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Senior Recital: Anna Marcus-Hecht, composition

Anna Marcus-Hecht

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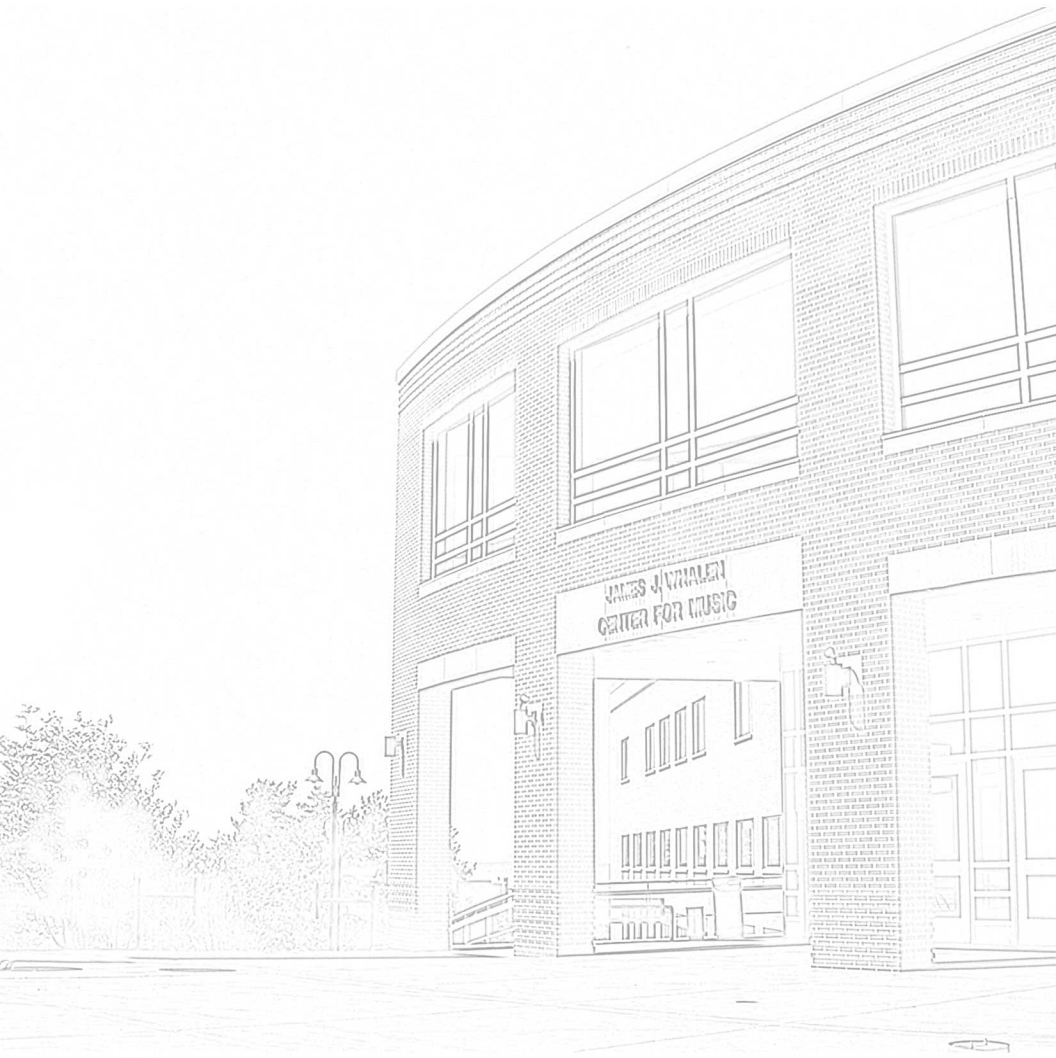
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Senior Recital:
Anna Marcus-Hecht, composition

Hockett Family Recital Hall
Sunday, March 24th, 2019
7:00 pm



ITHACA COLLEGE

School of Music

Program

- Temporary* (2018)
Kyle Kelley - soprano sax
Amanda Swatling - alto sax
Alice DeRagon - tenor sax
Alex Kelsey - baritone sax
- Transfigurations* (2018)
1. Ignore the Elephant (text by Christine Gaba)
2. Mushrooms (Text by Sylvia Plath)
3. The Dead Mother's Club (text by Alex Paul)
4. From the House of Yemanjá (text by Audre Lorde)
Brittany Mechler - mezzo
Emily Ramonetti - piano
- Forest Evening* (2017)
Seth Barrett - bassoon
- Five Gems for Piano* (2017)
1. Rutilated Quartz
2. Pyrite
3. Snowflake Obsidian
4. Fire Opal
5. Satin Spar
Yuhe Wang - piano
- Mindscape* (2019)
Anna Marcus-Hecht - alto
- H.R. 899* (2017)
Mary Bello, Nathaniel Finke, Peri Margolies, Brittany Mechler, Jake O'Connor, Jennifer Peisner, Mayavati Prabhakar, Emily Ramonetti, Ian Soderberg, Abigail Sullivan, Michael Wong - chorus
Mayavati Prabhakar - soloist
Keeghan Fountain - marimba
Leon Yu - piano
- "Strife Stories" (2018)
from *Time's Apprentice*
Mayavati Prabhakar - Rosa
Will Giering - 204
Hallie Arbital Jacoby - Lin
Nora Marcus-Hecht - Kiran
Alex Dietz - alto sax
Aleyna Ashenfarb - trumpet
Zachary Kalik - piano
Samuel Higgins - bass
Andrew Lackland - drums

This recital is in fulfillment of the degree B.M. in composition. Anna Marcus-Hecht is from the studio of Evis Sammoutis.

