

# About the Music.

## *Surfacing*

Music has long served as a tool to process the difficult experiences we encounter throughout our lives. Despite being so abstract, this sonic medium allows us to access poignant and palpable messages which ring true on both a visceral and emotional level. This program is an exploration of our internal responses to existential, life-altering events. From beginning to end, we move through phases of healing and growth, ultimately surfacing from confusion and pain with a renewed sense of hope.

Our journey begins with **Brian Raphael Nabors' String Quartet**. Described by the composer as “a snapshot of a universe before the big bang,” the work’s fragmented chaos takes inspiration from a mix of genres including R&B, jazz, gospel, and contemporary classical. By juxtaposing vibrant and dense textures with flowing melodies and peaceful pastoral scenes, Nabors paints a drawn-out act of creation through what is at times overwhelming chaos. As the piece ultimately funnels towards an abrupt black hole, we’re left wondering: “Where do we go from here?”

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*Brian Raphael Nabors' award-winning works have been performed by orchestras across the US and internationally, and he is currently assistant Professor of Composition at the Louisiana State University School of Music. Born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, as the son*

*of a church musician and pastor, he received a Doctor of Musical Arts and a master's degree in Composition from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.*

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## As **Kevin Lau's String Quartet**

**No. 3** follows, the emotions clear, dust settles, and we regain our footing. Like the Nabors quartet, this work features rapid, eclectic shifts of genre, with vibrant influences from electronic dance music and East Asian folk tunes. But with a more exploratory and relaxed feeling, the work unfolds in an abundance of curiosity and humor, undergoing a new wave of self-discovery.

Lau's **Quartet No. 7**, written eleven years later, was inspired by a familial health scare: In 2024, Kevin's new-born son was diagnosed with a rare liver disease. This powerful piece navigates the parallel processes of recovery and growth, surfacing from the depths of strife and hardship with a renewed exuberance.

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*Recipient of the 2025 Johanna Metcalf Performing Arts Prize, Kevin Lau has been commissioned by some of Canada's most prominent artists and ensembles, and his work has been performed worldwide. A prolific composer of orchestral, chamber, ballet, opera, and film music, he has produced eight works for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and three original ballets for Canadian arts companies. His seven string quartets, including Surfacing, commissioned by the Poiesis*

*Quartet, have been championed globally by internationally renowned ensembles, and his debut album, Under a Veil of Stars, was nominated for a JUNO award for Best Classical Album of the Year (Small Ensemble).*

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With **Sky Macklay's *Many Many Cadences***, the self-assuredness developed in the first half of the program is halted and recalibrated. Macklay overturns our fundamental constructions of harmonies by dissecting cadences — the chord progressions that lie at the bedrock of all western musical traditions. As chords zip by at comically fast speeds, trudge at an uncomfortably slow pace, and then morph into unusual sound objects, *Many Many Cadences* showcases the myriad ways we can celebrate and jest about serious things in life. This simultaneously hilarious, aggressive, and inquisitive environment leaves us confused and insecure, but also, oddly, provides a sense of clarity.

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*Baltimore-based composer, oboist, and installation artist Sky Macklay has received awards and fellowships from The American Academy of Arts and Letters, Civitella Ranieri, and ASCAP, and her work has been featured at a range of international festivals. She has been commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chamber Music America, the Kronos Quartet, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and Klangforum Wien, among others. Originally from Minnesota, she completed her DMA in composition at Columbia University. She was Assistant Professor of Music*

*at Valparaiso University and is now on the composition faculty of the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University.*

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Finally, the renowned composer, conductor, and jazz pianist **Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson's *String Quartet No. 1*** represents the culmination of growth and self-discovery. This work is based on the African-American spiritual ***Calvary***, which recounts the story of Jesus's death and ascension to heaven. Our violinist **Max Ball's** arrangement of the spiritual for violin quartet flows directly into Perkinson's quartet. As the pained voices of four violins yearn for release and tension builds, Perkinson's celebratory work arrives. Recontextualizing this hymn into a joyous and liberatory celebration, the program closes with a sense of unabashed optimism, freedom, confidence, and hope for the future.

— *Poesis Quartet*

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*Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson wrote for both film scores and concert ensembles, drawing on a wide range of classical, jazz, and popular music. After serving on the faculty of Brooklyn College, he co-founded the Symphony of the New World in New York in 1965; he then became its music director. He also served as music director of Jerome Robbins' American Theater Lab, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and the New Black Music Repertory Ensemble at Columbia College Chicago. He received bachelor's and master's degrees from the Manhattan School of Music and studied conducting in the Netherlands and Salzburg.*