



Concert Program - VAMS 2025

Quartetto Noûs

June 15th, 2025 | 18:30

Conservatorio di Musica Benedetto Marcello di Venezia | Venice, Italy

<i>History Repeats</i>	de Lima, Samuel
<i>Halcyon</i>	Holloway, Grace
<i>Festival of Lights</i>	Tirumala, Rajiv
<i>Agony</i>	Tse, Angela
<i>Salisbury From the Meadow</i>	Simpson, Kyle
<i>Chaconne in C#: "Blossom"</i>	Staten, Alex
<i>dream 1</i>	Hui, Xavier
<i>Hiraeth</i>	Pennington, Gracie
<i>"Dancing With Every Tear"</i>	Sjostedt, Samuel

Noûs (nûs) is a Greek word whose meaning is 'mind', and thence 'rationality', but also 'inspiration' and 'creativity'.

Quartetto Noûs

Formed in 2011, the Quartetto Noûs has gone on to established itself as one of the most interesting chamber music ensembles of its generation.

The quartet studied at the Accademia Walter Stauffer in Cremona with the Quartetto di Cremona, at the Basel Musik Akademie with Rainer Schmidt (Hagen Quartet), at the Escuela Superior de Música 'Reina Sofia' in Madrid and at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena with Günter Pichler (Alban Berg Quartet) and at the Lübeck Musikhochschule with Heime Müller (Artemis Quartet).

In 2014 Quartetto Noûs was selected to take part in the project 'Le Dimore del Quartetto'. In the same year, they were also awarded a scholarship offered by the Fundación Albeniz of Madrid.

The Piero Farulli Prize, given to the best emerging chamber music group was awarded to the quartet in 2015.

The versatility and the interpretative originality of the ensemble appears in the quartet's repertoire and the attention to the new compositional languages drives the Quartet to experiment with innovative concert formats like performing by heart in complete darkness.

The Noûs has worked with several contemporary composers and taken part in many cross-cutting projects with theatre and dance companies.

They have collaborated with renowned artists like Tommaso Lonquich, Andrea Lucchesini, Bruno Canino, Boris Petrushansky to name but a few.

In Italy the Quartet Noûs appears regularly in the most prestigious concert series.

Further afield the quartet regularly performs in United Kindom, Germany, Switzerland, France, Spain, Canada, United States, Colombia, South Korea and China.

Their performances have been broadcasted by several radio stations such as RAI Radio 3, Venice Classic Radio, Radio Clásica and RSI.

In 2013 and 2017 they were Quartet in residence at Festival Ticino Musica in Lugano.

The Quartetto Noûs has recorded with music labels such as Brilliant Classics, Tactus, DaVinci Edition and Warner Classics.

From 2021 to 2024 the Quartet has recorded the "complete" Shostakovich' string quartets, the piano quintet (with pianist Roberto Plano) and the octet (with the Quartetto di Cremona) for Brilliant Classics.

Quartetto Noûs

Noûs (nùs) è un antico termine greco il cui significato è mente e dunque razionalità, ma anche ispirazione e capacità creativa.

Il Quartetto Noûs, formatosi nel 2011, si è affermato in poco tempo come una delle realtà musicali più interessanti della sua generazione. Le sue coinvolgenti interpretazioni sono frutto di un percorso formativo nel quale la tradizione italiana si fonde con le più importanti scuole europee. Ha frequentato l'Accademia "Walter Stauffer" di Cremona nella classe del Quartetto di Cremona, la Musik Akademie di Basilea studiando con Rainer Schmidt (Hagen Quartett), l'Escuela Superior de Música "Reina Sofia" di Madrid e l'Accademia Musicale Chigiana di Siena con Günter Pichler (Alban Berg Quartett) e la Musikhochschule di Lubeca con Heime Müller (Artemis Quartett). Nel 2014 è stato selezionato per il progetto 'Le Dimore del Quartetto' grazie al quale è vincitore di una borsa di studio per l'anno 2015. Nello stesso anno gli viene inoltre riconosciuta un'importante borsa di studio offerta dalla Fundación Albeniz di Madrid. Nel 2015 si aggiudica il Premio "Piero Farulli", assegnato alla migliore formazione cameristica emergente nell'anno in corso, nell'ambito del XXXIV Premio "Franco Abbiati", il più prestigioso riconoscimento della critica musicale italiana. Riceve inoltre dal Teatro La Fenice di Venezia il Premio "Arthur Rubinstein - Una Vita nella Musica" 2015 ... *per essersi rivelato una delle formazioni più promettenti della musica da camera italiana ed aver dimostrato, nella sua ancor breve carriera, di saper affrontare la grande letteratura per quartetto in maniera matura, cercando un'interpretazione ragionata e non effimera del repertorio classico-romantico e del Novecento, proseguendo allo stesso tempo una ricerca seria e non episodica anche all'interno dei linguaggi della musica d'oggi.*

