Reflections

A Faculty Recital Performance

by Christopher Hernacki
Welcome!

About the recital

This performance is themed around the various working relationships I have had the pleasure of sharing during my time living in Michigan. It features music from close friends, colleagues, and the lineage of teachers from which they studied.

The concert is presented as a faculty recital at the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam as well as part of the dissertation requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Michigan.

Enjoy the performance!
Program

Christopher Hernacki, Trombone
Ling Lo, Piano

Saturday, March 27th, 2021, 3:00pm
SUNY Potsdam, Crane School of Music, Sara M. Snell Music Theater
https://www.potsdam.edu/academics/crane-school-music/crane-school-music-live-concert

The Old Burying Ground: Book I (2003) Evan Chambers
I. And Pass From Hence Away (b. 1963)
II. Oh Say Grim Death
III. A Bar So Pure
IV. Oh Drop On My Grave
V. Thy Peaceful Reign

infinite morning (2009) Joel Puckett (b. 1977)

- Intermission -

I. Mulberry Alexa
II. Half a Million
III. Even More Shocking
IV. Attractive
V. Good, Healthy Fun
VI. That Big Van
VII. The Windowsill
VIII. Miss Lulu

Trombone Edition Premiere

I. Mist
II. Fury
III. Prayer
IV. Steamboat
Evan Chambers was born in Alexandria, Louisiana and is a Professor of Composition at the University of Michigan. His compositions have been performed by numerous symphony orchestras, including Cincinnati, Kansas City, Memphis, New Hampshire, and Albany Symphonies. He has won several prizes and awards, including first prize in the Cincinnati Symphony Competition and the Walter Beeler Prize by Ithaca College in 1998. Evan Chambers has been recognized by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Luigi Russolo Competition, Vienna Modern Masters, NACUSA, and the American Composers Forum. His composition teachers include William Albright, Leslie Bassett, Nicholas Thorne, and Marilyn Shrude, with studies in electronic music with George Wilson and Burton Beerman. In addition to his composition career, Evan Chambers also performs solo and chamber music, even appearing as a soloist in Carnegie Hall with the American Composers Orchestra.

At one point in his life, Evan Chambers came across Irish folk music via the NPR show The Thistle and Shamrock and that experience was so profound that it would go on to shape his career forever forward. In Irish folk music, he found the sense community and the musical genre’s understanding that perfection was not a primary goal or directive to be exhilarating and liberating compared to his experience with Western classical music. It was then where he started to combine the two genres and his music took on new vitality. Many of Chambers’ works combine elements from multiple genres.

Evan Chambers enjoys walking in cemeteries as they provide an ideal place to meditate upon how lives appear and disappear in the world. The gravestones offer an opportunity to reflect upon and confront a central truth to humanity: death is inevitable. Chambers once visited The Old Burying Ground, a cemetery located in Jaffrey Center, New Hampshire in 1998 and was particularly taken with the epitaphs. The composer has this to say as a reflection on that visit: “In order to read the stones one must sometimes lie flat on the graves. Stern exhortations about the brevity of our lives and tender statements of loss take on an urgent meaning when you encounter them face down on top of someone’s final resting place… I had a teacher who insisted that to sing for someone didn’t mean to sing while someone listened, but rather to sing for them, to take their place in song. It’s my hope we can do the same as listeners, and imagine ourselves standing for those whose who speak in these songs, since putting oneself in someone else’s place is the essence of compassion.”
The Old Burying Ground borrows from the various folk music traditions in the United States and overseas, which include Irish traditional music, American folk song, Sacred Harp singing, and Albanian Polyphony, in addition to European classical music. Many of the movements are marked with various grace notes in the score to denote folk inflection (scoops, bends, falls, etc.) that are difficult to notate in the traditional manner that would be appropriate in Western classical music. "And Pass from Hence Away" and "Oh Say Grim Death" are largely treated like a recitation/recitative, somewhat akin to a preacher’s words with musical punctuations from the piano. The first of these two has a slower more somber affect while the latter of the two has a more forceful and resolute tone, containing more complex rhythmic configurations of the melody and accompaniment. “A Bar So Pure” is a tender moment that reflects on the loss of a life just begun. Much of this movement is unison rhythm between the two voices.

