

DEPARTMENT OF
MUSIC
AT PRINCETON



Tuesday, March 7, 2023, 8:00 PM
Taplin Auditorium, Fine Hall

Princeton Sound Kitchen presents

~Nois

Saxophone quartet **~Nois** performs new works by Princeton University graduate student composers **Francisco del Pino, Kennedy Taylor Dixon, Bobby Ge, Travis Laplante, Lucy McKnight, Christian Quiñones,** and **Nathan Schram.**

The use of photographic, video, or audio equipment is strictly prohibited. Please turn off or mute electronic devices for the duration of the performance. **For more information about the Department of Music and other upcoming events, and to sign-up for our mailing list, please visit music.princeton.edu.**

PROGRAM

Bobby Ge	<i>To Speak As One</i>
Lucy McKnight	<i>insides out</i>
kennedy taylor dixon	<i>they can finally breathe</i>
Christian Quiñones	<i>High Tide</i>

INTERMISSION

Nathan Schram	<i>While Babies Sleep</i>
Francisco del Pino	<i>Invisible</i>
Travis Laplante	<i>Running in a Field of Flowers</i>

PERFORMERS

~Nois:

Julian Velasco, soprano saxophone

Hunter Bockes, alto saxophone

Jordan Lulloff, tenor saxophone

János Csontos, baritone saxophone

with

Francisco del Pino, electric guitar

PROGRAM NOTES

Bobby Ge

To Speak As One

The more people I've spoken with, the more I have come to cherish moments of shared understanding. For me, language often feels rather insufficient as a means of expressing thought, like trying to portray a three-dimensional image on a flat surface. Understanding someone's words is a delicate process of reconstructing the ineffable depth and interiority of their thoughts, and quite frequently, much is lost in translation.

These ideas provided the seed for *To Speak As One*. To me, the saxophone quartet as an ensemble naturally contends with such questions of mutual understanding and communication. It is conversational in scale; its instruments share much in common both registrally and timbrally; virtually any technique that can be done on one instrument can be done on any other. The result is a collection of instruments that very easily behaves as a hyperinstrument, able to blend and move with uncommon unity.

Over the course of the piece, I sought to shift throughout between treating the quartet as a singular entity versus four unique players. The resulting work scatters its lines across the group, assigning disparate notes and rhythms to each musician as they discover the composite together. Players enter and peel off constantly, and even in moments of stasis, there is an element of confusion; it's not always clear which instrument is playing which sounds. Even with all its raucous sounds and lurching instability, though, *To Speak As One* is intended to be an intimate piece, ultimately focusing on how a small ensemble—with all their cuing, breathing, and eye contact—can discover ways to communicate nonverbally with one another.

Lucy McKnight

insides out

kiss on my morning mouth
ice cream scoop my insides out
tingles and tangles, i've lost a bunch of time
you're gone
i'm fine

kennedy taylor dixon

they can finally breathe

- i. before
- ii. after

they can finally breathe (2023) serves as a reminder to simply close your eyes, take a breath, do a little dance, and remind yourself that everything will work itself out in time.

Christian Quiñones

High Tide

Conceptual ideas tend to be an integral part of the way I write music. Usually, I have a conceptual framework before I start writing music, and this piece is a direct response to that, or rather a much-needed departure from working on pieces with a heavier subject matter. For the first time in years, I wrote this piece thinking about sensations.

I grew up near the beach and one of my favorite things to do as a kid was to submerge myself and feel the power of the waves or how the tide changed over time. These memories go from the extreme calmness of being underwater to the sensation of trying to swim against the current, to the fear I felt at a time when I got caught up by a powerful series of waves and for the first time I thought I might drown. All of these emotional and visceral memories seem to have left a very tactile memory in me which still feels very present and all of them seemed to have made their way into this piece.

INTERMISSION

Nathan Schram*While Babies Sleep*

This piece came about while my family was asleep and a brief energetic thought entered my mind. I jumped out of bed and quietly performed the piece as a voice memo on my phone. The tremendous performers of ~Nois bring the sounds to life like gentle monsters on a deserted island.

Francisco del Pino*Invisible*

Francisco del Pino, electric guitar

Invisible was an Argentinian power trio formed by Luis Alberto Spinetta during the mid 70s and is my favorite band from my home country. Spinetta was a genius and a poet and perhaps the most uniquely Argentinian of our 'rock' notables, and his passing ten years ago still hurts me today. This piece has no quotations, nor does it aspire to be an elegy, yet—I think—it displays a sense of yearning, a longing for a glimpse of those we can no longer see.

I want to thank ~Nois for welcoming me within the group, and for their generous and sensitive input which helped me work out the ultimate shape of the piece.

Travis Laplante*Running in a Field of Flowers*

A note of inspiration:

When I was a young child I have a vivid memory of running through a field with a sense of complete joy and freedom. It was as if each flower and blade of grass was singing to me and I could hear a beautiful song that existed inside the air.

