



New Music Delaware presents

Smith Opera and Capstone Projects

Wednesday, May 13, 2026
8 p.m.
Puglisi Orchestra Hall
in the Roselle Center for the Arts
University of Delaware

Program

<i>Insectarium</i> (2026) I. Atticus Atlas II. Elytra	Aaron McCloskey
<i>Spectre</i> (2026)	Will Doyle
<i>Deluge</i> (2026)	Alejandro Lobo

— Intermission —

<i>a grain of sand</i> , a chamber opera in one act (2025) Scene I: The Beach Scene II: Mirror Scene III: Contemplation I Scene IV: Dollhouse Scene V: Junk Scene VI: Ship in a Bottle Scene VII: Contemplation II Scene VIII: Rose	Rachael Smith
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Nicole Stover, soprano
Mairin Srygley, mezzo-soprano

New Music Delaware Sinfonietta
Yoshiaki Onishi, conductor

All World Premieres

New Music Delaware Sinfonietta

Personnel

Aaron Dore*, flutes
Zander Barrow, oboe
Matt Vice, clarinet
Zane Ballenger*, bassoon
Melanie Robinson*, horn
Hannah Goldstone, trumpet
George Mayo III, trumpet
Alex Mizroch, trombone
Ruby Whitesell, trombone
Julie Nishimura, piano
Lily Cohoon, percussion
Jack Felts, percussion
Jacob Fullinwider, percussion
Keegan Vaughan, percussion
Anthony Chan*, violin
Alexander Covelli*, violin
Roger Shao*, violin
Brian Jennings*, viola
Wil Vanderslice*, cello
Nick Bedway*, contrabass

* Members of the UD Chamber Music Collective

Introduction

Three composers on this program—Will Doyle, Aaron McCloskey, and Alejandro Lobo—are graduating in a matter of weeks and have each chosen to write for sinfonietta as their capstone projects. These works summarize their maturity and growth as composers over four years of undergraduate study at the University of Delaware. Amid the varied themes on which the pieces are based—celebrations of insects, investigations into tuning and instrumental timbre, and ruminations on floods of mental and material states—one might ask: in what ways do these three works share a common thread?

These pieces move beyond the notion of music as storytelling; instead, they distill their narratives to an essence. Through these essences, the works suggest—or signal—specific musical and compositional situations. “Aural tableaux” may more closely describe what the composers are creating. Their pieces come to life and exist on their own terms, just as their composers do, creating space for those who listen to reflect. Listening, through the composers’ generous act of making such space, becomes a personal act: we may never fully know who the composers are or what they intended, but we are invited to extend our own faculties as we encounter the sounds they have woven. In this sense, all three works are offered in a spirit of generosity—an act in which the composers “step aside” to invite us into their cosmologies. We thus witness the emergence of these sound creators as they set forth with curiosity beyond their time at UD.

What about Rachael Smith’s opera, *a grain of sand*? On one hand, the work presents a clear narrative arc, finely shaped through thoughtful orchestration. On the other hand, it gestures toward the idea of time—and its passing. What might it mean to grow old? What might it mean—thinking of Proust—to reminisce and attempt to recover lost time? Through this exploration of time, we are prompted to reflect on our own identities, just as Smith herself does throughout the work. She describes the piece as a “love letter” to her past. Her musical “gaze” toward that past becomes reflected in our own, compelling us to look inward as well. Yet, after this moment of deep reflection, Smith’s opera encourages us to look toward the future—toward the unknown we ought to embrace. What, then, might she find there? And what might *we* find?

Finally, this concert poses an important question: can a new music ensemble dedicated to contemporary repertoire be formed at the University of Delaware

School of Music? You are about to witness a moment that may well serve as a touchstone in answering it.

– Yoshiaki Onishi

Program Notes

Aaron McCloskey: *Insectarium*

Insectarium (2026) is a four-movement work for sinfonietta. Each movement of this piece represents a different kind of insect. Inspired by Holst, Ravel, and Mort Garson, this piece uses modal harmony, polyphony, and extended techniques to portray the beauty of differences each of these insects show.

