



# Performers

The name **POIESIS** is derived from the ancient Greek word ποιεῖν, meaning "to make.". Poiesis seeks to program music of all styles and genres and expand the traditional string quartet setting with an emphasis on platforming works by emerging and underrepresented composers. Poiesis strives to create unique moments of synchronicity, sensitivity, and verve in each performance.

The **POIESIS QUARTET** is the 2023 Grand Prize winner of the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and winner of the 2024 Concert Artists Guild Competition. Founded at Oberlin Conservatory, within their first eight months of playing together, they also received Fischhoff’s Lift Every Voice Prize as well as Gold Medal and BIPOC Prize at the 2023 St. Paul String Quartet Competition. Poiesis has since appeared on major chamber music series in New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Asheville, Charlotte, Des Moines, and San Antonio. The quartet has also toured internationally, including in Uruguay in 2023, as well as Italy in 2024 for a residency at the Emilia Romagna Festival.

As an ensemble passionate about new music, the recent release of their debut album as we are on the Bright Shiny Things label features world premiere recordings of works by Clint Needham and Richard Stout alongside mezzo-soprano Nancy Maultsby. In the 2024-25 season, they also serve as ensemble-in-residence with concertnova, a Cincinnati collective presenting multi-sensorial and multi-disciplinary concert experiences. The Poiesis Quartet is the current Graduate Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music studying with the Ariel Quartet.

Comprised of violinists **SARAH MA** and **MAX BALL**, cellist **DREW DANSBY**, and violist **JASPER DE BOOR**, members of the Poiesis Quartet have attended programs such as Kneisel Hall, the Perlman Music Program, Verbier Festival Orchestra, Aspen Music Festival, and Madeline Island Chamber Music’s Fellowship program. In addition to their performance degrees from Oberlin, Drew received a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry, and Sarah holds two minors in Comparative American Studies and Gender, Sexuality, & Feminist Studies. Jasper graduated as a double major in viola and violin performance with a minor in baroque violin, and Max pursued a minor in jazz studies. When not playing chamber music, Poiesis loves to learn new languages on Duolingo, share delicious ice cream cakes, and take long walks on the beach.

Taiwanese pianist **MING-LI LIU** has been praised for her charismatic and passionate solo and chamber performances throughout the United States and Taiwan. In 2023, she won the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM)'s concerto competition and subsequently performed Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 4 with the school's orchestra. Additionally, Liu was a prize winner in the 2019 Wideman International Piano Competition, and won the Soochow University Concerto Competition in 2016, performing Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 3 with the SCU Orchestra. In 2014, she participated in the Rong-Hsing Music Competition in Taiwan, winning the first prize in the concerto round and third prize in the solo performance round.

In addition to her solo achievements, Liu is also rapidly gaining attention as a premier chamber musician and collaborative pianist. As part of various groups, Liu has been awarded the Grand prize of the 2023 CCM Chamber competition, the first prize and “Best interpretation of music by an American composer” in the 2022 Gershwin International Music Competition, the second prize in the United States International Duo Piano Competition, the third prize in MTNA-Stecher and Horowitz Two Piano Competition in 2020, and the first prize in Taiwan Chamber Music Competition in 2016.

Liu is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in piano performance at CCM, where she earned masters degrees in both piano performance and collaborative piano, studying with Daniel Shapiro, Ran Dank, and Sandra Rivers.

# Composers—Music

**MARGI GRIEBLING-HAIGH**’s music has been characterized as haunting, charismatic, yearning, lyrical, and insouciant. She has been Composer-in-Residence at the Kent/Blossom Music Festival since 2011. Recent commissions have come from the International Double Reed Society, Stetson University, and the International Society of Bassists. A recording of repertoire for soprano and eight cellos, Voices from the Other Side, featuring two of her works, was released in September, 2024 to wonderful reviews. Her compositions have been in frequent rotation on American Public Media radio programs *Performance Today*, *Pipe Dreams*, and *With Heart and Voice*.

