



# Bard College Conservatory of Music

*20 Years of Music, Vision, and Excellence*

*Faculty Spotlight Series*

**Kyle Gann, composition**

Sunday, October 26, 2025 at 7:00 pm

László Z. Bitó '60 Conservatory Building, Performance Space

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Nocturnes for piano (2021-23)

Kyle Gann

No. 1: *Collines de Lavande*

No. 2: *Souvenirs d'un Tango*

No. 3: *Crépuscule sans fin*

No. 4: *Nora in the Night*

No. 5: *The Argument of Innocence*

No. 6: *Spectral Dance*

No. 7: *Night Sky*

No. 8: *Homage to Clementi*

No. 9: *Am Grab von Bruckner*

No. 10: *The Eddying River*

No. 11: *Managing Expectations*

Emanuele Arciuli, *piano*

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Kyle Gann** (b. 1955 in Dallas, Texas) is a composer and the author of seven books on American music, including books on microtonality, Charles Ives's *Concord Sonata*, John Cage's *4'33"*, Conlon Nancarrow, and Robert Ashley. He studied composition with Ben Johnston, Morton Feldman, and Peter Gena, and about a fourth of his music is microtonal. His major works include two piano concertos, a symphony, *Transcendental Sonnets* for chorus and orchestra, the microtonal music theater piece *Custer and Sitting Bull*, *The Planets* for mixed octet, and *Hyperchromatica* for three retuned, computer-driven pianos. His music is available on the New Albion, New World, Cold Blue, Lovely Music, Mode, Other Minds, Meyer Media, Innova, New Tone, Microfest, Vous Ne Revez Pas Encore, Brilliant Classics, and Monroe Street labels.

**Emanuele Arciuli** has established himself as one of the most original and interesting performers on today's classical music scene. His repertoire ranges from Bach to contemporary music, with a strong affinity for composers from the United States.

He continuously develops new projects and is in constant pursuit of new ideas and innovative programs. Round Midnight Variations, a group works, written expressively for Arciuli by composers such as Crumb, Babbitt, Kernis, Rzewski, Torke, Daugherty, Bolcom, Hoffman and Harbison, has sparked the interest of international critics. His numerous recordings include *Gates to Everywhere*, with music by Carla Bley, Fred Hersch, and Chick Corea, the complete piano works of Berg and Webern, and the world premiere of Bruno Maderna's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra. His CD dedicated to George Crumb (Bridge) was nominated for a Grammy Award. Recently VAI Records has released a dvd featuring Ives Concord Sonata. His most recent release *Walk in Beauty*, a 2cd box for Innova, features music composed for him by such musicians as John Luther Adams, Michael Daugherty, Kyle Gann, and Martin Bresnick, as well Native American piano music.

Emanuele Arciuli regularly performs at major concert halls and festivals, such as the Berliner Festwochen at Philharmonie, Wien Modern at Musikverein, La Scala Milano, Biennale di Venezia, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Miami Piano Festival, Miller Theater New York, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Brescia and Bergamo International Piano Festival. He has collaborated with internationally renowned orchestras such as the Saint Paul Chamber, Saint Petersburg Philharmonic, Orquestra Sinfônica Brasileira, RAI National Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Brussels Philharmonic and many others. Conductors with whom he has worked include Roberto Abbado, Andrey Boreyco, Dennis Russell Davies, Yoel Levi, James MacMillan, Kazushi Ono, Zoltan Pesko, Emilio Pomarico, Corrado Rovaris, Arturo Tamayo, Wayne Marshall and Mario Venzago. His comprehensive book *Musica per pianoforte negli Stati Uniti*, was recently published in Italy.