When I remember this experience I don't desire to go back to my youth, or even romanticize an innocence that I no longer carry. I simply remember a time in my life when I was consciously more connected to the Earth through listening, before the human-centric conditionings of this life set in. It is part of my life's work to repair this connection inside of myself. I hope that the sounds inside *Running Through a Field of Flowers* communicates at least a sliver of this essential and once passionate love affair between humanity and the Earth, despite the relationship's current decimation.

The musical structure of *Running in a Field of Flowers* is symbolic of a journey taken deeper and deeper into ourselves, to a place where we can hear both the earth's cry and the love without end that is all around and inside us and cannot be destroyed, only forgotten.

A huge thank you to ~Nois saxophone quartet for their generosity to this composition. I have composed three previous albums of saxophone quartet music and this is my first experience not also performing in the ensemble. This has been an exceedingly vulnerable experience. Thankfully, I've been filled with happiness to hear the music come alive without my presence in the ensemble. This is largely due to ~Nois's ability to play and listen beyond the notes into a deeper level of communication between each other and the audience. This experience gives me tremendous hope for the future.

ABOUT

Francisco del Pino is a Buenos Aires-born composer and guitarist. Drawing influence from both classical and vernacular traditions, his music revolves around process and pattern and is usually characterized by an extensive use of counterpoint. Francisco's debut album *Decir*, a song cycle on texts by Argentinian poet Victoria Cocco described as "stunning" (*Bandcamp Daily*), was released on New Amsterdam Records in 2021. He is currently a PhD candidate in Music Composition at Princeton University as a Mark Nelson Fellow.

Kennedy Taylor Dixon is a violist, composer, and scholar currently residing in Trenton, New Jersey. Dixon has been described as a "vibrant musical voice," often writing for herself and collaborators in her musical community. Some highlights of her career to date include a collaborative commission from the Boston Children's Chorus and *Castle of our Skins*, an upcoming residency at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, UT, a premiere of her piece *here I stand* at Electronic Music Midwest 2022, a presentation of her Master's Thesis discussing Wadada Leo Smith's *String Quartet No.3* at the International Alliance for Women in Music 2022 Conference, performance by Jack Quartet, and a commission from Laura Lenz in 2021. Dixon was selected as a performance fellow at Nief-Norf in 2019 and again in 2020, participated as a composition fellow at New Music on the Point in 2021, and attended Bang On a Can as a performance fellow for their 2022 festival. Before starting her PhD this past fall at Princeton University, Dixon received a MA in Music Composition in addition to her dual undergraduate degrees in Viola Performance and Music Composition from Western Michigan University.

Bobby Ge is a Chinese-American composer and avid collaborator who seeks to create vivid emotional journeys that navigate boundaries between genre and medium. He has created multimedia projects with the Space Telescope Science Institute, painters collective Art10Baltimore, the Scattered Players Theater Company, and the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. Winner of the 2022 Barlow Prize, Ge has been programmed by groups including the Minnesota Orchestra, the New York Youth Symphony, the Albany Symphony's 'Dogs of Desire,' the Harbin Symphony Orchestra, Interlochen Arts Academy, Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra, Guangzhou Symphony Youth Orchestra, Seattle Symphony Youth Orchestra, Music from Copland House, the Pacific Chamber Orchestra, the Bergamot Quartet, the Boss Street Brass Band, and Mind on Fire. He is currently pursuing his PhD at Princeton University as a Naumberg Fellow, and holds degrees from UC Berkeley and the Peabody Conservatory.

Travis Laplante is a saxophonist, composer, improviser, and qigong practitioner. Laplante leads the acclaimed saxophone quartet Battle Trance, as well as Subtle Degrees, his duo with drummer Gerald Cleaver. Recently, Laplante has composed long-form works for new music ensembles the JACK Quartet and Yarn/Wire while performing alongside them. Laplante is also known for his raw solo saxophone concerts and being a member of the avant-garde quartet Little Women. He has performed and/or recorded with ICE, Tyshawn Sorey, Caroline Shaw, Ches Smith, Peter Evans, So Percussion, Ingrid Laubrock, Mary Halvorson, Buke and Gase, and Darius Jones. Laplante has toured his music extensively and has appeared at many international festivals such as Moers, Jazz Jantar, Saalfelden, Jazz em Agosto, Earshot, Hopscotch, and the NYC Winter JazzFest. As a composer, Laplante has been commissioned by the Lucerne Festival, JACK Quartet, Roulette, Yarn/Wire, Yellow Barn Music Festival, MATA festival, and The Jerome Foundation.

Lucy McKnight prefers to write a bio in first person. So hi, hello, I'm Lucy! I work with colors, textures, and sounds to create environments where I and others can explore intense emotions and ways of surviving them. My expressive tools include paint, fabric, ceramics, tinfoil, magnets, strings, pots, pipes, wood, my cello, my body and voice, and my friends' bodies and voices. I am interested in touch, connection, movement, and using sound to build mutually cathartic experiences. I love to swim in natural bodies of water, with particular affinity for the Pacific Ocean off the coast of my hometown, Los Angeles. Currently, my three deeply affectionate cats and I live in my wildly colorful home in Trenton, New Jersey.

