



## A.C. Sullivan, composition

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Quintet in B-flat Minor "Rain and Roses"  
Prelude

A.C. Sullivan

A.C. Sullivan and Paolo Reyes, violins | Emily Svendsen, viola  
William Masters, cello | Mia Kawakami, clarinet

Duet in E-flat Major for oboe and bassoon

Ethan Pham, oboe | Victor Nuno-Robles, bassoon

Of Kings and Queens

Kiele Miyata, flute | William Masters, cello

Apollo's Call

Mason Rogers, trumpet

Toy Soldier

Ben Jilbert, snare drum

### INTERMISSION

A Walk to Remember

A.C. Sullivan, synthesizers (recorded)

My Scarlet Raven

A.C. Sullivan, poet | Paul Salzberg, piano

Tales from Ukrainian Folklore

Alkonost: Song of Joy

Sirin: Song of Sorrow

Gamayun: Song of Prophecy

Song of Oblivion

Jake Michael as Alkonost | Alissa Prince as Sirin  
Isabelle Ceballos as Gamayun | William Masters, cello  
Dr. Ryan Enright, piano 1 | Oskar Castaneda, piano 2  
Dr. Matthew Morse, conductor

*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Music in Theory/Composition.  
A.C. Sullivan is a student of Dr. Josiah Catalan.*

## PROGRAM NOTES

A.C. Sullivan began working on the **Quintet in Bb Minor** after their engagement was called off in October 2022. It is an embodiment of the joys and sorrows of romance. The namesake, "Rain and Roses" is both a figurative and literal metaphor for the tragedy and beauty of love. Throughout this Prelude, the imagery of literal rain is captured through pizzicato, recalling the rain and roses in full bloom on their first date. Love is in the air as soaring melodies shared between the clarinet and strings serenade the inner romantic. As engraved in the score, the composer intends this piece to be cathartic and hopeful for listeners and performers too,

*"For the grieving and broken-hearted,  
When things seem utterly abysmal and hopeless--  
It is not the end." (2022)*

The **Duet in Eb Major** for oboe and bassoon is a classical-style duet in rounded binary form. It is inspired by Mozart's elegant thematic style and the deliberate, harmonic moodiness of Shostakovich. This is a rare instance of "absolute music" in AC's oeuvre. Absolute music is nonrepresentational, primarily instrumental music that is not intended to evoke or illustrate something else. Whereas "programmatic music" is intended to convey extra-musical ideas such as a story, poem, or scene.

**Of Kings and Queens** is a programmatic duet for flute and cello. The flutist and cellist have been given character roles— Queen and King, respectively. One of the foundational elements incorporated into this score was chess's unknown, yet seemingly simultaneous origin in several different regions of the ancient world. There are several non-Western modes and scale systems used in this piece, reflecting chess's international history.

This piece is an expression of AC's love, frustration, and hopes for the future regarding the liberation of genders, and how it relates to the History of Chess. As of August 2023, FIDE International Chess Federation has banned trans folk from competing in tournaments: "Players who have transitioned from male to female have no right to participate in official FIDE events for women."

"Winners of women's titles who change their genders to male would have their titles abolished, . . . those can be renewed if the person changes the gender back to a woman."

**Apollo's Call** for solo trumpet is a triumphant call and prayer to musical heroes, gods, and goddesses of old. May we humbly offer this music to the powers that be and ask them to bless the concertgoers and performers. Growing up in Anaheim, California, AC Sullivan loved to watch Disneyland parades. A core memory for them was when they saw the toy soldiers in Fantasyland come to life and dazzle the crowds.

**Toy Soldier** for solo snare drum is directly inspired by those wonderful childhood memories of watching the virtuosity of the Disneyland toy soldier-performers delight and awe-inspire with their technical precision and brilliant show passages. Beyond the whimsical and fantastical origins, AC sought to ask what tales would the romantic warrior tell of their adventures training, war, and reintegrating back into civilian life? The piece tells the tale of a toy soldier who has reanimated to share his adventures with the audience.

