

Dana Crytser, flute

Candidate for the degree of Master of Music
From the studio of Bonita Boyd

Friday, October 13, 2023
Hatch Recital Hall
6:30pm

songbirdsongs (1980)

Morningfieldsong
Apple Blossom Round
Evensong

John Luther Adams
(b. 1953)

Eric Bergeman, piccolo
Sean McWilliams, Anders Wong, and Luke Poeppel, percussion

Le merle noir (1952)

Olivier Messiaen
(1908-1992)

Luke Poeppel, piano

Canyon Echoes (1991)

Dance
Serenade
She Mourns
He Returns

Katherine Hoover
(1937-2018)

Fredrik Jernberg, guitar

INTERMISSION

Botanical Obsessions (2000)

Milky Bellflower
Heliotrope
Chaste Tree

Elizabeth Brown
(b. 1953)

Vox balaenae (Voice of the Whale)

Vocalise (...for the beginning of time)
Variations on Sea-Time
Sea Theme
Archeozoic (Var. I)
Proterozoic (Var. II)
Paleozoic (Var. III)
Mesozoic (Var. IV)
Cenozoic (Var. V)
Sea Nocturne (...for the end of time)

George Crumb
(1929-2022)

Joëlla Becker, cello
Luke Poeppel, piano

Logan Barrett and Connor Simpson, sound reinforcement and lighting design

A note about tonight's program...

As many of you know, I spend a lot of my time outdoors. My greatest passions outside of music—climbing, backpacking, scuba diving—have grown out of a desire to see as much of this spectacular, breathtaking world as possible. Standing on a glacier in Alaska with my sister a couple of years ago, I remember us sharing a sense of awe and sadness that incredible places like that, which have already changed so much in our lifetimes alone, won't look the same for much longer. I join a global community that is deeply concerned about the devastating effects of climate change and the preservation and conservation of our natural spaces and resources.

A few years ago, I became interested in finding a way to support this mission musically. The more I dove into the intersection of musical performance and environmental activism, the more I found resonance with composers and performers who share a feeling of immediacy in putting their artistic platform to use in pursuit of environmental action. I was struck when I heard John Luther Adams talk about environmental degradation and the overwhelming number of birds whose songs have faded into extinction to never be heard again. His words made clear how not only the landscape, but the *soundscape* of our natural world has been irreparably changed.

All of the pieces on this program are inspired by, embody, or are otherwise representative of some aspect of the natural world. With some connections rather explicit and others more symbolic, I hope the sounds you hear in the hall tonight inspire a renewed appreciation of the plants, trees, canyons, whales, birds, and breezes from which this music finds its origins.

Program Notes

songbirdsongs (1980)

Any conversation on environmentalism in music would be remiss without mention of John Luther Adams, formerly a full-time environmental activist who spent nearly 40 years living in northern Alaska. This experience has inspired a body of works which embody the serenity, solitude, and wonder of being outdoors. In this work for two piccolos and percussion, Adams simulates external soundscapes with melodies and rhythms that recall birdsong. While birders in the audience may recognize the melodies of the song sparrow, hermit thrush, field sparrow, and olive-backed thrush, Adams insists: "This music is not literal transcription. It is translation. Not imitation, but evocation. My concern is not with precise details of pitch and meter, for too much precision can deafen us to such things as birds and music." He adds, speaking to the profundity of birdsong, "No one has yet explained why the free songs of birds are so simply beautiful. And what do they say? What are their meanings? We may never know. But beyond the realm of ideas and emotions, language and sense, we just may hear something of their essence."

Le merle noir (1952)

Oliver Messiaen is perhaps the composer best known for an obsession with birdsong. He spent considerable time throughout his life studying and notating the sounds of birds. This work, whose title translates to "The Blackbird," was written for the flute *concours* at the Paris Conservatoire. It is largely based on birdsong with wild and unpredictable flute cadenzas that certainly pay homage to the piece's namesake creature (though with a distinctly Messiaen flavor).

Canyon Echoes (1991)

Inspired by Michael Lacapa's retelling of an Apache folktale in his book *The Flute Player*, this work for flute and guitar tells the tragically beautiful story of a young boy and girl from different areas of a large canyon. Katherine Hoover writes:

They meet at a Hoop Dance, and dance only with each other. The next day, as the girl works up on the side of the canyon in her father's fields, the boy sits below by a stream and plays his flute for her (flute-playing was a common manner of courtship). She puts a leaf in the stream which flows down to him, so he knows she hears. This continues for a time, until the boy is woken one morning and told he is of age to join the hunt—a journey of some weeks, leaving momentarily. The girl still listens each day for the flute until, feeling abandoned, she falls ill and dies. When the boy returns, he runs to play for her—but there is no leaf. When he learns of her death, he disappears into the hills and his flute still echoes when the breezes blow through the cottonwoods and the streams ripple through the canyon.

Botanical Obsessions (2001)

Each movement of this charming work for solo flute by Elizabeth Brown pays tribute to a different plant with which the composer, an avid gardener, has found particular interest. She writes:

Milky Bellflower (*campanula lactiflora*) has glorious milky-blue bell-shaped flowers; an old cottage garden favorite, Heliotrope has clusters of tiny purple flowers with a rich vanilla fragrance; and the Chaste Tree (*vitex agnus-castus*) has lavender flower spikes and grey-green foliage, both of which give off a spicy scent when brushed. In each movement, the flute uses a language of microtonal trills and progressions to swirl and obsessively repeat a few simple gestures.

Vox balaenae (1971)

This masterwork for flute, cello, and piano was inspired by whalesong, particularly that of the humpback whale. The composer calls for all three players to perform with a black half-mask, saying: "The masks, by effacing a sense of human projection, will symbolize the powerful impersonal forces of nature (nature dehumanized)." George Crumb employs a musical language of extended techniques including, but not limited to, use of a paperclip and chisel by the pianist, singing and playing by the flutist, and a harmonic/glissando technique by the cellist which has the remarkable effect of sounding like a seagull. The result is a uniquely haunting and beautiful soundscape which leaves the listener awash in a sea of time.