



CLEVELAND  
INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

2025-26  
SEASON

# CONCERT SERIES



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The Cleveland Institute of Music empowers the world's most talented classical music students to fulfill their dreams and potential. Its alumni command hallowed stages across the globe as soloists, opera leads, chamber musicians, and ensemble members; compose meaningful, award-winning music; produce Grammy Award-winning recordings; and are highly sought-after teaching artists, administrators, and thought leaders. CIM's faculty likewise hail from around the country and across the world, giving students "The CIM Advantage" as they embark on professional careers. The school's increasingly diverse collegiate and pre-college student bodies benefit from access to world-renowned visiting artists and abundant performance and outreach opportunities, and from the rich curriculum offered by CIM's partner, Case Western Reserve University. A leader among its peers, CIM is the largest presenter of free performances, masterclasses, and community concerts in the Midwest, hosting hundreds of events each year on campus and at locations regionwide, including Severance Music Center. Explore [cim.edu](http://cim.edu) to learn more.



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CIM students are positioned for success, developing 21st-century skills to thrive musically and in life. This is possible because of the **CIM Advantage**, where students' artistic potential is unlocked in our nurturing environment, and hours of work and training are transformed into first-rate performances on professional stages and in the community.

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**NEW MUSIC SERIES**  
**Keith Fitch, director**

Sunday, November 23, 2025  
4pm | Mixon Hall

**Composition Department Recital**

Anh Kieu  
(b. 2007)

dream-traverser (2025)

**Abigail Macy**, violin  
**Dongsub Alex Jeoung**, violin  
**Victoria Goettel**, viola  
**Fiona Tsang**, cello

Sean Murphy  
(b. 2007)

Tessellation Configurations (2025)

- I. ●
- II. —
- III. △
- IV. ◇
- V. □
- VI. ⊙

**Malik Nowlin**, alto saxophone

Andrew Schneider  
(b. 2007)

October Winds (2025)

**Anton Dmitrik**, clarinet  
**Victoria Goettel**, viola  
**Yu-Hui Yang**, cello  
**Andrew Schneider**, conductor

Alexandra R. Văduva  
(b. 2004)

Flashback (2025)

**Alexandra R. Văduva**, piano

Wyatt Knutson  
(b. 2004)

Response III: The Kill (2025)

**Malik Nowlin**, soprano saxophone

Owen Axelberd  
(b. 2006)

The Perseverance of Job (2025)

- I. Upright
- II. Losses; a Blessing

**Dongsub Alex Jeoung**, violin  
**Abigail Macy**, violin  
**Nilli Tayidi**, viola  
**Fiona Tsang**, cello

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

### **dream-traverser**

**Anh Kieu**

Dreams, and other figments of imagination, have fascinated and inspired many works of mine. They represent an ethereal yet encompassing human nature, images that always lie beyond what material alone offers us. In *dream-traverser*, this state of lingering is reached after a rapidly transforming journey, alluding to the sheer variety and depth of our mind, before sending itself back to a mobile world.

### **Tessellation Configurations**

**Sean Murphy**

*Tessellation Configurations* is a work inspired by the idea of translating fundamental geometric shapes into sound. I began with a dot and a line since these are the two basic elements from which all other shapes are formed. To create the sounds of these shapes, I imagined tracing each one by placing my finger at its top and moving counterclockwise, as if “walking” along its edge. As the piece unfolds, the shapes become increasingly complex. I start with a dot and then a line because these shapes are the simplest shapes in math. I started adding sides from the dot and line to have a triangle, wedge, square, and finally a spiral. While a spiral may not have sides like any of the other shapes, I thought it was a shape that was important to include because it is still very uniform in its construction, even if it does not have defined sides like the shapes before it.

### **October Winds**

**Andrew Schneider**

*October Winds* ventures through the soundscapes that one might imagine with the season change from summer to fall. The work opens with hints of what is to come later, same as what fall does for winter. The clarinet, viola, and cello combination fits into this narrative since each instrument has a uniquely warm timbre that conjures images of browns and oranges that some may associate with October or Autumn.

### **Flashback**

**Alexandra R. Văduva**

Though I have played piano my whole life, I was always afraid to write for it, as if composing for the instrument I knew best would expose too much. This piece is about that fear: how it lingers, how it loosens. In

writing this piece, I tried not to prove anything. I simply tried to be honest with the instrument that has shaped me and to let the music come as it is, not as I thought it should be. This is my first offering to the piano as a composer. It is a beginning.