Program Notes

Temporary

Unlike any other piece I've written, the title for *Temporary* came before the musical idea for the piece. It grew out of a conceptual idea: what if I could write a piece that would destroy itself? That later grew into a more vague, symbolic idea of ephemerality. The frequent sound of key clicks and soundless air blown through the saxophone is meant to represent rain, washing away all that was built before. The dense harmonies and rapid asymmetric rhythmic sections are society, building itself up to near chaotic heights. However, nothing can escape the simple destruction of water. As a saxophonist myself, I really enjoyed using techniques that I've actually played around with in practice, such as the use of the bell as a percussion instrument. It had been years since writing a piece for saxophone, so it was very nice to go back to my musical roots.

Transfigurations

Transfigurations is a song cycle split into sets of two, each set focusing on a specific women's issue and featuring one poem written by an Ithaca College student poet and another written by a renowned published poet. The sets are designed to be both complete pieces on their own and to work as part of the greater cycle. The first set features poetry from Christine Gaba, a senior Writing major, next to a work by Sylvia Plath, while the second set features poetry by Alex Paul, a senior English major, juxtaposed with a poem by Audre Lorde. The first set focuses on the disregarding of women's issues, while the second one explores the cycle of motherhood. The text of each piece drives the mood and motivic material, with "Ignore the Elephant" featuring a raucous, stomping motif, "Mushrooms" giving off an eerie, creeping vibe with a slow dissonant march, "The Dead Mothers' Club" using more standard, romantic harmonies to reflect the Victorian nature of the text, and "From the House of Yemanjá" having a natural, speech-like cadence to the text setting to represent the feeling of storytelling the text gives off.

Forest Evening

Forest Evening is a piece for unaccompanied solo bassoon meant to invoke the sounds and feelings of walking through a forest in Upstate New York. It is divided into four sections, the first being a leaf floating on the wind. This melodic, rubato section is interrupted by the second section, a quick, staccato portion representing frogs jumping and croaking. The third section is very quiet, featuring rapid quintuplet patterns and key clicks meant to represent walking through a cloud of gnats. The fourth and final section reprises the falling leaf theme, but with a darker tone. The final statement of the piece, which is meant to be the bassoonist getting frightened and running backwards through the forest, quotes all the previous themes rapidly in reverse. As someone who has lived in the Ithaca area my whole life and spent much of my childhood roaming through the woods, this piece is an homage to the forests I grew up with.

Five Gems for Piano

Five gems for piano, as one can probably surmise from the title, was written with a different stone in mind for each movement. While the whole work is tied together through the common theme of quartal harmony, chords in 2nd or 3rd relationships to each other, and a short motif first introduced in the opening movement, each section is defined by aspects of the gems they were named after. Rutilated Quartz, the only movement who's gem was chosen after the fact, is a chorale, structured like a quartz crystal, but the non-traditional harmonic structure acts like spines of rutile throughout the movement. Pyrite features a very sparkling sounding accompaniment, like light

bouncing off a pyrite cluster. Snowflake obsidian was chosen for the third movement for two reasons: firstly because the movement is a nocturne, a form which reminds me of snowfall, and secondly because the climax of the movement is meant to represent a volcanic explosion, as obsidian is a form of volcanic glass. Fire Opal acts as a movement as it does as a gemstone: fast, flashy, and sneaks into your head like a vein of opal sneaks into cracks of other minerals. The final movement, Satin Spar, is meant to encompass all the previous movements and connect them through their common themes under a ghostly white veil of nostalgia. While most of the movement is made up of preexisting material, the final moments of the piece seem to float up, utilizing a soft, rising motif similar to the soft fiber-optic properties of satin spar.

Mindscape

Writing *Mindscape* was a very interesting experience for me. It combined my knowledge of composition with my experience recording my own voice, but pushed both into areas I had never thought to explore. The story of the piece is that it shows the singer's conversation with their own intrusive thoughts. The thoughts begin as small, startling intrusions, then begin to take the place of the singer's own voice. The singer gets more and more overwhelmed by these thoughts as they erupt into utter chaos, but by the end they come to terms with the thoughts and no longer fight the thoughts, but sing with them in harmony.

H.R.899

One of the political issues most frequently tossed around in this education-focused music school is the discussion of education secretary Betsy Devos. Nearly everyone I have spoken to on this campus has an opinion about her, and more often than not that opinion is negative. This piece is one of those opinions. The text for this piece comes from two sources, the first being directly from the proposed bill "H.R. 610," which details the programs Secretary Devos proposes to cut such as the ESSA and Elementary and Education Act. The listing of these cut programs and protections is written in dissonant harmony with a crunchy marimba background, meant to unsettle the audience. The second half of the piece draws its text from an open letter written by an eight-year-old girl. The text reads "Dear Secretary Devos, I love my public school. It is the place I've been in this school for four years, please leave our public schools alone. Do not tear it down ever. I love schools and I love everything about it." All grammatical flaws are preserved in the text setting for the sake of emphasizing the idea of innocent children. This is aided in the music with a gentile piano accompaniment, standard tonal harmony, and a folk song-esque melody.

"Strife Stories"

"Strife Stories" is one of many numbers from my original musical, Time's Apprentice, a show about oppression, abuse, and freedom from the perspective of the servant to the god of time. This song in particular follows a family of revolutionaries as they recount how they escaped the shackles of their draconian government and why they need to fight back. As a whole, this recital covers a lot of heavy topics, and after a while that can be a bit draining. After a full evening of politically charged music and stories ending in death or disaster, "Strife Stories" is here to end on an uplifting note, on a message of hope. That there's always a way to freedom, it's never too late for freedom.