Senior Recital: Nicholas Fagnilli, composition

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Senior Recital:
Nicholas Fagnilli, composition

Featuring
Amy Zuidema, Olivia Schechtman, Katie Adams, Colleen d'Alelio, Mariel Christiana, Brendan Kennelty, Nic Mathisen, Scott Bruce, and David Florentin

Ford Hall
Friday, November 1st, 2019
8:15 pm
As the sun rises,  
the breeze blows the humidity across the sands,  
combing through the long dry grass  
like fingers through the salty hair.  
In the curve of the bay, where the lighthouse stands,  
The Cape wakes with the lap of the shallow waves.

Snails dot the sand banks like moles,  
swiveling across wet, crunchy palms,  
collecting in the tide pools, absorbing the heat of the sun.  
Pebbles collect and form trails, trails for snails,  
to follow the stones, and their slimy hearts, back to the bay.

Digging hands into wet, sloppy sand,  
Little white crabs squirm between my fingers.  
Tiny holes, pores where clams have dug shelters,  
sit below sinking ankles.

The colors that erupt from the setting sky  
paint the wings of shorebirds. Mounds of sand sit shifting in the long shadows of the decrepit watchtower,  
Its rubble rusting through floors, shards of cement and resilience,  
as hidden as the bunkers, waiting patiently beneath the dunes, and the wooden fences, and the long dry brush.  
Horseshoe crabs migrate to the sore,  
dragging their tails gently along the snail trails, like ships, their smooth hulls gleaming,  
under the mood lighting of the sand-soaked stars.

I did the best of my growing up in Rehoboth Bay, at Delaware's beaches and estuaries. It has turned in recent years from nostalgic vacation spot to my father's personal Heaven. The more I looked around, the more I realized that the wildlife in Delaware is as unique as my father. Indeed, he fits in so well in this natural habitat, that in this piece I hope to capture his sense of synchornicity with nature, a feeling that is becoming increesingly difficult to comprehend as the world's environment continues to fall apart.
Great Blue Heron was written for Katie Adams and is dedicated to my father, Ron Fagnilli.

Katie Adams, bass
Nick Fagnilli, tape preparation & operation
Text by Colleen d'Alelio

Petals - 5' (2019)

Olivia Schechtman, soprano
Amy Zuidema, clarinet
Nick Fagnilli, piano

Text by Amy Lowell (1874-1925)

We alone stay
While years hurry on,
The flower fared forth,
though its fragrance still stays.

Petals is a piece that is meant to create physical spaces and motions through the use of harmoy. It is based on the Mixoryllic scale:

do di re mi fi si la te

Using this intervallically symmetrical scale, I was able to easily illustrate the images which mimic or complement the text, like flowing water and falling petals. The result is lines and polyphony that very much move and sway like the spring wind, and give the foreground to Amy Lowell's stunning text filled with mainly colors and descriptive textures.

Petals was written in July 2019 and is dedicated to Julia Bokunewicz.
**Iapetus - 4' (2018)**

*Colleen d'Alelio, cello  
Brendan Kennelty, percussion*

Iapetus is the third-largest moon of Saturn. Its unique orbit causes ice to sublimate away from one half of the moon and deposit itself at the other half. Thus, Iapetus is distinctly two-toned: it looks as thought it is covered in ice on one side and ash on the other. This piece reflects the duality of those textures.

*This piece was written on March 31, 2018 for Lindsey Eastham and Craig Mehler.*

**Thaw - 10' (2019)**

*The Elsewhere Ensemble  
Nick Fagnilli- Synthesizer, tape, conducting  
Amy Zuidema- clarinets  
Nic Mathisen- bass  
Brendan Kennelty- percussion*

Thaw seeks to solve challenges of playing a synthesizer with acoustic instruments. Notational practices do not exist for synthesizers due to the historical inability to really duplicate a sound or be performer-friendly in general for many years. I was first introduced to synthesizers through progressive rock music, where the great players had seemed to have solved this problem of portability and performability. In these modern times, with my compact synthesizer and its unique capabilities, it is easier for me to perform with complicated patches and have control over the design of the entire performance format.