First movement, *Atticus Atlas* represents the Atlas moth and its grandiose flight patterns. The Atlas moth, or sometimes referred to as its scientific name *Atticus Atlas*, is one of the largest moths in the world. It lives in dry tropical forest across Asia, and has a wingspan from a range of 250-300mm. The Atlas moth is most recognized by its strikingly large wings, with a pattern of a snake on its forewing. Due to their great size, they are named after Atlas, a titan of Greek mythology. This piece aims to represent the sheer size of its wings through fluttering sextuplet patterns in the strings and winds. The introduction of this work sets a rainforest soundscape using wind sounds in the brass, key clicks, and small melodic gestures appearing through the trees.

Second movement, *Elytra* represents the beetle. Beetles are an incredibly diverse order of insects, having over 400,000 described species. Beetles are extremely important in their ecosystems, breaking down dead matter and reusing waste. All beetles have a hard exoskeleton known as the Elytra, this piece's namesake. The elytra protects the softer wings inside, and often make a particular chittering sound in takeoff. This piece aims to represent the sound and excitement that comes with the flight of a beetle. Certain string excerpts represent the sound of a flying insect going quickly past your ear. Marimba is used to emulate the sound of the hard elytra exoskeleton. Quick tremolos appear throughout the work in both strings and percussion to emulate the buzzing of wings.

– Aaron McCloskey

Will Doyle: *Spectre*

“Why is it that a compound tone consisting of many harmonic partials is normally and immediately perceived as a single tone, rather than as a chord?”

- James Tenney, 1983

The above question, posed by the American composer James Tenney as part of a writing on the harmony of John Cage, is framed in context as a descriptive one: we have observed that our ears tend to fuse pitches that are related by certain mathematical ratios, and the question of why that occurs will eventually be understood with further development in our scientific understanding of human auditory perception. An interesting compositional point of departure, however, emerges from interpreting this question prescriptively: why *should* it be that a compound tone, containing within itself the vast, vibrant world of pitch content that is the harmonic series, is reduced in traditional musical understanding to be a singular note? Much of traditional, Western musical composition is centered on the notion that notes cannot have meaning until they have been given melody, rhythm, harmony, and form. Yet, when we choose to listen with intensity to a drone from a string bass, or a long tone from a wind instrument, we begin to perceive a world of polyphonic harmonic partials, moving in subtle pulsations that shift, rhythmically, in and out of our focus. Sound contains a music of its own.

Spectre is a work born out of a fascination with the pieces and composers associated with the “spectralist” movement, an approach to creating music that places timbre—the emergence of sound from an accumulated spectrum of harmonics at various amplitudes—at the center of musical development. This school includes such composers as Gérard Grisey, Tristan Murail, Kaija Saariaho, and the quoted James Tenney, though there are undoubtedly strong differences in compositional approach between all of them and most would reject a unifying compositional label.

In my fixation on this style of compositional understanding, I grew interested in interrogating what it means to capture the idea of *spectra* musically, beyond the harmonic series. I developed as my musical materials correlating spectrums of rhythms, of dynamics, of intonation, of “airiness” and “reediness,” and of “sul ponticello” and “sul tasto.” The various forms of movement along

these continua of sound define the character of the piece.

– Will Doyle

Alejandro Lobo: Deluge

How does physical and mental stress manifest itself within the body? This recent question and fascination led to *Deluge*. As an athlete and coach I've witnessed the body's failure to manage stress, resulting in gruesome or irritating persistent injuries. In other situations, I've also experienced the gradual accumulation of mental stress that builds over months toward a breaking point, where, like a bursting dam, the stress manifests itself in anxiety responses, physical illness from prolonged immune weakness, or sleep disorders and other unwanted physical responses. I think of this flood-like effect as a "mental deluge."

All forms of stress incite intriguing and complex reactions and responses within biological matter, but in analogous ways for inanimates. *Deluge* draws a parallel between these two forms of flood-like stress manifestations. Just as the body responds to stress, so too do our environments: materials wear, structures weaken, and landscapes are reshaped by water and wind over time. The piece explores this shared process of pressure, rupture, and aftermath.

