

3-23-2011

## Alumni Recital: Joshua Modney, violin

Joshua Modney

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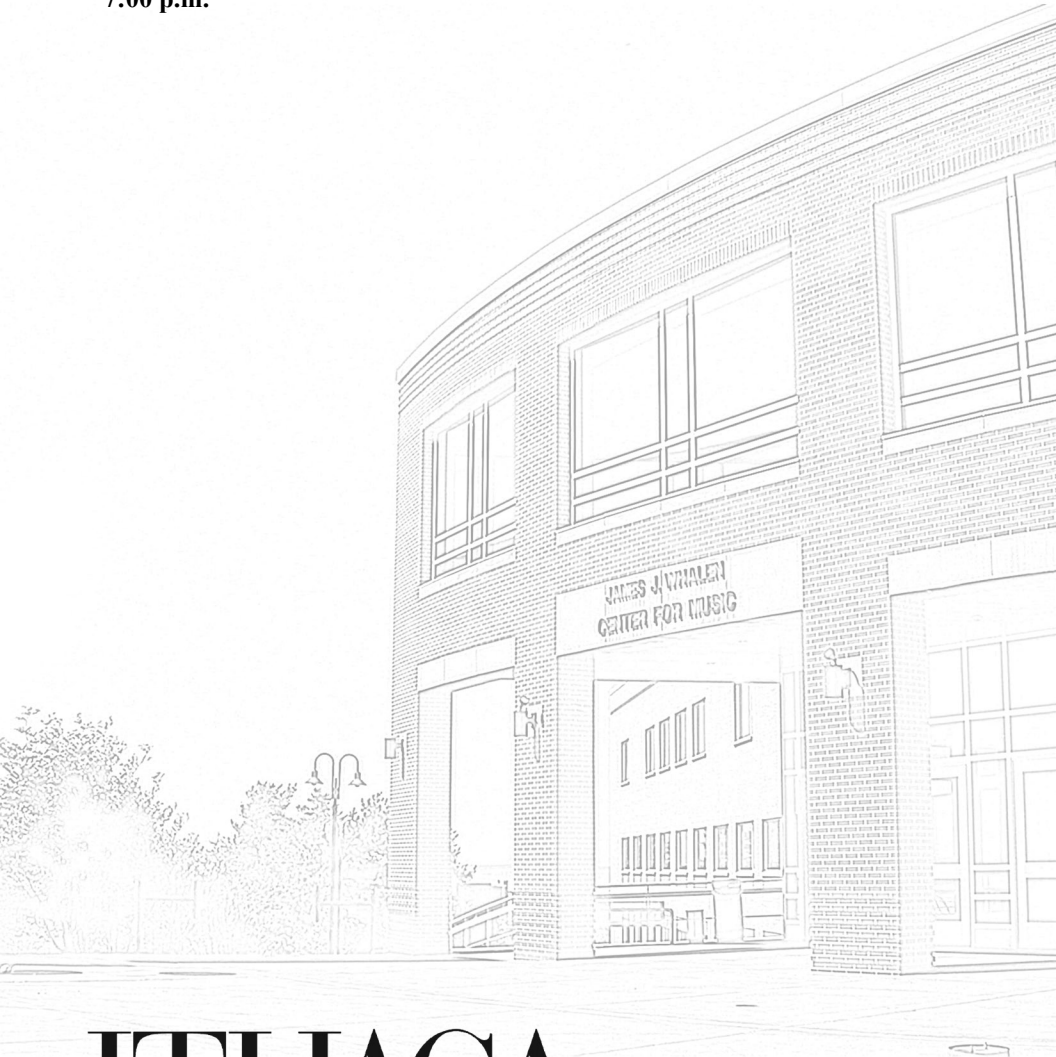
### Recommended Citation

Modney, Joshua, "Alumni Recital: Joshua Modney, violin" (2011). *All Concert & Recital Programs*. 122.  
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**Alumni Recital:  
Joshua Modney, violin**

**Hockett Family Recital Hall  
Wednesday, March 23, 2011  
7:00 p.m.**



**ITHACA**  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

## Program

*Sequenza VIII* for violin solo (1976)

Luciano Berio  
(1925-2003)

*Vocalise*, for violin solo with drone (2009)

Taylor Brook  
(b. 1985)

*Four Songs* (2011) World Premiere  
*(on the) east coast*  
*do it to me*  
*poisonous forest*  
*out of time*

Robert Pierzak  
(b. 1984)

## Pause

*Street Musician* (2007, rev. 2009)

Ronen Shai  
(b. 1977)

*For Aaron Copland* (1981)

Morton Feldman  
(1926-1987)

*Unsichtbare Farben* (1998)

