



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Presents

**Harrison J. Collins, Composer  
and Guy Trying His Best™**

Monday, March 6th, 2023

8:30 pm

Van Cliburn Concert Hall at TCU

**Program**

**Into a world unknown** (2022)

Harrison J. Collins  
(b. 1999)

Lauren Hanifan, oboe; Katie Lilley, english horn; Dorian Holley, bassoon;  
Robert Rudolph, contrabassoon; Christian Lackey, Eb clarinet; Lucas Lynn, Bb clarinet;  
Rylee Grimes, bass clarinet; Evan Pallanes, contrabass clarinet

**Emerald Green** (2018)

Harrison J. Collins  
(b. 1999)

Robert Rudolph, bassoon; Andrew Packard, piano

**New Wine** (2020)

Members of the 2019 - 2020 Illinois  
State University Composition Studio

Harrison J. Collins, Arturo Alfaro-Manriquez, Kyle Waselewski, Brennon Best,  
Blaise Mollet, Ryan Lauciello, Matt Fink, Ben Sanetra, Ben Long, composers;  
Savannah Ekrut, flute; Lauren Hanifan, oboe; Lucas Lynn, clarinet;  
Aidan Lewis, horn; Dorian Holley, bassoon

*Chill for a lil' bit*

**Because I could not stop for Death** (2014)

Harrison J. Collins  
(b. 1999)

Lucas Lynn, clarinet; Robert Rudolph, bassoon; Aidan Lewis, horn;  
Alfredo Ortiz, piano; Chase Morrison, violin; Riley Kee, cello

**Letters from Bill** (2022)

Harrison J. Collins  
(b. 1999)

- I.) October 10th, 1:30pm
- II.) October 21st, 8:50pm
- III.) November 13th, 8:00pm
- IV.) December 12th, 7:30pm

Ryan Sawicki, baritone; yet-to-be-determined cool person, piano

**Finding Home** (2021)

Y'all already know  
(b. 1999)

Savannah Ekrut, flute; Lauren Hanifan, oboe; Lucas Lynn, clarinet;  
Coby Gratzner, bassoon; Nathan Musso, trumpet; Aidan Lewis, horn;  
David Clary, trombone; Colin Elmore, tuba; Blaine Bryan, double bass;  
Alfredo Ortiz, piano; Josh Foust, Katie Jobe, Eric Goodheer, percussion

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Degree in Music Composition. Harrison is a student of Dr. Till Meyn, to whom he extends his deepest gratitude, just as he does to all of the teachers and mentors who have helped him to keep growing, changing, and believing in himself. The use of recording equipment or taking photographs is technically prohibited but it's not the end of the world if you do it, just keep it on the DL. Please silence all electronic devices including watches, pagers, and phones because I really need these to be good recordings. Thank you for being here. (:

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## Program Notes

### Into a world unknown

*Into a world unknown* was composed for the TCU 24 Hour Composition Competition, in which students compose a work based on a given prompt in 24 hours. The prompt for the Fall 2022 semester's competition was a painting by Marion Peck, entitled "Isle of Joy", which features some colorful and creepy clowns guiding some children onto a boat in a river (reader, I encourage you to Google it to see for yourself—it's a beautiful work but seriously sketchy). Inspired by this art, *Into a world unknown* is framed as a boat ride to the titular Isle of Joy, filled with great apprehension and fear for the unknown that lies ahead—and whether, as the inspiring art creepily suggests, this location is true to its name or perhaps more sinister. As such, the piece uses two melodies that represent these possibilities: the sacred harp tune *Idumea* to represent apprehension for a bad outcome, and Stephen Sondheim's famous song *Send in the Clowns* to represent hope for a good outcome. The piece begins with a dark, conflicted inner monologue, and after much back-and-forth between these two melodies, the work ends as it began, this time with our confliction reaching a fever pitch as we reach our destination; but what that destination is exactly is up to the listener to decide.

### Emerald Green

For a long time, I've associated my favorite key center, Eb major, with brilliant shades of green that one might associate with stones such as emerald, jade, or peridot. I am not synesthetic, and I do not make associations like this in any other context; this is a unique mental connection for me. When my friend, bass trombonist and composer Francisco Martinez, asked me to write a bass trombone solo for him, I decided to act on this association and write a work that, to me, reflects the emerald green with which I associate Eb major. The work does take a trip through C minor—perhaps a slightly darker, bluer shade of green—but quickly finds itself back in its emerald hues.

While the work was originally written for bass trombone, as a bassoonist myself I could not help noticing that, with a few notes brought up an octave, the work would be excellent for bassoon or any other low woodwind, brass, or string instrument. As such, in addition to bass trombone, the piece is also available for the following instruments: bassoon, bass clarinet, baritone saxophone, tenor trombone, euphonium, and cello. The part is identical for these instruments.

## **New Wine**

*New Wine* is inspired by the “exquisite corpse” art method, originally started by French surrealist artists in the early 20th century. This practice, led by writer and poet André Breton, began as a fun activity that became unexpectedly enriching—participants would write a portion of a poem, conceal the majority of it, and then pass it on to another writer, who would continue the writing without knowing what came before it. The title of the method, and the title of this piece, come from a sentence constructed during its early practice: “the exquisite corpse shall drink the new wine.” I first learned about the concept through George Watsky’s 2016 album, *x Infinity*, which contains a track titled “Exquisite Corpse” that is written in this style and features a number of other musical artists. I had the idea that this same concept could be applied to a work of music written in the classical idiom, and I set out to create the work by collaborating with several other members of the Illinois State University composition studio.

