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N.E.O. Voice Festival Presents  
**The 2023 Exploratorio "Recurrence"**  
Saturday, July 1, 2023 @ 7 PM  
First Congregational Church of Los Angeles

David Harris, Fahad Siadat, Laurel Irene, Directors  
Abraham Ross, Organ Specialist

Part 1: Bacchanalia Mirrors

Lunar Raveling Ritual Derek Weagle  
*Abigail Whitman, Molly Pease, Katelyn Dietz, Soloists*  
*Fahad Siadat, Conductor*

he too concludes that all is well Max Eidinoff  
*Julia Anne Cordani, Molly Pease, Rachel Steinke, Soloists*  
*JoEllen West, Organist*

Non Chaonis afuit arbor Elliot Menard  
*Julia Anne Cordani, Elliot Menard, Jazmine Jendersee,*  
*Daniel Newman-Lessler, Soloists*

Overtone Meditation N.E.O. Festival Chorus

Part 2: Lunar Cosmos

In Waves Kion Heidari  
*Molly Pease, Rachel Steinke, Rachel Velarde, Katelyn Dietz,*  
*Caitlin Glastonbury, Julia Anne Cordani, Kion Heidari, Joanna Wallfisch*  
*Fahad Siadat, Conductor*

La La Richard An

Eclipse Molly Burke  
*Scott Graff, Soloist*

Connection Jamey Guzman  
*Molly Pease, Soloist*

*continued*



Part 3: In Morning’s Light

Press “1” to be enlightened	Megan Steinberg
Abigail Whitman, Soloist	
‘ō‘ō	Daniel Newman-Lessler
A quiet rumbling in the dark	Abigail Whitman
Daniel Newman-Lessler and Rachel Steinke, Soloists	
unattainable	David Walters
Scott Graff, Soloist	
A Cloud's Tale	Meg Huskin
Joanna Wallfisch and Molly Pease, Soloists	
Niagra	JoEllen West
JoEllen West, Molly Pease, Jessie Rivest, Molly Burke, Soloists/Organists	

Director's Note

NEO’s 2023 thematic launch point is that of Recurrence: a deliciously, inspiringly-cyclical cocktail of philosophical and poetic threads that unravel into one another over and again. Fantastically, the conversation around recurrence tends to repeat on itself quickly and often. As soon as we get our heads around part of it, we lose sight of the rest. The 2023 N.E.O. composers responded to “Recurrence” in ways that repeated on each other. Many explored improvisation, there are multiple reflections on celestial recurrence, and everyone elucidated meaning and purpose in some way. We organized the program celestially, beginning with early evening, moving through night, and then to daylight. Each programmatic moment reflects the others, revealing the poetic core of recurrence.