Brian Ferneyhough  
(b. 1943)

## Joshua Modney

Hailed as "superb" and "flamboyant" by the New York Times, violinist and violist Joshua Modney has performed as a soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States and Europe. As a specialist in contemporary music, both notated and improvised, he is committed to presenting performances that make the music of our time enlightening for all concertgoers. Joshua is violinist and personnel manager for Wet Ink Ensemble and is a founding member of MIVOS quartet. He also performs frequently with Signal, Columbia Composers, and Talea Ensemble. He has recorded for Carrier, Tzadik, and New Amsterdam Records. Joshua holds degrees from Ithaca College and Manhattan School of Music. [www.joshuamodney.com](http://www.joshuamodney.com)

### Notes (by the composer except as noted)

#### Luciano Berio: *Sequenza VIII*

Berio's fourteen *Sequenzas* for solo instruments explore the extremes of virtuosity using the sparsest of musical materials. *Sequenza VIII*, like most pieces from the series, has become a staple of the repertoire and is nearly a standard work for violinists. Underneath its dizzying exterior of florid, neo-baroque figuration and hyper-romantic melodic gesture, *Sequenza VIII* is a relentless study of the notes A and B. The opening presents A as tonic, reinforced by the resonance of the open string, and B as secondary. This hierarchy is overturned again and again throughout the piece, culminating in a quasi-improvisatory climax free of notated pitches. After the dust settles, the violin continues for several minutes *con sordino*, while the conflict remains unresolved. -JM

#### Taylor Brook: *Vocalise*

*Vocalise* is dedicated to the violinist Mira Benjamin.

This composition is largely influenced by my exposure to Hindustani (Classical North India) music. The title, *Vocalise*, refers both to the long lyrical sections performed on a single violin string, as in the famous *Vocalise* of Rachmoninov, as well as the singing style of Hindustani music with its long sweeping lines and heavy use of *glissandi*.

In the Hindustani tradition all instruments aspire to the qualities of the voice, relating the playing techniques on the instrument to vocal production. For example, the act of plucking a string may correspond to the act of the tongue enunciating a consonant; minor variations of the angle and speed of the pluck slightly alter the timbre in a way similar to the timbral variations elicited by slight changes in the movement of the tongue. In this composition, I approach the violin in this spirit, calling for a variety of playing techniques in order to achieve a richness and variety of timbre rather than taking the unified "classical" timbre associated with standard orchestral violin technique for granted.

Formally, *Vocalise* consists of a single movement with several internal sections, each focusing on different strings of the violin. Furthermore, each section has a faster pulse than the previous one, giving the work a sense of large-scale acceleration. The entire

work is accompanied by a slightly flat F# drone, to which the fourth string of the violin is also tuned. This drone functions as the tonal centre throughout the composition as the solo violin plays in a just intonation mode in relation to it.

### **Robert Pierzak: Four Songs**

It is interesting to watch someone vocalize while trying to hold a violin at their neck near their throat. Visually, the violin looks like some kind of weird growth or super-vocal box of the singer/violinist. The violin's voice becomes an extension of the human voice and vice versa. I want to thank Josh for the opportunity to write this piece for him, his hard work on it, and his willingness to be vocally vulnerable on stage. This piece is also for Bethany, who for some time was my voice.

(on the) east coast

i'm not  
because i won't  
tomorrow

ha ha ha

today however...  
stop it

do it to me

everyday sometimes  
my body aches  
and sometimes  
it reminds me of all the times  
i wished i wasn't like you

but then you do it to me  
oh how you do it to me

everyday sometimes  
my eyes ache  
from looking down at you  
and you're lying still wishing  
you still knew how to make love

but then you do it to me  
oh how you do it to me

after all the stars burst,  
i'm gone too

poisonous forest

the wit with which she closed her sound out in the round forest

the wit with which she closed her mouth out in the round forest  
the witness which closed her mouth out in the round forest  
the witness closes her mouth out in the surrounding forest  
the coy witness closes her mouth out in the surrounding forest  
the boy witness closes his mouth out in the surrounding forest  
the boy cloisters his mouth out in the surrounding forest  
the boy cloisters his mouth out in the surrounding poison  
the boy cloisters his mouth out in the sounding poison  
the boy cloisters his mouth out in the noisy poison  
the boy cloisters his loin out in the noisy poisonous forest  
the boy cloisters his loin in the noisy poisonous forest

he'll be stripped bare there  
he will be fed marginally  
through his pores  
then  
he'll probably die

and then

stomachs on the floor!  
stomachs on the floor!  
stomachs on the floorses!

