



TUESDAYS @ MONK SPACE

2025-26 Season

STEVE THACHUK:
Abreise

September 22, 2026
8:00 PM

Monk Space

presented by

Brightwork
newmusic





The 2026-27 Season of Tuesdays @ Monk Space is
curated by **Shalini Vijayan.**

Brightwork newmusic is generously supported in part by:



STEINWAY & SONS



PROGRAM

Matins

Steve THACHUK

Abreise (world premiere)

THACHUK

Impurity Chains

Bekah SIMMS

-Intermission-

There's Always One

Alexander Elliot MILLER

More Hill (world premiere)

with Sarah Wass, flute

Three Songs by *The Tragically Hip* (arr. Fraser & Thachuk)

with Stacey Fraser, voice

***I Can Hear Her Through
the Thin Wall Singing***

D.J. SPARR

1. *Elegy After Midnight*
2. *The Guitar*
3. *The Singing*
4. *The Piano*
5. *Heaven*

with Stacey Fraser, voice



PROGRAM NOTES

Matins by Steve THACHUK

Matins takes its name from the canonical hour traditionally observed as the first office of the Christian liturgy, sung in the darkness before morning. The title refers not to the religious character of the office, but to its atmosphere of stillness, contemplation, and anticipation.

I have developed a practice of improvising in the early morning as a way of beginning the day creatively and exploring consonance, contrast, tension, and resolution. *Matins* grew from these improvisations and reflects the particular character of music conceived at the threshold between night and day.

Like the office from which it takes its name, however, *Matins* may be performed at any hour.

Abreise by Steve THACHUK

Abreise (2017) is a meditation on the “Arioso” from J.S. Bach’s Capriccio on the Departure of a Beloved Brother, BWV 992. Written for solo guitar and six-track looper, the work reframes the ostinato figures of Bach’s original through repetition, shifting textures, and harmonic ambiguity.

Recurring figures emerge, recede, and return in altered contexts, becoming increasingly distant from their source. Through this process, *Abreise* explores different aspects of loss while suspending the process of confronting and resolving it outside a conventional sense of temporal progression.

Impurity Chains by Bekah SIMMS

There are written passages that, perhaps, have a profound meaning if only one could understand them. You know the language, you recognize the words, but the meaning is lost or

skewered. Only fragments show themselves as having meaning: familiarity alongside something else.

“We study odd-membered chains of spin- $\frac{1}{2}$ impurities, with each end connected to its own metallic lead. For antiferromagnetic exchange coupling, universal two-channel Kondo (2CK) physics is shown to arise at low energies. Two overscreening mechanisms are found to occur depending on coupling strength, with distinct signatures in physical properties. For strong interimpurity coupling, a residual chain spin-12 moment experiences a renormalized effective coupling to the leads, while in the weak-coupling regime, Kondo coupling is mediated via incipient single-channel Kondo singlet formation. We also investigate models in which the leads are tunnel-coupled to the impurity chain, permitting variable dot filling under applied gate voltages.”

-Andrew K. Mitchell, David E. Logan, and H. R. Krishnamurthy
Phys. Rev. B 84, 035119 – Published 25 July 2011

There's Always One More Hill

by Alexander Elliot MILLER

"There's Always One More Hill" is a duo for flute and electric guitar composed for my friends Steve Thachuk and Sarah Wass in 2025. The piece was written shortly before my wife, Christen, and I became engaged and its title comes from our first large hike together. The hike was more strenuous than I had initially indicated to her, and Christen kept asking if we were near the top. I kept deviously saying, "ah yeah, there's just one more hill." We made it to the top, but she kept making fun of my deception for a while on later hikes or bike rides together. Gradually, it became a special expression for us with far greater meaning, referring to there always being new metaphorical hills to climb together, new challenges, and new adventures awaiting. I like to think of this piece as one adventure after another.

I Can Hear Her Through the Thin Wall Singing

by D.J. SPARR

I met Kristina Bachrach at the Lake George Music Festival. I heard her sing Barber's *Knoxville* and thought she was amazing, and she heard a chamber piece of mine there and liked it, so I pitched her an idea I had been carrying around for years: a set of songs for soprano and electric guitar. She said yes, we wanted to work together, and somehow that turned into a week at the Avaloch Farm Music Institute. I found Patrick Phillips by looking through poets who had won awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and his poems were exactly what I was after: family and children and memory, melancholy but also full of music imagery. Same feeling I got hearing Kristina sing the Barber. I wrote to him and asked, and he said yes. We started with seven or eight poems and narrowed to five. Before I went up there, I sat in a coffee shop in Lubbock and wrote out all the text on a single line, rhythms only, and the melodies and guitar grew out of that. At Avaloch, we did one song a day. I would bring a sketch in the morning, we would sing through it, and I would revise in the afternoon. Each movement is built around a specific guitar sound I picked before writing a note: folk slide, reverse delay and volume swells, overdrive and wah-wah for the smashed piano filling with leaves. At the end of that week, we recorded it, and we premiered it in Cambridge not long after. That recording is what appears on my album *Electric Bands*. I did not know until later that "Heaven" is famous from the poetry posters in the New York subway, which was a pleasant surprise. Nine years on, the piece means even more to me than it did then. The idea that you can hold the memory of a family you love, and that this is what heaven might be, is absolutely fantastic to me.

