In Living Color

Katahj Copley

A Carrollton, Georgia native, Katahj Copley premiered his first work, Spectra, in 2017 and hasn’t stopped composing since. As of 2017, Katahj has written over 100 works, including pieces for chamber ensembles, large ensembles, wind ensembles, and orchestra. Katahj received two Bachelor of Music degrees from the University of West Georgia in Music Education and Composition in 2021. He is currently studying composition with Omar Thomas at the University of Texas at Austin.

Aside from composing, Katahj is an excited educator who teaches young musicians the joy of discovering music and why music is a phenomenal language.

“Music for me has always been this impactful thing in my life. It can soothe, it can enrage, it can quiet, and it can evoke emotions that are beyond me and this world we live in. I believe that music is the ultimate source of freedom and imagination. The most freedom I have had as a musician was through composing. Composition is like me opening my heart and showing the world my drive, my passion, and my soul.”

2020 brought the world to a pause. With the global pandemic of COVID-19, so many of life’s simple joys were taken, including the opportunity to perform music.

To me, music is one of the greatest means of communication. When it was taken away, the language of music became foreign- and for some, a passion for the subject disappeared. Now, as the world slowly takes its turn again, a love for music has grown-through separation, we grew stronger.

I wrote In Living Color as an ode for live music, especially music performed on the wind band stage. The piece offers a kaleidoscope of colors and energy from modern jazz artists such as Snarky Puppy, American Boy singer Estelle, and takes inspiration from George Gershwin.

Please help me celebrate life and all the small things that lead to big things with In Living Color.

Program Note by Katahj Copley

Colonial Song

Percy Aldridge Grainger

The musical material of Colonial Song dates from 1905 and is wholly original. The work is dedicated to Grainger’s mother, and as Grainger describes:
No traditional tunes of any kind are made use of in this piece, in which I have wished to express feelings aroused by thoughts of the scenery and people of my native land, Australia, and also to voice a certain kind of emotion that seems to me not untypical of native-born colonials in general. Perhaps it is not unnatural that people living more or less lonely in vast virgin countries and struggling against natural and climatic hardships (rather than against the more actively and dramatically exciting counter wills of the fellow men, as in more thickly populated lands) should run largely to that patient yearning, inactive sentimental wistfulness that we find so touchingly expressed in much American art. I have also noticed curious almost Italian-like musical tendencies in brass band performances and ways of singing in Australia (such as a preference for richness and intensity of tone and soulful breadth of phrasing over more subtly and sensitively varied delicacies of expression), which are also reflected here.”

Program Note by Percy Aldridge Grainger

SHUT OUT

Tyler Mazone

Tyler Mazone is a graduate of Guilderland High School, The Crane School of Music, and is currently music composition student at Michigan State University.

Although born deaf, Mr. Mazone began playing clarinet in the fourth grade. His deafness created a struggle to learn how to practice and listen to himself play the clarinet, but he had several music teachers that helped him along the way. He started composing because he wanted to create the magical music that he heard in video game soundtracks, but he eventually started learning how to compose for band by studying scores, and by listening in band rehearsals.

Shut Out is a piece about the experience of being a disabled person and not quite fitting into society. The repeating structures throughout represent society with disabled people being the melodic and harmonic ideas that wash over and around these structures.

The piece is cast in three distinct sections, each showing a range of emotions that me and my disabled friends, colleagues, and family feel every day. Shut Out starts off with ponderous music which is the exposition of the burden that we feel every day having to fit into a society that really isn’t built for us. A faster section is ushered in, representing the daily charades that have to be played with society with factors such as ableism, intersectionality, barriers to accessibility, and even socioeconomics. This comes to a climax which leads into an optimistic statement about what society could be like if we worked harder to be more inclusive and accessible. This dream is then yanked out by a sudden ending that sounds like a door being shut in someone’s face.

Obviously, being shut out is not an experience that is exclusive to disabled people. People affected by things like racial injustice, various stigmas such as xenophobia and homophobia, ableism, and poverty all feel this way. I simply wrote the piece from my lens as a disabled person, but I hope that others who have been shut out of society can
connect with this piece, as society could not exist without so many of those that are excluded.