“Oh Drop On My Grave” begins with a recitation/recitative that slowly builds energy. After this brief introduction, the movement launches into a beautiful dance of coloristic writing in the piano with an evolving melody in the voice. This melody in the solo voice begins with a simple call, but it unfolds and develops more and more each repetition. "Thy Peaceful Reign" ends the cycle with a heavy and haunting a song. The piano alternates between two chords regularly throughout the vast majority of this movement. For the first half, these chords consist only of open 4ths and 5ths, but in such a way that depicts both pained anguish and hollowness. When the emotions rise halfway through the piece, the chords finally change. The piece ends with just the piano, expanding both lower and higher as if disappearing to both the Earth below and Heaven above.

The original texts are taken from the *Old Burying Ground*, a cemetery located in Jaffrey Center, New Hampshire.
I. AND PASS FROM HENCE AWAY

IN MEMORY OF MR. JOHN WOOD
WHO DIED JULY 5 1799
AGED 55 YEARS

THERE IS A SONG WHICH DOETH BELONG
TO ALL THE HUMAN RACE

CONCERNING DEATH WHO STEALS THE BREATH
& BLASTS A COMELY FACE

COME LISTEN ALL UNTO MY CALL WHICH I
DO MAKE TODAY

FOR YOU MUST DIE AS WELL AS I &
PASS FROM HENCE AWAY.

II. OH SAY GRIM DEATH

HERE IS ENTERED THE LAST REMAINS OF ISAAC A. SPOF
FORD SON OF DEACON ELEAZAR
& MRS. MARY SPOFFORD,
A BRAND PLUCKED FROM
THE ASHES OF REV. LABAN
AINSWORTH’S HOUSE.
13 FEB 1788 AE8

OH SAY, GRIM DEATH WHY THUS DESTROY
THE PARENT’S HOPES, THEIR FONDEST JOY

CEASE, MAN, TO ASK THE HIDDEN CAUSE

GOD’S WILL IS DONE - REVERE HIS LAWS
III. A BAR SO PURE

IN MEMORY OF OLIVER BACON
SON OF LIEU. OLIVER
& MRS. REBECCA BACON
WHO WAS KILLED BY
LIGHTNING
JULY 2ND 1801 AGED
8 YRS & 7 MONTHS

IN BLOOMING YOUTH ONE MOMENT STOOD
THE NEXT CALLED TO THE BAR OF GOD
THINK READER CAN THY HEART ENDURE
A SUMMONS TO A BAR SO PURE

IV. OH DROP ON MY GRAVE

ABEL SPAULDING
JR DIED JUNE 11
1805 AGE 46

OH DROP ON MY GRAVE, AS YE PASS IT
NO TEAR
BUT REJOICE FOR THE FREED ONE, WHOSE
FEATHERS LIE HERE
V. THY PEACEFUL REIGN
AARON SPOFFORD DIED AUG 28 1888 AE 22
BEST FRIEND THO TORN FROM MY EMBRACE
THY GOD HATH BID THEE COME
THOU’ST LEFT A BROTHER’S FEARFUL FACE
& GONE TO HEAVE THY HOME
YES: THOU’ST LEFT A WORLD OF TOIL &
PAIN
AND ENTERED ON THY PEACEFUL REIGN.
Joel Puckett is an American composer, born in Atlanta, Georgia. He is the Chair of Music Theory, Ear Training, and Piano Skills at the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University. Having held positions previously with Shenandoah University and Towson University, he also served as composer-in-residence for the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras. Joel attended Shenandoah Conservatory for his undergraduate degree in composition, where he studied with Will Averitt and Thomas Albert. He later completed his academic work at the University of Michigan with both a Masters of Music and a Doctorate of Musical Arts where his teachers included Michael Daugherty, William Bolcom, and Bright Sheng.

Joel Puckett’s music has been recognized by organizations such as the American Composers Forum, BMI, Chorus America, National Public Radio, and the American Bandmasters Association for its excellence. His music is often characterized by its emotional energy and commitment. He melds tradition with innovation into a unique charismatic language. Some of his works are often written as reflections of personal events of his life, as is done with Shadow of Sirius and in this piece.

Infinite Morning is about beginnings and the hope that they bring of new possibilities. Joel Puckett writes the following in the score: “I love beginnings. I don’t know why, but it has always been for me that the first line of a book is far more satisfying than the last. I dive into these first lines filled with the hope that I might be reading something life changing or at least reading something old in a new and meaningful way. Full of hope, full of the endless promos that only a new day can bring. Unadulterated optimism for the cyclic renewal of morning.” The initial sketches of this piece were written when Joel Puckett and his wife were expected their first child. The pregnancy, unfortunately, ended with a miscarriage and the mourning that followed shaped how the ending of this piece came to be.