### **Response III: The Kill**

**Wyatt Knutson**

*The Kill* is a musical representation of my experience viewing an artwork of the same name. This artwork exists on the inside surface of a clam shell and was painted in China between 300-100 BCE. The illustration depicts a hunting scene: a wagon with horses, hunters holding spears, hunting dogs, and some sort of cervids they all are pursuing. This piece is one of the oldest surviving figure paintings from China, and is currently in the possession of the Cleveland Museum of Art. *The Kill*, as well as being a standalone solo piece, is part of the *Responses* cycle.

### **The Perseverance of Job**

**Owen Axelberd**

This quartet, while not strictly programmatic, is based on the biblical story of Job. The form of the piece follows the emotional arch of the story with the first two movements based on the first two chapters of the book. In these chapters, Job is established as righteous man, yet suddenly faces intense suffering, and through he remains steadfast in his faith in God. As a commentary on the problem of suffering, I find Job to be incredibly interesting. But more importantly I find it to be incredibly true. Using such narratives which feel true to form a strong core to a musical work is one of my favorite strategies. The work features five movements in total, with the first two forming a distinct half.

## **ABOUT THE COMPOSERS**

**Anh Kieu** is a Vietnamese composition student at CIM studying with Keith Fitch. Before coming to Cleveland, he studied classical piano at the Vietnam National Academy of Music in Hanoi and was a pianist for his high school orchestra. His compositions have seen several performances in local communities, and he is continuing work with the Schubert in a Mug group in Hanoi for a performance in January.

**Sean Murphy** is a composer and violist based out of Atlanta, Georgia. He has won various local competitions in his home state such as the Georgia Music Educators Association Composition Competition in 2022 and attended the Brevard Music Summer Institute in 2024.

**Andrew Schneider** is a composer from Columbus, Ohio, in their first year of the bachelor's program. Their compositional style has evolved over the past few years but has consistent neo-impressionist and absurdist influence. Schneider's music attempts to express common human experiences of young persons in America through their use of tone colors and sound painting that create nostalgic imagery.

**Alexandra R. Văduva** is a Romanian American composer whose works have been performed internationally by distinguished musicians and ensembles such as the Mivos Quartet, Sean Gabriel, Cleveland Chamber Orchestra, and more. She is actively involved in the music ministry at the Cleveland Romanian Baptist Church, serving as an accompanist, arranger, and conductor. Her compositional development has been shaped through studies with notable composers including Oliver Weber, Philippe Leroux, and Andrew Rindfleisch, as well as participation in masterclasses with Martin Bresnick. She is currently pursuing a degree in music composition at CIM under the mentorship of Keith Fitch.

**Wyatt Knutson** is an undergraduate student at CIM studying double bass with Scott Dixon and composition with Keith Fitch.

**Owen Axelberd** is a Bachelor of Music student at CIM studying composition with Keith Fitch. He is a graduate of Atlanta Music High School where, beyond his compositional training with Phil Sims, he also studied piano and played in several small ensembles. Some of his recent achievements include being a finalist in the 2023 National Young Composers Challenge, a performance from the Greater Cleveland Flute Society, and winning first prize in the 2025 Cleveland Composers Guild Collegiate Composition Competition. Most recently, his piece *Drive Down I-81* was premiered by The FAB5 at Mostly Modern Festival.

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

**Keith Fitch** holds the Vincent K. and Edith H. Smith Chair in Composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he also directs the CIM New Music Ensemble. Called “gloriously luminous” by *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, his music has been consistently noted for its eloquence, expressivity, dramatic sense of musical narrative, and unique sense of color and sonority. Reviewing a performance of his work *Totem* by Wolfgang Sawallisch and The Philadelphia Orchestra (chosen by Maestro Sawallisch to celebrate the orchestra’s centennial), *The Wall Street Journal* praised “the sheer concentration of his writing, and its power to express a complex, unseen presence shaping the course of musical events.” The American Academy of Arts and Letters has said, “[his] music reveals an individual landscape that concentrates on unusual textures and sounds – all within a strong narrative that drives towards a rich and powerful conclusion.”