The primary musical elements shaped by these ideas are form, timbre, texture, and gesture. Sudden, loud, rhythmically unpredictable, and often destabilizing full-ensemble impacts evoke the force of deluge: once set in motion, these currents cannot be stopped, only endured. Throughout the work, extreme contrasts in register, density, and patterning blur the line between structure and perceived randomness.

As the piece unfolds, the deluge begins to de-intensify. Pitched material gradually gives way to timbral and noise-based sonorities, suggesting both structural breakdown and the loss of clarity that accompanies prolonged stress. In the later stages, moments of relative stillness representing recovery emerge with increasing durations. These passages explore the aftermath: the slow, uneven process of repair following both environmental catastrophe and psychological rupture. Like a landscape reshaped by floodwaters, or the lingering cognitive haze following a mental breaking point, what remains is permanently altered

and reminds us of the fragility and always changing nature of humanity.

Deluge is dedicated to my loving and illuminating mother, Michele Lobo, who was diagnosed with breast cancer near the conception of this piece. In many ways, she is the opposite of the obnoxious, overpowering, destructive, and eerie Deluge, yet she possesses a profound strength of spirit, defined by passion, altruism, and unwavering care for others. The clarity and intensity of her character mirror, in a different light, the same sense of force and presence that shapes this work.

My mother is a warrior. Her love for others endures and overcomes even her most difficult struggles, as shown through months of surgeries and treatment. She is the glue not only of our family, but of many others. Beyond the dreams she has nurtured in me, she has dedicated her life to helping children and families through her work in childhood development and physical therapy for infants and children with motor disabilities at the University through wearable technology and contributions in health science research.

It is my great privilege to dedicate this work to her and her ongoing fight with cancer: to her strength, her compassion, and all that she has given to others.

– Alejandro Lobo

Rachael Smith: a grain of sand

a grain of sand is a one act opera for soprano, mezzo-soprano, and sinfonieta and was written between Spring 2022 and Spring 2025. The work uses an original libretto and pulls narrative inspiration from Socrates, Plutarch, and Thomas Hobbes, and from additional media such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking Glass*, and *What Alice Found There* by Lewis Carroll, and *Genshin Impact*. The goal of the work is to be an exploration of “the self” and identity through both narrative and musical elements.

In the opera, a woman wakes up on a deserted beach having lost her memory. After regaining consciousness, various objects emerge from the sand that relate to her identity in some way. As she inspects the objects, the woman attempts to make observations of who she may have been and what may have happened to her.

The story takes place over the course of eight scenes, with each scene being symbolic of a different part of identity; the self as a reflection of environment, physical appearance, relationships, childhood, material possessions, goals and ambitions, internal thoughts and memory, and choices. Musically, *a grain of sand* seeks to represent identity through the various elements of harmony, melody, instrumentation, and texture. When choosing musical materials, I sought out ways to take completed ideas and fragment them into smaller parts and spread them throughout the full range of the ensemble, coalescing as the work progresses. I also sought to write musical materials that aurally referenced different moments within my own life to create musical symbolic connections through the use of pastiche. Throughout the opera, the musical and narrative materials come together to form the identity of the nameless main character, while building the expectation, and acceptance, that the new-found identity is a temporary one.

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To the University of Delaware School of Music and New Music Delaware: Thank you endlessly for all the support of this project.

To the UD School of Music musicians: Thank you for the priceless gift of your time and talents.

To Nicole and Mairin: Thank you for bringing my characters to life. Seeing them realized from the page is a dream come true and I can't thank you both enough.

To my Peabody teachers Du Yun and Katherine Balch: Thank you for your guidance during my time at Peabody. I learned so much through this process and I am incredibly grateful for your mentorship.

To the graduating seniors: Thank you for sharing your music as a part of this concert. I am so proud of all of you and I can't wait to see what you do next!

To my students and colleagues: Thank you for all of your enthusiastic support. Getting to be a part of the UD School of Music is such a joy and a privilege and I'm so grateful for each day I get to spend teaching, learning, and making music with you all.

To my friends and family: Thank you so much for always supporting me. My DMA was a marathon and I couldn't have done it without you all.

