucci-Hill, Trey Makler, Zoë Wallace among others while advocating for contemporary music.

As a chamber musician, Nick is a founding member of Latitude 39, a dynamic and innovative trio with violinist Diana Seitz and pianist Maya Tuylieva that fuses their diverse cultural backgrounds and influences through musical programming.

He released his debut album in 2019 under Albany Records - *Tone Studies: the Saxophone Music of David Maslanka*; is also featured on *The Chamber Music of David von Kampen* and the University of Nebraska - Lincoln Jazz Orchestra's album, *The Good Life*. Additionally, he is the founder of the I Exist Project, which aims to advocate for, bring light to, and celebrate the multifaceted aspects of queer life, culture, and artistry through the collaboration with a

diverse range of queer composers and performers to promote the creation and visibility of new queer repertoire.

May has given masterclasses, guest performances, and been an artist in residency at many of the nation's elite conservatories and universities including the Manhattan School of Music, University of California-Davis, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Denison University, the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the University of Arizona, among others, while teaching at Baker University and the Music Academy of Kansas City. He holds degrees from the University of Nebraska -Lincoln (B.M.) and the University of Kansas (M.M.).

Nick May is an endorsing artist for Key Leaves and Légère Reeds.

www.nickmaysax.com

Born and raised in Hong Kong, **Alex Li** now enjoys a dynamic career as a pianist based in Kansas City. Finding common grounds to bridge music of different composers to different audiences is one of his most valued career foci. To this end, he is particularly interested in the works of under-represented composers and augmenting musical communication through multimedia presentation, including words, pictures, diagrams, and videos.

As a pianist, Alex is equally inclined towards solo and collaborative piano music. He recently completed two Master's degrees at the University of Missouri, Kansas City (UMKC), one in the field of solo piano under the tutelage of Prof. Thomas Rosenkranz, and the other in collaborative piano with Prof. Karen Savage. He is now working with Prof. Jeffrey Savage to pursue a Doctor in Musical Arts (DMA) degree in Piano Performance at UMKC. Previously, his undergraduate work was completed at Hong Kong Baptist University, where Dr. Mary Wu and Prof. David Chung taught him piano and harpsichord. He also became a recording technician after studying with Prof. Christopher Keyes.

In the field of collaborative piano, Alex frequently works with singers of all levels, having served as staff accompanist at Johnson County Community College from 2018–21 and continuing as a graduate assistant in collaborative piano (vocal) at UMKC. He is equally active in collaborating with instrumentalists, with most experience working with strings and woodwinds players.

Outside of the realm of music, Alex still enjoys Mathematics, sudokus, coding, crafting, designing, writing, teaching and learning languages.

I EXIST PROJECT

The I Exist Project amplifies the richness and diversity of queer life, culture, and artistry by partnering with a broad spectrum of talented queer composers and performers. Our mission is to inspire the creation and promotion of innovative queer repertoire that celebrates the unique experiences and voices within our community, fostering greater understanding, connection, and visibility for all.

Current collaborators comprise of emerging and leading creators of our time, with diverse queer identities and backgrounds include: Spencer Arias, Stuart Beatch, Evan Boegehold, Kevin Day, Peter Dayton, Claire Eckstein, Darius Edwards, Nathan Froebe, Keaton Garrett, Scott Hansen, Tyler Harrison, Jennifer Higdon, Kevin Kay, Xenia St. Charles Iris Llyllyth, Trey Makler, Zachery Meier, Nebal Maysaud, Aaryn S. Ricucci-Hill, Iván Rodríguez, Ingrid Stölzel, Zoe Wallace, Sebastian Zhang, and more.

In the face of recent heart-wrenching acts of targeted violence, ongoing attempts by legislatures to undermine queer rights, and the continued dehumanization endured by transgender folx, the pursuit of this project becomes even more essential. It stands as a resolute testament to the strength and unity of our community, boldly asserting that our existence will not be diminished or silenced.