Griebling-Haigh is self-producing the world premiere of her opera *The Higgler* in June 2025. Recently written works include *Sieben Zungenbrecher Lieder* (bass or baritone and piano with optional double bass), *Eleveneses* (flute, oboe, clarinet); *Quatuor Royal* (trumpet, horn, trombone, piano); *A little moment at the end of* all (big band or jazz octet); and *Weimarer Winterszenen* (English horn, piano);.). Her music is published by Jeanné Inc.; Trevco Inc., and Musicalligraphics, and can be heard on numerous CD recordings.

**VISTAS DESDE EL BALCÓN** began its existence in the autumn of 1997 as a piece in which I whimsically set out to musically represent several elements of (land line! — those were the days...) telephone communication, complete with touch tones, dial tones, and busy signals. However, the piece clearly had a mind of its own, as is often the case: it decided it would prefer to be lyrical and expressive, and eventually only the smallest fragments of my original ideas remained. By the time I drew the final double bar, the music had nothing to do with technology. It reminded me more of the Mediterranean scenery my husband and I had once witnessed looking down at the beach while leaning over the edge of the Balcón de Europa in Nerja, Spain so I settled on its evocative title.

**SEBASTIAN ANTHONY BIRCH**, a native of Ohio, was brought up in Florence, Italy where he began his musical training in piano, theory and solfeggio. Returning to the US, he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in music from Cleveland State University, studying with Edwin London and Bain Murray, and subsequently attained a doctorate degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music, under the guidance of Donald Erb. His distinctive style is marked by a fusion of diverse musical genres and far-reaching rhythmic possibilities. Birch's compositions have been interpreted by distinguished ensembles such as the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Cavani Quartet, Vórtice Ensemble, Cleveland Chamber Collective, Cleveland Flute Society, and notable soloists including Mary Kay Fink, Anita Pontremoli, and Iwona Glinka. Currently, an associate professor of music at Kent State University Stark, Dr. Birch teaches theory, composition, and piano. His works are available through Universal and JWPepper, with recordings accessible on Phasma Music and all major streaming platforms.

**EPHEMERAL TIMELINES** explores the fluidity of time, oscillating between precise regularity and distorted abstraction. In our fast-paced, often chaotic lives, time can feel both fleeting and elastic—moments intersect, overlap, and diverge, leaving only faint traces in their wake. The piece begins with a pizzicato motif, evoking the steady, predictable ticking of a clock. As the music unfolds, it accelerates and shifts into a driving 7/8 meter, creating a rhythmic tension that pulses with both vitality and unease. This duality reflects the instability and unpredictability of our daily lives, where energy and uncertainty often coexist. The work builds momentum, culminating in a coda where alternating and tightening regular and irregular meters propel the piece to its conclusion. Through its interplay of rhythm and texture, EPHEMERAL TIMELINES captures the ephemeral nature of time—its fleeting moments, its distortions, and its enduring impact.

A native of Rome, Italy, **DR. LORENZO SALVAGNI** is a well-established composer, pianist, organist, translator and language instructor. He is Director of Music at Holy Rosary Church in Little Italy, Lecturer of Italian at John Carroll University, and Staff Pianist at Hathaway Brown School in Shaker Heights. Dr. Salvagni’s compositions are frequently performed, recorded and broadcast nationally and internationally, and are currently available on all major streaming services. Dr. Salvagni is the current chairman of the Cleveland Composers Guild.

**SCHERZO** was composed in 2025 for the Poiesis String Quartet. In Italian, the word *scherzo* can define a jest, a prank, or something that can be accomplished quickly and effortlessly. In music, the term identifies “a vigorous, light, or playful composition, typically comprising a movement in a symphony or sonata” (Oxford). It usually comprises of a slower portion (“trio”), neatly framed between two fast-flowing and playful (or dramatic) sections. The structure of this particular piece is only slightly more complex, in the sense that the “trio” here blends more organically with the external sections and the themes morph into each other without clear fractures. The rigorous, monotone beat set by each instrument at the beginning soon becomes more malleable, interspersed with short rests and small pitch variations that eventually allow the first motif to emerge; the tempo then stretches accordingly to accommodate the lyricism of the slower theme. The G-major coda resembles a joyful and free-spirited dance, the initial rigidity all but forgotten.