This piece is written in two large sections. The first section begins with a series of lush, tone row arpeggiation. In between these arpeggiations are very long and lyrical phrases in the solo voice that feature a good degree of expressive portamenti. The sense of time is very loose at the beginning as there are no consistent rhythms to ground oneself to. Eventually, the tone rows rhythmicize and form a moving accompaniment as the piece picks up energy. Both parts intensify in a steady build into a loud climax. At this point the music returns back to the beginning material. An extensive unaccompanied section bridges into the second large section of the piece. This second section is marked by constant sixteenth notes in the piano until almost the very end. This ostinato in the upper range of the piano with occasional low chords rolling in the lower range floats along as the solo voice performs a broad, folk song-like melody. The piece ends with a big crescendo in the piano as the solo dies out, leaving several low Cs to be hammered out into the otherwise silence of the space.
Gala Flagello is an American composer based out of the Ann Arbor, Michigan area. She is also the Festival Director and co-founder of the nonprofit contemporary music festival Connecticut Summerfest and currently serves as the Composer in Residence at Promenade Opera Project in Boston, Massachusetts. Gala holds a Bachelor of Music in Composition degree from The Hartt School, a Master of Music in Composition degree from the University of Michigan, and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Michigan. Her major composition teachers include Michael Daugherty, Kristin Kuster, Erik Santos, Evan Chambers, and Robert Carl.

Gala sees the great potential for music to be used as a vehicle for social change, allowing to engage with topics such as environmental advocacy, gender equity, and mental health and thusly actively seeks out opportunities to do so with her own work. In January of 2021, she participated in the Georgia Run-Off Commissioning Project, raising funds for the senate campaigns of Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff. She was also recently a part of Latitude 49’s Bagatelles Project in support of the Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts. Gala is a two-time collaborator of DAMET Percussion, writing *Precious Metals* and *Fragile Goods* for Natural Beauty, a multimedia touring show that aims to demonstrate humans’ impact on our environment. She and DAMET founder, Danielle Gonzalez, also co-host the podcast *Music & Mindset*, a bi-weekly series addressing mental health for musicians in the categories of mind, body, and spirit.

Gala writes the following about the piece in 2015: “The text for *Comments by Computers* was taken from the comments sections of websites and blogs, where spam bots had left the most “human” sentences their algorithms could produce. These comments each took on their own unique character: honest, poetic, joyful, pleading. The comments’ use as lyrics led to these mezzo-soprano and piano miniatures, so that each “writer” might have their own distinct, musical voice.”

The version being performed for this recital for trombone and piano was adapted at my request. Because performing the work on trombone loses the ability for the text to come through during performance, it is suggested to recite the movement’s text as it originally appears before playing each movement.
"Mulberry Alexa" flirts with the line between dreamy and distressed with alternating moments of gentle, flowing passages and sharp interruptions. The movement ends with a solitary call, as if the request was never heard. “Half a Million” follows a suspicious observation marked by a very dry, rhythmic dialogue between the solo and the piano. A few outbursts emerge, but the movement ends similar to how it began. “Even More Shocking” has the solo part perform unaccompanied in a short, lyrical, tongue-in-cheek phrase. “Attractive” has the feel of a light-hearted waltz that has a few loose screws in it with sections of the beat missing throughout.

“Good, Healthy Fun” centers around the feeling of nostalgia and harkens to the sound world of the English folksong akin to the Six Studies in English Folksong by Ralph Vaughan Williams that many low brass players are familiar with. “That Big Van” is ominous and frenzied with a constant barrage of sixteenth notes in a steady accelerando after the opening flurries. “The Windowsill” is a beautiful and sincere conversation of mostly one, as if closed off behind the windowsill. “Miss Lulu” closes out the cycle with a bouncy and cheerful that features mostly dancing and lyrical tonal passages with a few exclamations with clusters of sound.

The following text is exactly as it appeared in the comments sections of the websites and blogs from which it was collected for this song cycle.
Mulberry Alexa
Mulberry Alexa oversized oak Alexa mulberry bags mulberry bags Alexa.

Half a Million
Half the pages are missing. What’s the matter? Isn’t half a million enough for you?

Even More Shocking
Even more shocking is that this is the greatest number of women that have ever held this position at this time.

Attractive
Attractive component of content. It’s toilsome to note illuminating and explicit information.

Good, Healthy Fun
I wish you had a picture of the boy going in for the seeds. There is nothing quite like good, healthy fun!

That Big Van
They’ll try to escape in that big van, so we need to shut them down.

The Windowsill
End up with the indistinguishable satisfaction therefore teh latter are able to be daunting by helping, the windowsill. Love you shouldn’t happen. For logic behind why authorities.

