



# Spektral Quartet

*Something to Write Home About*

## Something to Write Home About

*Something to Write Home About* invites concertgoers to join the creative process by writing five postcards across an evening of performances with stimulating visuals and provocative writing prompts from the quartet.

A celebration of Chicago's world-class contemporary music scene, the program orbits five of the city's most imaginative composers, with each piece vibrantly contextualized by Spektral through interviews, video, and nimble storytelling.

For each number, Spektral draws the listener closer to the composer and their composition, using the music as the leaping-off point for audience members to pen a short message to someone special in their own life. Writing on custom-made postcards featuring the alluring work of Chicago visual artists, concertgoers become creators right alongside the Quartet...and reconnect with loved ones in unexpected ways.

Praised by *The New Yorker* as providing the "...signal service of obliterating the dividing line between past and present, tradition and avant-garde..." Spektral Quartet offers this interactive experience as not only a melding of the head and heart, but an opportunity to celebrate the creative spirit in us all.

Eliza Brown	String Quartet No. 1
Sufjan Stevens arr. by Gene Knific	<i>Arnika</i>
Nathalie Joachim	<i>Lamizè pa Dous</i> from <i>Fanm d'Ayiti</i>
Samuel Adams	Movement II: <i>For Chris Stark</i> , from String Quartet No. 2: <i>Current</i>
Tomoka Reid	<i>Prospective Dwellers</i>

Multi-Grammy-Award nominees, the Spektral Quartet actively pursue a vivid conversation between exhilarating works of the past and the extraordinary works of today. With *The New York Times* writing that, “they have everything: a supreme technical command that seems to come easily, a capacity to make complicated music clear, and, most notably...an ability to cast a magic spell”, Spektral is regarded as one of the boldest ensembles working today.

Invited to take the stage at notable venues such as the Kennedy Center, Library of Congress, American Academy in Rome, and NPR’s Tiny Desk Concerts, the quartet is also in demand for residencies at leading music schools around the country including Stanford University, New World Symphony, and Northwestern University. Distinguished by its stylistic versatility, Spektral Quartet enjoys collaborations with artists such as Theaster Gates, Miguel Zenón, and Nathalie Joachim, and frequently commissions new work from composers including Augusta Read Thomas, Anna Thorvaldsdottir, and George Lewis.

# Karolina Bermudez

Student at Chicago Bulls College Prep  
Young Teaching Artist at Marwen



Karolina Bermudez (she/her) is a current 12<sup>th</sup> grader and an Art Institute of Chicago teen intern and Marwen young teaching artist. Being surrounded by art is her safe place, filled with inspiration and with zero fear of judgment. She has explored collage and stop motion through teaching art classes to fellow youth. Karolina believes in eliminating the exclusivity art spaces bring that limit people from exploring their

creativity; this is why she plans to create inclusive classes and spaces that invite everyone to make the art they desire.



*Good Days* by Karolina Bermudez

## Artist Statement

The collage *Good Days* is named after the song *Good Days* by SZA. Music has never healed me as much as it does now and the song has had a hold on me throughout quarantine, reassuring me about all the good to come and reminiscing on the better days I've had. I arranged film pictures I took in Florida on a hike to remember the feeling of warmth: I wanted to visualize how the hiking path was a portal for me at that moment. Memories of Miami will always be tinted in green and remind me of good days.

# Ethan Rodriguez

Senn Arts student at Senn High School



Ethan Rodriguez (he/they) is a 2D artist based in Chicago, and a Senn Arts student at Senn High School. Their works consist of multiple glowing stars and mystical elements. They're heavily inspired by different forms of spirituality and human relationships. This is seen in their own evaluation as a trans individual and practicing spiritualist, rooting from Mexican heritage and growing up surrounded by an ever changing city.

They primarily work with procreate and crayola colored pencils, as well as being trained in traditional painting and drawing techniques, often experimenting with 4D elements and planning to expand to installation spaces.



*Comfort in All Things* by Ethan Rodriguez

## Artist Statement

Within a time where separation is synonymous to safety, I am often encountering and viewing the inability to connect and find that human “comfort.” Throughout this historical period of time again and again I am turning away from people and searching for the tender and the soul healing...within everything. The way the breeze feels on a warmer day, the crunch of the snow under my dog’s paws, the whisper of morning tea and my own hands. It is a hug from all matter, the entire universe all in one: I find comfort in all things.

