

About the Music.

A Love Letter to the Queer Community is an homage to our quartet's roots, identity, and mission. This program includes four of the pieces in our Oberlin Commission Project, all written by current students or alumni of Oberlin Conservatory who are queer or trans people of color (QTPOC). Jeff Scott's commission honors the lives of four activists central to the fight for queer and trans rights: Marsha P. Johnson, Harvey Milk, Silvia Rivera, and Jeanne Manford. The plethora of genres, styles, influences, and experiences reflected in this program are tied together by an implicit courage, a yearning for a better, safer world.

— *Poesis Quartet*

When I was contacted by the Poesis Quartet about the commission of ***commonplace little perils***, I was two weeks away from traveling to the Rockies to be a full-time wrangler on a horse ranch for the summer. It seemed obvious: my string quartet would be about my time in the mountains, somehow or some way. But *what* about the mountains I wanted to address seemed elusive as I started to brainstorm.

As soon as I started writing poetry about it, though, what was so formative about my time there became incredibly clear. It was the way that the beauty of the nature surrounding me seemed shrouded by the dangers found within it. Sudden storms, falling pines, sinkholes, bears, wildfires: all of these are perilous, and

yet we viewed them as commonplace and did what we could to protect ourselves. It was almost impossible for me not to see parallels to the way marginalized people exist in today's world. We see the dangers, and we move forward with quiet acknowledgment.

The work is presented in three sections. The first, *dawn song*, creates a soundscape of the mountains at daybreak, with gestures representing bird calls, wind, and the distant sound of the cargo train at the station in town. The second section, *beautiful dangers*, marks a stark shift from the external to the internal, in the processing of the wide expanse of nature and the perils it presents. It features spoken text shared among the performers, selections from poems written throughout my time in the mountains. The final section, *wildfire sunsets*, exists as a combination of the internal and external, with melodic arcs that shift between the impending pressures of these little dangers and a sense of hope, reaching beyond the smoke and storms to take in the beauty of the mountains.

— ***Max Lang***

Max Lang (they/he/she) is a writer, vocalist, and composer from Columbus, Ohio. They are currently working toward their BA in Creative Writing and Musical Studies at Oberlin College. Although not a composition student, Max has received inter-departmental invitations to write several works for vocal chamber performance, including 2025's They Shut Me Up in Prose for

string quartet and five voices, set to an Emily Dickinson poem of the same name. Outside of composing, Max works with horses, writes poetry, and sings in an a capella group.

My composition ***Circus of the Mind*** is a reflection of the human experience and the experience of being in consciousness, of watching your mind undulate and play games with you, dance and have a theater. It's about exploring all these different layers and modes of yourself, trying to touch a common human experience, whatever your circus is. I think we all have our own circus going on inside. I'm genderqueer, and I hate labels, to the point where I don't even like to label my gender. I just like to be; "I am." I also hate putting genre labels on things and I don't like staying in the box. A lot of my pieces can range from feeling experimental to modern to jazz, but I let them all commingle and I don't really aim for a genre when I'm composing.

— **Daniel Lasagna**

Daniel Lasagna (they/them) is a multifaceted composer, MC, and musician. As a composer, Daniel has two goals: to create a shared cathartic moment that is healing, intimate, and revealing, and also to destroy limiting categories and definitions. They attended Cincinnati's School for Creative & Performing Arts and received two degrees from Oberlin College and Conservatory: a BA in Creative Writing and a BM in Jazz Composition.

Order grew out of the idea that we tend to view our beliefs, however passionate or banal they are, as natural, simple, consonant. Consequently, anything outside of that is often regarded as convoluted and inconceivable, even terrifying. The piece opens with a choral — a hymn, if you will. An ode to idealism, however hesitant and strained, however crumbling the facade of certainty. But as new ideas and perspectives and orders and commandments are introduced, one instrument at a time, they scatter the fragile opening theme and drive us into a chaotic, violent whirlwind of mimosis, motifs, and emotional extremes. Order is lost, hope is gone, any paths for communication are compromised — and yet we continue to scream, "What happened to the world I knew could be?"