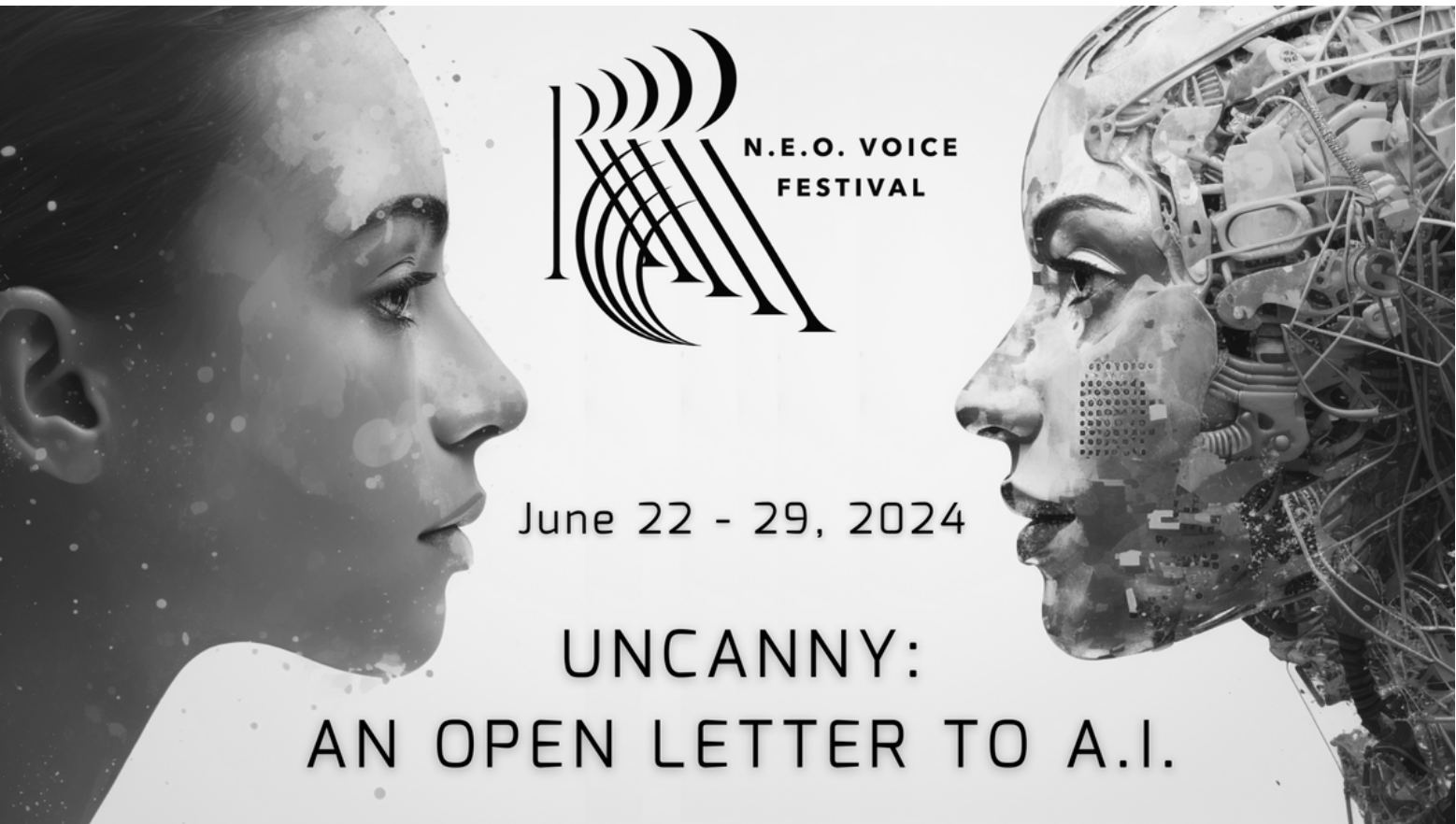
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The N.E.O. Voice Festival

The **N.E.O. Voice Festival** is an annual new music festival that attracts an international, vibrant and diverse community of artists for a week of creativity, performance, and exploration. By attending one of our performances, you witness the future of choral and vocal music: composers, performers, and conductors codifying and putting into practice the cutting edge of vocal performance and composition. We hope to see you at our three concerts this summer!

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Information at [www.neovoicefestival.com](http://www.neovoicefestival.com)

2023 N.E.O. Festival Chorus

Richard An	Maddie Goldsborough	Carrie Schneider
Marco Barrios	Scott Graff*	Nicholas Slaughter
Nicole Belmont	Jamey Guzman	Megan Steinberg*
Rhian Bristol	Kion Heidari	Rachel Steinke
Molly Burke	Meg Huskin	Rachel Velarde
Shania Carden	Jazmine Jenderesse	Chiara Viscomi
Julia Cordani Anne	Elliot Menard*	Joanna Wallfisch
Jeremy Davalos	Daniel Newman-Lessler*	David Walters*
Esther del Valle Gurrion	Molly Pease*	Derek Weagle
Katelyn Dietz	Alexandra Reyna	JoEllen West*
Max Eidinoff	Jessie Rivest	Abigail Whitman
Caitlin Glastonbury	Luke Rosar	

