
ÇEDILLE
Mischa Zupko
In Sympathy
Timothy McAllister
Civitas Ensemble
~Nois Quartet

Mischa Zupko

In Sympathy

Timothy McAllister, saxophone
(alto, except as noted)

Mischa Zupko (b. 1971)

1. Tailgate‡ (2:49)
   with Mischa Zupko, piano
2. Simple Song (2:47)
   with Mischa Zupko, piano

From the Skyline‡‡ (17:08)

3. I. Crystal (7:42)
4. II. Chasing Moonlight (4:30)
5. III. Brick and Steel (4:51)
   with Mischa Zupko, piano
6. Anechoic Rhapsody* (10:57)
   with Civitas Ensemble
7. Quantum Shift (7:52)
   ~Nois Quartet
8. In Sympathy* (9:53)
   with Civitas Ensemble

In Transit (22:39)

9. I. Red Walls of Fog (5:27)
10. II. Mango Cafe (5:35)
11. III. So Alone Am I (4:27)
12. IV. Rush Hour! (2:32)
13. V. The Dream (4:33)
    with Mischa Zupko, piano
14. Bonus track
    Ed Sarché: “So Alone am I” (1:59)
    performed by the composer

TT: (76:45)

*World Premiere Recording

‡soprano saxophone ‡‡tenor saxophone

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Notes by

Mischa Zupko

Tailgate (2021) is a short ride for soprano saxophone and piano exploring danger, high speed, and road rage. The saxophone leads off with a stuttering musical line followed by the same irregular line in the piano two and a half measures later. The entire piece is, in fact, a strict relative-time canon between the two parts where the follower (the piano) inches closer and closer to the leader (the sax) throughout, like an irate driver pursuing lane-based justice. Justice, or something like it, prevails in the denouement, where the piano finally "catches up" and the two parts play in unison, vying for supremacy amidst jarring leaps and accents to the bitter end. *Tailgate* was commissioned by and is dedicated to Cristopher and Hannah Creviston.

I composed ***Simple Song*** in 2019, upon learning of the death of my friend and longtime champion, Dr. Frederick Hemke. An icon of the classical saxophone world, Fred was admired not only for his artistry but also for the love and respect he showed those he mentored and inspired. For me, Fred was a transformative figure. When I was a piano

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student at Northwestern, he inspired me each week as I played for his students. He later commissioned my work and helped bring my saxophone music to audiences throughout the world. He gave generously and without expectation, sustained by an abundance of light, life, and music that he readily shared with everyone he encountered. *Simple Song* is a tribute through which I express the depth of my gratitude in a way words never could.

There is little to explain about the piece itself. It is my response to Fred's intense love of pure, unadorned melody. The piece embraces that quality throughout, as its melody gradually gives way to, and ultimately becomes, a quotation from Debussy's "Voiles" ("Sails"). I am not entirely sure why this music came to me at that moment. Perhaps I was remembering the cover of Fred's album, *Simple Gifts*, where he is pictured on Lake Michigan, his constant backdrop, and imagining him sailing beyond the horizon into a mysterious eternity filled with the music he loved.

From the Skyline (2022), for tenor saxophone and piano, is a three-movement work inspired by mesmerizing views from a 15th-story Chicago apartment. The first movement, *Crystal*, obsesses over the infinite ice formations that evolve daily during the coldest winter days along the coast of Lake Michigan. Both frozen and fluid, these intricate sculptures imbue a sense of mystery captured in the music's ever-varying arabesques and layered harmonies. *Chasing Moonlight* fixates on reflected moonbeams dancing off the water and into the living room. An air of stillness, akin to the experience of witnessing a cosmic rarity, saturates this movement amidst a gentle, rolling tide that plays with light and shade, intensity and resignation, fulfillment and longing. The third movement, *Brick and Steel*, is an ode to the great city of Chicago, whose skyline, visible from the southern windows, stands as a testament to the ingenuity of some of the greatest creative minds of the modern age; a true work of art that does not pale

in the face of its pristine natural surroundings, but rather intensifies their beauty. The music celebrates this city's vibrancy with a hard-edged approach that employs "found" percussion instruments the pianist plays at various points throughout. Angular and rapid, always on the move, this compact essay subjects a short rhythmic idea, stated at the beginning, to a vast array of treatments, showcasing the tenor sax in the middle in a fiendish, Coltraine-like solo, accompanied only by a triangle and various "drum" fills. *From the Skyline* was commissioned by a collective of 30 saxophonists organized as the Contemporary Tenor Repertoire Initiative by saxophonist Jeffrey Vickers. The composer gratefully acknowledges the consortium's members for their support and for the life they have given the work.

