

Vicente Alexim

Title: Shadows, Stains, Trails

Vicente Alexim, clarinet and live electronics

Program Notes:

Shadows, Stains, Trails, for clarinet and live electronics, explores the relationship between performer and electronic medium. Their interaction parallels that of a painter and a white canvas, in which the electronic component serves as a receptacle for the clarinetist's sound and builds different kinds of residual images with it. The structure of the piece follows the different ways in which this interaction can take place, with a gradual change in the hierarchy between the two elements.

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Joseph Prestamo

Title: Spoken in Passing

Players: Natalia Salemmo, soprano. Joseph Prestamo, piano.

Program notes:

The text for this cycle is not drawn from poetry or prose. Rather, each movement contains words that were spoken in real conversations. Some of these words were spoken directly to me, others were not. Some left a permanent digital footprint, irrevocable evidence of their existence. Others left no trace, and continue to live on only in memory.

We use dozens of words every day, some chosen wisely and others carelessly. Many words are discarded in the past as quickly as they were selected, but others seem to stick. This cycle is about the ones that “stuck.” I have selected a few memorable words and phrases, and attempted to make something new out of them. In a way, I have turned these real-life moments into a work of fiction, deliberately ripping them from the context within which they were originally uttered, and putting them on display as a new work.

For more information, please visit: www.josephprestamo.com

TEXT:

I.

I can't put it all into words

You've been a “better” friend compared to others, to say the least—you've really made me happy in the past—I just wanted you to know that

And you still do

So I won't change—we're still friends like before

Maybe even closer

I hope you get things straightened out

II.

If you were a woman, do you think we would be dating?

III.

Why do you make yourself ugly?

IV.

You're never going to be happy unless you stop thinking that you're smarter than everyone else.

V.

And when I see you around—that's the worst. It's like that feeling you get when you look directly at the sun. I want to keep looking at you, because you are so (I struggle to find a fitting word) beautiful, but at the same time it hurts so bad that I need to look away, or I'll go blind or something.

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Polina Nazaykinskaya

Title: Four Songs (from musical "Genetics")

Players: Tracy Chang, soprano; Lindsay Garritson, piano

program notes:

Genetics explores the evolution of a series of interconnected relationships during a time of transition and upheaval. As Phillip and Catherine--a once-happy couple--begin the process of separation, their teenage daughter Corinne struggles to understand how she and her boyfriend Tyler can avoid succumbing to a similar fate. Even with the support and encouragement of her friends Ashleigh and Dana, Corinne's questioning ultimately begins to mirror the same questions her parents ask of each other: How do we know the decisions we make in love will last? And how do we move on when it seems that even love is not enough?

— — INTERMISSION — —

Patricia Giannattasio

Title: Three Songs

Players: Tracy Chang, soprano Patricia Giannattasio, piano.

Text:

1. First Fig....Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—
It gives a lovely light!

2. Life Is But A Dream (excerpt)...Lewis Carroll (1832-1898)

In a Wonderland they lie,
Dreaming as the days go by,
Dreaming as the summers die;

Ever drifting down the stream—
Lingering in the golden gleam—
Life, what is it but a dream?

3. This Living Hand...John Keats (1795-1821)

This living hand, now warm and capable
Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
And in the icy silence of the tomb,
So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
That thou wouldst wish thine own heart dry of blood
So in my veins red life might stream again,
And thou be conscience-calmed—see here it is—
I hold it towards you.

— —

Jonathan Howard Katz

Title: Meacham Songs

I. Daphne Prayer

II. Likeness

III. Advice to My Father from Harry Houdini

(IV.) The End

Players: Mary Mackenzie, soprano; Jonathan Howard Katz, piano

Program Notes:

I composed these songs in 2012 for soprano Mary Mackenzie to texts by Chicago-based

poet and teacher Molly Meacham. Mary and I premiered the first three in April 2012 at the DiMenna Center, and at the time I expected to add additional songs to the set. Ultimately, I wrote only one more, "The End," and as it so drastically alters the emotional climate of the piece, I chose to consider it an independent song that can function as an optional appendix to the other three. This will be the world premiere of "The End."

Texts, by Molly Meacham:

Daphne Prayer

Sunlight stalked her footprints
in warm, wet sand.
Waves did not wash them shallow
fast enough . . .
She could not chase her shadow
fast enough
into dusk.