\* = 2023 Fellows and Scholars



## 2023 N.E.O. Voice Festival Exploratorio

### *Recurrence*

#### Program Notes

#### **Director's Note**

NEO's 2023 thematic launch point is that of ***Recurrence***: a deliciously, inspiringly-cyclical cocktail of philosophical and poetic threads that unravel into one another over and again. Fantastically, the conversation around recurrence tends to repeat on itself quickly and often. As soon as we get our heads around part of it, we lose sight of the rest. The 2023 N.E.O. composers responded to "Recurrence" in ways that repeated on each other. Many explored improvisation, there are multiple reflections on celestial recurrence, and everyone elucidated meaning and purpose in some way. We organized the program celestially, beginning with early evening, moving through night, and then to daylight. Each programmatic moment reflects the others, revealing the poetic core of recurrence.

Derek's "Lunar Raveling" awakens us into recurrent space with improvisatory drones and cycles. Singers are encouraged to explore sets of potential sounds, repeating them in festive sequence with others. Max explores the myth of Sisyphus. We push our metaphoric boulder up a hill with a technique that asks singers to choose their own pitches while being rhythmically aligned. The choir reflects on everyone's Sisyphus journey while the soloists illuminate humanity's continual recounting of death as a counterbalance to boredom. Also drawing from Greek mythology, Elliot presents a moment in Ovid's "Metamorphosis." The text describes varied trees on its surface, but to Ovid's audience, those references have deep connection to other stories. As the treble voices march forward in their arboreal descriptions, ever increasing in vocal range, we feel a connection to a past we struggle to identify as it circles around us.

As we move to the darker night, Kion invites us to explore the repetitive mental states of depression through Sam Aldape's poem, written for this program. Small musical cycles create waves of sound over which melody and text drift in time. Richard's "La La" follows, taking us deeper into recurrent mind spaces with the use of subtle vocal gesture and percussion. The ensemble leaves the space full and buzzing as Scott takes the stage for Molly's "Eclipse." Both singer and composer connected around stories of their relative's past. The piece presents a struggle to find something that we have already been given through the eyes of a frustrated child and the response of a guiding voice. This section ends with Jamey's compassionate "Connection." Molly, the soloist, picks up the struggle Scott left in the air as the choir asks her, and each other, "are you ok?"

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### *Recurrence*

Part 3 sheds sharper light on these struggles beginning with Megan's "Press '1' to be enlightened." Abigail moves back and forth between an A.I. voice and the voice of someone struggling to be heard. As she yells at the world we hear a human clarity of purpose that carries us into "ō'ō." Daniel uses altered megaphones and vocal improvisation to thrust us into the mixed emotional space of remembering an extinct species. We are enthralled in primal sounds even as we are forced to reckon with human destruction to the planet. Abigail's improvisatory matrix increases the justice energy. As the singers respond to prompts that guide them into group reaction spaces, we hear a growing call to action and group solidarity. The confused sum of a people calling for change becomes a cohesive unification of purpose. Encouraged to action, we are met with David's "Unattainable." In a constantly mixed metric piece based in water imagery, layers of flowing roll over layers of flowing. We return to the recognition first introduced at the beginning of the program in Max's piece. As with Sisyphus, "Unattainable" asks us to decide how we will respond to these meta-cycles of life. Will we frustrate ourselves with the task at hand, or find joy in the pushing, pushing, always pushing? Meg's "Cloud's Tale" offers a form of release to that question. The three performers create around one another, telling a story of discovery and creativity through a child's lens. We see and hear what we choose to see and hear, from clouds to justice, and the cycle repeats. The concert ends with JoEllen's "Niagara." It's a playful frolic as much as a recognition of human frailty and smallness in the universe. Up against the mighty falling waters of this "Sorceress of Sound", we chatter and sing and the water keeps on tumbling down.  
~David Harris