I wrote ***Anechoic Rhapsody*** on a 2020 commission, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the world was being asked to shelter-in-place. The world changed overnight and brought with it an intense quiet and solitude never before experienced. Heartbeat and breath became audible and reflection was inevitable. It was enough to drive one mad and also a potential source of healing. The periodicity of breath and heartbeat are central to this work and take the form of repeating gestures that undulate and pulse. At times, the pulsing is even in nature; at other times it varies widely in speed, progressing rapidly between slow and fast tempos. At yet other times, the pulses of the various instruments diverge from one another, producing something akin to a sense of drifting into reverie. The range of experience spans from meditative to untethered, and the work ultimately climaxes with the piano alone, a voice that had previously remained relatively subordinate, as if consciousness itself was awakened and moved by a revelation.

The anechoic chamber, referenced by the title, is a completely soundproof environment used for testing audio

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products. Reputedly, most people cannot stay within it for longer than 45 minutes at a time, some needing to leave immediately. The awareness of one's own blood flowing through organs and the sound of bones moving at the turn of a head can stir awareness of the fragility of life. A frightening prospect, but it is precisely this fragility that makes life so precious and causes us all to dream beyond the confines of our experience. There is beauty and healing in the quiet. This work was commissioned by the Civitas Ensemble and dedicated to Judy McCue, all of whom engaged in the process of developing the concept behind this work and to whom I'm truly grateful.

Quantum Shift (2021), for saxophone quartet, is an 8-minute work of intense virtuosity inspired by the mysteries of the subatomic. A quantum shift is a movement of an electron from one orbit to another with the fascinating property that there is no discernible transition between orbits; it is as if the electron simply ceases to exist in one orbit and magically appears in another. This phenomenon is imagined in the music's abruptly changing states in terms of figuration, texture, tempo, and gesture. At the atomic level, however, the music is conceived entirely from a single, three-note cell that issues from the start in rapid-fire exchange among the four saxophones. The result is an ensemble *tour de force*, demanding absolute precision and synergy among the members of the quartet to convey the sudden shifts of energy that define work's structure. *Quantum Shift* was commissioned by the Kenari Quartet in consortium with the Donald Sinta Quartet, Barkada Quartet, ~Nois Quartet, Fuego Quartet, Zzyzyx Quartet, Project Fusion Saxophone Quartet, Assembly Quartet, and Mirasol Quartet.

Scored for saxophone, violin, cello, piano, and a chorus of nine resonating wine glasses, ***In Sympathy*** (2024) is a collaboration with Fermilab National Accelerator Laboratory (where I was the

2024 Fermilab Research Alliance guest composer) and the esteemed Civitas Ensemble, featuring Winston Choi, Yuan-Qing Yu, and Ken Olson, with guest saxophonist Timothy McAllister. I was inspired to write the piece during conversations with theoretical physicists Chris Quigg and Luis Mendoza. My conversation with Chris introduced me to the use of resonance as a tool for particle discovery, a concept I found fascinating and decidedly musical. In a subsequent conversation, Luis's insights into quantum field theory, where particles emerge as resonant excitations in underlying fields, further deepened the idea of resonance as a principle that connects science and art. From this inspiration came the desire to explore the phenomenon of sympathetic resonance, a physical process whereby one object is coaxed into vibration via the excitation of another sharing its resonant frequency. My vision was to create a system in which acoustic instruments would trigger a chorus of tuned wine glasses to ring out in response based (solely) on this principle.

Over the course of a year, I conceived and designed the resonance system and its underlying architecture, developing both the physical glass units and the logic by which instrumental sound is detected, qualified, and translated into resonance. Bringing the system to life involved an extended process of experimentation and collaboration. I owe a profound debt of gratitude to my generous collaborators, without whom this project could never have taken shape:

- Brad Robin, who served as the principal Max programmer, working closely with me to implement and refine the patch architecture and devise technical solutions as the system evolved.
- Todd Johnson, who collaborated closely on the development and refinement of the resonating apparatus, bringing his technical

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expertise to the many experiments that shaped the final system. In addition to developing the custom magnetic transducers and assembling the piezo pickups (small electronic devices that turn the physical vibrations of an instrument into electrical audio signals), Todd created the "accelerator artwork" featured on the album cover: a "Lichtenberg figure" realized by electrically charging a plate and then releasing the charge to reveal the resulting branching paths traveled by the electrons.

- Timothy McAllister and the Civitas Ensemble, whose early testing of the system helped reveal and refine the musical potential of these resonant materials.

At its core, *In Sympathy* reflects on how resonance as a multifaceted concept relating to sound, science, and society, can illuminate the structures that link seemingly separate entities. Just as the instruments and glasses respond across space through shared frequencies, this piece allows us to experience how meaningful connection arises not from uniformity, but from the ability to respond, adapt, and move in relation to one another. In this way, *In Sympathy* becomes both a musical and conceptual exploration of what it means to coexist in ways that foster creativity. *In Sympathy*'s development was supported in part by a 2025 Individual Artists Program grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE).

