



University Choir

University of Colorado Boulder

Elizabeth K. Swanson, conductor

National Collegiate Choral Organization
Biennial Conference

Friday, Nov. 7, 2025
Meng Concert Hall
Cal State Fullerton College of the Arts
Fullerton, California



College of Music

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Friends,



On behalf of the University of Colorado Boulder College of Music, we're excited to share the extraordinary talents of our students and faculty at Cal State Fullerton College of the Arts on the occasion of the National Collegiate Choral Organization Biennial Conference (NCCO11). This year's theme—*Cultivating Transformation*—reflects our own mission at the CU Boulder College of Music where we seek to inspire artistry and discovery, together; and where we're committed to developing multiskilled, multifaceted universal musicians who are well-equipped to participate in the 21st century as artists, educators and scholars—and as broadly based professionals with flexible, sustainable career options.

Under the direction of our Associate Professor of Conducting + Associate Director of Choral Activities Elizabeth Swanson, we're honored that our CU Boulder University Choir is among 10 choirs—selected through a nationwide competitive application process—performing at NCCO11. The University Choir comprises CU Boulder undergraduates—approximately one-third of whom are music majors and two-thirds of whom are pursuing degrees in other disciplines—as well as a handful graduate students.

The overarching theme of the University Choir's powerful program mirrors the conference theme and includes four selections by American composers: *Border Lines* by award-winning transgender Mexican-American composer Mari Ésaabel Valverde, featuring soprano soloist and CU Boulder undergraduate student Adriana Cipponeri, as well as Associate Professor of Guitar Nicolò Spera; *Whispers* by the late Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Steven Stucky; *Like a diamond*, composed and performed by CU Boulder Associate Professor of Composition Annika Socolofsky; and the late Moses Hogan's arrangement of *This Little Light of Mine*, featuring tenor soloist and CU Boulder DMA student Miguel Ángel Ortega Bañales.

In short, you're in for a treat—just as we're pleased and privileged to be here with you. With gratitude and best wishes to all NCCO11 participants for our collective cultivation of transformation through artistic expression,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John S. Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John S. Davis
Dean, University of Colorado Boulder College of Music

About CU Choirs

Under the direction of Director of Choral Activities Coreen Duffy and Associate Director of Choral Activities Elizabeth Swanson, the University of Colorado Boulder choral program strives to examine and honor its legacy while moving forward with evolving pedagogies and programs, including the music of underrepresented composers.

Founded in 1938 by former dean of the College of Music Warner Imig, the CU Boulder choral activities area was the first formal area of study in the College of Music. In the 1960s, CU Boulder became one of the first universities in the nation to offer a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral conducting; and, in 1969, Charlene Archibeque, the first woman to ever earn a DMA degree in choral conducting, did so at CU Boulder. The faculty continues to mentor brilliant students from across the country and we take pride in prioritizing inspiring performance opportunities, including this year's University Choir performance at the NCCO national conference at Cal State Fullerton as well as the upcoming Chamber Singers performance at the SWACDA regional conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



@cuboulderchoirs



Visit the Choirs web page



Photo credit: Cyrus McCrimmon

Conductor's Note

On behalf of the CU Boulder University Choir, it is an honor to share a program that connects deeply with the NCCO11 conference theme, ***Cultivating Transformation***. There are a number of thematic threads that weave together throughout the three sections of our program, which serve to support the listener seeking personal transformation.

“Cultivating Divisions: man-made partitions” amplifies Mari Ésabel Valverde’s composition, *Border Lines*, which unfurls Yesenia Montilla’s crushing text about those who risk their lives in desperate pursuit of safety and belonging by endeavoring to cross into the United States of America at its Southernmost border. *Border Lines* underscores human issues that have of course become heavily politicized; and, Valverde and Montilla remind us that each migrant is a human being with a deeply personal story. While the poetry and music were composed in 2017, *Border Lines* connects even more strongly with today’s circumstances at the border, which is less than a two-hour drive from Meng Concert Hall, not to mention the devastating immigration-related enforcements happening at a much closer proximity.

“Whispers of Heavenly Death: transitions and apparitions” features Steven Stucky’s exquisite composition, *Whispers*, in which he obscures the boundaries between his music and filaments of William Byrd’s *Ave verum corpus*. Such a delicate fusion of music and texts conveys the moments at which the human spirit makes its departure from the human body in its transition from life to death. Today happens to mark what would have been Stucky’s 76th birthday, and we celebrate his prolific career and well-lived life. On a personal note, Stucky was a beloved mentor and dear friend to many, including myself. Because he cultivated meaningful and transformative relationships during his lifetime, his wisdom, empathy, and humor continue to *ripple like unseen rivers* throughout this earthly realm.