In this piece, I have chosen a "modular" form containing cells of pitches and directions to vary the density, speed, and occurrence of those pitches. So, the music you are hearing is improvised with regards to melodies and harmonies, but highly structured in another way entirely. The pitches we play are set, but the group can control how those pitches interact and the balance of different textures and temperaments.

*This piece was premiered by Valerie Nuzzolo and Nick Fagnilli. Recordings are available on Spotify.*
text from The Daily Show
interview with Edward Snowden
and adapted from the Tao Te Ching
including original text by Nick Fagnilli read and recorded by the ensemble

SNOWDEN:
We are today being used against the future. We are being used against our children. Everything we do now lasts forever— not because we want to remember it, but because we're no longer allowed to forget.

WHISTLEBLOWER [repeat]

ENSEMBLE:
Means to the resource is means to reality. Means to the power is means to the crises. Stress on the Earth is a stretching for Greed.

TAPE:
Humans follow the Earth. Earth follows Heaven. Heaven follows the Tao. The Tao is what is natural.

SNOWDEN:
It- it was a memory....
(repeat)
It wasn't a thing that had been stolen...
It- it was a memory....

TAPE:
We are being used against the future. We are being used against our children. Everything we do lasts forever.

SNOWDEN:
They had stolen and were stealing not just one person's memories, but everyone's memories— everyone's, everywhere, all the time, and they still are right now.

Everyone's, everywhere, all the time...

TAPE:
I take no action and the people are reformed. I enjoy peace and the people are honest. I do nothing and the people become rich. I have no desires and the people return to a good and simple life. I share and the people are driven to action.
The Universal Vehicle- 10' (2016-2019)

I. The Truth Body
II. The Beatific Body
III. The Emanation Body

Mariel Christiana, flutes
David Florentin, alto saxophone
Colleen d'Alelio, cello
Katie Adams, bass
Brendan Kennelty and Scott Bruce, percussion
Nick Fagnilli, piano & conducting

The Universal Vehicle (‘Mahayana’) is one large idea that governs the separate ways to practice Buddhism. The Universal Vehicle is the idea that anyone, not just Buddhas, can become enlightened. The Universal Vehicle is comprised of three bodies: The Truth Body, The Beatific Body, and the Emanation Body. There are many ways to translate this idea into English, but this translation which was done by Robert Thurman is one that I resonated with in particular, and suggests for me a relationship between light, matter, and sound.

This piece was written in my own moments of inner peace over the past few years. It existed in forms for synthesizers and for different ensembles. This is the premiere of its most heavily designed iteration.
Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who played and contributed to this concert. Each of you brought a unique perspective and set of ideas about the world that inspired me in countless ways. Thank you to my infinitely supportive parents who undertook the grand endeavor of sending their son to college. Thank you to everyone else in my immensely extended family who have also always supported me. Thank you to Anastasia, my darling love, my muse, your ambition and dedication spill over and fuel my fire too. Thank you to all my teachers whom I wish I could list. Some are here with us and some are gone. Of course thank you to Dr. Sammoutis and Dr. Grossmann, and to Louise Mygatt and Dana Wilson. Thank you to Dr. Rothbart and Eric Svalgård, who taught me everything I know about how to work a synthesizer. Thank you Greg DeTurck, whom I still hear as my favorite voice in my head: "everything's gonna be fine." Thank you to everyone who ever complimented my sideburns. Thank you, sideburns. The sideburns have really been there for me. Thank you to this strange entangled web of young new musicians on the internet that have claimed me as part of their tribe. The valuable work of making new music starts when we get together by any means necessary.

“Music is something I love to do, but it’s not at the top of my list anymore... Humanity, friendship, solving the suffering of your friends, yourself, reaching out to people, and so forth. There’s a list probably pretty long. And then there is music.”
-Chinary Ung