

CHATTERBIRD

PRESENTS

PLAGUE BODY AND SOUL,  
AFTER THE

COMPOSED BY

MARK VOLKER

P E R F O R M E R S

Joseph Lee, Conductor

Rebekah Alexander, Soprano

John Logan Wood, Tenor

Ryan Cockman, Violin

Joshua Dent, Cello

Celine Thackston, Flute

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Mark Volker, Electric Guitar

Megan Gale, Piano

Jesse Strauss, Percussion

Sebastian Buhts, Percussion

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B O D Y   A N D   S O U L ,  
A F T E R   T H E   P L A G U E

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# I I N T R O

(Narrator)

As I lay on a winter's night, before the dawn, in a time of feud and plague

I saw (there) a remarkable sight, a body, wan,

its consciousness weak and vague

It had been a proud man who'd richly lived, sated his head and his heart

but now he'd lost the animating light, his spirit out, preparing itself to depart

But as it moved to leave, it turned around, beholding the body from which

it came

It spoke with a sorrowful wailing sound, bemoaning its fate and

assigning blame.

It said...

# I I W O E   T O   Y O U R   F L E S H

(Soul)

Woe to your flesh, your blood

It's only worth despair.

You were once quite eager, so brazen, when alive,

To declare false judgements, to change two for five.

Woe to your flesh, your blood

Look how you lie here now.

You were wild and wanton, so filled with foolish pride.

Now you'll find your judgement, your witness will deride you.

Pretension and bluster surrounded you in life

So now your immortal soul is bleeding from your mortal knife.

Woe to your flesh,

your foulest blood.

As you were once so hungry, devouring all you see.

So the worms now eat you and you've brought the pain of hell on me.

# I I I P A V I L I O N S   T O   T H E   S K Y

(Body)

When I was young and small

I never thought I'd live as I did;

As all the wealthy men and women have before.

I never thought I'd drink such wine;

never smell the golden saffron.

With everything I earned I seized the greatest pleasures.

I built pavilions to the sky.

I lived in shining splendor free upon the sea.

Now death has come to tear my breath away from me.

Soul, you condemn me. If you have such pain,

you only have yourself to blame.

Listen closely, hear my call,

the proudest are the first to fall,

but I won't take the blame for all.

All my catastrophes, all my desires,

you could have saved us from this all.

If God made you in his own image

then why did you just let me go astray

You could have led us both another way

It's your neglect that brought us to this day

I learned to follow you, I set to serve your pleasure. We built pavilions

to the sky.

You led me to my fortunes, now we both are lost.

# I V D E B A T E   1

(Soul)

I never led you to misfortune.

The more that you lived,

the more you failed.

(Body)

Could it be that this is my soul,

that condemns me for my transgressions? Improperly it seems to me.

My heart breaks that death struck me so.

I am not the first, nor shall I be the last.

There is none so clever that he is left behind.

I've fully drunk the cup, there's nothing I've declined. The proudest be

the first to keep his tongue.

I know very well that I shall rot;

As even Alexander and Caesar

such that no one can find a trace of them,

nor of the mothers who bore them.

You're blaming me

when it's you who have failed

when fateful choices came to us

Your saintly judgement failed

(Both)

Be silent!

(Soul)

Tis I who did enlighten you.

(Body)

Tis I who listened to you.

(Soul)

You throw at me these vile curses,

yet lie there swollen as a leather bottle.

(Both)

For all the flaws you have brought the world

did you expect peace?

# V D A W N

(Body)

Craving pleasure, I only sought to live.

(Soul)

But pleasures fade.

(Body)

I believed my joys would never end

(Soul)

I believed you knew your joys would never end.

V I  
D E B A T E   2

(Narrator)

The bonds that you're in, they'll cast me to hell. Your fancy furs,  
palfreys and steeds,

all your wealthy goods,  
you'll not bear them with you wretch, where you lie.

(Soul)

You've lived too long wrought so much pain,  
so erratic and false, always playing games.