The myth-makers were wrong.
She did not fly from him
for lack of love. His touch
might make her skin
soft wax, but she knew
the ephemeral nature
of his divine "eternal":
two hundred years
—a blink
in immortality, then he spits
sour prophecies
into ex-lovers' mouths.

Her fair shoulders flushed,
blistered,
peeled.

She planted herself,
buried her heart
at her feet by a bed
of tiger-lilies and snapdragons.

There, where the tendrils of her hair
dipped into the river's mouth,
she consumed her heart

through her heels
like Narcissus drank his lover
through his eyes.

Her self-pitiless prayers preserved
a splintered skin, but
they planted His devotions there.
Her reaching leaves
snapped off
and perched
victorious
on his brow.

Likeness

“Death is the Mother of Beauty.”
—Wallace Stevens

Like any great butcher,
the mother is an excellent chef.
She knows how many teeth it takes
to create a grinning skull
and the force required to crack it.

The mother's hands are rough,
half plastic, half scar:
knife-nicks, steam burns.
The mother is a melted candle,
the smoke from the wick extinguished,
the stack of clean dishes put away.

The girl has never thought of this.
She smiles, checking her lipstick
in her steak knife.
Wax-thin fingers lift a midnight curl.
Her full lips—a sunflower-smirk.

In the water glass reflection,
the mother watches the full moon version
of herself
in her daughter
before years slivered

the pounds of flesh.

The mother feeds her daughter well:
lamb shank with wilted greens,
steak tartar. Red cubes of flesh
between rouged lips.
Each bite slick
with pink-gold gravy.

The ribs have always been
her favorite. The lean and fat
cleanly cut from each slim bone.

Never vegetarian, Beauty,
like her mother,
knows how to wield the knife.

Advice to My Father from Harry Houdini

Any space that requires a seamless escape
is your stage.
Anyone attentive to your struggle—
against metal, wood, water, time—
is your audience. An ideal crowd is smart enough
to read only the clues you leave for them.

Never put yourself in real danger
or any situation without three means of escape.
Never bury yourself alive.
Dirt is thicker than water or sand.

Flex all muscles when chains
are wrapped around you.
It will be easier to shrug them off later.

Hide a key under your tongue.
Thread a needle in your throat.
Hold your breath without turning blue.

Find jackets with arms longer than your own.
Hang by your feet, arms folded like a nocturnal thing.

Do not believe that you are god
lest you forget to conceal the trick.

Suspense is key to any performance.
Let them wait. The audience
should bite nails, pace, wring hands, sob—terrified
that you may be gone.
Prepare for gasps of outrage at your success
more often than applause.

Tell no one your secrets
(except one lovely assistant
who helps you with your act).

Become as adept at escaping questions
as handcuffs. Practice answers in the mirror
so you know what you look like
when you lie.
Fix your tells. No one wants to discover
how easily they could have known.

When asked to explain yourself,
say nothing.
Spread wide your arms,
take your bow.

The End

You decided pain was simple:
one of those short-legged creatures
you could label and put in a glass box
to look at, point at, describe its attributes.
You didn't understand how mine
kept escaping.
One ate through the box it was in,
wrecked havoc in my room.
While you tried to catch it barehanded
to put it back, I had an anvil and a machete
just trying to kill the thing—crush it,
chop it to bits . . . I'm sorry . . .
I usually have excellent aim.

“Daphne Prayer” © 2008 by Molly Meacham.

“Likeness” © 2010 by Molly Meacham.

“Advice to My Father from Harry Houdini” © 2009 by Molly Meacham.

“The End” © 2010 by Molly Meacham.

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Jacob Sachs-Mishalanie

Piece Title: Counterpoint for Two Isolated Drum Sets

Players: Cameron Wisch, Drum Set, Jacob Sachs-Mishalanie, Drum Set

Program Notes:

As composers and multi-instrumentalists, Cameron Wisch and Jacob Sachs-Mishalanie have been trading off playing percussion on each other's musical projects for the past five years. Being that it is both of their main instruments, it was inevitable that they would start a project where they were both playing drum set. This project led to the idea of improvising with isolation headphones, where both of them play along with metronomes set to different tempi. The goal of this concept is to create a kind of contradictory feeling of mechanically simple rhythms, that when overlaid create a very fluid and expressive feeling of time. This piece is the first of many through-composed pieces utilizing this idea. For more information about Jacob, visit JSMishalanie.com, and for more information about Cameron, visit <http://cameronwisch.tumblr.com>.