Miss Lulu
I don’t know about that, Miss Lulu! And after all, yours was a fainting couch, wasn’t it? I should have stretched out on my cot! Maybe if I had looked comfy on it, somebody would have bought it! Tee hee hee. –Tiffany
Michael Daugherty is a multiple Grammy Award-winning composer born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and is internationally recognized as one of the ten most performed American composers of concert music, according to the League of American Orchestras. He teaches music composition at the University of Michigan, a position he has held since 1991, and is a frequent guest of professional orchestras, festivals, universities, and conservatories around the world. Michael Daugherty studied composition with many notable composers of the 20th century, including Pierre Boulez, Jacob Druckman, Earle Brown, Bernard Rands, Roger Reynolds, and György Ligeti.

Michael Daugherty's music is rich with cultural and political allusions, using elements or musical quotations from many popular styles, including jazz, funk, rock, and folk. He combines colliding tonalities and blocks of sound with melodies that can be eloquent and stirring to create an iconic sound with boundless imagination and fearless structure.

Reflections on the Mississippi was composed in memory of Michael’s father, Willis Daugherty, as a musical reflection on family trips to the Mississippi River as a child. In July and October of 2012, he took two trips to the Mississippi River from McGregor, Iowa to Hannibal, Missouri. On these trips Michael Daugherty explored small towns, took photographs, and discovered some of the local wildlife havens via local boat owners and guides. The sounds, sights, and experiences led to the emotional framework of this piece.

The first movement, “Mist”, is a reflection on the sunrise as seen and heard through a misty haze over the Mississippi River. It begins with a mystical melody that slowly ascends with each iteration. An ostinato moves the piece into a dark second theme, but not for long. A brief cadenza, the likes of which appear quite frequently throughout the entire work, sets up a return to the opening melody, part of which is accompanied by the ostinato established earlier. The second movement, “Fury”, begins attacca from the first movement is a recollection of the turmoil of the Mississippi River in the fiction of William Faulkner’s novel, The Sound and the Fury, and in the history of the “Great Mississippi Flood” of 1927. The music of this movement features a very agile and active melody that darts around with dissonant harmonies and various polyrhythms.
Program Notes

Reflections on the Mississippi

“Prayer”, the third movement, is a meditation on the calm mood of the river viewed from a high vista as sunset turns to night. This movement features a very lyrical and soulful melody with allusions to the opening melody from the first movement. The accompaniment often rings in the bells like the echo of distant church bells.

The last movement, “Steamboat” is about the colorful tales from Mark Twain’s Life on the Mississippi. The music is representative of the various gambling steamboats present between Missouri and New Orleans. The solo voice is designed to evoke the role of the Zydeco and Second line music of New Orleans. Boundless energy and syncopation permeate throughout. The melody of the first movement returns several times to propel the piece to its exciting and virtuosic conclusion.
A Los Angeles native, Christopher Hernacki is an international award-winning musician/educator and has held positions as the bass trombonist of the San Antonio Symphony, the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Phoenix Symphony, and Symphony Silicon Valley. A huge nerd of music, video games, and video game music, Mr. Hernacki writes, performs, and records various arrangements of classic game music, some of which can be viewed on his YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/christoflur.

Mr. Hernacki holds degrees from the University of Michigan (B.M. Trombone Performance), the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (M.M. Trombone Performance), the Colburn School (Professional Studies Certificate), was a fellow of the New World Symphony, and is currently completing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Trombone Performance at the University of Michigan. He currently serves on the faculty of Idyllwild Arts’ Summer Music Program as a low brass instructor and the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam as Visiting Assistant Professor of Trombone.

Ling Lo currently serves as staff pianist at SUNY Potsdam. As an active pianist, Dr. Lo has been invited as a guest artist to present duo recitals at several universities including Purdue University Fort Wayne, Olivet College, Saginaw Valley State University, the University of Louisville, SUNY Potsdam, Schenectady County Community College, and the University of Kentucky. Additionally, Dr. Lo has served as a festival pianist for the Mid-West Regional Tuba and Euphonium Conference, Leonard Falcone International Euphonium and Tuba Festival, Henri Selmer Summer Clarinet Festival, and The Potsdam Clarinet Summit.

Dr. Lo holds degrees from Michigan State University (D.M.A Piano Performance/M.M. Collaborative Piano) and Boston University (M.M. Piano Performance). She is currently completing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Collaborative Piano at Michigan State University. Her teachers include Pavel Nersessian, Konstantinos Papadakis, Deborah Moriarty, and Zhihua Tang.