

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Department of Music,
as part of the William S. Newman Artists series,
presents

This Night, This Moment

Music of Allen Anderson

Saturday, October 29, 2022

8:00 pm

James and Susan Moeser Auditorium

Program

3 Alessandrans with Lullaby (2016/2022)*

Robert Buxton, piano

- i. Lu by all
- ii. Lalyblu, Blulyla
- iii. Blu Y'all
- iv. Lullaby

Evidence of Signs (2022) (pre-recorded performance)

Brooks de Wetter-Smith, flute

In Your Narrowing Dark Hours (2022)*

Julia Holoman, mezzo-soprano

- i. Night
- ii. Evening-Star
- v. Cartography

Mimi Solomon, piano

— Intermission —

Memento after Fernando Franco (2021)

Audrey Atherton, William Dowell, Emma Dunlap-Grube, Timothy Holley, Paula Peroutka,
Jonathan Simmons, Caroline Stinson, Lindsay Stipe, Brent Wissick, cello
Tonu Kalam, conductor

cym bow lick garden (2022)*

Tama Hochbaum, video

Think *That's You* (2019)*

Clara Yang, piano

This Night, This Moment (2007)

Susan Klebanow, conductor

UNC Chamber Singers

**premiere performance*

About Allen Anderson

Allen Anderson has written works for UNC Opera, the Raleigh Chamber Music Guild, Speculum Musicae, Ensemble Ascolta, the Empyrean Ensemble, the University of North Carolina Symphony Orchestra, the UNC Chamber Singers, UNC New Music Ensemble, Nicholas DiEugenio and Mimi Solomon, Aleck Karis, Clara Yang, Daniel Stepner, Tod Brody, Sara Soltau, Robert Buxton, and Julia Holoman, among others. Recent compositions include *In your Narrowing Dark Hours* for mezzo-soprano and piano on texts by Louise Bogan, Think *That's You* for piano solo, *Linen* for violin and piano, *Speak, Then* for large orchestra, and music for the Hans Richter's 1926 silent *Filmstudie*. Anderson's work has been acknowledged with awards or commissions from the Guggenheim, Fromm and Koussevitsky foundations, Chamber Music America, BMI, League of Composers/ISCM (both the National and Boston chapters), the Institute for Arts and Humanities at UNC and the Raleigh Chamber Music Guild. In 2005 he received the Goddard Lieberson Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His work has been described in *Fanfare* as "thoughtful, literate music that supplies its own logic; it makes an impact and is worth returning to for a point of view that suggests meaningful identities, relationships, and associations." *American Record Guide* says: "There is a playfulness and activity to his music that does feel somewhat mischievous," and ". . . the ingenuity in the interactions between instruments makes for engaging listening."

Before coming to UNC in 1996, he taught at Columbia University, Wellesley College, and Brandeis University. He teaches courses in composition and theory, and now, in his last semester, an introduction to improvisation.

Listening with Allen Anderson

Violinist Geoff Nuttall was known to jest, "The cool thing about music is that you don't have to know anything to get it." The statement is too simple to be simply true, but it's a good place to start when you're about to hear a slate of music for the first time. (Which you are if you are reading these notes on October 29, 2022 in Moeser Auditorium.) It's a little sentence that pokes you into thinking however you like as you listen. Into feeling however you do as you sit. For Nuttall, music is neither puzzling nor a puzzle to solve: it is a world of delights, shapes, and moments that circulate between composer, performers, and audience as a concert unfolds.

It is in the spirit of this verbal nudge that I offer some notes on the music of Allen Anderson. In the near decade Allen and I have worked together at UNC, I have countless heard him describe little facets of music and music making as "so cool," "neat," or "awesome." He talks about overhearing a student tinkering on a piano before class begins, he remembers the satisfaction of hearing a seasoned improviser nuance a musical idea in a concert, and he tells a story about a little compositional move that he likes to deploy. I've always heard these comments as a blend of brazen delight, clever attunement to craft, and curious—generous—ears. There is a cool thing about music, and Allen Anderson is listening, teaching, and composing in search of it.

Rather than mapping the concert terrain, I write along the glistening textures, out of the poetic images, and into the surprising melodic gestures of the works he is sharing this evening. Perhaps you, too, might style yourself as listening with Allen for sounds that surprise you, for moments that structure the space, and textures that invite you to lean in to hear, for example, as the pianissimo notes that open **Memento** unfurl again and again. Later in that work, pizzicato sounds across the cello choir splinter the elegant counterpoint of the sixteenth-century Mexican motet that provides footing for Anderson, and which he transcribes to bring the piece to a close. Allen often takes inspiration from others. Glimpses of visual art (especially that made by Tama Hochbaum), warm friendships, a fragment of written verse, or melodic modules serve as generative substrates for his own musical weaving and refiguring. In **Evidence of Signs** for Brooks de Wetter-Smith phrases lap themselves, with extraordinary leaps that shock and yawn the flute's register wide open. Across and among it, the dedicatee's initials are encoded in pitch.