out of time

i fell in a diamond well  
owned by a midas  
down the line  
i had toed of what remained  
some might say  
scary  
my balance at peak,  
but i carried a box which seeked me out,  
in turn carrying a bell,  
in turn carrying a heavy secret from you

so i slipped

that's the first time i hurried

when you left town  
all i heard were  
deafening bells  
coming from the ground  
but then the cage around me  
argued endlessly about  
whether a coat is louder  
or a song is louder  
and after i thought for some time  
i told it i can't hear anything

you're my hand and you were my sleep  
which means no more crevices in your room

you're my tree and you were my dream  
which means no breathing

you're my eyes and you still are  
which means so many intersections  
cut up red  
and cloudy  
and throwing beetles  
into the mist  
by the train  
and sometimes  
we'd hit it  
and together we made  
a body without organs  
actually never  
but virtually always

i'm out of time  
i can't see you

seven days of masterful aversion and one hour of pity in my favorite corner  
eight months of cutting paper cranes and two seconds of quietly singing the witness  
song  
thirteen years of sky and thirteen more years of nothing but sky  
then nothing

time holding you  
time holding back  
time's holding me back

the river you know  
the one i know  
the one i float down  
when i need an alibi  
the one swathed mostly in eternity,  
mostly in song,  
lastly in fields,  
it runs deeply past  
the fast-trap azure  
and i think i saw a  
tapped lark sing  
choking on the agua.  
it was more of a gesture  
than a song  
it was more of a locked box  
than an afternoon of speculation

i'm out of time

pepper flakes  
by your face

by your eyes  
buy your eyes some time  
to face the stake  
to make some  
naked accusation to  
buy your eyes some  
more time to lie.  
sometimes eyes lie,  
but i won't abide

i'm out of time

and i passed by your house  
to see  
and i passed by your house  
just to see if  
if i was still there  
sitting with you hand in hand  
in the fire we made  
but you weren't even there  
you took your dark ravens  
and had them fly you  
out of sight  
out of touch

and i'm out of time

if there are any scents after sleep, i don't want to know.  
if there are any suppers after flying, i don't want to know.  
if there is solace in touching a made face, and it whispers to you and gives you its color,  
i just don't want to know.  
if there are any women after dark, i don't want to know.  
if there is religion after the fact, i don't want to know.  
if there is any number after one, i don't want to know.

my name is bobby and i live in the forest.  
and i walk with my hands behind my back, my back, my back in the forest.

i wish i had a glove, because then i could show everyone  
the suitcase i packed with one hand instead of two.

i wish i had a timer, because then i could show everyone  
how the circular track encloses all the faces I've known.

i wish i had a lap, because then you could sit on it  
and whisper the relevant trinkets on the table to me.

and i wish i had started it all with a starling in my hands, because then i could show  
everyone  
the beautiful silence of the blood streaked sky.

i wish i had winter, because then i could show everyone  
a champion born under the blanket.



i wish i had a family, because then i could show everyone.

it's my birthday today.

how old are you?  
infinity.

were you in the war?

i was in all the wars.

is that why you live in the forest?

no, but that's why i walk with my hands behind  
my back my back my back my back

### **Morton Feldman: For Aaron Copland**

Feldman's eloquent tribute to the great American composer distills Copland's style to its barest essence - a lullaby of fifths and sevenths.

-JM

### **Brian Ferneyhough: Unsichtbare Farben**

I have always been fascinated by the sometimes problematic but always stimulating parallels between musical and non-musical modes of cognition. In the same spirit, the titles of my works are not infrequently selected with a view to throwing at least a little light on the limits and nature of the specific discursive models involved. In many surrealist paintings the title stands in a strikingly fractured or discrepant logical relationship to the image, thereby sensibilising the observer to the unseen presence of a complex field of semantically active energies. According to one of Marcel Duchamp's most celebrated pronouncements, the title of a painting thus assumes the status of an "invisible colour," that of the imagination, amplifying and enriching our subliminally speculative perceptions somewhere beyond the limits of the ocularly accessible spectrum. In the case of this short composition for violin it seemed fitting that the various degrees of "invisibility," absence or erasure involved in the compositional process should be evoked by means of a title itself suffering from radical strategic incertitude at one degree remove.

In a sense, *Unsichtbare Farben* might be seen as the "tip of the iceberg", to the extent that the vast preponderance of materials that went into its preparation appears nowhere in the musical phenomenon itself, having been suppressed by a formal filtering operation selecting and interleaving structurally equivalent elements from a relatively large number of through-composed layers. Correspondingly, the unfolding of the work's argument is characterised primarily by a series of rhetorical ruptures as short fragments of otherwise impalpable processes are abruptly invoked and, equally suddenly, abandoned.

*Unsichtbare Farben* was written in response to a request from Irvine Arditti, to whom it is also dedicated.