“A Light in the Darkness: human consciousness, a parturition” embraces the pairing of *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* and *This Little Light of Mine*—two texts that have inspired many generations to *shine their little light all through the night*. In 2024 I commissioned the choral arrangement of *Like a diamond*, which my CU Boulder colleague Annika Socolofsky had originally scored for amplified voice and string quartet. The students and I are grateful to be collaborating with her in today’s concert as she sings the vocal solo in *Like a diamond*. This exceptional composition abandons common choral writing practices and sound ideals, allowing singers the freedom to explore and revel in swishing and swirling consonant sounds, as well as permission to not prioritize a precise unification of rhythmic figures. The natural swelling of phrases, with occasional aleatoric moments, give this piece a shimmering effect, analogous to the concept of atoms vibrating at the cellular level.

Moses Hogan’s arrangement of *This Little Light of Mine*, an African American spiritual, is a powerful example of his extraordinary command of this genre. While I was a member of the St. Olaf Choir we premiered this arrangement, and as we read through the manuscript I recall how Anton Armstrong marveled at Hogan’s compositional ingenuity, particularly with regard to the choral texture and harmonies within the first two verses, as well as the brilliant and shining “Leontyne Price chords” at the end of the piece.

By consciously nurturing one’s inner light and allowing it to shine, others become emboldened to do the same. May you be inspired to recognize opportunities to cultivate transformation within yourself and within your beloved circles of community. *When the blazing sun is gone... then show your little light... Light your earthly sister, all through the night... All through the night... let it shine.*

Program: *Cultivating Transformation*

I. Cultivating Divisions: man-made partitions

Border Lines

Mari Ésabel Valverde (b. 1987)

Adriana Cipponeri, soprano soloist

Nicolò Spera, guitar

II. Whispers of Heavenly Death: transitions and apparitions

Whispers

Steven Stucky (1949-2016)

III. A Light in the Darkness: human consciousness, a parturition

Like a diamond

Annika Socolofsky (b. 1990)

Annika Socolofsky, vocal soloist (amplified)

This Little Light of Mine (African American spiritual)

arr. Moses Hogan (1957-2003)

Miguel Ángel Ortega Bañales, tenor soloist

Program Notes

Border Lines

Mari Ésabel Valverde (b. 1987)

Note from the composer: In collaboration with Harlem-based Afro-Latina poet, Yesenia Montilla, this work is born out of empathy for immigrants to the United States who have been separated from their families in the spirit of xenophobia. Her words call out the arbitrary nature of the geopolitical borders and implore all of us to unify at our roots in our common humanity. The music is inspired in meter and melody by Central American folk song; and the guitar, a common denominator in a variety of folk traditions, portrays the undulations of “el río” as the narrative unfolds, expressing a clear yearning for belonging.

Maps for Marcelo

poetry by Yesenia Montilla

Some maps have blue borders
like the blue of your name
or the tributary lacing of
veins running through your
father's hands. & how the last
time I saw you, you held
me for so long I saw whole
lifetimes flooding by me
small tentacles reaching
for both our faces. I wish
maps would be without
borders & that we belonged
to no one & to everyone
at once, what a world that
would be. Or not a world
maybe we would call it
something more intrinsic
like forgiving or something
simplistic like river or dirt.
& if I were to see you
tomorrow & everyone you
came from had disappeared

I would weep with you & drown
out any black lines that this
earth allowed us to give it—
because what is a map but
a useless prison? We are all
so lost & no naming of blank
spaces can save us. & what
is a map but the delusion of
safety? The line drawn is always
in the sand & folds on itself
before we're done making it.
& that line, there, south of
el río, how it dares to cover
up the bodies, as though we
would forget who died there
& for what? As if we could
forget that if you spin a globe
& stop it with your finger
you'll land it on top of someone
living, someone who was not
expecting to be crushed by thirst—

Whispers

Steven Stucky (1949-2016)

Note from the composer: Whispers was conceived as a companion piece to my 1979 composition *Drop, Drop, Slow Tears* (published by Merion Music, 342-40187) ... That earlier work is constructed around a reminiscence of the music of the Elizabethan composer Orlando Gibbons. Similarly, *Whispers* recalls fragments of William Byrd's famous motet *Ave verum corpus* (published 1605), surrounding those fragments with my own setting of lines from Walt Whitman's *Whispers of Heavenly Death* (1868). In both the Whitman and the Byrd, thoughts and images of death are so transmuted by the power of great art that the result is not sadness, but instead a kind of mystical exaltation. This is a blessing that we need more than ever in our own time ...