La versatilità e l'originalità interpretativa dell'ensemble si manifestano in tutto il repertorio quartettistico e l'attenzione ai nuovi linguaggi compositivi lo spingono a cimentarsi in performance innovative come suonare a memoria e totalmente al buio. Diverse le collaborazioni con compositori contemporanei e le partecipazioni a progetti trasversali con compagnie teatrali e di danza. Collabora inoltre con rinomati artisti tra cui Tommaso

Lonquich, Andrea Lucchesini, Alain Meunier, Giovanni Scaglione, Sonig Tchakerian, Boris Petrushansky, Bruno Canino, Alessandro Taverna, Gloria Campaner, Fabrizio Meloni, Enrico Bronzi, Roberto Plano

Si esibisce per importanti realtà musicali italiane, tra le quali la Società del Quartetto di Milano, l'Unione Musicale di Torino, gli Amici della Musica di Firenze, Bologna Festival e Musica Insieme di Bologna, la Società del Quartetto di Bergamo, la Società Veneziana di Concerti, l'Associazione Chamber Music di Trieste, l'Associazione Musicale Lucchese, l'Associazione Scarlatti di Napoli, I Concerti del Quirinale a Roma, lo Stradivari Festival di Cremona, il Ravenna Festival, le Settimane Musicali di Stresa e la Società dei Concerti di Milano.

All'estero viene invitato ad esibirsi in Germania, Svizzera, Francia, Inghilterra, Spagna, Belgio, Canada, Stati Uniti, Cina, Corea e India. Le sue esecuzioni sono state trasmesse da diverse emittenti radiofoniche come Venice Classic Radio, Radio Clásica, RSI e Radio 3.

Nel 2013 e nel 2017 è stato quartetto in residence al Festival Ticino Musica di Lugano.

Collabora con l'etichetta Warner Classics con la quale pubblica nel 2019 un disco contenente capolavori di Puccini, Boccherini, Verdi e Respighi.

Nel 2020 realizza per Brilliant Classics un progetto discografico interamente dedicato ai quartetti della compositrice italiana Silvia Colasanti.

Nel 2021 per la medesima etichetta discografica inizia l'incisione dell'integrale dei quartetti di Shostakovich.

Program Notes:

History Repeats

de Lima, Samuel
Ohio, United States

You tell me things get better with time, but I still had to watch my high school underclassmen get denied life-saving gender affirming care - the same care that I was fortunate enough to get before it was all shut down just months prior.

Halcyon

Holloway, Grace
United States of America

Halcyon draws its name from the ancient myth of Halcyone, a woman transformed into a kingfisher and granted a period of calm seas to nest each winter. Over time, “halcyon days” came to mean times of peace and tranquility—but the myth’s origin is anything but still. It’s a story of grief, transformation, and celestial mystery, linked to the bright star Alcyone in the Pleiades.

This piece embraces that complexity. Rather than depicting calm as stasis, Halcyon explores it as vibrancy in balance—a luminous, kinetic stillness. Bursting with color and rhythmic motion, the music suggests the glinting energy of a bird in flight, waves in motion, or stars coursing through the night sky. Melodic fragments shimmer and dart, sometimes converging in bright consonance, sometimes breaking apart into kaleidoscopic textures.

Like the myth itself, Halcyon is a meditation on beauty, movement, and the ephemeral nature of peace—not as absence, but as radiance held in delicate suspension.

dream 1

Hui, Xavier
Singapore

"Mid 2024, I decided that I needed a reset in my compositional output and approach. I was at a point, where I had lost meaning in the music which I had created thus far. Regarding them as sterile pedantic academic exercises, I wanted to write something not only which I can genuinely connect to, but also music that can genuinely connect to my audiences. Rather than writing for the sake of personal intellectual stimulation and gratification, I took a hiatus last year to reflect on music, and on life.