In May 2011, Emanuele Arciuli was awarded with the most important Italian critic's prize, the Premio Franco Abbiati. From 2017-18 he will teach Contemporary Piano Music at Accademia di Pinerolo. He is a professor at the Conservatory in Bari and a frequent guest professor at several American universities

## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Nocturnes 1-11 (2021-23)

I had long wanted to write some nocturnes, because I love the original ones by John Field, and I am partial to the genre in general - but in the Romantic era the form became so bound up with piano virtuosity that I feel that few examples are sufficiently... nocturnal. I wanted quiet piano pieces that one could listen to, musing, on a calm evening. I also wanted to dissociate the genre from the sectional, often ABA form into which Chopin developed it (in contradistinction to Field), bringing it into a more postminimal idiom.

The first three nocturnes were commissioned in 2021 by Francois Mardirossian for his ambient music festival in Lyon, June/July 2022. I thought the French titles would be a courteous gesture to my host.

Nocturne No. 1, "Collines de Lavande" (Lavender Hills), was inspired by a recent stay in rural southern France. It descends hills.

Nocturne No. 2, “Souvenirs d'un Tango” (Memories of a Tango), in E-flat, is expanded from a sketch for a tango I wrote in 2015.

Nocturne No. 3, “Crepuscule sans Fin” (Twilight without End), is greatly extended from a passage in my septet *But Even So*, which I had just completed.

Nocturne No. 4 in D, “Nora in the Night” (2022) was inspired by a nonsense poem, “Northern Lights,” by the incomparable cartoonist Walt Kelly, creator of *Pogo*:

Oh roar a roar for Alice,  
Nora Alice in the night,  
For she has seen Aurora  
Borealis burning bright.

A furore for our Nora!  
And applaud Aurora seen!  
Where, throughout the Summer, has  
Our Borealis been?

I wanted to write something with a similarly playful meter.

Nocturne No. 5, “The Argument of Innocence,” was inspired by a poem by my favorite poets, Kenneth Patchen. *The Argument of Innocence* is one of his picture poems, the entire text of which reads, “The argument of innocence / can only be lost / if it is / won.”

Nocturne No. 6, “Spectral Dance,” is based on previous sketches for two other works, The central section is a melody I wrote in 1997 for a piece I never brought to completion. At that time the musical movement known as spectralism was not yet on my radar; I imagined a dance of ghosts, specters, and intend no reference to that European idiom. The intro and outro passages from another sketch are closely related in rhythm.

Nocturne No. 7 in A-flat, “Night Sky,” is perhaps the simplest piece I've ever written, and requires no explanation.

Nocturne No. 8, “Homage to Clementi,” combines quotations of one of my favorite composers, one who has been unjustly underrated by history. It uses not the driving themes one associates with Clementi, but his delicate, static moments which evoke music boxes. Most often quoted here is the slow movement of Op. 40, No. 1 in G, and also Op. 36, No. 2 in F (second movement), Op. 50 No. 3 in G minor (“Didone abbandonata,” first movement), and Op. 34, No. 2, also in G minor (second movement). I wanted to hear all his delicious pedal points freed from the obligatory dramatic tropes of sonata form.

Nocturne No. 9, “Am Grab von Bruckner” (At Bruckner’s Grave), arose spontaneously from an emotionally charged experience: visiting, in 2023, the St. Florian Monastery outside Linz where the great Anton Bruckner worked, and seeing his grave in the vault beneath his favorite organ. I was taken there by the dedicatee, composer Martin Gut, to whom I am grateful. There are no quotations from Bruckner's music, but I did try to match the mood of the Seventh Symphony's Adagio, and the F minor tonality seemed apt.

Nocturne No. 10, “The Eddying River,” took as its image a flowing river dotted with spiraling eddies. I looked up the phrase “the eddying river” and found it associated with *The Iliad* and other pre-Homeric texts, so it seems to be the translation of a rather common ancient Greek phrase.

Nocturne No. 11, “Managing Expectations,” is in F-sharp Mixolydian mode (occasionally sneaking into Lydian). It is a jaunty exercise in pandiatonic counterpoint that keeps making you expect something specific, sometimes giving it to you, sometimes not.