Ave verum corpus

Traditional Latin Text (sung by semi-chorus). Text in square brackets has been omitted.

Ave verum corpus, natum de Maria Virgine,
vere passum,
[*immolatum in cruce pro homine:*
Cujus latus perforatum] unda fluxit sanguine.
[*Esto nobis praegustatum in mortis examine.*]
O Dulcis! O pie! [O Jesu fili Mariae]
miserere mei.
[Amen.]

Hail true body, born of the Virgin Mary,
who having truly suffered,
[*was sacrificed on the cross for mankind,*
whose pierced side] flowed with blood.
[*May it be for us a foretaste in the trial of*
death.]
O sweet, O holy, [O Jesus, Son of Mary] have
mercy on me.
[Amen.]

Whispers of Heavenly Death

Poetry by Walt Whitman (sung by the full chorus). Text in square brackets has been omitted.

Whispers of heavenly death, murmur'd I hear;
Labial gossip of night – sibilant chorals;
Footsteps gently ascending – mystical breezes, wafted soft and low;
Ripples of unseen rivers – tides of a current, flowing, forever flowing;
[[*Or is it the plashing of tears? the measureless waters of human tears?*]]

I see, just see, skyward, great cloud-masses;
Mournfully, slowly they roll, silently swelling and mixing;
With, at times, a half-dimm'd, sadden'd, far-off star,
Appearing and disappearing.

[[*Some parturition, rather – some solemn immortal birth:*
On the frontiers, to eyes impenetrable,
Some Soul is passing over.]]

Like a diamond

Annika Socolofsky (b. 1990)

Note from the composer: This song was written in dedication to two of the most important matriarchs in my life: my late grandmother Emma Jenkins Kale and my late great aunt Edith Jenkins Shear, also known as “The Twins.” I wrote this song after my great aunt’s passing and before my grandmother’s passing. This song was an attempt to come to terms with life in a world in which only one of The Twins were living.

While the music for this song is original, the text for this song includes forgotten text from “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” as well as a line “to light its earthly sister all through the night” from the original Welsh text of the hymn “Ar Hyd y Nos” (All Through the Night), which honors of our family’s Welsh roots and was sung at my Great Aunt Edie’s funeral.

Light the way for those in your life who need a guiding light. Light the way for those who were never given that light. Light the way for your sister, your mother, your loves, yourself.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star (excerpt)

Text by Jane Taylor and John Ceiriog Hughes

When the blazing sun is gone,
When he nothing shines upon,
Then you show your little light,
And you twinkle, twinkle, all through the night.

Ar Hyd y Nos (All Through the Night)

Text by John Ceiriog Hughes

Light your earthly sister, all through the night.

This Little Light of Mine (African American spiritual)

arr. Moses Hogan (1957-2003)

Moses Hogan’s impact on the choral world was profound; in particular, his ingenuity was expressed in his unaccompanied arrangements of African American spirituals. Some distinguishing compositional features include his intimate understanding of the voice and ability to write creatively for it, the use of innovative and robust harmonies, as well as complex textures that pervade in his compositions. This setting of *This Little Light of Mine* was written for Anton Armstrong and the St. Olaf Choir not long before Hogan’s tragic passing at the age of forty-five. In the words of Armstrong, Hogan’s arrangements “revitalized the whole genre of African American spirituals for choral singers and audiences alike.”

This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.
All through the night, I’m gonna let it shine.
My God gave it to me, I’m gonna let it shine.
Let it shine, shine, shine. Let it shine.

CHORAL CONDUCTING FACULTY DUO



Coreen Duffy
Director of Choral
Activities

Elizabeth Swanson
Associate Director of
Choral Activities

GRADUATE COHORT

Scholarships and
assistantships
available for DMA
and MM choral
conducting
applicants



Pictured from left to right: Dr. Duffy, Zachariah Smith (MM), Blake Clawson (MM), Kevin Wille (DMA), Emily Peterson (DMA), Wyatt Smith (MM), Dr. Swanson



Elizabeth Swanson, conductor

Elizabeth K. Swanson is associate director of choral activities and associate professor of music at the University of Colorado Boulder where she serves as the conductor of the University Choir and Treble Chorus, and teaches undergraduate courses in conducting. In partnership with Coreen Duffy, CU Boulder's director of choral activities, Swanson serves as a mentor to master's and doctoral students, and coordinates multiple aspects of CU Boulder's vibrant choral program. In 2024, Swanson was awarded a Provost's Faculty Achievement Award, acknowledging her creative work and contributions to the university.