**A Walk to Remember** is a fixed media piece composed and recorded by A.C. Sullivan. As far back as they can remember, A.C. would be taken on nature walks by their father Kevin R. Sullivan to teach them about the wonders of the natural world. From an early age, developing a deep understanding and appreciation for life and the environment has been a core value to the composer. When The Sullivans first moved to the Sacramento area in 2019, Kevin and AC found several beautiful nature trails that they began to frequent

during their breaks. In their evening walks at the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, they were met with the unusual and whimsical songs of the red-shouldered blackbirds, calling out to each other across the marshes.

A.C. was mesmerized by their sounds as they were at once so natural, yet artificial like the whirring's of a 1960's sci-fi computer system. The blackbirds' intricate, delicate, natural yet artificial timbre inspired this fixed media composition that blurs the line between acoustic and electronic. There are no acoustic instruments in this recording, they are all synthesizers played, balanced, and altered by A.C. Sullivan. The only authentic, natural sounds are the sampled recordings of blackbirds gathering at dusk. Like the wondrous song of the blackbirds, A.C. aimed to create a balance between natural and artificial sounding synthesizers that mimic "real" instruments. This piece is dedicated to beautiful walks with loved ones, inviting listeners to reflect on their life journeys with grace, respect, and love.

***My Scarlet Raven*** by A.C. Sullivan

This life of mine  
feels like dynamite.  
I might  
just explode  
in a minute.

Next to me is  
a scarlet raven.  
Judging  
my every action  
-in a rage  
of passion.

I find myself here.  
In this condemned creation,  
crowded with  
the people who  
cannot express  
their own pain.

They hurt me little.  
For I am numb.

When I wander  
here ensphered  
amongst billions,  
an array of  
curious folk  
pass me by,  
as I do to them.

I see reflections  
of myself,  
in every soul's face.

How do they  
not notice,  
that this is  
a fabricated existence?  
A curtain veiling  
their eyes  
from what  
lies beyond.

A distinct man  
rubbed his calloused hands  
together,  
ready to applaud  
his existence of  
ten thousand master-made  
hours away.

His wise face  
crinkled with  
a smile,  
to say,  
"See you tomorrow,"  
Though he never did.  
Say what it really was.

The dwellings of trillions  
of nameless molecules,  
reside in the space of  
a meaningful appellation.

I have forgotten that,  
long ago...

Why am I surprised?

Feet rotating right.  
I am running.  
Running towards  
something much grander,  
than I had once believed.

That deceiving puppeteer  
is not going to  
manipulate me.

I know I can overcome  
the bridges and bridges  
we walk upon.

Limitation eluded all thought,  
making me clumsy,  
as I became clammy.

A scarlet raven has feathers  
that capture the essence  
of the sun.

O' how they shone so brightly-  
I was blinded  
by a crimson flash.

I swore that I knew  
darkness and depression,  
yet this was unexpected.

My eyes  
were shut  
so tightly,  
they felt like  
someone was  
pinching them.

One deep breath  
that expanded my lungs.  
Air rushed in  
like people  
crossing a heavily  
trafficked New York  
intersection.

It stampeded in  
with the similar  
hotness of hay,  
exhausting itself  
on a sunny  
summer's day.

As I was about to  
end my moments  
in life...  
I could see a  
figure in the  
distance.

Its hopeful stature  
sent a signal  
to me  
to raise  
my hands upwards  
towards the sky.

This stick of dynamite  
and a scarlet raven.

That creature  
engrained in my brain  
was a phoenix rising.  
I remember.

The story of *Tales from Ukrainian Folklore* comes from Slavic legend that tells of three mythical avian-beings-- the Alkonost, Sirin, and Gamayun. Each legendary bird sings an enchanting song that embodies a powerful emotion. The Alkonost (Joy), the Sirin (Sorrow), and the Gamayun, who sings about the future. The first three movements are solo vocalises that introduce and feature each angelic character and their emotionally riveting songs. When the three of them sing the same song together, it is said that it brings about the end of the world. The final movement explores what that might sound like, the Song of Oblivion.