After writing a small portion of music, I passed on only the last few measures to another composer, who passed on only the last few measures of his portion to another composer, and so on and so forth until everyone had contributed. I supervised the process and patched together each composer’s portions as they were completed. After everyone had contributed, I took material from every contributor's parts and used it to create a fitting ending for the piece that provides a sense of continuity and return to an otherwise completely organic progression of musical ideas.

## **Because I could not stop for Death**

*Because I Could Not Stop for Death* is the first chamber piece I composed, and if I remember correctly, the second piece I ever wrote overall (the first being my work for band, *Clash*). It is the first instance of many in which my music has been inspired and influenced by literature; books, plays, poetry, and more. In this case, I was inspired by Emily Dickinson’s poem of the same title, which depicts Death as a gentleman who takes the writer on a carriage ride towards her death and passing to the afterlife. Just as the poem is, my work is imbued with a sense of not-unpleasant melancholy.

Loosely following the story of the poem, my work is set in three sections; the first one is reflective and calm, depicting Death’s calling to the writer and the understanding of the implications of the ride through a quietly insistent piano ostinato. The second section is brighter and more energetic, depicting the appreciation of the things the writer sees along the ride; children playing after school, fields of grain, and the setting sun. The third section returns to reflection and calm, but as the ride comes to its inevitable end, it grows urgent and bracing for what is to come; but just as the poem suggests the eternity that follows our Earthly passing, so does the work, which ends with an echo of the piano’s insistent piano motive.

## **Letters from Bill**

*Letters from Bill* is exactly what it sounds like; the text of some letters from a guy named Bill. Bill, whose full name was William Howard Thornton, is my paternal grandfather. Growing up, I understood that my dad had never known his father, but it wasn't until I was a bit older that I had both the thought and the courage to ask my dad what he knew about his father. My dad gave to me a worn blue folder that my grandmother gave to him when he first asked the same question many years prior. My dad and I sat down and looked through the folder together, which contained some basic information: his birth and death certificates, some yearbook photos, newspaper clippings about his family, and various other odds and ends. I learned some very interesting and important things: firstly, that my great grandfather and I share the same birthday, and that he was nearly exactly a century older than me. Secondly, the man to whom I owe my surname is not related to me at all. I appreciated learning that I am not bound by another man's history; I get to define for myself what it means to carry the name *Collins*.

Of the folder's contents, what I found most interesting by far was a set of four letters that Bill sent to my grandmother in late 1956. To the best of my knowledge, they are the only primary source left of Bill's. Those four letters, each about two pages of rough cursive, provided a small window into his thoughts and personality. Combined with what I know of him through my family and the information in the folder, it seems that Bill was about average; he was not a saint, but he was not evil either. In this spirit, *Letters from Bill* takes text from each of these four letters and attempts to bring to life once more the man to whom I indirectly owe my existence in a way that is, essentially, average; neither a glorification nor a demonization. It is, mostly simply, a portrait of a human being that once lived and loved in this world.

## **Finding Home**

At the young age of eighteen, I went to college several states away from my hometown. I left the people and the places that I loved dearly - everything I knew, essentially - to go to a new and completely unfamiliar place. I hoped that I would find a new home in the place I was headed, and I did; I became familiar with new places and new people, and grew accustomed to my life at college. But, over time, it grew more and more difficult to be away from my family, and although I visited occasionally, I found myself missing it deeply every time I left again, so much so that it practically ate away at me. Eventually, at the age of twenty-one, I made the decision to transfer to a school close to home so that I could be close to my family, trading my second home and the people I had come to love there for the chance to reconnect with my first home.

During these years, I became increasingly conscious of the way I thought about and defined "home". Not only was I struggling with finding my literal home; I was also grappling with finding what home *means* to me. I've come to believe that home is not defined only by places or people, but by the combination of the

two over time. Perhaps that's why three years in a new place with new people became a home, but not as much as the places and people with which I had spent eighteen years.

*Finding Home* attempts to capture the emotional journey I went on over three years of leaving homes for new homes, expressing the joy, wonder, and melancholy I felt along the way. The work utilizes an original melody introduced in solo bassoon and a hymn tune called "Beach Spring", but that I know as "Till We Meet Again". This melody, a tender and impermanent goodbye, summarizes the bittersweetness of parting ways throughout the work. The work features quite a few elements of rock music, as this is the music I grew up listening to. *Finding Home* also attempts to express the inner consciousness of what defines *home*, and I encourage those who listen to this work to think about what home is for them.

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## About Harrison

Harrison J. Collins (b. 1999) began composing at the young age of thirteen. Since then, he has made a name for himself across the United States as a skilled composer. He combines his musical studies in academic settings with years of self-teaching and a strong intuition to write music that challenges and connects to performers and listeners alike.

His works for wind ensemble, orchestra, and chamber ensembles are published by Murphy Music Press, C. Alan Publications, and more, and have been performed across the United States and internationally. He is a winner of numerous composition competitions, including the Sinta Quartet Composition Competition, the Dallas Winds Fanfare Competition, and the National Young Composers Challenge. Harrison is a proud representative and board member for the Millennium Composers Initiative, through which he seeks to provide opportunities for other composers to grow and reach new heights. In 2022, he founded the Aurora Tapestry Collective with his friends Kevin Day, Josh Trentadue, and Katahj Copley.

Harrison spent several years at Illinois State University, where he studied composition with Dr. Roy Magnuson and Dr. Roger Zare. Harrison currently studies at Texas Christian University with Dr. Neil Anderson-Himmelspach and Dr. Till Meyn, where he is seeking a degree in music composition.

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