Come 2025, and I felt deeply refreshed and ready to take on this task. The dream series is my answer to this deeper calling for a deeper connection in my music. This series was inspired by the dual meaning of the word "dream": how dreams can represent both the subconscious chaotic flux created within our minds during sleep; as well as hope and aspirations. Regarding the first definition, I was quite interested in the concept of dream states, and how different layers of dreams intersect and collide in mysterious yet beautiful ways. In some sense, these pieces aim to depict this through layers upon layers of textural sophistication - complex interactions and behaviours between individual lines/ gestures, come together to create a larger living and breathing whole. Regarding the second definition, my inspiration stems from the countless people I have interacted in my life, and seeing how their hopes manifest (or crumble) due to various circumstances. Two things strike me the most deeply - the first: how shared hope has the power to connect even the most different of people; the second: the power of hope as a source of strength to go through even the most hellish and brutal of life's problems.

Each piece in the dream series explores a different perspective based on these two definitions. On the surface, dream 1 explores the notion of texture as process. The most elemental of materials are used as starting points, for various rhythmic and timbral processes to take place at both a micro and macro structural level. I am not so much concerned with the clarity and discernment of each individual process. Rather, I see the sum of processes as a living and breathing organism, almost like a kaleidoscope that invites new points of view with each listen. On a more representational level, this piece explores two key questions: how does hope burgeon; how do we cling on to hope? These two questions form the two main parts of the piece. I will stop here however. Being cautious of over-representation, it is not my intention to create universally understood symbols for each and every gesture/section. Rather, with this general frame, I would invite both performers and listeners alike, to interpret and create personal meaning by reflecting on the dreams that you have.

On a personal note, this series is dedicated to a group of close personal contacts, who have helped me get by in the harshest and darkest moments throughout various phases of my life. Their kindness, compassion and love, have inspired and lifted up many people around them up on their feet with renewed strength - to pursue their dreams."

Hiraeth

Pennington, Gracie

United States

Deriving chiefly from Wales and the Welsh language, Hiraeth is a word that describes a feeling deeper than nostalgia; it represents the deep longing and yearning for something (such as a place, time, or person) that cannot be retrieved or experienced again. In my piece consisting of three short movements, I attempt to recreate the aching feeling of hiraeth. The first movement, titled Longing, sets the harmonic precedent of the work. There is a certain emptiness in this movement, as if the thing that is being longed for is far out of reach and perhaps partially forgotten. The second movement, titled Loss, explores just how piercing grief can be. There are gaps in the melody at points, like memory gaps; as when one is away from something for so long, they may fear they might forget it. The fragmented melodies become complete and more upbeat before quickly drawing away, a harsh reminder that those times being longed for are long gone. The third movement, titled Comfort, attempts to pick up the pieces amidst the hollowness that is left behind when something is lost. It ends on a hopeful note, leaving a place to fill the hollow space left by what has been lost with new life and new experiences, while still remembering the beauty of what once was.

Salisbury From the Meadow

Simpson, Kyle

USA

This composition is inspired by John Constable's 1831 masterpiece Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows. The painting presents a vivid and dramatic landscape: the cathedral rising above a lush meadow, a pond reflecting storm-darkened skies, and a radiant rainbow arching through the clearing clouds. Often described as capturing the "full compass" of Constable's art, the work is rich with symbolism—depicting toil and journey through the cattle and stagecoach crossing the River Avon, and offering hope and transcendence through the rainbow after the storm.

In this music, I explore both my personal emotional response to the painting and some of the sentiments Constable himself expressed. He once said of the work, "I mean more than the rainbow itself—I mean dewy light and freshness, the departing shower, with the exhilaration of the returning sun." These feelings of "freshness" and "exhilaration," along with the painting's evocation of nature's constant flux, deeply influenced the shape and spirit of this composition.

The piece opens with a musical depiction of the cathedral's grandeur, followed by darker, weightier passages reflecting the storm and themes of mortality and struggle. Ultimately, it returns—renewed and uplifted—to a variation of the opening material, now imbued with the light, clarity, and emotional release inspired by Constable's rainbow.

"Dancing With Every Tear"

Sjostedt, Samuel

United States

This piece composed for oud and string quartet, is a reflection on the lifetime I've spent absorbing the music of Western Armenia and Anatolia. From afternoon talks with my grandmother, to studies with my instructors, the latter half of my life has been (in the best way possible) spent being consumed by the dances of the countryside, the hymns of the Badarak, and the haunting colors that exist within Armenian history. It is also a reflection to the lives of the Armenian immigrants who were forced to flee their homeland in the early 20th century, and pick up new lives, in a new land. Together, or sometimes alone.