The text in IV. Song of Oblivion is adapted from the well-known Gregorian Chant *Dies Irae* and incorporates a Lemko-Ukrainian folk song lyric:

Пливé кáча по Тисíні (Plyve Kacha Po Tysyni),  
A Duckling Swims in the River Tisza.

The setting of this lyric has taken on different meanings over the years, though has remained a metaphor for departed souls crossing over into the afterlife. In the 21st century, it became well-known due to its frequent use as a requiem for protestors killed during the 2013- 2014 Euromaidan, the 2014 Revolution of Dignity, and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War. For generations of Ukrainians, it is a warning lamenting the dangers of warfare.

I, A.C. Sullivan, dedicate this experimental chamber work in honor of the victims and survivors of the Russo-Ukrainian War, and hope it is cathartic for everyone who performs and listens to it. Preserving cultures, especially folk stories, are key in preserving humanity in places wrought in war. I did black-out poetry to the *Dies Irae* and incorporated a Lemko-Ukrainian folksong lyric:

**"DIES irae, dies illa**  
**Пливé кáча по Тисíні, (plyve kacha po Tysyni)**  
**Teste Sirin cum Gamayun, Alkonost**  
**Dies illa, culpa rubet vultus meus.**  
**Ingemisco, tamquam reus.**  
**Qui Gamayun absolvisti,**  
**et latronem exaudisti,**  
**mihi quoque spem dedisti.**  
**Quantus tremor est futurus,**  
**Solvat saeculum in favilla,**  
**Deus...**

THAT day of wrath, that dreadful day,  
"A Duckling Swims in the Tisza River"  
As Sirin and Gamayun, Alkonost say  
That day, deep shame and grief are on my cheek;  
In sighs and tears my sorrows speak.  
You Who did Gamayun's guilt unbind,  
and mercy for the robber find,  
have filled with hope my anxious mind.  
What horror must invade the mind  
Shall heaven and earth in ashes lay,  
God..."

Multimedia artist **A.C. Sullivan** (b. July 4th, 1997) is a synesthete painter, poet, violinist, and composer. As a violinist, they have performed in venues such as the Los Angeles Convention Center and La Madeleine Church in the heart of Paris, France during a concert tour with the Seraphim Symphony. In 2018, they were invited to perform at Carnegie Hall with Symphony Irvine, and performed with musicians of Earth, Wind, and Fire fame for The Eddie Nash Foundation. They have appeared as a featured soloist in live mariachis, cameratas, and in recordings for local rap, alternative, and metal groups in Southern California.

A.C.'s love of music and soundscapes is a central part of their creative process. By encapsulating their chromesthesia experiences on canvas, they have been commissioned to create art inspired by selected music for a variety of musicians and composers. "The Sound of Souls" (oil on canvas, 2018) was selected to be digitally reproduced as a mural in the lobby of Sac State's Aspen Hall, Hornet Commons in 2021. In 2022, they were one of seven selected artists to create a 7ftx30ft mural for Sac State's Antiracism and Inclusive Campus Plan "Believe" project. They were commissioned by the Festival of New American Music for their 45th Anniversary to create an original oil painting, "Bella Festiva" (4ft x 4ft, 2022) inspired by the music of featured composer Libby Larsen. In 2023, Shuying Li commissioned A.C. to create cover artwork for her opera *When the Purple Mountains Burn*.

A.C. is currently a senior at California State University, Sacramento pursuing a BM in Music Theory/Composition, studying composition with Dr. Josiah Catalan and violin with Anna Presler. They have also studied violin with Drew Tretick, Beata Gilbert, and Sam Weiser, and composition with Dr. Brian Kehlenbach, Dr. Shuying Li, and Dr. Sarah Wald.