**GEOFFREY PETERSON**’s music has been performed throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. Works and performances include: *Schadenfreude* for reed quintet, *Micah 6:8* and *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, both premiered by the Cleveland Chamber Choir, *Drones* for chamber ensemble and recorded sounds premiered by the Cleveland Chamber Collective, *Race Riot* for jazz band, *A Mighty Handful: Symphonic Portraits of the Russian Five* for wind ensemble, *Danse Diabolique* for orchestra, Suite from *Vinegar Tom* for clarinet and piano, *The Edmund Fitzgerald* concerto for piano and string orchestra, *Homage to Donald Erb* performed by bassoonist Pascal Gallois and *Three Hopper Paintings* for piano. . His music is published by Theodore Presser, Tenuto Publications and Cimarron Music Press. Peterson was raised and educated in Northeast Ohio and attended both the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied with Donald Erb and received a bachelor’s degree in composition. He resides in University Heights with his wife, Michelle.

Each movement of “**SEASONS JOURNEY**” is titled and inspired by a different seasonal poetic line: “I find young summer in full tides of green,” (Harry Kemp); “Drift, Autumn, drift; fall, colours, where you will. (W.H. Auden); “Winter, you are nothing but a villain!” (Charles d’Orleans); and “Warm breath of spring, all mad and pure,” (Gene Derwood). The first and fourth movements are performed on today’s concert. It was my intention to evoke a personal and introspective message regarding the "seasons" of one's life. Several musical quotes are used including the aria, "The people that walked in darkness," from Handel's *Messiah*, in the third movement, and the opening music and theme from the final movement of Sibelius’s Fifth Symphony in the fourth movement. The work was written in honor of my aunt, Mikaela Christina Petras, who died of cancer in 2002. It received its premiere by the Cavani Quartet.

**JEREMY PIPER** has been studying piano since 1986 when he started piano lessons in the third grade. He continued his study through high school and went on to earn a bachelor’s degree from the Baldwin Wallace Conservatory of Music, where majored in music composition and music theory with an emphasis in jazz studies. Jeremy also holds a master’s degree in music composition from Kent State University. He has composed over 60 works spanning diverse mediums including chorus, orchestra, wind ensemble, jazz ensemble, chamber music, and jazz combo. His compositions have been premiered by the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Cleveland Contemporary Youth Orchestra, Baldwin Wallace Wind Ensemble, Kent Chorale, the Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High School Concert Band, and the Cleveland Chamber Collective. In 2020, Jeremy’s composition for orchestra, *Gated Mountains of Yasparia*, was recorded by the Brno Philharmonic in the Czech Republic and featured on their CD *Orchestral Masters Vol. 7* on the Ablaze label.

**MAJESTIC FOOTHILLS OF MOUNT YASPARIA** depicts the beautiful landscape of rolling hills and valleys leading towards the high peaks of Mount Yasparia. Inspired by the harmonic language of Aaron Copland, the melodic line leaps up and down in fourth and fifth intervals and colors it with descending major chord outlines. Gradually, the foothills become thicker and larger as the different stringed instruments make their entrances. Eventually, the macro line reaches its peak and slowly makes its way downward and settles at the bottom.

**RYAN CHARLES RAMER**’s first performance of his work in fifth grade was a complete surprise to him; after showing his music teacher an original piece for recorder ensemble, she secretly organized a performance by a student ensemble for the morning assembly (where the entire school got together daily to recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing the National Anthem). This piece was a 4-part madrigal, and his style has ever since followed a trend of imitative counterpoint. He still uses lyrical lines, ultimately playable within the limited range of a recorder. String quartet is his favorite ensemble for which to compose.

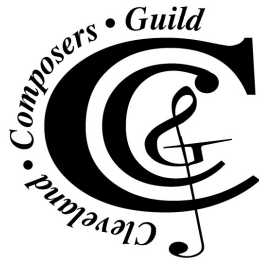
**ANIMAL DREAMS** sets to music a 1975 poem (of the same name) by his favorite poet, Terry Stokes. Each line gets its own musical section, most of which are played attacca. Five melodic fragments appear throughout the piece in inversion, augmentation, and diminution. The last section floats away despondently: "Stars rust in the corner of my eyes/ I have run to the end of my world."

