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Photo credit: Owen Zhou.

Doctoral Recital

Benjamin Garcia, bass trombone

Will Shi, piano

Darian Freeman, tenor trombone

Jovan Mays, spoken word

Monday, Feb. 16, 2026

S102

PROGRAM

A quick trip with lots of baggage (2010)

Inez S. McComas (1977)

Portas (In Memory of Daniel Portas) (2024)

Ricardo Mollá (1992)

Extremely Close (2016)

Daniela Candillari (1979)

- I. We Will Not Stop Looking
- II. Walking Over Bridges Also Makes Me Panicky
- III. Why I'm Not Where You Are 5/21/63
- IV. The Sixth Borough
- V. The Falling Man

Intermission

Flood

Conrad Kehn and Jovan Mays (spoken word)

Darian Freeman, tenor trombone

World Concerto (2014)

Steven Verhelst (1981)

- I. Allegretto
- II. Andante
- III. Allegretto

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Ben Garcia is a trombonist, musician, and educator based in Denver. He is bass trombonist of the San Juan Symphony, and regularly performs with the Colorado Symphony, Colorado Ballet, and New Mexico Philharmonic. Ben is a founding member of the Four Higher trombone quartet and has recently performed in Texas and Canada. A Colorado native, Ben was on fellowship with the Denver Young Artist Orchestra, and was acting principal trombone with the Denver Philharmonic on their tour of China in 2016. He holds a master's degree from the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, and a bachelors from CU Boulder. During the summers, Ben is also a part time golf instructor and has taught golf and sports psychology to both adults and children as young as age 4. During his free time, Ben enjoys museums, hiking, camping, and fly fishing.

Australian pianist **William Shi** has won first prizes at numerous competitions including the Petrof, Vivace, Yamaha and Queensland piano competitions. He is a recipient of the Theme & Variations Foundation Award and an American Australian Association Arts Fund grant, and he has been supported by the Australian Music Foundation (AMF) since 2021. In 2023, he became the inaugural winner of the AMF Richard Bonyngue Award, the first award created by the AMF for a collaborative pianist. His U.S. performances have been broadcast on "Performance Today," WCRB and WXXI

Classical, with reviews of his collaborations citing “crisp and clean extended solos” (The Boston Music Intelligencer), “with passion” (Classical Source) and “precise coordination” (The Berkshire Edge).

Shi completed undergraduate studies at the University of Queensland with Max Olding where he was awarded the University Medal. Upon graduating with a master’s degree at Mannes School of Music with Arkady Aronov, he received the Newton Swift Piano Award—presented “to an outstanding soloist who is also an amiable colleague in accompanying and chamber music.” Shi is a recent graduate of the Eastman School of Music where he was the teaching assistant for Natalya Antonova and Ran Dank with whom he undertook a DMA in piano performance and literature; as well as teaching assistant to Andrew Harley with whom he earned a concurrent master’s in piano accompanying and chamber music. Shi is a four-time recipient of Eastman’s Excellence in Accompanying Award in addition to the Jean Barr Award in Accompanying. He has held positions at Nazareth University and currently serves as lecturer of collaborative piano at the University of Colorado Boulder.

Darian Freeman serves as Principal Trombone of the Denver Philharmonic and acting Principal of the San Juan Symphony. He is a busy freelancer in Colorado and the surrounding areas. He regularly plays with the Colorado Symphony,

Colorado Springs Philharmonic, the Wyoming Symphony, the Greeley Philharmonic, Cheyenne Symphony, South Dakota Symphony and many others in various states. He has played under the baton of notable conductors such as Leonard Slatkin and Ken-David Masur performing in Carnegie hall as well as David Geffen Hall.

Darian also teaches all across the Denver area in before and after school programs as well as maintains a private studio of students of all ages and all instruments. He earned a Bachelors degree from Northern Illinois University, and has a Masters degree from the Manhattan School of Music and a Performers Certificate from the University of Denver.

When not playing music Darian enjoys following and playing sports as well as staying healthy and active.

Jovan Mays is the inaugural and emeritus Poet Laureate of Aurora, Colorado, a National Poetry Slam Champion, TED speaker and the Youth Voice Coordinator of Aurora Public Schools. Mays has worked with well over one million students through poetry outreach in his program, Your Writing Counts. He is the author of 3 books: *Pride*, *The Great Box Escape*, and *This Is Your Song*. The Pilgrimage, Button Poetry, and Write About Now have published his work. He is a graduate of Chadron State College, where he played football, wrestled, and earned a degree in Secondary History Education.

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*Photos: On this page, University Chorus, Fall 2024.
Photo credit: Erika O'Connor; On the cover, Cross-
Genre Ensemble, 2025. Photo credit: Owen Zhou.*

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*The Drowsy Chaperone (2023).
Photo credit: Bennet Forsyth.*

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