— **Calvin Ray Shawler**

Calvin Ray Shawler (they/them) studies Composition at Oberlin College and Conservatory, where they have written and directed many theater pieces including Eurydice Tells Orpheus Goodbye (2024), Wait for Me, Goodbye, Look Up, I Love You (2023), and [INSERT future HERE] (2022), which garnered a Tri-Valley Innovators Award. They have written and directed short films including Things I Should Probably Throw Out (2022) and one step at a time orpheus and eurydice draw closer to the morning sun (2024), winning awards at the Las Po Film Festival. They are the Bay Area Creative Foundation's 2023 Creative Youth Award recipient, and their classical composition catalog

has acquired awards from US Open Music Competition, National Guild of Piano Teachers, Music Teachers National Association, and MusicIN Artist Competition.

The work **forest of taldeni** explores and creates an imagined safe haven, free from colonial violence and oppression. The listener and the player are transported into this almost physical place of peace, tranquility, safety, and healing. I'm deeply inspired, first and foremost, by my ancestors, who channel their energy, experiences, and memories through me as I compose. I'm also inspired by the queer community, whose members have always created safe spaces for themselves. My composition is just an extension of that tradition.

A huge part of my practice is inspired and directly influenced by the history and legacy of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), and you can see that in my piece. While there are some parts that use traditional Western classical notation, it also includes a lot of text and graphic images that require the players to improvise.

— **Maya Irizarry Lambright**

Maya Irizarry Lambright (they/them) is an improviser, composer, and violinist. They have performed over fifty concerts, including a 2023 tour to nine cities across the East Coast, as a member of the Eris Quartet, which was the Fellowship String Quartet in Residence at New Music on the Point

in 2024. In 2022, Maya spearheaded Why We Breathe, a piece fusing art and music, created as a result of the pandemic's effects on collaborative music projects. Maya graduated with a BM from Oberlin, where they studied with Sibbi Bernhardsson and led a traditional Latin music band. Currently they attend the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California under the tutelage of Lina Bahn.

Tapestry of the Beloved Beatified unfolds like a ritual of remembrance, a sonic tapestry woven from the lives of those whose courage reshaped the world in ways history did not always record, specifically Marsha P. Johnson, Harvey Milk, Xulhaz Mannan, and Jeanne Manford. Their stories rise through the music not as relics of struggle but as luminous presences. Beloved figures whose humanity, tenderness, and defiance continue to echo across generations.

The work moves through shifting textures of chant, whispered testimony, and expanding polyphony, its voice sometimes breaking into *sprechstimme* as if memory itself were speaking. Shadows of the forces that sought to silence these lives remain unnamed, present only as the tension against which resilience glows brighter. The musical language draws on a lineage of modernist clarity and expressive daring, yet it is the emotional truth of these lives that forms the heart of the piece. In this tapestry, they are lifted, honored, and made radiant. Threads of light

woven into a larger, ongoing story of becoming.

— **Jeff Scott**

Jeff Scott is a composer, hornist, and educator. He has performed in Broadway, Alvin Ailey, and Dance Theater of Harlem orchestras and as a member of the Imani Winds quintet, as well as on recordings with Chick Corea, Wayne Shorter, Steve Coleman, Chris Brubeck, Chico O'Farill, Freddy Cole, and Jimmy Heath. His arranging and composing credits include scoring the off-Broadway production of Becoming Something, The Canada Lee Story and Josephine Baker: A Life of Le Jazz Hot!, as well as many original works for solo winds and for wind, brass, string, and jazz ensembles. He received his bachelor's degree from Manhattan School of Music (studying with David Jolley), and master's degree from SUNY at Stony Brook (studying with William Purvis).