# Brandon Breaux



Brandon Breaux is a Fine Artist/ Designer working out of Chicago. His creative experience is comprised of painting, sculpture, web, video, print, and interactive projects. Currently his work contributes to clients marketing efforts, attracting and maintaining consumer loyalty and interest. Widely known as the artist behind all 3 of Chance the Rapper's iconic album covers, Brandon continues to meet the demands of the evolving market

by having a good understanding of what inspires an audience and what moves the culture. His primary goal is to produce creative solutions, with authentic sensibility and an undeniable aesthetic.





*Portrait of Charity Clay by Brandon Breaux*

## Artist Statement

28 Days of Greatness is a project that honors and uplifts Black individuals presently making history in their communities. The portraits feature individuals who embody Black excellence. The images were unveiled through Rebuild Foundation and Brandon Breaux' Instagram platforms daily throughout the month of February 2021.

I met the amazing Dr. Charity Clay in College at DePaul University where she arrived on a basketball scholarship only to have to switch things up due to injuries she sustained after being hit by a car on campus. Long story short she decided to major in Sociology and our first and I believe only class together was a sociology class. She's brilliant, very thoughtful, a kind spirit and an amazing human being. I'm very blessed to have met her and always love our exchanges. As a Critical Race Sociologist she currently teaches at Xavier University in Louisiana where she heads a major concentration in crime and

## Antonia Contro



Antonia Contro is a visual artist whose work ranges from discrete objects to site-specific installations and concept-based collaborations that engage artists and practitioners from a variety of disciplines. Her exhibitions and multidisciplinary projects include *Theorem*, a visual and literary book with poet Elizabeth Bradfield; *Light Itself*, a visual and sonic collaboration with Spektral Quartet; *Tempus Fugit* at American

Philosophical Society Museum, an exhibition of the artist's mixed media works alongside pieces selected from the institution's museum and library's collections; *Ex Libris*, at Chicago Cultural Center; the Italian Pavilion, 54th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale; *Centennial Celebration: New Acquisitions 2001-1011*, New York Public Library; *Closed/Open*, Newberry Library; and *Descry*, Museum of Contemporary Photography. Her work is in museum and private collections, including Art Institute of Chicago, Davis Museum, Delaware Art Museum, Hammer Museum, Harvard Art Museums, Menil Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art, Museum of Contemporary Photography, and New York Public Library.



*Campanil Basso* by Antonia Contro, from the collection of Mary Ittelson

## Artist Statement

I've been in awe of Campanile Basso since seeing it in family photos as a little girl. When I turned 13, my zio Luciano led my brother and me to the legendary peak in the Italian Dolomites where I first witnessed the mesmerizing spire.

My piece, *Campanil Basso* (as it is known in the dialect of the region), suggests a journey: a boot carries the peak against a backdrop of an August star map, amber pools behind, and geometric forms balance glass orbs. Light and dark, wind and rock, balance and precariousness.

As I listen to Spektral Quartet play Sam Adams' evocative quartet, I am psychically and viscerally transported back to *Campanile Basso*.

## Theaster Gates



Theaster Gates lives and works in Chicago. Gates creates work that focuses on space theory and land development, sculpture and performance. Drawing on his interest and training in urban planning and preservation, Gates redeems spaces that have been left behind. Known for his recirculation of art-world capital, Gates creates work that focuses on the possibility of the “life within things.” Gates smartly upturns

art values, land values, and human values. In all aspects of his work, he contends with the notion of Black space as a formal exercise – one defined by collective desire, artistic agency, and the tactics of a pragmatist. Gates has exhibited and performed at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France; Sprengel Museum Hannover, Germany (2018); Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland (2018); National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., USA (2017); Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada (2016); Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy (2016); Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK (2013); Punta della Dogana, Venice, Italy (2013) and dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany (2012). He was the winner of the Artes Mundi 6 prize and was a recipient of the Légion d’Honneur in 2017. He was awarded the Nasher Prize for Sculpture 2018, as well as the Urban Land Institute, J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development.

Gates is a professor at the University of Chicago in the Department of Visual Arts and the College. Gates also serves as the Senior Advisor for Cultural Innovation and Advisor to the Dean. Gates is Director of Artists Initiatives at the Lunder Institute for American Art at Colby College Museum of Art and the 2018/2019 Artist-in-Residence at the Getty Research Institute (GRI).



*A Postcard From St. Louis by Theaster Gates*

## Artist Statement

The predatory acquisition appetite of young aspiring St. Louis flippers is awe-inspiring. With no regard for the families, memories, or histories of a particular geography, they go down the list of residential properties until they find the 'big kahuna.' The buildings that I own in St. Louis were built to house cultural workers who do great work in North St. Louis, but the "flip it and become rich mentality" has changed architectural psychology from the importance of collective neighbourhoods to the importance of speculation and isolation.

