

About the Composer



Spencer Leong Cowie (he/him) is currently an undergraduate student at the University of Victoria, where he is pursuing a bachelor's degree in music education.

An avid flutist and bassoonist from Ladner, BC, he also plays piano, saxophone, guitar, and sings. He is a part of the University of Victoria Wind Symphony.

His works have been performed across Metro Vancouver and Victoria. He is thrilled to be able to contribute to the big IDEA project as a local queer composer.

In addition to being a composer, he is also a skilled arranger, teacher, conductor, and social media influencer through his YouTube channel *Scherzando Music* and his Instagram @spencerleongcowieofficial.

About the Piece

Blossom was composed for the Victoria Conservatory of Music's "Big IDEA" project. A huge thank you to Marsha Elliott-Edwards for giving me this opportunity. While searching for inspiration for this duet, I immediately thought of a poem I had read titled "Risk" by Elizabeth Appell a few months prior, which had struck me as a profound expression of what it felt like to come out.

After much consideration, I chose the name *Blossom* instead of the poem's title, Risk, as I wanted to focus on the pride and celebration that the project is all about. Unfortunately, anti-2SLGBTQIA+ hate is on the rise, with over 500 bills in the US targeting queer folks being introduced in the past two years. Living life out and proud can still be a profound risk to countless queer people.

As soon as I read the first line of the poem, I knew I had to turn it into a melody. In my musical studies this year, Marsha and I had talked about melodies with pickup notes being interpreted as a sentence that begins with "and then...", and so I knew that this melody would start with a pickup resolving into the downbeat.

Musically, I was inspired by a piece that went viral on Instagram recently, Caleb Arredondo's *Echo Sax End*. Other sources of inspiration for my writing that come to mind are *Luminous Sky for Saxophone Trio* by Chris Evan Hass, "*on queer survival*" for Alto

Risk

And then the day came,
when the risk
to remain tight
in a bud
was more painful
than the risk
it took
to blossom.

Saxophone and Piano by Stuart Beatch, and the title theme from *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*.

Blossom tells a story about a child growing up and realizing that there is something different about them. As the piece unfurls, the child initially tries to distract themselves, hoping that this feeling would go away. When this doesn't work, the dissonant journey to acceptance - both from others and oneself - begins. Then, one fateful day comes and reveals itself in the melody set to the poem (I have included the text in the score when that happens), and the rest is history. The piece ends with the simple resolution that appears at the start of the poem setting.