You relished your lust, your carnal stings,  
now you'll know the true pain true passion brings.

(Body)

Godforsaken soul, please go away!

How long will your dissenting cries go on? Maggots rule this place,  
their verdicts stand

my dying carcass burns with their contagion.

I am prepared, I'm not afraid,  
my final breath will be the same.

More celebrated ones than I lie here.

I know that I shall pay for my excessive pride. Still, more painful things  
will rain upon you, soul.

(Soul)

You ran wild games with savage skill  
while you threatened poor men just to feel a thrill.

You'll no longer live to dance and play  
all you buddies and mates have run away.

(Body)

Turn away you wretched soul,  
my conduct won't concern you anymore.

(Soul)

Mary, Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost  
save a penitent soul from a villainous host.

(Body)

The venom slung at me flows down into my soul.

You're bathing in your own corruption.

I'll say it now with pithy prose:

You bear the blame for all the shame that plagues you now.

(Soul)

Where are your golden chambers now?

All your castles have fallen and your vineyards plowed.

(Body)

Would you leave me behind to count my bones  
to dedicate them to the soil that becomes my home.

(Soul)

You took from the poor and drained the world.

You didn't care whose labor served you.

You welcomed wealthy men into your home  
while lower men were left to their afflictions.

(Body)

You've lived too long wrought so much pain  
so erratic and false, always playing games.

You relished your lust, your carnal stings  
now you'll know the true pain true passion brings.

(Soul)

Why did you spurn your sacred duty  
to deny the fierce passions guiding you.

(Body)

We share all the guilt and the sins you name  
it's a stain upon you too.

V I I  
R E Q U I E M

(Both)

We've seen plague before, we've known its expectations,  
stood before the graves of many men.

Did we regard as idle speculation  
all that still remained to be resolved?

Requiem aeternam

dona eis Domine:  
et lux in perpetua luceat eis.

Te decet hymnus Deus in Sion,

et tibi reddetur votum Jerusalem:

exaudi orationem meam, ad te omnis caro veniet.

Requiem.

V I I I  
D E B A T E   3

(Soul)

You were warned here before, what would happen to both of us.  
You displayed everything that the world asked of you.

I suffered you and did as I was made to.

You the master, and I the knave.

I cast all my love on you, gave you rest.

You made a servant of me, imprisoned in your breast.

(Body)

Do you believe you're vindicated, that you're blameless.

You say that I made you my servant, that's outrageous.

All my defenses came from what you disclosed

You withheld the pow'er of right and wrong leaving me alone, exposed

(Soul)

You put a paper shield around me in your weakness.

As I confronted all your messes, you betrayed me.

I did all I could to bring harmony when you had lost your way.

But you did all you could to just bring me pain.

(Body)

You left me to wander the paths proper to only fools.

You rather could have given me wisdom's tools.

You had all the knowledge.

All that I know I did I learned from you.

(Soul)

You were taught to learn from me, but it was you who moved.

You only did the things I taught not to do.

(Body)

I never stood or travelled anywhere, when not beneath your eye

(Both)

Now I hear the hellhounds baying for us!

I X  
T H E   B E L L S   O F   E T E R N I T Y

(no text)

X  
R E S O L U T I O N

(Soul)

When we lived in the mortal kingdom, I concealed your slides to mortal vice.

Now we suffer for our mortal follies, parting sorrows,  
sadness waits for us.

All our quarrels and our condemnations, pointed fingers, won't restore these bones.

(Both)

We will part and end our sacred pairing, end our union, we'll go on alone.

In winter snow and frost, summer sun, and autumn showers.

(Soul)

And here you'll lie until you drift away.

(Body)

And you will travel into darkness.

It had to be this way.

Were there ever a man or woman safe from dying, clear of evil's breath,

(Soul)

Such a one would never risk their comfort.

(Both)

Our brightest fires are sparked by the flint of death.

(Body)

When the floor is at my back, and the roof is at my nose,

and I think of all the joys of life that we have known.