And last but not least, thank you to my wonderful friend and colleague Yoshiaki Onishi for conducting and organizing. There truly aren't enough words to express how grateful I am to get to work alongside you. You are an amazing mentor and I've learned so much from you over the last three years.

Special shoutout to the UD composition cats Schubert and Dorian for all their meownifesting and pawsitive vibes.

– Rachael Smith

Biographies

Aaron McCloskey is a 22 year-old queer American composer, pianist, and music educator born in 2004 in Wilmington, DE. He is graduating in 2026 with a bachelor's degree in music composition, and currently works as a composition and piano instructor at Meridee Winters School of Music in Ardmore, PA. Since entering the composition program at the University of Delaware, he has written eight full-scale works, and has studied under Dr. Jennifer Barker, Dr. Yoshiaki Onishi, and Dr. Rachael Smith. His latest piece, *Insectarium* (2026), is a four-movement work for sinfonietta inspired and influenced by the music of Ravel, Holst, and Mort Garson. His work draws inspiration from the natural world, using extended techniques and prepared piano to create unique soundscapes. Aaron is passionate in composing for collaborative media such as video games and film, where he can merge his love for storytelling and sound design. Aaron has composed for chamber musicians, percussionists, vocalists, and electronic mediums.

Delaware born-and-raised, **Will Doyle** (b. 2004) is a composer, pianist, and amateur percussionist whose artistic work is caught between a curiosity for harmonic and timbral complexity and a longing for formal and contrapuntal

grounding. Drawing inspiration from natural phenomena, queer disorientation, folk traditions, the experience of autism, and the beauty of music in and of itself, he seeks to translate personal experiences and perceptions into music that rewards thoughtful engagement.

As a pianist, Doyle has performed on piano and other keyboards with the University of Delaware Wind Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, and Symphonic Orchestra, as well as in collaborations with fellow composition students. Representing the School of Music within the broader Newark community, he has played engagements both as a soloist and as part of a combo for such venues as The Audion, Building X, and the Wright House, and for such distinguished guests as Governor Matt Meyer, Joe and Jill Biden, Dr. Laura Carlson, Dr. Marichu Valencia, and Don Puglisi.

A proud Sinfonian, Doyle has served as president of the Xi Mu Chapter of Phi Mu Alpha over the past year, helping lead social, musical, and charitable initiatives in support of the brotherhood and the wider community.

Costa Rican American composer and guitarist **Alejandro Lobo** (b. 2004) crafts music that immerses listeners in “harmonically rich” and “narratively driven” sonic ecosystems. His work is marked by a nuanced attention to detail that ensures “every note is intentional” (the Review). Viewing composition as a dialogic, communal art form, Lobo treats music as a fluid, permeable language that prioritizes color and emotional grammar above conventional frameworks. His recent projects engage with gradual transformation, environmental/biological phenomena, and the architecture of language and culture.

Lobo has recently collaborated with the Bergamot Quartet, Ecce Ensemble, Valencia International Contemporary Ensemble, ISAM Ensemble, JCA Ensemble, and the University of Delaware’s Concert Choir and Guitar Ensemble. He has received numerous accolades, most notably: the Presser Foundation Award, the Eagleson Memorial Award, the Jefferson Prize, and the National Hispanic Recognition Award.

Lobo’s strong ties to his Costa Rican heritage are deeply expressed through his music. This heritage traces back to his great grandfather, Raúl Cabezas Duffner, a founder of the country’s National Conservatory and the first Costa

Rican to perform at Carnegie Hall. Lobo returns often to compose, perform, and visit his family.

His academic work includes award-winning research on “DuPonts’ Musical Legacy: Northern Delaware’s Music of 1890-1920” and extensive studies of Latin American guitar culture and technique abroad in Costa Rica, Panama, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. He has been invited to present across the US and abroad in San José (CR), Valencia (ES), and Buenos Aires (AR).

Lobo is co-founder of the Outward Collective and New Music Ensemble, a composer-performer-led initiative dedicated to advancing new music through multidisciplinary performance, promotion, and collaboration alongside fellow composers Robbie Strauss and S.E. Andrews.