## Part 1: Bacchanalia Mirrors

### ***Lunar Raveling Ritual*** - Derek Weagle

In most spiritual, astrological, and folk magick practices, the full and new moons are energetic counterparts. While the new moon is a time for manifestation and setting intentions, the full moon is a time to celebrate and release the energy accumulated during the waxing phase between new and full. The Lunar Raveling Ritual is designed to be performed on or around the full moon as an act of joyful gratitude for the blessings of the bygone moon phases. The ritual encourages the performers to explore the notions of recurrence on both literal and metaphorical levels through the direction of ancestral invocation, phoneme glissandi, harmonic tension and release, and other elements.

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## 2023 N.E.O. Voice Festival Exploratorio

### *Recurrence*

***he too concludes that all is well*** - Max Eidinoff

Text by Walt Whitman and Max Eidinoff

*he too concludes that all is well* is inspired by Albert Camus' 1942 philosophical essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" in which he argues that one must imagine Sisyphus to be happy. Sisyphus is absurdly victorious over the gods by being conscious of the futility of his efforts. It is during the breathing space when walking back down the mountain that Sisyphus reflects on his tragic condition and is rebellious through acknowledging his own powerlessness. It is here that Camus refers to Sisyphus as the "proletarian of the gods," connecting him to real life workers who have no opportunity for climbing the socio-economic ladder. However, it is the certainty of their condition which allows for happiness to occur. Joy through conscious hopelessness.

To engage with these ideas, the three soloists and choir in this piece sing different texts. The choir sings fragments from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* conveying timelessness through joyous individuality. The first soloist also sings text by Whitman, but quotes that instead reflect an indifference towards death because of a faith in the eternal. These voices are juxtaposed by another soloist describing the imagery of Sisyphus's punishment while the final soloist makes the connection between Sisyphus's condition and that of the contemporary worker, concluding with an optimistic, albeit playfully irreverent, sentiment.

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***Non Chaonis afruit arbor*** - Elliot Menard

Text from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

*Non Chaonis afruit arbor* sets text from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (10.90-105) to music for 8 (or more) voices. This particular excerpt, considered the "catalog of trees" by Ovidian scholars, describes in vivid detail the grove Orpheus wanders to after losing Eurydice for the second time. Denied re-entry to the Underworld, Orpheus laments on the banks of the river styx for seven days, returns home to Thrace, and shuns the love of women for three years. In this grove, Orpheus returns to music, singing stories of ill-fated love: boys too-favored by the gods and girls driven by their sinful desires. The trees, rocks, and wild animals bend to his song. From the woods, the Bacchae overhear Orpheus' slander. Insulted and enraged, they tear him apart and throw his head in the river. Orpheus returns to the Underworld, this time dead, still seeking Eurydice. The two reunite and look at each other, safely, forever.

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### *Recurrence*

At first glance, the catalog of trees appears to solely function as scenic ekphrasis, halting the narrative rather than contributing to it. However, the more time I spend with this text, the more I understand it to be a perfect snapshot of the entire *Metamorphoses* poem and the condition of metamorphosis itself.

Throughout the catalog of trees, Ovid nods to the poem's previous stories of tree-related metamorphoses: the Heliades sisters as poplars, mourning the death of their brother and crying tears of amber; the old couple Philemon and Baucis, on the verge of death, transformed into the oak and linden instead, as a reward for their hospitality to disguised deities; the resolute maiden Daphne maintaining her virginity as the laurel; exiled Byblis, feral from shame, accompanying the oak as a bubbling spring; the nymphs Lotis and Dryope as lotuses, the former to avoid the advances of Priapus, the latter as punishment for plucking the leaves of the former.

Not only is the grove crowded with its trees and their stories, but the passage itself is crowded with words. The lines progressively run into one another, infringing on each other's space and disrupting the meter's organization. In this piece, I explore how voices can represent the tangled character of the text and the grove it describes.