Timothy McAllister commissioned ***In Transit*** in spring 1999. I wrote the work during a period of self-discovery, when I was mining previously unexplored sources among my musical influences. I imagined the piece as a travelogue, with each movement taking my music into a new environment, both stylistically and sonically. At the same time, I wanted to maintain a sense of continuity from one movement to the next, as though the work

followed a traveler whose perception of each new experience became increasingly colored by earlier encounters.

The destinations along the way include an impressionistic landscape inspired by the dense fogs of Seattle; the lively sounds of salsa spilling from clubs in Miami; a journey into the past that reimagines a melancholy song that my maternal grandfather wrote in the 1940s; a breathless, cadenza-like movement recounting a drive through the busy streets of Manhattan; and a contemporary jazz reverie reflecting on the journey. My grandfather's song, "So Alone Am I," provides musical material for all five movements, creating continuity across their diverse styles and sound worlds.

The most literal presentation of my grandfather's song occurs in the third movement, which bears its title, while the surrounding movements lead toward and away from this central point through motivic fragments drawn from the song. This is perhaps most evident in the scherzo-like second movement, "Mango Café." Here, an aggressive salsa dance is interrupted several times by slower, ethereal passages quoting the opening of "So Alone Am I." These fragments reappear in different contexts until the third movement, which follows without pause. There, the missing pieces of the melody are gradually assembled, culminating in a complete, literal quotation near the movement's end, revealing the source and inspiration for this eclectic journey.

Written in memory of my grandfather, Ed "Papa" Sarché, *In Transit* was commissioned by my longtime friend and collaborator Timothy McAllister, to whom the work is dedicated. His artistry, friendship, and advocacy have been central to this project, and this album would not have been possible without him.



Photo: rrjones

Timothy McAllister

Saxophonist Timothy McAllister is hailed as “one of the foremost saxophonists of his generation” by *The New York Times*. He has premiered over 300 works and has been presented by major symphonies, concert series, and music festivals worldwide.

Recent highlights include McAllister’s debut with the New York Philharmonic conducted by Leonard Slatkin, performing John Corigliano’s *Triathlon*. McAllister premiered *Triathlon* with the San Francisco Symphony and can be heard on the world-premiere recording with the Nashville Symphony, to be released by Naxos.

In 2025, he performed and recorded new saxophone concerti written for him by Adolphus Hailstork and Steven Mackey. In March 2026, he celebrated the world premiere of a new saxophone concerto by James Lee III, *Abiding Legacy*, with the Nashville Symphony, and in 2027, he presents new concerti by Viet Cuong with the Albany Symphony and Paul Moravec alongside the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. Additional world premieres include Jennifer Higdon’s Soprano *Sax Concerto*, Tyshawn Sorey’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Adagio* (For Wadada Leo Smith), and John Adams’ *Saxophone Concerto*, which he

performed at the BBC Proms, among appearances in over 20 countries.

The most recent addition to his multifaceted discography of over 60 albums, which have been recognized as "the top classical saxophone recordings in the industry" (*Detroit Free Press*) is *Project Encore Vol. 2*, a collaboration with pianist Liz Ames that commissions miniature works for saxophone and piano. Released in 2025, the recording showcases today's top composers, from Wynton Marsalis to Jennifer Higdon. With Liz Ames and acclaimed saxophonist Branford Marsalis, he has launched a new ensemble, the Marsalis-McAllister-Ames Trio.

In great demand as an orchestral saxophonist, he performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic for Gustavo Dudamel's inaugural gala concert performing the world premiere of John Adams' major work, *City Noir*, and reprised the work with Dudamel in a Grammy-nominated recording with the Berlin Philharmonic.

As soprano saxophonist of the renowned PRISM Quartet, McAllister has performed at Carnegie Hall, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and throughout Latin America and China. The Quartet has also been presented as soloists to great acclaim with the Detroit Symphony and Cleveland Orchestra and has commissioned over 300 works by eminent composers. *The Fifth Century,* PRISM's recording with The Crossing, won a Grammy for Best Choral Performance.

McAllister is Professor of Saxophone at The University of Michigan and distinguished faculty at Interlochen Center for the Arts.

timothymcallister.com



Photo: Dan Svaboda

Mischa Zupko

Chicago-based composer, Mischa Zupko writes music for performers who seek depth, risk, and mastery, creating immediate and emotionally powerful experiences for audiences. Hailed as an exceptionally inventive composer, his major commissions, international recordings, and collaborations with many of today's most prominent soloists and chamber musicians reflect a voice shaped by urgency, depth, and artistic fearlessness.