A Mária Telkes Distinguished Scholar, Lobo is currently Composer-in-Residence with the Wilmington Classical Guitar Society. He studies at the University of Delaware with composers Yoshiaki Onishi, Rachael Marie Smith, and Jennifer Barker.

Outside of music, Lobo enjoys writing poetry, rock climbing, strategy games, and competitive distance running. He proudly possesses personal records of 1:14:10 and 2:38:16 in the half and full marathons (5:39 & 6:02 min per mile).

Rachael Smith is an American composer, librettist, and educator from Brockport, NY. As a composer, she uses sound as a vehicle for story telling and commentary. She has worked with a wide variety of groups such as the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, A/tonal, SHUFFLE, the SUNY Fredonia Department of Theatre and Dance, and the Performing Arts Company at SUNY Fredonia. She has also been commissioned by the Metropolis Ensemble as a part of the Biophony Project at the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, the Fredonia College Symphony as a part of their COVID Zoomworks project, and was the recipient of the 2020 Dr. T.Y. Huang and Mrs. Mary Huang Commission Competition.

In addition to being a composer, Rachael is also a playwright, librettist, lyricist, with her text being performed at SUNY Fredonia, the Bowling Green State University MicroOpera Festival, and the NOW Festival at the Conservatory of Music at Baldwin Wallace. Her libretti have been described as “witty, evocative, and unsettling, in just the right way.”

Rachael received her BM in Music Composition at the State University of New York at Fredonia where she studied with Andrew Martin Smith and Rob Deemer, received her MM in Music Composition at the University of Louisville where she studied with Steve Rouse and Krzysztof Wolek, and she received her DMA in Music Composition at the Peabody Conservatory where they studied with Du Yun and Katherine Balch.

Rachael has been an instructor of record at the University of Louisville and Peabody Conservatory, and currently teaches music theory and composition at the University of Delaware.

Nicole Stover is a vibrant soprano with a passion for collaborative storytelling, holding performance degrees from both Peabody Conservatory (MM) and the University of North Texas (BM). She loves to sing as part of a group and always finds the most rewarding part of a performance to be in discovering the community that makes it possible. She is also one of the founders of Charm City Opera Retreat in Baltimore, a new program designed to support local early - career singers during audition season.

As a versatile performer and vocalist, Nicole is often found singing in the Baltimore area. This Spring, she is actively preparing programs with the Emmanuel Choir, early music ensemble Basso Celestia, the Schola Cantorum of the Baltimore Basilica, and the contemporary / classical choral ensemble Dualis.

Favorite performances include Darlene from Michael Mills' *Take me Down*, Inaugural concerts with Charm City Opera Retreat, the Cecelia Collective, and PitchCraft Collective, Barbara Strozzi's *Salve Sancta Caro* with Basso Celestia, and a special showcase at Sprague Community Theater in Bandon, Oregon this past September. Nicole has also been featured as a soloist in Bernstein's *MASS!*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Bach's *B minor Mass*, and Craig Hella Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepard*.

Nicole teaches private voice and piano lessons in the DC metro area and loves working with new voices of all ages. She will also be returning for a third year to Duke Ellington School of the Arts as an instructor for their Vocal Music Summer Intensive. When she isn't performing or teaching lessons, Nicole is

usually found at home practicing and digging through art song texts or her home garden for inspiration.

Mezzo-soprano **Mairin Srygley** is a versatile storyteller praised for her “palpable sincerity” and musicianship in opera, art song, and contemporary music. Recent 2026 highlights include first place in the NATSAA Mid-Atlantic Region competition, tied second place in the Joy in Singing Art Song competition, and her South American concert debut with the Colchagua Vocal Institute of Chile. Coming up, she will debut the roles of Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* and La Zia Principessa in *Suor Angelica* with Camerata Bardi/Teatro Grattacielo in New York and Italy. She will also be part of the world premiere of *a grain of sand*, a new opera by Rachael Smith, at New Music Delaware, and the world premiere of *Mirrored Play*, an outdoor sculptural performance piece by composer Ashi Day and artist Dawn Whitmore.