His works have been performed throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia by such ensembles and soloists as The Philadelphia Orchestra, American Composers Orchestra, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, St. Luke’s Chamber Ensemble, Colorado Quartet, Da Capo Chamber Players, guitarist Jason Vieaux, and many others. His music has been heard at the Mostly Modern Festival, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, June in Buffalo, Atlantic Center for the Arts, and New York’s Carnegie and Merkin halls, among others. Recent works include *Alee* for orchestra, commissioned by CIM for its centennial; *as Earth dreams*, a solo work for the renowned harpist Yolanda Kondonassis; *still*, commissioned by the Chicago Center for Contemporary Composition at the University of Chicago; and *Mirrors*, commissioned by the Ellis-Beauregard Foundation for the Bangor Symphony Orchestra.

A native of Indiana, Fitch (b. 1966) began composing at age 7 and began formal musical training on the double bass at age 11. While still in high school (age 16), he received his first professional orchestral performance. He attended the Indiana University School of Music, where he studied composition with Frederick Fox, Eugene O’Brien, and Claude Baker; double bass with Bruce Bransby and Murray Grodner; and chamber music with Rostislav Dubinsky, founder of the Borodin Quartet. He also counts Donald Erb and Joan Tower among his compositional mentors. Among his many awards are a 2023 Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, the 2023 Ellis-Beauregard

Foundation Composer Award, the 2024 Arts and Letters Award in Music and the 2016 Walter Hinrichsen Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Fromm Music Foundation Commission, three Individual Excellence Awards from the Ohio Arts Council, a Copland House Residency Award, and an Individual Artist Grant from the Indiana Arts Commission/National Endowment for the Arts. He has enjoyed multiple residencies at The MacDowell Colony and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, as well as at Yaddo, The Charles Ives Center for American Music, and the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and he has twice served as resident composer and faculty at the Chamber Music Conference and Composers' Forum of the East.

Highly regarded as a teacher, chamber music coach, and conductor of new music, he has taught at Indiana University, Bard College, and for 11 years served on the faculty of the Mannes College of Music in New York. From 2015-17, he served as composer-in-residence and director of the Young Artist Seminar in Composition at the Rocky Ridge Music Center.

He frequently appears as guest composer at colleges, universities, and summer festivals nationwide, and his students regularly win awards from such prestigious organizations as ASCAP, BMI, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Fulbright Foundation, as well as attending leading summer festivals around the world.

A passionate advocate for new music, for five years, he curated a concert series at Cleveland's Museum of Contemporary Art, and he has mentored such ensembles as Cleveland's FiveOne Experimental Orchestra and Ars Futura ensemble, as well as individual members of leading new music ensembles throughout the country. Not one to avoid controversy, in 2014, he organized and co-authored an open letter that took to task The Cleveland Orchestra for failing to program works by American composers. That letter went viral, gaining national attention and reigniting a conversation about the place of American music on our nation's orchestral programs. Equally adept at working behind the scenes, he also guided pianist Daniil Trifonov, the 2011 Tchaikovsky Competition gold medalist, in the composition and world premiere of Trifonov's first piano concerto.

His music is published by Non Sequitur Music and Edition Peters and appears on Azica Records and Naxos Digital. He joined the CIM faculty in 2008.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Tuesday, December 2**

7:30pm | *Mixon Hall*

**Intensive Duo Concert**

**Wednesday, December 3**

7:30pm | *Kulas Hall*

**Mike Block**, cello (BM '04)

**Yacouba Sissoko**, kora

*Kulas Foundation Visiting Artist*

**Jamey Haddad**, percussion

Cellist and CIM alum Mike Block returns with another invigorating program, featuring faculty percussionist Jamey Haddad and Yacouba Sissoko, a master of the kora, a West African stringed instrument. Together, they meld West African and American traditions through an intimate collaboration that features their original compositions and adaptations of traditional folk repertoire.

**Friday, December 5**

7:30pm | *Mixon Hall*

**Advanced Piano Trio Program Concert**

**Saturday, December 6**

**Sunday, December 7**

7:30pm | *Mixon Hall*

**Brass & Woodwind Ensembles Concerts**

**Saturday, December 6**

7:30pm | *Kulas Hall*

**Sunday, December 7**

3pm | *Kulas Hall*

**Opera Scenes**

A program of arias and ensembles from the opera repertoire.

*CIM Opera Theater is supported by a grant from the John P. Murphy Foundation.*

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