*Non Chaonis afruit arbor* was composed for the 2023 N.E.O. Voice Festival's ExplOratorio concert on the theme "Recurrence," which pervades the entire *Metamorphoses* itself—as memory, repetition, and allusion—and also speaks to its reception throughout history.

This piece is a continuation of my work on "Orpheus/Ovid," an in-progress chamber opera on Ovid's account of the Orpheus myth for eight (or more) treble voices, cello, and flute. My compositional choices are guided by my research from my undergraduate thesis, which argues that Ovid influenced the birth and evolution of opera not only for the multitude of plots in the *Metamorphoses*, but also for his narrative prowess and methodologies.

This text came into my life after losing a close friend in 2017. I was in a wandering state of grief, not able to process the finality of her death. I had recurring dreams in which she would appear before me. Sometimes she would tease me for believing she had died. Sometimes she couldn't see or hear me. Reflecting on the text's grip over me, I think I saw myself in Orpheus and her in Eurydice. I knew how it felt to return from the katabasis of sleep, empty handed. I dedicate this project to my friend; as I compose, I work just as closely with the text as with my memories of her.

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### *Recurrence*

Throughout every era, music, opera, and theater return to the Orpheus myth. No adaptation I've encountered tells the whole story — or at least, how Ovid tells it. In *Non Chaonis afruit arbor* and the entire chamber opera, "Orpheus/Ovid," I aim to translate my visualization of the ancient poem into an aural experience, develop a deeper relationship to the text, and tell the parts of the story that never make it to the stage.

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## Part 2: Lunar Cosmos

***In Waves*** - Kion Heidari

Text by Sam Aldape

*In Waves* delves into the cyclical sensations that come with depression, reappearing throughout milestones in a year. In the text, such feelings are analogized to depictions of nature. We, as humans, are at the mercy of the natural world, and struggling against it is often futile. Similarly, depressive states can be so dominating and consistent that they feel inevitable, like the seasons themselves.

Though the subject matter is on the heavier side, an intimate, heartbreaking beauty can be found between the words and lines. The music itself comes in waves, each verse different but at its core the same, representing the cycle that feels impossible to break.

Composed/written for the 2023 N.E.O Voice Festival Exploratorio in the theme of "Recurrence", this piece is performed by an octet of soprano/alto singers and a soloist.

---

It seems as though it was always like this.

Hollow vision-  
the old scripture passed along,  
a light to come to blind,  
birthing this song:

Drifting  
Just drifting  
Nothing to do but wait  
For I know it comes in waves

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### *Recurrence*

It comes in waves

A boy of ice cracks  
In a dim, distant home  
With only shadows to watch  
as he loses control;  
snow falls, and the night waits  
to consume my soul.

Floating  
Just floating  
Nothing to do but sway  
For I know it comes in waves  
It comes in waves

The sun begins to gaze  
and so Day starts its toll.  
My core rips and tears  
through pits of fleshy coal,  
boiling in my waters,  
heaving rotten, molten bone.  
The inferno burns my lungs  
and consumes my soul.

Falling  
Just falling  
Nothing to do but pray  
For I know it comes in waves  
It comes in waves

With each falling of the moon  
or rising of the tide,  
this cycle does not break.  
I simply stand aside,  
waiting for a day  
when I might feel alive,  
but-

it seems as though it was always like this.

---

**La La** - Richard An



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The singing you make in this body is the same as the singing you will make when you return to the earth. The songs in your ear will come back, quietly or loudly.

La La is a piece for choir and stones, composed for the 2023 N.E.O Voice Festival ExplOratorio 'Recurrence.'

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#### **Eclipse** - Molly Burke

"Lunar eclipses bring culminations, ultimatums, revelations and completions."