In 2024-25, Mairin completed fellowships with the Toronto Summer Music Festival and the Mostly Modern Festival, and debuted the roles of Sister Helen in Heggie’s *Dead Man Walking* and Sheila in Whitacre’s *Gift of the Magi* as an Opera AACC Young Artist. Other highlights of previous seasons include appearances with the National Symphony Orchestra, the Newark Symphony Orchestra, and the Chicana Art Song Project, and engagements under the batons of Marin Alsop, Helmuth Rilling, and Kenneth Slowik. Notable past roles include Mother in *Hansel and Gretel*, Sesto in Mozart’s *La clemenza di Tito*, Narrator (all female solos) in Craig Hella Johnson’s *Considering Matthew Shepard*, and the title role in the new opera *Penelope and the Geese* by Milica Paranosic.

Mairin is passionate about curating recital programming with intention, curiosity, and a bit of irreverence. Curated programs include “Return Beautiful Era,” a concert program for voice, organ, and oboe, “When I am Alone,” a multi-sensory experience exploring what it means to be alone post-pandemic, and “What She Said,” a song recital juxtaposing Debussy’s *Chansons de Bilitis* with love songs by French women composers. As a licensed voice therapist, Mairin also maintains an online voice studio/clinic for professional voice users and is professor of vocal pedagogy for the University of Maryland Opera Studio. www.masvoice.org

Yoshiaki Onishi is a Japanese-American composer, conductor, and clarinetist. As a composer, he is interested in exploring a wide range of instrumental timbres and finding ways to incorporate them in musical syntaxes and forms that disrupt the sense of expectation. Noted by a New York Times critic Anthony Tommasini for its “varied, eerily alluring sounds,” Onishi’s music has been performed worldwide by organizations such as New Japan Philharmonic, Asko|Schönberg Ensemble, Klangforum Wien, Nieuw Ensemble, Distractfold Ensemble, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Quatuor Diotima and JACK Quartet. With his 2010 work *Départ dans...*, Onishi became the laureate of the Gaudeamus Prize 2011. He is named a 2018 Guggenheim Fellow. Other recent honors include the Fromm Commission in 2018 and artistic residency fellowships from Künstler*dorf Schöppingen (Germany), Civitella Ranieri Foundation (Italy). His works are published by Edition Gravis in Berlin, Germany.

As a conductor deeply engaged in promoting the music of today, Onishi served as Assistant Conductor then Director for the Mizzou New Music Ensemble. He was one of the founding members of Ensemble Exophonie Tokyo and its Artistic Director/Conductor/Composer Associate. Recent conducting engagements include a residency at Stanford University with the Ensemble Kujoyama from Kyoto, Japan in October 2023, a portrait concert of Makoto Shinohara at Tokyo Opera City in July 2021, and a concert “An Evening of Today 2014” with Nieuw Ensemble in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. He has conducted many ensembles and orchestras, working closely with composers of his generation.

As a clarinetist and improviser, he has worked with composers and musicians such as George Lewis, Alvin Lucier, Eli Wallace, Miles Brown, and Oswald Huynh. Together with Santiago Beis, he plays in the Onishi-Beis Duo, an electroacoustic improvisation duo. The duo has released two albums to date.

Onishi received his doctorate in music composition from Columbia University in New York in 2015. Onishi has held teaching positions at Columbia University and Toho Gakuen School of Music in Tokyo, Japan, and the University of Missouri School of Music. Since fall of 2023, Onishi is Assistant Professor of Music Composition at the University of Delaware School of Music. (LinkTree: <https://linktr.ee/YoshiakiOnishi>)

Gratitude

- Daniel Stevens, Director, UD School of Music
- Event Staff and Scheduling Team (Sharon Whetham, Fred Barr, John Alt, Ben McMonagle, Alejandro Lobo, and all the student workers)
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- The New Music Delaware Committee
- All Colleagues and Staff at the UD School of Music for their support in new music
- All Students whose curiosity and enthusiasm will move the music of tomorrow
- **You** for coming to the concert or watching the live-stream online

Thank you