Through the creation and promotion of queer music and art, we unleash the powerful resonance of our voices, aiming to ignite profound and lasting change within society. By showcasing the vibrant tapestry of queer artistic expressions, we transcend barriers and defy attempts to marginalize us. We firmly believe in the extraordinary capacity of art, in all its boundless forms, to challenge societal norms, evoke empathy, and stimulate meaningful conversations that bring about transformative shifts. By advocating for the recognition and appreciation of queer culture, we strive to foster a world where acceptance, equality, and understanding prevail.

www.iexistproject.org

PROGRAM NOTES

Sebastian Zhang – *White Socks?!*

I'm a trans guy. When I was in high school, I wore a tuxedo for the first time in a concert my junior year. Throughout my younger years, I had a lot of people make disparaging comments towards me, regarding what I was doing—everything from my hair to my instrument to the way that I stood while quietly listening, to the fact that I was wearing the "wrong" clothes.

So I sat there, nervously putting on tuxedo shoes in the percussion room of my high school. I sat there, and my new band director walks by me, and glares at me, and exclaims "Seriously?!", and I felt the familiar dread of looking at the now and the future of my life and seeing nothing but question marks and strangers' faces jeering and I think that everything is over, everything is so utterly over, that the path I so eagerly wanted to forge in music was not possible now and never was, and never will be.

So I look up to face my doom, and I hear: "...COME ON, WHITE SOCKS?!" And then everything was going to be okay.

That band director was one of the most supportive teachers I had in high school. Supportive teachers are so important for queer kids, especially those who lack a support system. I hope that all of you—teachers, friends, strangers—all realize how important this is—to look beyond stereotypes, to see someone that is different but not wrong; that the word "normal" can be diverse.

Stuart Beatch – *on queer survival*

When Nick first approached me about writing a piece for the I Exist Project, I wanted to address the struggles faced by the queer community, while also celebrating our strength and resilience. *on queer survival* opens with a gentle melody which is gradually fragmented and transformed, weaving between different moods and colours with hypnotic repetition. At the centre of the piece is an aggressive outburst, depicting the violence faced by our community daily across the globe. As the

music settles, it begins to retrace its steps before emerging confident and settled. The opening melody returns one final time before fading away unresolved—as we remember all those who haven't survived.

Nathan Froebe – *Silence Still = Death*

In 1987, the Silence = Death Project created a now iconic political poster as a symbol of public awareness and resistance to government inaction about the HIV/AIDS crisis. The poster itself is a solid black background, with a pink triangle in the middle and the words SILENCE = DEATH capitalized in white at the bottom. This abstract image was purposely chosen over photographic or realistic representations to be as inclusionary as possible. The pink triangle was a symbol that the 1970's gay liberation movement had reappropriated from its use in Nazi Germany, where it was formerly as a defamatory mark used to identify and persecute homosexuals. For the 30th anniversary of the poster, an installation was created for the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, adding the words "Be Vigilant. Refuse. Resist."

I chose to title this work *Silence Still = Death* as means of embracing the original message of the poster while expanding on its inclusionary imagery. In 2023, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is still ongoing, and while it is no longer a death sentence, it still remains an underserved and underrepresented medical emergency spanning all communities worldwide. Additionally, marginalized groups at large are facing increased amounts of backlash to our social progress and acceptance, where oppressors are working to silence our voices in any way they can. These efforts are thinly veiled attempts at wanting to erase our presence, and thus existence. Ultimately, this means they want us dead, as it would be the only way to truly achieve their nefarious goal.

The piece itself moves through four main sections. It begins with a heartbeat motif that remains throughout the work, with the first section being calm yet passionate and featuring the work's singular melodic theme. The second section becomes more energized, balancing beauty with vigilant resistance. The third section becomes frenetic, with the heartbeat motif growing increasingly unstable until at its climax, it falters. The final section

is brief, slow, and disjointed, as both the heartbeat and melodic theme fall apart. Of special note, the tempi for each section, and thus the heartbeat motif, is tied to various human heart rates: resting, excited, dangerously high, and dangerously low.

Darius D. Edwards – *Where Will My Flowers Go?*

Where Will My Flowers Go? revolves around the theme of unrequited love and all the emotional turmoil that comes with it. It is also a love letter to my dearest self and a reminder that no matter what, I am deserving of love and kindness.

The inspiration behind this piece includes Whitney Houston's music, particularly *Greatest Love of All*, and an original poem, included below. I've always admired the sheer power of Whitney's voice and her effortless ability to sustain notes at the top of her range

Where will my flowers go?

