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## A Whitman Sampler: New Works by UNI School of Music Composition Faculty, September 27, 2019 [program]

University of Northern Iowa

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# A WHITMAN SAMPLER

NEW WORKS BY UNI SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
COMPOSITION FACULTY

FEATURING SETTINGS BY  
WALT WHITMAN

# PROGRAM

***Youth, Day, Old Age, Night*** .....Christopher Merz

Dakota Andersen, voice  
Christopher Merz, soprano saxophone \*  
Mike Conrad, piano \*  
Matt Andreini, cajon \*

***America A Devotion to Democracy*** .....Rebecca Burkhardt

Jean McDonald, mezzo-soprano \*  
Julia Bullard, viola \*  
Korey Barrett, piano \*

***Continuities*** .....Jonathan Schwabe

Jeffrey Brich, voice \*  
Amanda McCandless, clarinet \*  
Julia Bullard, viola \*  
Vakhtang Kodanashvili, piano \*  
Alexander Pershounin, bass \*

***The Sacred Idiots*** .....Mike Conrad

Dakota Andersen, voice  
Christopher Merz, soprano saxophone \*  
Mike Conrad, piano \*

***Rules*** .....Daniel Swilley

Kramer Milan, percussion \*

\* UNI School of Music faculty

*Thanks to Anna Zetterlund for designing and projecting the texts*

# PROGRAM NOTES

**Youth, Day, Old Age, Night** (2019), for voice, soprano saxophone, piano, and cajon, utilizes the brief poem of the same name, taken from the "Deathbed" edition of *Leaves of Grass*. The text speaks to persons of a "certain age," at which I have arrived. As I read the poem, the text immediately suggested a rhythmic treatment, preserved throughout the piece. Formally, the poem breaks into two parts, with each of these further dividing into two parts. Harmonies from the first half are expanded to form a setting for improvisation, which separates the two halves and provides a transition to the climactic activity of the second half.

**America** (2019): The definitions of the words "equal," "perennial" and "adamant" in Whitman's poem set the character for the musical statement in this work. Adamant, as a noun, is a stone (such as a diamond) formerly believed to be of impenetrable hardness, or an unbreakable or extremely hard substance. Perennial means not only present at all seasons of the year, but persistent, enduring, constant and continuing without interruption. And finally, equal, being the same in quantity, size, degree, or value.

**Continuities** (2019): I was especially taken with the opening statement: "Nothing is ever really lost, or can be lost". This poem speaks of the natural cycle of constant change (birth, aging, death followed by renewal). I read this poem with a certain optimism: "The light in the eye grown dim, shall duly flame again".

**The Sacred Idiots** (2019), for voice, soprano saxophone, and piano, uses text from one of Walt Whitman's more well-known poems, a selection from *Leaves of Grass* which is often referred to as "The Sleepers." This piece highlights the supernatural and ritualistic undertones of Whitman's text with a modal theme in the voice at the beginning and chant-like figures towards the end. Through both composed and improvised musical material, feelings of innocence are juxtaposed with the unsettling, creepy, and even sinister feelings associated with someone being watched as they sleep.

**Rules** (2019), for solo percussion, draws inspiration from non-linear narrative and the works-in-progress of Walt Whitman - his drafts, notes, and editorial marks, etc. This work uses the text from one of these works-in-progress - *Rules for Composition* (early 1850s). *Rules* explores the use of non-linear narrative as an aleatoric device for musical structure to simulate the creative process evident in Whitman's works-in-progress.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

UNI BASS STUDIO RECITAL  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2 AT 6 P.M.  
DAVIS HALL, GBPAC

WIND ENSEMBLE & SYMPHONIC BAND  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4 AT 7:30 P.M.  
GREAT HALL, GBPAC

UNI JAZZ BAND ONE & JAZZ BAND TWO  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11 AT 7:30 P.M.  
BENGTSON AUDITORIUM, RUSSELL HALL

THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC CALENDAR OF EVENTS IS  
AVAILABLE ONLINE AT [MUSIC.UNI.EDU/EVENTS](https://music.uni.edu/events). TO  
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In consideration of the performers and other members of the audience, please enter or leave a performance at the end of a composition. Cameras and recording equipment are **not permitted**. Please turn off all electronic devices, and be sure that all emergency contact cell phones and pagers are set to silent or vibrate. In the event of an emergency, please use the exit nearest to you. Please contact the usher staff if you need assistance.

This event is **free** to all UNI students, courtesy of the Panther Pass Program.

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