(Soul)

As we're separated now, those memories afflict me so,

as I'm alone.

(Body)

We will leave behind all that we have made,

all of your forms, words, songs.

(Soul)

We'll have nothing more than the space beneath our heads when we are gone.

(Both)

While we lived as one, nothing could bring us together.

We believed our united world would never end.





## ESSAY 1

When chatterbird approached me about composing a large-scale work for them, I was thrilled and flattered. I have enormous respect for their work. In addition to their exceptional artistry, they have carved out a unique place in the musical world. Led by Celine Thackston, chatterbird has gone beyond the important work bringing stylistically varied modern music to the mid-South. They have created a body of work that demonstrates respect for adventurous composers, performers, and audiences alike, creating a wonderful creative space for all involved. Therefore, it was important to me that I respond with a project worthy of chatterbird's singular talents.

Not long before, my dear friend Suzanne Edwards had first introduced me to the medieval "Body and Soul" debate poetry, and suggested we collaborate on a project that used some of these as source material for a large-scale musical work. This group of poems is a particular area of research interest for her, as a specialist in medieval studies. The two particular poems she chose moved me in a very profound way. Through dramatic renderings of a debate between a body and soul as they face death, these texts explore the nature of the human condition and our place within a shared community. The style, by turns grim, solemn, and irreverent, appealed to side of my personality first cultivated during my Catholic upbringing. This felt like the perfect project for the chatterbird commission.

I have known for some time that I fear death. The finiteness of life is something that sincerely scares me. Like most humans, I value the richness and experience of life, so it disturbs me to think that one day this will come to an end. One way to confront this fear is to consider why and how we live, both as individuals and as a community. These poems struck me as powerful representations of such a consideration. They may lead to a fascination with grim subjects, but the ongoing questions of how and why we live and die the way we do can lead to crucial personal answers.

In spite of my enthusiasm for the texts, I was unsure about the best way to approach them musically. I believe that one should only set text to music if there is something fresh to be found in doing so. This is such rich and expressive poetry on its own, but even in translation, it is also very dense and filled with rhetorical conventions foreign to modern readers or listeners. Such conceptually rich, subtle texts are deceptively difficult to apply to large-scale musical structures.

We decided that I would mix paraphrased sections of Suzanne's translation with more direct versions of it to evoke the combination of timelessness and timeliness that we wanted to achieve. I even decided to include the sound of Suzanne reading some of the original Middle English text to provide a direct link to the medieval source, and to exploit the mystical quality of the original language.

Music is particularly capable of broadly powerful gestures, as well as subtlety with indefinite meaning. These texts call for vibrant expression that, while inviting interpretation, allows for cerebral consideration of specific meanings.

Writing strictly for a traditional, concert music instrumentation felt insufficient for the task. This led me to consider a multimedia approach with some less conventional elements: an electric guitar incorporated into

a chamber music setting, sound synthesis and processing of the acoustic instruments, and a video component. The electronic guitar and digital sound synthesis/processing have played roles in many of my past musical works. The mixture of acoustic instruments with amplified, synthetic, and processed sound provides a fantastic sound palette for illustrating and illuminating the flesh versus spirit components of the text. From a very early point, such electro-acoustic elements were a significant part of the conception for the piece.

In addition, a visual element felt like a very natural fit as well. The presence of intentional imagery during a musical performance has the potential to broaden the sensory range of the work. This can of course be very literal, in a music video or narrative film format, but I felt this text would be best served by a more abstract, but calculated approach.

I had admired Christine Rogers' work for some time, particularly her video to accompany performances of Peter Maxwell Davies' musical work, *Sea Eagle*. I appreciated the way Christine used a photographer's eye for expressive still moments in slowing-developing video clips. The images themselves were not inherently abstract (the events and objects they capture are generally quite clear), but the concepts expressed are less obvious and open for multiple interpretations. I felt that, in conjunction with a musical and text setting, this could be very effective at drawing out fresh ideas from the "Body and Soul" poetry.