As a guest conductor, Swanson has been a headlining artist at Carnegie Hall (2022 and 2024) and enjoys guest conducting and being in residence at higher education institutions. She currently serves as the National ACDA Co-Chair of Student Activities alongside Jami Lercher, and is honored to be a former member of NCCO's executive board (2016-2023).

Swanson's degrees are from Northwestern University (DMus conducting), Ithaca College (MM conducting) and St. Olaf College (BM education).



Annika Socolofsky

Annika Socolofsky is a composer and avant folk vocalist who explores corners and colors of the voice frequently deemed to be "untrained" and not "classical." Described as "unbearably moving" (Gramophone) and "grotesquely gorgeous" (Chicago Tribune), her music erupts from the embodied power of the human voice and is communicated through mediums ranging from orchestral and operatic works to unaccompanied folk ballads and unapologetically joyous Dolly Parton covers.

Socolofsky writes extensively for her own voice, including composing a growing repertoire of "feminist rager-lullabies" under the titles of *Don't say a word* and *I Tell You Me*, which serve to confront centuries of damaging lessons taught to young children

by retelling old lullaby texts for a new, queer era. Socolofsky has taken these rager-lullabies on the road, performing with ensembles including ~Nois, Eighth Blackbird, New European Ensemble, Albany Symphony, Knoxville Symphony, Latitude 49 and Contemporaneous. Recordings of her music are available on New Amsterdam, Bright Shiny Things, Naxos, and other labels.

She is associate professor of composition at the University of Colorado Boulder, and is the recipient of the 2021 Gaudeamus Award. She holds a PhD in Composition from Princeton University.
aksocolofsky.com



Nicolò Spera

Italian guitarist Nicolò Spera is one of the few guitarists to perform on both six-string and 10-string guitars. He has published recordings of new works for guitar and choir; his own transcriptions of Bach's Cello Suites; selected works by Catalan composers Federico Mompou and Enrique Granados; a recording focused on the passacaglia form; new works for 10-string guitar; and the complete works with guitar of Christopher Theofanidis.

A primary goal of Spera's creative work is to expand the guitar repertoire. He has commissioned, performed and recorded new works ranging from solos to programs with choirs, small ensembles, and orchestras. He has collaborated with composers from Europe and the Americas, including Carlo Boccadoro,

Martin Bresnick, Nicola Campogrande, Carlos Cordero, Filippo Del Corno, Steve Goss, Corrado Margutti, Roxanna Panufnik, Annika Socolofsky, Giacomo Susani, and Christopher Theofanidis. Spera's passion for choral music and his interest in new works for guitar and choir have also led him to a close collaboration with Eugene Rogers and EXIGENCE Vocal Ensemble in the U.S., and with Giovanni Cestino and ITER Research Ensemble in Italy.

His most influential teachers are Oscar Ghiglia, Jonathan Leathwood and Lorenzo Micheli. Since 2011, Spera teaches guitar at the University of Colorado Boulder.



Miguel A. Ortega Bañales

Miguel A. Ortega Bañales, Mexican tenor, conductor and pianist, is currently pursuing a DMA in vocal performance and pedagogy at the University of Colorado Boulder and serves as a teaching assistant. Ortega also obtained his master's degree in voice performance and choral conductin at CU Boulder. During his bachelor's degree he held a position as vocal TA and served as a piano collaborator for the music department at Berea College, Kentucky.

Recent vocal appearances include main roles in several productions at Eklund Opera at CU Boulder such as Alfredo in *La Traviata* (2021), Rodolfo in *La Bohème* (2022), Fenton in *Falstaff* (2023), and Captain E. J. Smith in *Titanic* (2024). In addition, he has served as an assistant conductor for several productions.

Ortega has been distinguished with the Denver Lyric Opera Guild Competition's 1st Prize Winner in 2024, the Metropolitan Opera National Council's "Middle Tennessee District Winner" prize in 2020, the "Gina Scaggs Epifano Audience Favorite Award" in 2018's National Association of Teachers of Singing vocal competition in Kentucky, as well as the "First Place Winner Classical Adult" prize in three consecutive editions of Kentucky's NATS vocal competition during 2017, 2018 and 2019.