His works have been described as "harrowing and gripping" (*Classical Voice North America*), "a powerhouse of the evening" (*Chicago Tribune*), and "music that simply asserts itself with force and eloquence" (*Positive Feedback*). Zupko has also received favorable reviews in *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* and has been featured in the *Chicago Tribune* and

Chicago Reader for his significant compositional activity in Chicago's new music scene. Zupko has also been a featured guest on David Osenberg's weekly radio program, "Cadenza" (WWFM).

Zupko's music has been commissioned, premiered, and championed by leading orchestras and ensembles across the United States, including the Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus, Minnesota Orchestra, Pacific Symphony, New York Youth Symphony, Civitas Ensemble, Fulcrum Point New Music Project, Western Brass Quintet, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, American Modern Ensemble, Camerata Chicago, St. Olaf Band, Eighth Blackbird, Coigliano Quartet, and Lincoln Trio. Significant commissions have come from the Fromm Foundation, Barlow Endowment, and Gilmore International Keyboard Festival. His works have been featured at Carnegie Hall, Weill Hall, Merkin Hall, Ravinia, Segerstrom Hall, and the Moscow Conservatory, as well as major festivals including the Aspen Music Festival and Gilmore International Keyboard Festival. His works for saxophone and wind band are published by Murphy Music Press.

mischazupko.com

Civitas Ensemble



Winston Choi
Kenneth Olsen
Yuan-Qing Yu

Photo: Jamie Benjamin

Founded in 2011, Civitas Ensemble is one of the leading chamber music groups in Chicago. The Ensemble presents repertoire spanning four centuries of music and numerous genres and styles. The musicians nurture relationships with living composers, commissioning and premiering more than ten new works over the past 15 years, with additional commissions planned for future seasons.

The heart of the organization's mission comprises community engagement and bringing live music to people with limited access. To advance these goals, the Ensemble's musicians and Board members continually seek new ways to serve communities as Civitas Ensemble performs regularly in hospitals and retirement living facilities and partners with other nonprofits such as Chicago Lighthouse and the Center for Food Equity in Medicine.

Praised for the quality of its performances and community engagement efforts, Civitas members are passionate about working with artists from other creative disciplines – dancers, visual artists, poets – in projects that underscore the power of cross-disciplinary arts. Past collaborations include *Alla Zingarese*, an international connections project supported by the MacArthur Foundation. Their corresponding Cedille album, *Alla Zingarese*, showcases Civitas Ensemble with the Prague-based Gipsy Way Ensemble in exhilarating music inspired by the Roma music tradition.

Other collaborative projects include performances with Yo-Yo Ma at the Chicago Humanities Festival that featured a panel discussion on the topic of "Artist and Citizenship." Civitas was also named Artists in Residence for the Chinese Fine Arts Society and performed in Millennium Park's Pritzker Pavilion as part of the City of Chicago's "Loops and Variations" series.

civitasensemble.org

~Nois Quartet

Take your preconceptions of “noise” and toss them out the window. Equal parts “fiendishly good and fiendishly goofy” (*Chicago Tribune*), ~Nois Quartet is a “prolific, charismatic young ensemble that is swiftly becoming the American saxophone quartet du jour” (*Musical America*).

~Nois Quartet has presented over 200 performances in its ten years and has “continued to legitimize the saxophone quartet as a premier ensemble formation for classical music” (*Brutal New Music*) with invitations to perform at some of the nation’s top festivals and concert series, including LONG PLAY, the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, Princeton Sound Kitchen, and University of Chicago Presents. The quartet has had the privilege of working with some of the world’s leading voices in composition, including Clarice Assad, Chris Cerrone, Jessie Montgomery, Nico Muhly, Shawn Okpebholo, Jeff Scott, and Augusta Read Thomas.

The group’s recorded output boasts a wide variety of genres across more than a dozen albums. Most recently, the group’s genre-bending New Amsterdam Records album, *What is ~Nois*, was featured on NPR’s “Best Albums out April 10th, 2026,” heralded as “utterly gorgeous and



János Csontos
Jordan Lulloff
Julian Velasco
Natalia Warthen

Photo: Nick Zoulek

gripping" (*Cast The Dice*), and received four stars from *BBC Music Magazine*. Their music can also be heard on the Cedille, New Focus, Bright Shiny Things, and Records to Burn labels.

~Nois Quartet is János Csontos, Jordan Lulloff, Julian Velasco, and Natalia Warthen. The members are Yamaha Performing Artists and winners of the 2026 Concert Artists Guild Louis and Susan Meisel Prize.

noisquartet.org

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plus Dan Nichols (*In Sympathy*)

Editing Assistance Jeanne Velonis

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