

You Are The Artist

an interactive virtual concert experience

featuring the works of Longy composer, Paige Burke

as part of ID539: The Power of Art for You and Your Community

Lux Aeterna (2020)

Juliet (Ye) Liang, soprano

Yuhan Liu, mezzo-soprano

where the wild things are (2020)

Lorenzo Macuja, clarinet

it won't be long now (2021)

Jinnan Zhao and Xin Li, pianos

FROM THE COMPOSER, ABOUT *YOU ARE THE ARTIST*:

As a composer and musician, I have always been drawn to the connections between the visual and the aural—the concepts of “the color of sound,” and of synesthesia has always fascinated me. How does the brain make these connections between these two different stimuli? What makes this sound “purple,” and what about this particular piece of music reminds the listener of a quiet beach at sunset? Most importantly, how does the listener’s perspective of the piece differ from the composer’s, or the performer’s?

In designing the concept for *You Are The Artist*, which I hope to expand into a concert series going forward, I wanted to create a space for listeners to interact with the music in their own way just as much as I wanted to perform my own empirical research on the connections between visual and aural stimuli. Furthermore, as a music educator, one of my main goals is for my audience—whether they are my students in a classroom or listeners in a concert hall—have meaningful interactions with music that are accessible to everybody. Regardless of where you are, or what materials you have access to, you are encouraged to craft and submit your own responses to the music you hear on this program—this is a composer-artist collaboration where *you* are the artist.

PROGRAM NOTES:

Lux Aeterna was composed in memory of my beloved grandmother, who passed away last year after a years-long battle with dementia. The text, taken from the Latin Requiem mass, is a prayer for eternal rest:

*Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,
quia pius es.*

Let perpetual light shine upon them, O Lord,
with your saints for ever,
for you are merciful.

*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.*

Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.

The music aims to create a feeling of *liminality*, or existing at the threshold between one thing and another. This threshold represents the transition between the physical and spiritual realms, or between vague memories and reality.

Drawing on influences from Renaissance polyphony, the two voices are in a constant push and pull against one another, finding relative peace in dissonance. Each resolution gives rise to further harmonic and rhythmic tension, reinforcing this idea of liminality.

where the wild things are, for solo B-flat clarinet, was the first piece I completed as a student at the Longy School of Music, and one of my first forays into non-traditional compositional techniques—looking back, for me it represents my breaking free from what I thought was my “compositional style” at the time into an ongoing process of self-discovery.

Based on my very first assignment from my composition professor, which was to compose a three-measure melodic theme, soon enough this three-measure melody spiraled off into a nearly four-minute rhapsody. I drew on influences from jazz, blues, and also from my days as a music education major, dealing with beginner band students learning to make sound through their instruments. Beginning with a series of overblown, under-blown, and (purposely) sloppy-sounding notes and descending glissandi, the piece blusters into the main theme before developing into something more fanciful—an adventure into uncharted territory, where all the wild things are.

In this way, *where the wild things are* was my introduction to writing for a solo instrument, as well as a trial-by-fire in extended techniques, melodic fragmentation, atonality, and experimenting with timbre. All this is just to say, this was one of the first full-length pieces I had ever written that wasn't a pretty, lyrical choral piece about Jesus.

“I am not your rolling wheels...I am the highway.” -Chris Cornell

Coming back to the theme of liminal spaces, I originally intended for *it won't be long now*, written for piano duo, to convey a more subdued but haunting sense of anticipation. While composing the piece, however, I found myself listening to a fair amount of '90s alternative rock and metal, and wanting to channel this energy into the pieces that I was working on at the time. (The other solo piano piece that I finished soon afterwards, titled *between sacred silence and sleep*, quotes the main riff in System of a Down's song *Toxicity*.) I scrapped the original idea I had for the piece, instead channeling this louder, in-your-face, but still emotionally vulnerable, energy into the piece that would remain titled *it won't be long now*.

The dual piano parts begin the piece with spacious block chords, trading voices before easing into tight, syncopated rhythms, all while constantly gaining momentum. While the second piano part barrels along with low, open chords, the first piano part provides rhythmic and harmonic dissonance. This dissonance provides a sense of agitation and apprehension, contributing to this liminal state—you are on a highway headed somewhere unknown.