Photo credit: Cyrus McCrimmon

University Choir

* Semi-chorus

+ Graduate teaching assistant

Sopranos

Adriana Cipponeri
BM Education, Choral
Jacey Fischer
BA Computer Science
Halle Harrington
BM Voice Performance
Aimee Kennedy *
BM Education, Choral;
English Minor
Lily Kraus
BM Voice Performance;
BA Psychology
Aaliyah Lovelace
Music Technology/Production
Zoe Myers
Biological Engineering
Keira Oppenheimer
Business Administration;
emphasis in Marketing and
Business Analytics
Rebecca Rhodes
Chemical Engineering
Dani Swen
Mechanical Engineering;
Minor in Computer Science
and Energy Engineering

Mezzo Sopranos and Altos

Isabella Grant
Astrophysics
Cambria Henson
BM Education, Choral
Grace Lindell
BM Education, Choral
Amelia Pennell
Secondary Education, History
Emily Peterson
DMA Choral Conducting
Lorelai Rafter
Music Education, Choral
Logan Richardson *
BM Voice Performance
Mandi Steele *
PhD in Music Education
Elspeth Wooldridge *
BM Voice Performance

Tenors

James Early
MA Theater and Performance
Studies
Christian Greer
BM Voice Performance and
BA Computer Science
Alex Ituarte Escarsega
Business: Accounting and
Finance
Kaden Livingston
International Affairs
and Political Science
Jihwan Park *
Anthropology

James Smith *
Media Production -
Sound Design
Zachariah Smith
MM Choral Conducting;
MME Music Education
Kevin Wille
DMA Choral Conducting
Ian Worland
BA Political Science

Baritones and Basses

Henry Adams
BA Voice Performance
Jimi Adams *
BM Voice Performance
Daniel Bardell
Aerospace Engineering
Blake Clawson
MM Composition;
MM Choral Conducting
Mason McCool *
MM Education and Licensure
Connor O'Brien
Speech Language Hearing
Sciences and Linguistics
Markus Pacheco
Film and Theater
Noah Sambirsky
Mechanical Engineering
Wyatt Smith +
MM Choral Conducting
Hunter Stricker
BA in Political Science and
Spanish; Leadership Minor

Degrees + Certificates at the College of Music

Bachelor of Arts (BA)

Music
Music (in conjunction with
Engineering degree)
Musicology and World Music Emphasis
Music Production Emphasis
Songwriting Emphasis (*Fall 2026*)

Bachelor of Music (BM)

Brass & Percussion
Composition
Jazz Studies
Keyboard
Musical Theatre
Musicology
Strings
Voice
Woodwinds

Bachelor of Music Education (BME)

Choral General
Choral
Instrumental General
Instrumental Band
Instrumental Strings
Instrumental Jazz

Dual Degrees

BM Brass/BME Instrumental Band
BM Percussion/BME Instrumental Band
BM Strings/BME Instrumental Strings
BM Voice/BME Choral
BM Woodwinds/BME Instrumental Band

Undergraduate Certificates

Music Entrepreneurship
Music Technology
Music Theory
Singing Health Specialist
Arts Administration (*micro-credential*)

Graduate Degrees

Master of Music (MM)
Master of Music Education (MME)
Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA)
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Artist Diplomas

Opera and Solo Vocal Performance
String Quartet Performance
Solo Instrumental Performance
Chamber Music Performance
Orchestral Performance
Vocal Coaching

Graduate Certificates

Music Theory



Learn more

By the Numbers

329

undergraduate students

198

graduate students

8:1

student-to-faculty
ratio

99%

job placement for Bachelor
of Music Education students

30+

ensembles in
different genres

40+

Grammy nominations among
faculty and alumni

27%

of undergrads pursue
interdisciplinary studies



Photo credit: Cyrus McCrimmon

About the College of Music

At the University of Colorado Boulder College of Music, our mission is to inspire artistry and discovery, together. Our students earn more than a music degree in the foothills of the Rockies: We develop multiskilled, multifaceted universal musicians who are well-equipped to participate in the 21st century as artists, educators and scholars; as broadly based professionals with flexible career options; and as passionate, compassionate world citizens.

Our faculty are deeply dedicated pedagogues, award-winning performers, scholars and composers who support student success and flourishing—whether their passion is to teach, perform, compose, research or rethink music entirely.

Since 1920, the CU Boulder College of Music offers a wide range of programs for undergraduate and graduate study, integrating advanced musical and interdisciplinary training with professional-level experiences. Home to the American Music Research Center, the first university-level music entrepreneurship center in the country and a musicians' wellness program, the College of Music offers seven degrees in 24 fields of study—i.e., a full range of bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs including three degree types for undergrads (BA, BME, BM) with options for BA degree emphases in music production and songwriting, plus options for dual degrees.

One of the top comprehensive music schools in the country, the College of Music is a fully accredited member of the National Association of Schools of Music since 1941.



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colorado.edu/music