To grow
To bloom

To dance
To sing

To wilt
To die

To You?
To Me.

Jennifer Hidgon – *Echo Dash*

Echo Dash, is a mad race through a land of echoing shadows....a tight run through a close maze of notes, with the lead shifting quickly between the saxophone and the piano, racing forward and always on the verge of crashing.

Ingrid Stölzel – *Anders als die Andern*

Anders als die Andern (*Different from the Others*) was inspired by the eponymous 1919 German silent movie. This film is considered the first explicitly queer full-length feature film. One of its powerful messages is an appeal to end judicial and societal persecution. This message from over 100 years ago is utterly contemporary, especially considering the current rise of conservative lawmakers around the United States pushing anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. The scenes I selected from the full-length movie center on how these laws affect the lives and livelihoods of the LGBTQ+ community and how they are a contributing factor in the high suicide rate amongst its members. This piece was commissioned by Nicholas May for the I Exist Project.

CONTENT WARNING: The film and narrative discusses suicide.

SCENES FROM THE MOVIE (NARRATIVE SUMMARY):

The film opens with famous violinist Paul Körner reading obituaries in the newspaper. He becomes visibly upset. He knows that many of the men took their lives because of the German law known as Paragraph 175, a law which stated that "an unnatural sex act committed between persons of the male sex is punishable by imprisonment." In his mind's eye he sees a procession of famous people from history who suffered a similar fate: Peter Tchaikovsky, Leonardo da Vinci, Oscar Wilde and others.

Paul Körner falls in love with Kurt Sivers and the two men are shown walking arm in arm in a public park. While walking together, they pass a man, Franz Bollek who recognizes Körner. Later that day, Bollek confronts him and demands money or else he will expose Sivers.

Körner pays him and keeps it a secret from Sivers. Eventually the blackmailer's demands become too great and Körner refuses to pay. He reports Bollek for blackmail and has him arrested. In retaliation, Bollek exposes Körner. The judge is sympathetic to Körner and gives him the minimum sentence of one week in prison.

Allowed to go home before starting his term, Körner finds himself shunned by friends and family, and no longer employable. His concert agency drops him. He again sees in his mind's eye the procession of individuals throughout history, and this time he joins the line-up as its last member. He then takes pills and dies of suicide.

Kurt Sivers rushes to Paul's side as he lies dead. Devastated Kurt wants to take his own life. A doctor (a character in the full version of the movie) prevents this and delivers the final powerful message of the movie: You have to keep living; live to change the prejudices by which this man has been made one of the countless victims. You must bring justice to him, and all those who came before him, and all those to come after him. Justice through knowledge!

Spencer Arias – *You, Me, Us*

You, Me, Us was written after getting my heart broken from now one of my best friends. I had envisioned a future with him, and I was doing all of this while concluding that my long-term partner, who had moved to Sweden, was also not the right person for me anymore. Completed in my last summer trip to Sweden before the big break up, and right after this smaller realignment, I realize now that this piece was not so specifically about these people. These relationships, and even the smaller ones that have happened since have led me to realize that this piece is about getting over someone.

You Broke My Heart and are angry, which leads to a somewhat sad acceptance. You aren't quite ready to move on, and you get glimpses of sadness, but it ultimately starts to fade, like the memory of a dream.

You Taught Me How to Fly, which is uplifting because while the thought of this person is painful, you remember just all you learned from this person. Maybe they didn't even teach you, but you grew because the experience still impacted you. We always have looked forward. We traveled the world together, and even through some relationship troubles and growing pains, we always came back together and celebrated the good times between us.

Finally, *You + Me = Us* explores the idea that you have the opportunity of a lifetime to connect with another human. While it did not work out as you might have intended, you got to enjoy the time you did have together. At least from my perspective, I would much rather remember the good parts of the relationship and remind myself that the reasons you did not work out do not necessarily make that person a bad person (of course, there are exceptions). I fall fast and hard, but I am somewhat picky with who I give my heart. All these people helped me grow and become a better person, love myself, and communicate better. They have taught me how to be the best me I can be. This piece means so much to me because it brought me to many of these realizations but also led me to love people in many different ways. Learn from these experiences. Live a life full of love. Love does not need to be romantic. Love can be between friends, family, or even yourself. There is no wrong way to love.