Founded in 2016, **~Nois** (pronounced "noise") has become one of the premier ensembles in the United States by combining contemporary chamber music and improvisation to connect with audiences in unique concert experiences. Heralded as "fiendishly good" (*Chicago Tribune*) and known for their "supremely sensitive balance and control" (*Chicago Classical Review*), ~Nois has been awarded top prizes at prestigious chamber music competitions including the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and the M-Prize International Arts Competition. Since their founding, ~Nois has presented over 100 performances in 22 states. In addition to their regular concert season in Chicago, ~Nois has performed on festivals and series such as Big Ears, LONG PLAY, the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, and the University of Chicago Presents Series. In addition, ~Nois is in demand as a guest artist and lecturer at universities across the nation having held residencies and given performances at over 35 institutions including University of Southern California, the University of Colorado - Boulder, the Manhattan School of Music, and Princeton University. During the 2022 - 2023 season, ~Nois has been appointed as an Entrepreneurial Musical Artist in Residence at Michigan State University alongside Imani Winds and Damien Sneed. Dedicated to expanding and redefining the saxophone quartet repertoire, ~Nois has premiered over 60 works including compositions by Gaudeamus Prize winners Kelley Sheehan and Annika Socolofsky as well as 2018 Guggenheim Fellow Tonia Ko. ~Nois' recent commission, *I Tell You Me* by Annika Socolofsky was called "grotesquely gorgeous" by the *Chicago Tribune* and the premiere performance was included in their list of "Chicago's Top 10 moments in classical music, opera, and jazz that defined 2021". ~Nois is Hunter Bockes, János Csontos, Jordan Lulloff, and Julian Velasco. For more information, please visit www.noissaxophone.com

Christian Quiñones is a Puerto Rican composer who explores personal and vulnerable stories through the lens of cultural identity. From sampling to auto-tune, and to body percussion, Christian is interested in interacting with existing music to create intertextual narratives. Recently Christian was commissioned by the New York Youth Symphony, selected as a composer in residence at the Copland House, and as a fellow for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra Workshop, Cabrillo Festival, and the Bang on a Can Summer Festival. In 2020 he was selected for the Earshot Underwood Orchestra Readings where he worked with the American Composers Orchestra. He has received commissions from Dogs of Desire, Transient Canvas, the icarus Quartet, the Bergamot String Quartet, and the Victory Players where Christian was the 2018-2019 composer in residence. Christian graduated from the Conservatorio de Música de Puerto Rico (B.M.) and the University of Illinois (M.M), where he was the recipient of the Graduate College Master's Fellowship. Currently, Christian is a Ph.D. President's fellow at Princeton University

Nathan Schram is a member of the Attacca Quartet and the Founder & Executive Director of Musicambia, an organization that develops music education programs in prisons throughout the United States. Albums of his original music have been released on New Amsterdam and Better Company Records. He has a wife and daughter and adores living in Princeton.



What is PSK?

A lab for Princeton University composers to collaborate with today's finest performers and ensembles, Princeton Sound Kitchen is a vital forum for the creation of new music. Serving the graduate student and faculty composers of the renowned composition program at the Department of Music at Princeton University, PSK presents a wide variety of concerts and events throughout the year.

Upcoming Princeton Sound Kitchen events

Tuesday, March 21, 2023, 7:30 PM, Richardson Auditorium, Alexander Hall

Alarm Will Sound

Twenty-member chamber orchestra Alarm Will Sound, under the direction of conductor Alan Pierson, performs new works by Princeton University graduate student composers Gulli Björnsson, Dai Wei, Liam Elliot, Hope Littwin, Soo Yeon Lyuh, Christian Quiñones, Elijah Daniel Smith, Max Vinetz, Justin Wright.

Tuesday, March 28, 2023, 8:00 PM, Taplin Auditorium, Fine Hall

Michael J. Love

Interdisciplinary tap dance artist Michael J Love collaborates with Princeton University faculty composers Jason Treuting and Dan Trueman, and graduate students composers Ellie Cherry, Kennedy Taylor Dixon, Hope Littwin, James Moore, and Max Vinetz.

Tuesday, April 11, 2023, 8:00 PM, Taplin Auditorium, Fine Hall

Generals Concert

Princeton University second-year graduate student composers Hope Littwin, Soo Yeon Lyuh, Christian Quiñones, and Justin Wright present new works alongside, and in response to, works by established composers, performed by special guest artists.

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 8:00 PM, The Forum, Lewis Arts Complex

Felix Kindermann: *Choir Piece*, featuring Natalie Dietterich: *Composition for Separated Musicians*

This performance of Felix Kindermann's *Choir Piece*, featuring Princeton University graduate student composer Natalie Dietterich's a cappella score for 16 singers *Composition for Separated Musicians*, occupies the entire space of The Forum. The audience becomes part of the work, finding themselves inside the sculpture, surrounded by the singers and embedded in the sound.

Keep up to date about Princeton Sound Kitchen events on the Current Season page of our website princeton_soundkitchen.org