~Dayna Lynn Nuckolls (ThePeoplesOracle.com)

I always considered myself bad at music theory. Music Theory was a tear inducing class that I nearly failed as I pursued an education in classical voice. With this educational trauma, I viewed myself strictly as a vocalist- an interpreter of what was written, unable to write music myself. Of course, as our lives continuously cycle back to moments we must confront, my artistic journey has cycled back to education. I became an educator last year. I teach voice, piano, and composition (I know!) through a school that utilizes revolutionary pedagogical techniques. Through implementing these new teaching styles on young musicians, I couldn't help but see myself all those years ago, weeping over piano keys. This return to a point of trauma forced a confrontation with the beliefs I had in myself. The Bad Student™ is now the teacher and the teacher knows what she's doing. Fittingly, I stretched to get a better look at my artistic self during an eclipse, applying for this festival thinking myself a vocalist that struggled with music theory and being confronted with the revelation that there are many ways to compose music, and I am indeed a composer as well. The educational trauma is being healed by returning to it through a new phase of the moon. Revelations come in cycles, often we must return to previous moments in our life to complete them. This eclipse is in conversation with itself, a singular vocalist playing both seeker and revealer of the moon, with the accompaniment inter playing with both characters. A lunar eclipse renders the reflection of the moon invisible to the seeker, but she's still there. We just need to trust and return to ourselves, revealing her light.

Text:

By: Rebecca Kidnie

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*Recurrence*

I want to see the moon! I want to take a big look.

“You can!” Said the Sky, “Tonight is the full moon, it’s so bright you can’t miss it.”

I need the best view! I’m going to miss it!

The moon began to rise, almost in view. Just as I was promised!

I need the best view! I’m going to miss it!  
I stretch and craned to see the moon and saw nothing.

Nothing but darkness.  
Only strange darkness.  
You lied! You lied!  
Tell me what happened.

“I did not lie. You had the sun to your back, you see; You were blocking her light. Eclipsing her. Eclipsing her.  
You didn’t see the moon! But she saw you.

She gave you the strength to stretch, and to climb to see the moon.

Her light, her light, her light, her light, her light.”

---

**CONNECTION** - Jamey Guzman

Are you okay?

This question is not an easy one to ask. It takes a certain amount of boldness to look at another person, realize they might be suffering, and inquire into the state of their intimate, internal world. When you ask this, you decide that the risk of intruding, having guessed wrong, and being shut down or rebuffed, is far less important than the risk of another person needing help and you not offering it out of fear. Through the cyclic repetition of the phrase in this piece, and the option for the audience to join in the musical experience, it is my hope that the

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### *Recurrence*

walls surrounding this phrase and preventing connection can be broken down a little bit, and that people feel a little more empowered to check in with one another.

Connection explores *Recurrence* through examining an individual's relationship with community. A soloist starts by asking herself, Are you okay? growing more and more panicked. Her community around her notices, and sings the question warmly back at her, but she pushes them away: "Okay. Okay." She rejects the community, feeling unworthy of their help, turning away and hiding her face—but they somberly intone the question again and again. In the only deviation from the text of the question, the community sings I see you – we see you. She turns around and starts to truly see them in turn: You. You. You. The community, now joined by the audience, answers: You are. Are, the verb, with no adjective needed. She is. And that is what makes her okay. We all are, together, and that is enough.

The most obvious connection to *Recurrence* is in the setting of the very spare six-word text. The question the protagonist asks herself is, in turn, an obsessive, self-hating mantra, a reaching out from the community, a single-word changing of focus, and finally an affirmation. The melody, too, recurs throughout the piece, arranged differently in each section, but always simple and memorable. The story, a journey starting from pushing one's community away to ultimately connecting to and affirming them in turn, is a beautiful cycle of healing that transcends the stage into the audience. Because the narrator accepts help and starts to heal, she is then able to reach out to the audience and join that community, which could help the next person in need of connection. If just one person turns to a loved one, or a stranger, and asks are you okay, then this cycle will recur even beyond the walls of this Sanctuary.