Dancing With Every Tear is dedicated to my grandmother, Marie.

Chaconne in C#: "Blossom"

Staten, Alex

United States of America

The chaconne, as a vehicle for abstract musical expression, found its greatest flowering in the hands of Bach, and later Vitali; otherwise, it remains an entirely antiquated compositional structure in its original form.

Perhaps owing both to my predilection for anachronistic things, and to the great impressions Bach's and Vitali's respective chaconnes have left on me as a composer, it seemed natural, during a period of relative creative drought, to undertake the composition of a chaconne as a creative exercise.

As for the subtitle, "Blossom," it derives mostly from the central motif's role as a sort of thematic blossom, out of which each constituent section of music blooms into its own floret of the interconnected whole.

Notwithstanding the ostensibly sterile nature of this piece's provenance as a sort of study, the music nevertheless remains rooted deeply in an emotional reflection on the implacable cycle of new growth, decay, and inevitable death to which all living things are bound; wherefore the blossom, that symbol of the start of the cycle anew, seems all the more beautiful.

Festival of Lights

Tirumala, Rajiv

United States of America

Last summer, I visited the city of Vienna, Austria with my family. Among the many historical sites we visited such as the Schönbrunn Palace and the Hofburg Palace, we went for a concert at the Musikverein's Großer Saal and listened to the Wiener Mozart Orchestra perform. The music in that hall was so lush and majestic, each note as golden as the grandiose chandeliers that adorned the hall above the stage. The following day, we visited the top of Vienna at the Jubiläumswarte tower. As I looked out from the top, I could see the city from afar, many buildings dotting the horizon amongst the many rolling hills that surrounded it. The piece I composed, "Festival of Lights", is inspired by all the sights and sounds I was able to experience during my trip to Vienna.

Agony

Tse, Angela

The US and China

1. A
2. G
3. O
4. N
5. Y

The piece reflects a process of experiencing trauma.

It is also a callback from 2023, and Venice is the place where the piece was originated and was born.



Bios:

de Lima, Samuel

Ohio, United States

Samuel de Lima (he/they) is a Brazilian American undergraduate composition student at New York University studying with Dr. Jerica Oblak. Sam likes to explore psychology through both new and old methods of approaching composing. A pianist, guitarist, and cellist, he got his start at an early age performing as many genres as he could. Today Sam writes a wide selection of music including classical concert music, genre-bending songs, and film and game scores, with his score for producer Jaymica Rapisura's "Everything Is You" being featured in the Post Alley Film Festival and Bridge Film Festival. Through their concert music, they have collaborated with the Budapest Symphony Orchestra, Luna Composition Lab, Dither Guitar Quartet, Jonathan Haas, and Jacques Lee Wood.

Holloway, Grace

United States of America

Grace Holloway is a composer entering her final year of undergraduate study at Carnegie Mellon University, where she studies with Nancy Galbraith. Her work explores unique timbral nuance, formal clarity, and the expressive potential of contemporary concert music.

Their compositions have been performed by Carnegie Mellon students, various new music ensembles, and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. In addition to concert work, Grace is actively engaged in collaborative and interdisciplinary projects, continually shaping a compositional voice rooted in curiosity, craft, and artistic dialogue.

Hui, Xavier

Singapore

“siao” (adj (Hokkien): crazy

is one word that best describes the young Singaporean composer and conductor Xavier (b.2004). As a composer, he embraces - from music of the past to music of the present; from small tightly knit ensembles to large instrumental forces; from highly indeterminate to highly intricate music. Having formed his experimental ensemble what the FORTE after graduating high school, Xavier firmly believes in the concept of “collaborative composition”, seeing his performers and non-musical partners as equal collaborators in creating music.

When not composing (and pulling his hair out trying to explore an infinite number of compositional possibilities...), Xavier also actively conducts. Having formed Re:Cinta Wind Symphony, he has led the group to new heights, most notably a live-projection concert involving music from the anime series Hibike Euphonium. Xavier is strongly against the notion of the “solitary desktop composer”. Conducting is one of the many ways he pushes himself to be in touch with musicians and actively participate in the music making process.

At present, Xavier is a first year composition student at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music. Having been awarded the NUS Merit Scholarship, Xavier is under the tutelage of Dr Peter Ivan Edwards, and Dr Chen Zhang Yi. Xavier also studies conducting under Dr Robert Casteels.