There is at once both an immediate and hypnotic quality to Christine's images, beautifully elevating the experience of the piece. The immediacy lies in the very modern, corporeal aspects of the imagery, some emotional, some beguilingly prosaic. There are real, natural places and people living lives not unlike that referenced in the poetry. The hypnotic quality comes from the indefinite, but dynamic nature of much of the images. We see people experiencing real but unspecified emotions, and elemental settings filled with haunting mist, mountains, birds, and fire. Then there is the central image of the whole piece: two pieces of dry ice lie against a block of conventional ice, melting into one another as they slowly lose their substance, much as the body and soul of the poetry. It is a potent tableau that eloquently binds together the entire piece.

While Suzanne and I had discussed the relationship of the medieval bubonic plague to the poetry as early as January of 2020, the fact that the poems were prominent during and immediately after plague outbreaks became especially pertinent in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Suzanne, Christine, and I all worked on our respective components of this piece in the shadow of this plague, with the belief that we were creating a piece of art that could inspire critical assessment of our culture and thinking as we entered the period of recovery. The poetry depicts a debate between the flesh and spirit of a person trying to understand the meaning of their life and death. But as Suzanne taught me so well, haunting the entire piece is the idea of trying to understand our place in a shared community. Regardless of how an audience for *After the Plague: Body and Soul* perceives the work, it is this critical consideration of our role in the world community that I hope comes out clearly.





## E S S A Y 2 by Suzanne Edwards

In the midst of a long winter night and awaiting the dawn in despair, the narrator of a medieval poem sees a dead person lying on a bier at just the moment when the soul departs the body. As the narrator watches, a personified Body and Soul address each other to debate which one of them bears greater responsibility for the mistakes the now-deceased person made in life. Mark Volker’s *Body and Soul, After the Plague* places contemporary audiences in the medieval narrator’s position, as witnesses to a debate that is by turns humorous, grief-stricken, aggressive, and tender.

The text for *Body and Soul, After the Plague* is based on two anonymous thirteenth-century Middle English debate poems, “In a Thestri Stude I Stode” (“In a Dark Place I Stood”) and “Als I Lay in a Winteris Nyt” (“As I Lay in a Winter’s Night”). Although these two poems were written a century before the bubonic plague that would kill up to half of the population in England (and ultimately more than a hundred million people worldwide), they raise urgent ethical questions about how confronting mortality can transform self-understanding and community for the living. These medieval texts speak to us, eight hundred years later, in the context of another global pandemic during which more than three million people have so far died. These debate poems ask: How do the relationships among aspects of the self connect with our relationships to others?

The body-soul debate poems dramatize the conceptual and psychological barriers that hinder the living from reckoning with death, through the conflict between a Body and a Soul that once comprised a single human being. Body and Soul, *After the Plague*, like the medieval poems on which it is based, begins with the Soul castigating the Body (II. “Woe to Your Flesh”). Soul laments Body’s habitual indulgence of carnal desires for goods that have now passed away rather than unselfish virtues that would have enduring value after death; now Body is consumed by worms, and Soul is destined to suffer in hell. At first, it might seem that the Soul, an undying and rational faculty, will clearly hold the moral high ground. And so it did in earlier medieval texts where the soul holds forth and the body says little or nothing in its own defense. Yet, in “Thestri” and “Als I Lay,” Body’s arguments are equally matched with Soul’s. Body and Soul, *After the Plague* emphasizes this balance by following Soul’s opening lament with Body’s solo “Pavilions to the Sky.” Accusing the Soul of self-satisfied pride, the

Body complains that the Soul abandoned its duty of care and failed to protect them both from shame: “I learned to follow you,” the Body says, “I set to serve your pleasure . . . and now we both are lost.” After the opening articulation of each’s position, Body and Soul speak together in “Debate I,” and the musical setting underscores how their arguments mirror each other, with each refusing responsibility. With unison words, they accuse the other: “For all the flaws you have brought the world, did you expect peace?”