Are you okay?

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## Part 3: In Morning's Light

***Press '1' to be enlightened*** - Megan Steinberg

*Press '1' to be enlightened* is born from text by authors with bipolar disorder, including the composer, and responses to it from AI chatbots. Several mental health organisations are replacing human therapists and counsellors with chatbots and this presents serious potential for harm. This piece is a realisation of this future, and a call to

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action to improve access to mental health treatment. The sung text is by Matthew Quick (Silver Linings' Playbook), Kay Redfield Jamison (An Unquiet Mind) and composer Megan Steinberg. The spoken text is generated by Chat GPT-2 and GPT-3. Composed for 2023 N.E.O Voice Festival Exploratorio 'recurrence'

Content warning: this piece contains conversation about mental/emotional distress

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**‘ō‘ō** - Daniel Newman-Lesler

The Kaua'i 'ō'ō was the the last member of the 'ō'ō (Moho) genus within the Mohoidae family of birds from the islands of Hawai'i...which had originated 15-20 million years prior during the Miocene...The entire family is now extinct...marking the only extinction of an entire avian family in modern times ("modern" meaning post-1500 AD)."

A recording of the last known-surviving male 'ō'ō was made in 1987 by David Boynton. In the recording, the bird calls out repeatedly to a nonexistent mate that will never sing back.

This piece is an apocalyptic musical playground for 15 megaphonists, choir, organ, 2 Suzuki Andes 25fs, fixed media, and the architecture and acoustics of First Congregational Church of Los Angeles.

The amplified and acoustic choirs explore birdcall-inspired sounds while the organ provides a floor of industrial noise. A passive megaphone sits looping the recording of the 'ō'ō.

The piece is antithetical to the theme of recurrence in N.E.O.'s Exploratorio, as it centers on the nonrecurrent nature of extinction – of the o'o's, humanity's, everything's.

---

***A quiet rumbling in the dark*** - Abigail Whitman

*a quiet rumbling in the dark* embodies the different aspects of societies as they go through drastic change. As I was reflecting on the theme of recurrence, my mind kept coming back to the “unprecedented times” we live in and how they really aren't unprecedented at all. A brief glance into history shows pandemics of the past, a cycle of fascism, unfettered capitalism leading to an extreme divide between the impoverished and wealthy, and along the way there are individuals providing catalysts for often messy,

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### *Recurrence*

but hopeful, change. It was these moments of hope I decided to focus on. The use of the Locrian mode, which is the most ambiguous of the western classical modes, was picked to create that unsettling and chaotic feeling that goes hand in hand with societal upheaval, and the use of graphic notation and guided improvisation in each section gives the performers the freedom to experience and convey discomfort. The organ is given an emotional journey and holds the power to further drive the group into cacophony or guide us to some sort of resolution. The choir, representing the unified masses, holds the power of choice, and can respond to the emotions and inspirations of the other two sections. The soloists are given the most freedom and are placed in a position to inspire the other performers, receiving only a set of instructions and short phrases alluding to inspirational people and actions. This piece honors the individuals whose seemingly small actions inspired millions to rise up and say enough is enough, while recognizing the serious, absurd, and maddening events that create the perfect storm for these catalytic events.

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### ***Unattainable*** - David Walters

Text by Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935)

Humans, as pattern-seeking organisms, designate events as having recurred in an effort to make sense of the universe. As such, constellations and other cyclical phenomena not only mark the passage of time, but are often commingled with existential significance. While the search for structure and meaning is a weighty pursuit and has been ingrained by over 200,000 years of evolution, *unattainable* is not actually about recurrence itself. Though the text returns to the same imagery again and again, the reference is different each time – so to with the universe. It may appear that phenomena transpire precisely as they did before, but there are too many variables at play. Perhaps exactitude isn't required, but it's never exactly the same. So then, the recurrence is in us, and self-derived recurrence is irrepressible.

