

Spring 5-5-2023

## Honors Capstone Composition Recital

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### Recommended Citation

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**NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

Honors Capstone Composition Recital

**A Capstone Submitted to the**

**University Honors Program**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the**

**Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree**

**With Honors**

**Department Of Music**

By Kayla L. Bivin

**DeKalb, Illinois**

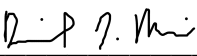
May 13, 2023

University Honors Program  
Capstone Faculty Approval Page

Capstone Title (print or type): Honors Capstone Composition Recital

Student Name (print or type): Kayla Bivin

Faculty Supervisor (print or type): Dr. David Maki

Faculty Approval Signature: 

Department of (print or type): Music Theory and Composition

Date of Approval (print or type): April XX, 2023

Date and Venue of Presentation:

April 16, 2023, 7:00 pm  
NIU Recital Hall (Music Building, 550 Lucinda Ave)

Check if any of the following apply, and please tell us where and how it was published:

Capstone has been published (Journal/Outlet):

N/A

Capstone has been submitted for publication (Journal/Outlet):

N/A

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**Abstract:**

The Honors Capstone Composition Recital is an exhibition of my own musical compositions from throughout my undergraduate study. The purpose of the event was to perform original music and share it with the community. The program is completely comprised of original works for a variety of instruments and ensembles and includes five world premiere performances out of the seven pieces, totaling about 45 minutes of music. The performance was held at the NIU Recital Hall (located in the Music Building at 550 Lucinda Ave.) at 7:00 pm CST on April 16, 2023. It was available for free to the public, as well as by a livestream on the School of Music YouTube page.

**Summary and reflection:**

The compositions were written over a period from the Fall 2020 semester until the Spring 2023 semester. The process for writing a piece of music varies from piece to piece, with some receiving edits over several semesters until the recital, and others being virtually completed start-to-finish in only a few months. For example, *Lasts* was started in the fall of 2020 and updated for this recital, where *Clear Skies Prelude* was written just this spring.

The instrumentation of pieces was varied, ranging from the smallest, a solo harp piece, to the largest, a sextet of four strings and two woodwinds. This variety allowed me to express proficiency with writing for multiple instruments and instrument combinations.

The compositions are designed to play to the strengths and special characters of each instrument. For example, the piccolo is chosen for its bright and clear sound and the piano for its versatility in both quick rhythmic passages and pitch range. The string quartet is used for its great blending abilities, expression, and unique textural techniques such as pizzicato and tremolo.

Another specialty is the piece including live electronics developed in the software Max by Cycling '74. This piece was developed in my Electronic Music II class as a performance piece involving a live acoustic instrument paired with an electronic instrument. The two instruments coexist and create an ambient sonic space using a modular form without a specific timeline. Please see the attached program and program notes for more information about the pieces.

Recruiting and collaborating with the players helped me work on interpersonal communication skills. I reached out to both friends and people who I had not met before, helping me build my network. I participated in numerous rehearsals, pointing the players towards my vision for the style and sound of the pieces and accepting feedback and interpretative suggestions from players that strengthened the music. This helped me not only develop the performance but develop my own understanding of the pieces through other peoples' points of view. Hearing a piece played live is an entirely different experience than hearing it through computer playback, so this rehearsal process helped me refine my writing and strengthen my connections with my colleagues.

The recital was held at the NIU Recital Hall on April 16, 2023. It was also broadcast on the NIU School of Music YouTube page. Putting on the event itself also helped me with professional presentation. Even the little things like stage setup and addressing the audience were steps that I had to

plan out beforehand to ensure they went smoothly. The program was planned out to give the best impression of contrast and inspiration to the audience.

To conclude, I grew professionally and personally through my Honors Capstone Composition Recital. At first, I had feared that I would not be able to write enough interesting music to fill a recital. However, I defied that fear and brought together wonderful musicians to create an engaging program. I have my musicians, professors, audience members, and more to thank for helping me present this memorable recital.