## Eliza Brown



The music of composer Eliza Brown, described as “delicate, haunting, [and] introspective” by *Symphony Magazine*, has been performed around the world by leading new music ensembles and recorded on multiple labels. Eliza’s work is frequently intertextual, referencing existing pieces of music, historical musical styles, and other cultural artifacts. Deeply interested in the relationships between music and the

other arts and humanities, Eliza has engaged in interdisciplinary collaborations with practitioners of theater, dance, architecture, poetry, visual art, and film, frequently taking on other artistic roles in these projects in addition to composer. Eliza is currently Assistant Professor of Music at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana.

## Gene Knific



Composer, arranger, and pianist Gene Knific is the recipient of four ASCAP composition awards and eight Down Beat Magazine Music Awards for their performances and compositions in jazz and contemporary categories. As an arranger Gene has had 40 orchestral arrangements and compositions recorded at Abbey Road Studios in London. In 2019, Knific arranged the theme to HBO's *Game of Thrones* and performed it

along with the three-time Grammy nominated Spektral Quartet at Symphony Hall in Chicago. Knific has had works performed by Spektral Quartet, the Avalon String Quartet, The Buffalo Philharmonic, and the Merling Trio. Gene currently resides in Chicago, where they teach at The Voice Lab, Inc., a music and speech studio dedicated to serving queer and transgender communities internationally. They play synthesizers in and act as assistant to the regional manager of IVERSON, the official band of Planet Earth.

## Nathalie Joachim



Nathalie Joachim is a Grammy nominated flutist, composer, and vocalist. The Haitian-American artist is hailed for being “a fresh and invigorating cross-cultural voice”. (*The Nation*). She is co-founder of the critically acclaimed urban art pop duo, Flutronic. Upcoming world premieres include Joachim’s first ever symphonic and choral work commissioned by St. Louis Symphony and the In Unison Chorus;

new chamber works for Roomful of Teeth, So Percussion, Imani Winds, and Lorelei Ensemble; and a micro-chamber opera commissioned by Boston Lyric Opera. Joachim’s debut solo album, *Fanm d’Ayiti* with Spektral Quartet, available on New Amsterdam Records, received a Grammy nomination for Best World Music Album, and 2020 saw the release of *Transformation*, a collaboration with students at Kaufman Music Center’s Special Music School High School. An avid educator, Joachim holds faculty positions at the University of Hartford, Princeton University, and Bang On a Can Summer Festival. Joachim is a United States Artist Fellow, and an artistic partner with the Oregon Symphony.



# Samuel Adams



Samuel Adams (b. 1985, San Francisco, CA) is a composer of acoustic and electroacoustic music. His work has been hailed as “mesmerizing” and “music of a composer with a personal voice and keen imagination” by *The New York Times*, “canny and assured” by *Chicago Tribune*, and “wondrously alluring” by *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

Adams served as the curator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s MusicNOW series from 2015-2018, a period that saw the commissioning of nine new works, including Amy Beth Kirsten’s SAVIOR and a new work by Manual Cinema, as well as the development of an audiovisual collaboration with the Art Institute of Chicago. He has also curated for the San Francisco Symphony as part of their experimental SoundBox series.

Adams has held residencies at Civitella Ranieri (Umbria, IT), Visby International Centre for Composers (Visby, SE), Avaloch Farm (Boscawen, NH), Ucross (Ucross, WY), and Djerassi Resident Artists Program (La Honda, CA). He is a 2019 Guggenheim Fellow and will be composer-in-residence with Het Concertgebouw in Amsterdam for the 21-22 season.

## Tomeka Reid



Cellist and composer Tomeka Reid has emerged as one of the most original, versatile, and curious musicians in Chicago's bustling jazz and improvised music community over the last decade. Her distinctive melodic sensibility, always rooted in a strong sense of groove, has been featured in many distinguished ensembles over the years. Reid has been a key member of ensembles led by legendary reedists like

Anthony Braxton and Roscoe Mitchell, as well as a younger generation of visionaries including flutist Nicole Mitchell, vocalist Dee Alexander, and drummer Mike Reed. She co-leads the adventurous string trio HEAR IN NOW and in 2013 launched the first Chicago Jazz String Summit, an international festival of cutting edge string players held in Chicago. In the Fall of 2019, Tomeka Reid received a teaching appointment at Mills College as the Darius Milhaud chair in composition.