According to Pessoa, the river (that which recurs) is deep below the abyss that separates identity from the conscious mind. All thoughts of God, of the world, of self, and of mystery are floating there.

---

Between me and my consciousness  
Is an abyss  
At whose invisible bottom runs



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### *Recurrence*

The noise of a stream far from suns,  
Whose very sound is dark and cold -  
Ay, on some skin of our soul's deeming,  
Cold and dark and terribly old,  
Itself, and not in its told seeming.

My hearing has become my seeing  
Of that placelessly sunken stream.  
Its noiseless noise is ever freeing  
My thought from my thought's power to dream.  
Some dread reality belongs  
To that stream of mute, abstract songs  
That speak of no reality  
But of its going to no sea.

Lo! with the eyes of my dreamed hearing  
I hear the unseen river bearing  
Along to where it goes not to  
[All things my thought is made of - Thought  
Itself, and the World, and God, who  
On that impossible stream float.]

Ay, the ideas of God, of World,  
Of Myself [and] of Mystery,  
As from some unknown rampart, hurled,  
Go down with that stream to that sea  
It has not and shall never reach  
And belong to its night-bound motion.  
Yet oh for that sun on the beach  
Of that unattainable ocean!  
[omitted]

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### ***A Cloud's Tale*** - Meg Huskin

The inspiration for “A Cloud’s Tale” came about through many conversations with friends on recurrence. We discussed family and generational cycles, personal habits and daily rituals, and even the recurrence that is found in nature. I began to search for a way to connect all of these ideas, and it was in a conversation with my longtime friend and collaborator Sarah Perret-Goluboff that the story began to shape itself in my mind. She told me a story from her childhood, when her older sister took her to watch clouds, and how she felt when her sister saw the same shapes in the clouds that she did. She

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### *Recurrence*

noted how important it was to have someone to affirm her imagination and reality at that young age.

That is when the story for “A Cloud’s Tale” began to take shape. I chose to re-tell Sarah’s story, this time from the perspective of the cloud. I wanted to explore the theme of “recurrence” through something that was not exactly alive, but existed and moved through many living things. Through this story, I felt I could equate the process of the water cycle and the many transformations a cloud undergoes with the process of aging & gaining wisdom. I still however wanted to retain that sense of childlike imagination that was what drew me to Sarah’s story in the first place. That was how I came up this “musical storybook,” enhanced by the use of shape and color in the score to further immerse the performer in the childlike aspects of the story. In many ways, I feel like I have composed something akin to a piece of children’s theater, where the sonic elements of the piece are meant to evoke images in the minds of the listeners, similar to a storybook.

Lastly, woven throughout are bits of text from a few poems by William Wordsworth, including “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,” and “Lines Written in Early Spring.” Wordsworth’s poetry often draws connections between nature and a human state-of-mind, which - along with his rich imagery - felt particularly appropriate for this piece.

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### ***Niagara Falls*** - JoEllen West

I chose to write this piece shortly after visiting Niagara Falls with my best friend. I assumed it would be a much-needed getaway from school after a challenging semester, but I did not expect it to be life-changing. More than anything else I can think of, the water cycle captures the essence of the theme of recurrence. I like the irony of spontaneity within this recurrence that no two performances of this work which builds and expands upon a handful of ideas will ever be the same. To me, this sentiment echoes the climate change issue. We rely on nature yet often take it for granted nevertheless. Mother Nature is determined to be there for us. If we continue to harm the planet, however, nature’s stability will exponentially decline.

In writing this piece, I tried to blend genres in less than typical ways. Singers play the organ; jazz, canon, and aleatory are intertwined. I hope you, as a performer, are inclined to tell your own story through the many choices I have presented you. Think of the score as guidelines, like reading an adventure book where you get to choose the ending. The

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ultimate goal of the performer is to work with the ensemble in performance to create and maintain an atmosphere that perpetuates recurrence similarly to the water cycle and the great phenomenon that is Niagara Falls.