The music of **CARA HAXO** juxtaposes delicate, sparkly textures with the gritty and the grotesque. Haxo is the winner of the 2022 National Women’s Music Festival Emerging Women Composers Competition. She was also awarded the 2019 International Alliance for Women in Music Libby Larsen Prize, the 2013 National Federation of Music Clubs Young Composers Award, and the 2013 IAWM Ellen Taaffe Zwilich Prize. She has received commissions from the May Festival Youth Chorus, Hub New Music, Quince Ensemble, and Splinter Reeds, amongst other ensembles. Recordings of her music have been released by New Focus Recordings. A native of Massachusetts, Haxo earned a doctorate in composition at the University of Oregon, where she worked as a graduate teaching fellow in music theory. She also holds degrees from Butler University and The College of Wooster. She previously taught courses in composition and theory as an Adjunct Instructor of Music at Notre Dame College (Ohio). Haxo is a visiting assistant professor in music at The College of Wooster and academic dean and faculty member for The Walden School Young Musicians Program.

SAYS THE ALMANAC (2024) is a reference to Elizabeth Bishop’s 1956 poem “Sestina,” a style of poem that consists of six six-line stanzas plus a three-line envoi. The last words of each line are the same, but they are rotated within each stanza according to a set pattern. All six final words return in the envoi. I used this format as a starting point for my own piece, composing six melodic fragments that I rearranged based on Bishop’s pattern, each time at a different pitch level to create a different “stanza.” While not all the results of this process made it into the final version of the piece, several melodic wisps still return multiple times in different orders and contexts. Moreso than my fascination with the cyclical format of Bishop’s poem, I was especially attracted to her use of language. Her words are simultaneously simple and evocative, straightforward and mysterious. The six last words—*house, grandmother, child, stove, almanac, tears*—gradually change meaning over time as their placement within the stanza changes. We are placed in the kitchen of the house with the grandmother and child and are present as they each experience grief and resilience in their own ways. Many of Bishop’s word choices appear in SAYS THE ALMANAC as character texts at the start of each new section.

The CLEVELAND COMPOSERS GUILD is one of the nation’s oldest new music organizations, and has had over 200 composer members over its sixty-seven-year history. There are currently about 40 professional composers in the Guild whose work represents a wide range of musical styles. In recent years the Guild has collaborated with the Poiesis Quartet, the American Guild of Organists, the North Coast Winds, Factory Seconds Brass Trio, Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Burning River Baroque, the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, ContempOpera Cleveland, the Chamber Music Society of Ohio, Cleveland Opera Theater, the Cleveland Chamber Choir, and with various local solo artists, to create multidisciplinary concerts that engage with the arts in a new way. The CCG produces numerous live concerts every season featuring the finest performers available in Northeast Ohio. In addition to regular series programs, the Guild produces an annual *Creativity: Learning Through Experience* concert in tandem with the Music Settlement in University Circle and recognizes young undergraduate composers in Northeast Ohio through its Collegiate Composition Contest.

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## Our 2024-2025 Season

Join us during our 67th season for music for organ, strings, voices, and much more, in exciting venues across Northeast Ohio!

**New Music for Organ | October 20, 2024 | 3pm**  
**Morley Memorial Hall | Lake Erie College | Painesville**

Guild members in collaboration with members of the American Guild of Organists

**Poiesis Quartet | March 16, 2025 | 3pm**  
**Drinko Hall | Cleveland State University**  
The Graduate Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music presents works by Guild members.

**Chamber Music and Sestina Choir | April 13, 2025 | 3pm**  
**Holy Rosary Church | Little Italy**  
A program of chamber and choral works presented in collaboration with Sestina Choir of Cleveland’s soaring voices.

**Creativity: Learning Through Experience XXXIII | May 18, 2025 | 3pm**  
**The Music Settlement | University Circle**  
Latest edition of our annual Junior Concert! Works written specially for young musicians by Cleveland Composers Guild members.

**Rescheduled: Chamber Music | June 2025 | TBD**  
**West Shore Unitarian Church | Rocky River**  
Duos, trios, and quartets by Guild members.

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