

### No Exit Presents: LIGAMENT: An interview with Anika Kildegaard



This week No Exit Presents: LIGAMENT — Anika Kildegaard (voice) and Will Yager (double bass) on Friday, February 6 at Kent State University’s Ludwig Recital Hall and on Saturday, February 7 at Praxis Fiber Workshop.

Their program features works by Zac Fick-Cambria, Ruby Fulton, James Dillon, Amy Beth Kirsten, and Katherine Balch. The

Cleveland State Percussion Ensemble will perform brief opening set. Both free concerts begin at 7:00 pm.

No Exit’s Laura King spoke with Anika Kildegaard to learn more about her musical path and the intimate, exploratory listening experience LIGAMENT will offer their Northeastern Ohio audiences.

*The interview is reposted with the permission of the ensemble and author.*

*Laura King: Anika, your work spans world-premiere collaborations, vocal performances with ensembles like The Crossing, and now your duo LIGAMENT with Will Yager. What first drew you to new music and contemporary vocal performance, and how has that magnetism shaped your artistic journeying?*

Anika Kildegaard: In college, I had a piano teacher who encouraged me to look beyond the 26 Italian songs and arias. She had done a lot of collaborative work with singers and introduced me to some stuff no one was talking to me about. I don’t mean Dusapin, or

Babbit, I mean gateway new music: Libby Larsen, Jake Heggie, even Samuel Barber and Montsalvatge. It's all a far cry from the kinds of things I do now, but it did something really important: people really started listening to me. Like... them not knowing the music I was singing meant they weren't hearing their favorite recording, they weren't hearing a version from some recital they went to years ago, they were hearing ME! That realization was like a drug. It liberated me from the obsession with sounding like some famous singer. And that opened a door: what all could my voice do? What could music do?

*LK: LIGAMENT's instrumentation is wonderfully unconventional. How did the duo come together, and what excites you most about creating and commissioning new works for this unique pairing?*

AK: Will and I met at one of those grad student mingling events. He was wearing what he calls his “bat signal” – a t-shirt with the Bang on a Can logo. It totally worked on me! We started chatting right away. I already knew of this piece by Katie Balch (I had spent the summer before scouring SoundCloud for cool stuff to work on during my master’s degree) and I emailed him the next day to see if he’d be interested in putting it together with me. (An embarrassing thing about those early days is that I didn’t know that “bass” and “double bass” were the same thing. I wrote “I know you play the bass, but do you also play the double bass?” He forgave me.)

The truth is, we had fun working together right away. Sometimes a musical partnership just clicks, and that was how it was for us. It’s kind of a special combination of timbres: Will’s got this incredible range; he can play low, obviously, but he can also play up in my register. I love when composers make use of that part of the bass because we can really weave in and out of each other’s sound. We’ve also got a drumkit’s worth of percussive sounds—just think of all the percussive potential of consonants! And now think of all the ways Will can pound and pluck and tap on the giant wooden box that is his bass. It means a huge toolbox worth of potential noise, and the composers we work with keep discovering more possibilities of sound. It’s pretty thrilling!

*LK: Your upcoming No Exit Presents program includes works that range from text-driven pieces to experimental soundscapes. What is LIGAMENT looking most forward to in your Ohio concerts? What deliciousness will you be serving up to your crowds?*

AK: Oh man...it is so hard to pick. There are a lot of awesome pieces on this program. I have to call out and if not, why not—the Fulton—because it was a special collaboration between me and Ruby. I approached her about writing it after finding out about these baby contests that used to happen at state fairs: imagine a 4H-type animal competition,

except it's with human babies. (yeah. seriously.) We had a great time talking about the text, and she was generous enough to let me compile it. It's always really fun to have a composer be open to collaboration like that!

But the standout of this program is probably James Dillon's *A Roaring Flame*. It's a huge piece, the longest on this program. It's almost like (dare I say it?) an opera... all of these different scenes and different characters. I get to do a lot of chanting, like an incantation. Dillon asks for the singer to use many different voices, "rough, harsh voice" and "sensual and boastful," just as a couple examples. It's like I'm a witch on stage, and Will is helping me cast some incredible curse.

*LK: No Exit Presents is all about spotlighting adventurous new music and delivering fresh listening experiences to their audiences. What does it mean to you to TWICE be part of No Exit's Season 17 programming?*

AK: I was thrilled when Tim called to ask if I would come to sing with No Exit in May—it's such excellent repertoire, and to get to make a recording is just frosting. (Dare I hope that someday someone might sing it and someone in the audience might go—oh all I can hear is that awesome No Exit recording. Ha! Kidding. It's pretty awesome to start a new collaborative relationship and I'm really looking forward to returning and singing with the excellent musicians of No Exit

*Published on ClevelandClassical.com February 4, 2026*

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