Steve and Stacey are giving the first performance by anyone other than Kristina and me, and I am grateful for it. I hope you enjoy it.

ARTIST BIOS

Steven Thachuk is a guitarist, composer, and orchestrator whose career has consistently crossed the boundaries between classical, rock, and experimental music. A classical guitar virtuoso known for his versatility and adventurous programming, he has performed



as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral soloist throughout North America and Europe, with repertoire ranging from J.S. Bach and Toru Takemitsu to John Lennon and Radiohead. His performances have earned international critical acclaim, with Mexico's El Nordeste calling him "a master of interpretation and artistry."

Never entirely at home within traditional musical categories, Thachuk has performed on classical, electric, and steel-string guitars and has increasingly returned to the rock roots that preceded his classical career. His collaborations have included guitarists Julian Coryell (Leonard Cohen, Jewel, Alanis Morissette) and Jeff Young (Megadeth), as well as numerous rock, experimental, and ambient projects.

As an orchestrator and arranger, Thachuk has worked extensively on projects bringing rock bands and symphony orchestras together. His collaborations include Steve Hackett's Genesis Revisited for Band & Orchestra, which toured the UK and resulted in a live album and concert film recorded at London's Royal Festival Hall, as well as projects with Dave Mason and orchestral tributes to the Tragically Hip and the Grateful Dead.

Thachuk has also contributed to contemporary and experimental projects spanning classical and electric guitar, orchestral music, chamber opera, and film. He continues to perform as a classical guitarist, session player, and with bands in Los Angeles, while also working as a composer for film.

A graduate of the University of Toronto, Thachuk earned his doctorate from the Eastman School of Music and currently teaches at California State University, Northridge.

Sarah Wass is a musician whose artistic practice is highly collaborative. She has created works with dancer and choreographer Paula Present and as part of the experimental chamber group Freshly Squeezed Music Ensemble. Her composition “Tomorrow” was dubbed “24 blissful minutes” by Mark Swed in the LA Times. As a flutist she specializes in bringing new music to life and has performed with Brightwork Ensemble, International Contemporary Ensemble, The Industry, and Wild Up, and on the Ojai Festival, Monday Evening Concerts, and the Hear Now Festival, working with many leading composers of our time. Sarah has a BM in music performance from Oberlin Conservatory and an MFA from CalArts. She is the Interim Executive Director of The Industry, an experimental opera company.



Canadian-born soprano **Stacey Fraser** has been praised for her “wonderfully controlled voice” by the New York Times and her “astonishing presence” by the San Diego Union-Tribune. She has performed internationally in opera, concert, and theatre throughout the United States, Canada, Asia, and Europe.



Known for her “seamless” interpretation of Luciano Berio’s *Sequenza III* (Los Angeles Times), Fraser has premiered numerous works by renowned composers from around the world, including acclaimed Grammy-winning composer Jack Van Zandt. She is also featured in the music-art film *Still Life After*

Death, directed by Emmy-winning filmmaker Sandra Powers, with music by Chinary Ung.

Fraser's recordings are available on MicroFest Records (NAXOS), Neuma Records, Bridge Records, and ein Klang. She is a core member of the renowned Los Angeles-based Brightwork Ensemble and serves as Director of Opera Theatre and an Endowed Professor at California State University, San Bernardino.

Fraser was voted "Favorite Opera Singer" in the 2025 and 2026 San Francisco Classical Voice Audience Choice Awards, Los Angeles Division, and was named CSUSB's Outstanding Professor for 2025

Alexander Elliott Miller is a composer, guitarist, and educator based in Southern California. His compositions have been described as "in a deceptively laid back in an LA way...inventive...unconventional" (LA Times). Many of Miller's compositions feature the electric guitar, as a solo instrument with



electronic accompaniment or in chamber settings. His largest projects are ANTIBODYPOLITIC, an album length project of pandemic themed works for electric guitar and analogue synthesizers, and TO....OBLIVION: Historic Landmarks Around Los Angeles an album of six pieces inspired by six lost landmarks of symbolic significance, scored for electric guitar, foley style sound effects and a then / now video slideshow. He's also written for HOCKET, Duo Montagnard, Panic Duo, and guitarist Steven Thachuk. In 2017, pianist Vincent Craig performed one of his works at Carnegie Hall. He is on the faculty at CSULB's Bob Cole Conservatory of Music and Chapman University.



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