*Program Note by Tyler Mazone*

**En Mi, Familia**

*Ivette Herryman Rodriguez*

A native from Cuba, Ivette Herryman Rodríguez holds a B.M in Music Composition from the Instituto Superior de Artes (Higher Institute of Arts), in Havana, a M.M in Music Composition from Baylor University, and a M.M in Music Theory and D.M.A in Music Composition from Michigan State University. She studied composition with Juan Piñera, Scott McAllister, Ricardo Lorenz, and Zhou Tian.

Currently an Assistant Professor of Theory and Composition at the Crane School of Music, previous positions include the Instituto Superior de Artes, the Opera of El Salvador (OPES), the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Western Illinois University.

The composer writes about her work, *En mi, familia*:

I dedicate this piece to my immediate family: my parents, my brother, my nephews, and my little niece.

In the piece, I include ideas such as my brother’s life search, which sometimes hits dead ends, but remains relentless after all; my dad’s sensitivity and although subtly, his love for dancing; and my own version of a melody of a song my mom used to sing every Sunday while doing laundry.

The title of the piece expresses that I believe, although I have become my own person, I am still very much connected to my family. Lots of my past memories and my present are filled with my family. This piece is a loving homage to them.

*En mi, familia* was commissioned by the Michigan State University Symphony Band and David Thornton, Associate Director of Bands.

*Program Note by Ivette Herryman Rodriguez*

**Moth**

*Viet Cuong*

Viet holds the Curtis Institute of Music’s Daniel W. Dietrich II Composition Fellowship as an Artist Diploma student of David Ludwig and Jennifer Higdon. Viet received his MFA from Princeton University as a Naumburg and Roger Sessions Fellow, and he finished his Ph.D. there in 2021. At Princeton he studied with Steve Mackey, Donnacha Denney, Dan Trueman, Dmitri Tymoczko, Paul Lansky, and Louis Andriessen. Viet holds Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University, where he studied with Pulitzer Prize-winner Kevin Puts and Oscar Bettison.
While at Peabody, Viet received the Peabody Alumni Award (the Valedictorian honor) and the Gustav Klemm Award for excellence in composition. Viet has been a fellow at the Mizzou International Composers Festival, Eighth Blackbird Creative Lab, Cabrillo Festival’s Young Composer Workshop, Copland House’s CULTIVATE emerging composers’ workshop, and was also a scholarship student at the Aspen, Bowdoin, and Lake Champlain music festivals. Additionally, he has received artist residencies from Yaddo, Copland House, Ucross Foundation, and Atlantic Center for the Arts (under Melinda Wagner, 2012 and Christopher Theofanidis, 2014).

Viet is a recipient of the Barlow Endowment Commission, Copland House Residency Award, ASCAP Morton Gould Composers Award, Suzanne and Lee Ettelson Composers Award, Theodore Presser Foundation Music Award, Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra Call for Scores, Cortona Prize, New York Youth Symphony First Music Commission, Boston GuitarFest Composition Competition, and Walter Beeler Memorial Prize, among others. In addition, he received honorable mentions in the Harvey Gaul Composition Competition and two consecutive ASCAP/CBDNA Frederick Fennell Prizes. Scholarships include the Evergreen House Foundation scholarship at Peabody, a 2010 Susan and Ford Schumann Merit Scholarship from the Aspen Music Festival and School, and the 2011 Bachrach Memorial Gift from the Bowdoin International Music Festival.

The composer write about his work, *Moth:*

The “moth to the flame” narrative is a familiar one. We have all seen moths in the glow of flames or stadium lights. Scientists call this phenomenon “phototaxis,” but I prefer to think of this attraction in much more romantic terms. The dusty moth, though destined to live in shadow, has an insatiable craving for the brightness of day. Drab, but elegant; nervous, but swift; his taste for the glow of the flame or the filament is dire. Perhaps he dances in the light because it holds the promise that he might be as beautiful as his favored kin, the butterfly. For only there, in its ecstatic warmth, may he spend the last of his fleeting life, and believe himself to be.

*Moth* seeks inspiration from the dualities between light and dark, beautiful and grotesque, reality and fantasy, and the ultimate decision to sacrifice sensibility for grace.

Thank you to the members of the Brooklyn Wind Symphony and their artistic director, Jeff W. Ball, for trusting me to write a piece for their momentous 2013 Midwest Clinic performance. I have nothing but gratitude and respect for their dedication to the music, and for their commitment to sharing the wind repertoire with the New York City community. The Brooklyn Wind Symphony’s ability to flourish outside of an institution is, in a word, extraordinary.

Program Note by Viet Cuong