It's fun to imagine what caught Anderson's mind's eye as you listen. Is it the profound touch that is stroking the back of an infant that anchors the loving and playful "excursions" of **3 Alessandrans with Lullaby**? That work concludes with a lilting tune dedicated to his grandniece. In what precedes the pianist elaborates arpeggiation to its maximum ranges and disjunctures, careening across and caressing the keyboard. The Alessandrans (after Alessandra) twist name and melody, soothing and vitalizing along the way: lu by all; Lalyblu, Blulyla; and BluY'all. Like so many musicians, Allen began making his own music picking out chords and patterns on a guitar. His electronic piece, **cym bow lick garden**, simmers with little motivic repetitions—sometimes rhythmic, sometimes melodic—that yearn, that sound like fabrics, metals, stones, and breath feel. As a toccata, **Think that's you** is about touch by definition. Notes and fingers cascade in tandem. I find orientation in imagining I am hearing in a hall of mirrors, where the slightest of angled reflections—maybe in sound that's the brief gasp of a pause or a clutched chord that twangs—keeps me kaleidoscopic.

Perhaps you've brought an autumnal mood to this evening's concert. The summer's cicadas still in your ears, you are ripe for the dusky vocal works on deck. Allen reads around poetry habitually, and when he writes with it, poems' meters and assonances sound anew. He crafts musical reflections by holding, then releasing, harmonic temptation. Breath, wind, and sighs are melded into liquid music. Louise Bogan's inky restraint seethes across the texts **In Your Narrowing Dark Hours**, and across his settings Allen draws out her dark lyricism with quick quiet notes that taunt against the sung silhouettes of the vocal line as it carves its way around melancholy. Finally, **This Night, This Moment**. The cool thing about this piece (for me, in this moment) is how the concerned question ("again?") accumulates, straining into a rhythmic unison of strength and unfurling stamina. How quickly it quiets and passes, leaving us to keep listening.

— Andrea Bohlman

Program Notes

3 Alessandrans with Lullaby is a collection of fanciful excursions based on the simple A major lullaby I wrote on the birth of my grandniece Alessandra Martinez.

I composed **Evidence of Signs** (the title from John Hollander's poem "Telling Fortune") as a birthday gift for flautist and UNC Professor Emeritus Brooks de Wetter-Smith. A short melodic figure present from the beginning is chased, twisted, and eventually bent into a motto based on his initials.

In Your Narrowing Dark Hours sets five texts by Elizabeth Bogan on scenes and thoughts of darkness, evening, and night, of breathing, pulse, and the self. I composed the songs for the mezzo-soprano Julia Holoman. Songs I, II, and V will be performed this evening.

Memento after Fernando Franco is a reflection and commentary for cello choir on a brief, four-voice "Memento Mei Deus" by the 16th century Mexico City composer Fernando Franco. The original choral setting is transcribed to end the piece, while a paraphrase of it appears near the beginning. Brent Wissick and the students in his UNC cello studio premiered the work in 2021.

cym bow lick garden for recorded sound with video by Tama Hochbaum explores the strangeness of the backyard. The main audio ingredients include recordings of a cymbal, a bowed cello, a metal bowl (with rubber ball), and an electric guitar lick.

For me, the puzzle with **Think That's You**, a *personality recognition (software) toccata* I wrote for pianist Clara Yang is trying to determine if the music is the imaginary machine processing the habits and proclivities of the object under scrutiny or whether it is the subject itself. Is the "touch" of the insistent sixteenth notes the nervous system of the agent or the sample rate of the scanner? Or, when the music repeats, which it does frequently, is it because it's in its nature to do so or is it because the machine needs to repeat a data packet to process it to memory?

This Night, This Moment is a setting of Li Po's poem on departure, impermanence, and a heightened sense of the present in translation by David Hinton. The music was commissioned by the UNC Department of Music in 2007.

— Allen Anderson

*Please join us in the rotunda after the concert for a reception
celebrating Allen Anderson's 26 years at Carolina.*

UNC Chamber Singers

Susan Klebanow, conductor

Soprano

Elizabeth Banyas
Sarah Brooks
Brynne Delaney
Lily Gray Fournoy
Sindhura Kondaveeti
Regan Rymes
Isabel Swindall

Alto

Aubrey Amster
Olivia Ciani
Molly Conway
Luna Hou
Riley Mills
Jessica Phillips
Kristen Rhoda

Tenor

Ethan Bunch
Justin DeLoach

Bass

Reid Bowman
Li Han
Jackson Moseley

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