COLLEGE of FINE ARTS

School of Music

presents

Fall 2026 Student Composers Recital

November 3, 2026 7:00 PM Van Cliburn Concert Hall at TCU

Program

Necronomicon — Christian Maakestad (b. 2005)

Hannah Chapman, mezzo-soprano
Ethan Vinson, trumpet
Cole Reed, French horn
Paul Duhon, trombone
Sarah Fuentes, viola
Richard Barrientos, double bass
Jackson Perez, percussion
Matthew Hroch, percussion
Christian Maakestad, conductor

devils-walkingStick — Jordan Tucker (b. 1992)

Tim Franklin, marimba
Logan Scott, woodblocks
Davis Carr, toms

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An Endless Escape

Minyu Zhang
(b. 1995)

Ryan Rodarte, clarinet
Chonglin Xu, piano

For You, Only My Eyes See

Matthew Leyva
(b. 2008)

Matthew Leyva, baritone
Frederic Situmorang, piano

The Loneliest Star

Xiaokang Deng
(b. 1995)

Xiaokang Deng, piano

Who Am I?

Minyu Zhang
(b. 1995)

Hector Nieves, bass
Chonglin Xu, piano

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Wind, Waves, Water — Frederic Situmorang (b. 2006)

Layla Escatel, flute
Pablo Albert, clarinet
Rufino Medado, tuba
Nikita Simonenko, piano
Esther Koo, violin
Eva Renaudat, violin
Daniel Compton, viola
Jason Vierra, cello
Frederic Situmorang, conductor

Christian Maakestad and Minyu Zhang are students of Dr. Martin Blessinger. Jordan Tucker is a student of Dr. Till Meyn. Matthew Leyva is a student of Mr. Trey Gunter. Xiaokang Deng is a student of Dr. Neil Anderson-Himmelspach. Frederic Situmorang is a student of Dr. Ryan Lindveit.

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Program Notes

Christian Maakestad – Necronomicon

I grew up watching horror movies with my father, and as a lifelong fan of everything scary, I've developed a deep appreciation for the atmosphere, characters, stories, and especially sound design that well-made horror can achieve. Much of this piece is inspired by the soundtracks of these movies and the unsettling ambience they can achieve through color, texture, and space. To this end, the ensemble is made up of a strange combination of instruments: A quintet that is half-brass and half-strings accompanied by two percussionists. This instrumentation hosts a wealth of timbral possibility, from mutes to extended playing techniques to the keyboard and auxiliary percussion.

Necronomicon is a setting of three short stories by the great horror author H.P. Lovecraft. The first movement, *Yuggoth*, is based on *The Whisperer in Darkness*. In this story, a college professor investigates the sudden appearance of strange creatures in Vermont. He soon finds out that these creatures are aliens that have assimilated themselves into human society and are trying to harvest his brain. In the story, transmissions from these aliens are intercepted but only arrive in fragments, which inspired the layered whispering found in the beginning of the movement, accompanied by string instruments imitating the whine of a radio antenna. Later imagery evokes twinkling stars and screams of terror, and layered humming eventually turns to singing as these aliens learn human language.

The second movement, *Black Planets*, is based on Lovecraft's poem *Nemesis*. This poem is about an unnamed immortal being that is watching over the creation of the universe. The singer takes over as this narrator, and textural elements serve to punctuate the poem's words. A ticking clock motif represents the creation of time, and long, tired chords reflect the languid and expansive nature of the cosmos. At the end of the movement, we witness the creation of horrible demons, storms, and other nightmares which propels us forward into the final movement.

The House at R'lyeh is the third and final movement, based on the story *The Call of Cthulhu*. In this story, the main character pieces together clues left behind by his grand- uncle to discover the existence of an ancient cult. This movement specifically focuses on a moment in which a police force investigates a swamp and discovers a horrifying ritual involving euphoric dancing, chanting, and human sacrifice around a fire. The participants are arrested and the ritual is shut down, but an interrogation follows in which the cultists only reveal vague clues as to what they were doing. The movement focuses on these strange, incoherent explanations and frequently flashes back to the nightmarish imagery of the ritual as it is being explained. As the intensity builds, the band breaks into a chaotic, ecstatic moment of high-speed swing which evokes the repulsive dancing of these swamp cultists.

Jordan Tucker - devils-walkingStick

The title of this percussion trio 'devils-walkingStick,' gets its name from a somewhat rare tree found in the southeastern United States. This tree is thin and unassuming, but has on its trunk hundreds of tiny thorns that seem to serve one evolutionary purpose - to cause pain. It is with this spirit that this piece was composed; strictly utilizing an octatonic scale and conveying a primitive notion of improvisation, this work is designed to evoke the essence of this fascinating tree, which is at the same time borne of nature yet cursed.

Minyu Zhang – An Endless Escape

In an endless escape, there is no true way out. Deep within, a buried memory flickers, remaining a faint guiding light. Even in the face of inevitable doom, the will endures until the very last breath.

Minyu Zhang - Who Am I?

Inspired by Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Who Am I?* explores the human tendency to place trust in words. When that trust is shattered, a brutal reality emerges. Throughout life, we search for an answer to the question "Who am I?"—a question from which even a king cannot escape.

Frederic Situmorang – Wind, Waves, Water

Wind, Waves, Water is the second piece in a series of chamber ensemble vignettes based on modes of transportation, with this piece being based on boats. Leaning into the minimalist tendencies established in the first movement (*Locomotive Lesson*), this piece takes a simple motif established first in the flute and clarinet and places it over ostinato textures throughout the ensemble. The wind never escalates past a strong breeze, the waves are never more than gentle swells, and the water is calm.