Pennington, Gracie

Charleston, South Carolina, United States

Gracie Pennington is a composer from Charleston, South Carolina. She attended the Charleston County School of the Arts for high school, with a focus in violin performance. It was there that she discovered a passion for music composition, especially scores for film and video games. During her teen years she took part in the 2022 Nowbeat Composer Workshop as well as the Marvin Hamlisch International Film Scoring Awards. Through these experiences, she realized music composition was her path in life, and she enrolled and was accepted into the University of South Carolina for music composition. During college, she has composed many works, two having been performed on stage at USC's own recital hall.

Now at the age of nineteen, she is eager for opportunities to explore the world of music and make connections with other musicians across the globe. She recently has joined the USC ASTA (American String Teacher Association) branch to make connections with the music education world and to write grade-level music for beginning and intermediate musicians. She hopes to one day pursue a career in video game scoring, film scoring, and new music composition.

Outside of music composition, she is a Japanese Language minor at the University of South Carolina. She also studies violin under Dr. William Terwilliger at USC.

Simpson, Kyle

USA, Los Angeles,

Kyle Simpson DMA, is a film composer, educator, and conductor. His concert music has been performed by professional groups such as The Unheard-of//Ensemble, Hypercube, Janacek Philharmonic, Sofia Philharmonic, and most recently The Brazilian National Symphony. His film scores have appeared in numerous film festivals both nationally and internationally, with his latest short film score to What's in the Forest (2023, Zoe Xandra, dir.) winning "Best Original Score" in both the Madrid International Movie Awards and the Hollywood Blood Horror Festival. He is currently Assistant Professor and Director of the Media Composition Program at California State University, Northridge in Los Angeles, CA.

Sjostedt, Samuel

Worcester, Massachusetts, United States

Samuel Sjostedt is an Armenian - American composer and oud player from Worcester, Massachusetts. Holding a bachelor's degree in composition from Berklee College of Music, Samuel has performed his pieces with various ensembles all over the United States, and a multitude of his works have been performed globally. He is also the co-founder and oud player for the contemporary folk ensemble, Armadi Tsayn. By finding inspiration in Western Armenian classical and folk music, it's Samuel's goal to echo these sound worlds in his work.

Staten, Alex

United States of America

In lieu of accolades, how about a leading question: what was that one great wisdom of Old Qoheleth— "nothing new under the sun"? Well, spite this old philosopher's futile attempt to condemn all creativity as redundant for the ensuing millennia, Alex Staten— writer; composer; percussionist; photographer; none of the above— endeavors with great persistence to demonstrate in his work that, indeed, though a thousand identical bricks may be baking in the midday sunlight of our creative age, yet there will always need be made a thousand more. So the anachronistic, unrefined tonality of Alex's words, music, and photographs comprises his clay, baking somewhere, undoubtedly, amid the pallet's lower layers.

Tirumala, Rajiv

California, USA

Rajiv Tirumala is a sophomore at Santa Clara High School, and has been playing the double bass since he was 10 years old. He currently studies the double bass under Mr. Bruce Moyer. Rajiv served as Principal Double Bassist for both his school orchestra and the San Jose Youth Symphony. Currently, he is part of the California Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. He also had the privilege of performing at Carnegie Hall twice, and, this past summer in 2024, at London's Royal Festival Hall with the Honors Performance Series. This past fall, he was selected to perform with the Stanford Symphony Orchestra. For the past four years, Rajiv has been teaching himself to compose music. He has completed a music theory course at Mission College and has pursued an ABRSM certification in music theory this year. He is also a composer with The Nowbeat Project, in collaboration with The Juilliard School.

Tse, Angela

The US and China

Angela Tse is a young composer who has recently completed their Bachelor of Music in Composition at the Manhattan School of Music.

Their works have been performed over New York and China, collaborating with international performers, conductors, and orchestras, including the most recent premiere of their orchestra thesis C-R-U-S-H with MSM Symphony Orchestra in Neidorff-Karpati Hall. Angela is a multifaceted and prolific composer who has created an amount of works in various genres, including symphony, chamber music, electronics, musical theatre and pop. In recent years, the themes of their music approach to the reflective thoughts of the deep connection between music, science and philosophy ideas considering their additional interests in physics and astronomy. Angela has received a number of commissions in recent years, and have also organized and programed an orchestral concert in Beijing China, summer 2024, held in the Central Conservatory. Being admitted to the Veneto Art and Music Summit, Angela will have their new composition premiered in Venice as well as places around Veneto, Italy, summer 2025.