Throughout, Body and Soul each betray their nostalgia for the very same earthly attachments that they recognize as responsible for their current plight. For instance, Body claims that its mortality puts it in good company with famous pagans—Alexander and Caesar—whose ethics, in medieval Christian thought, were compromised. In Dante’s *Inferno*, Caesar is consigned to limbo, and Alexander to hell, for tyranny. In “Debate 2,” Soul’s taunting questions about where Body’s splendid castles and lands have gone suggest that Soul, too, feels the sense of loss that it attributes to Body’s foolishness. Later, Soul reminds Body that such fondness for luxury constituted self-harm, in its lack of regard for virtue, as well as an injury to human community more broadly—“You took from the poor and drained the world.” But Soul, in directing this lesson to Body without acknowledging its own longing for what has been lost, makes the very error it criticizes.

As the debate unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that both parties, in refusing responsibility and accusing the other, operate from a flawed premise. Body and Soul together comprised the living person whose death now occasions their retrospection. The recriminations that structure their dialogue hint that the living person’s ethical errors followed not just from Soul or from Body, but rather from the failed relationship between the two of them, their insistence on division rather than mutual care. Mark Volker’s setting of the Latin text of the Mass for the Dead (“Requiem”), which is not part of either “Thestri” or “Als I Lay,” illuminates how Body and Soul both should have anticipated the death of the person they formerly comprised and also how they persistently deluded themselves. In life, Body and Soul have stood at many gravesides and knew that death was not merely “idle speculation.” Yet, now at their own gravesite, Body and Soul still act merely as observers and continue to litigate responsibility in “Debate

3.” When Body says, “I never stood or travelled anywhere, when not beneath your eye,” it exposes the fundamental misrecognition that characterizes the debate: Soul’s “eye” was the Body’s. So, too, when Body in “Als I Lay” wishes it had been an animal who never knew right from wrong, it acknowledges that it was never fully separate from Soul. As in many medieval debate poems, there is no clear resolution. Body’s and Soul’s final words reflect their continuing error, and their incessant bickering becomes almost humorous to observers who can clearly see what Body and Soul fail to register. Body and Soul lament, “while we lived as one, nothing could bring us together,” at once claiming and refusing that they were always intertwined.

Body and Soul, *After the Plague* creatively adapts these medieval poems for contemporary audiences. Mark Volker worked from a literal translation of the Middle English text into Modern English, condensing and adapting the two poems for the chamber music setting. (The first spoken words audiences will hear are the first twelve lines of “Als I Lay,” in untranslated Middle English, the English language as it sounded between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries—related and yet radically from the Modern English we speak today.) Broadly, debate poems like “Als I Lay” and “Thestri” genre consists of a verbal debate between two or more antagonistic parties, often personifications of abstractions or things, in which the speakers compare their respective merits or consider a shared problem. In addition to the body-soul debates, medieval debate poems include verbal contests between summer and winter, between water and wine, between a cuckoo and a nightingale, and even among a carpenter’s tools. Debate poems were quite popular in Europe between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, a fact that likely reflects the broader cultural importance of disputation in medieval universities, itinerant preaching, and parliamentary debate. Elaborate public debates were central to universities’ pedagogical and philosophical methods that stressed the potential of dialectical methods for arriving at theological truth. These debate forms, conducted in Latin by intellectual elites, influenced the development of popular vernacular forms like debate poetry and contrapuntal dialogic songs called *jeux-partis*. In this sense, Mark Volker’s musical setting, translation, abridgement, and conflation of two different medieval body-soul debates is precisely in keeping with the texts’ thirteenth-century origins.

The medieval popularity of body-soul debates, in particular, may respond to the Fourth Lateran Council’s 1215 decree that each Christian must confess their sins at least once a year. In the context of this injunction to regular confession, body-soul debates may work as a form of popular vernacular instruction about the eternal consequences of incomplete confession as well as a rhetorical model for self-interrogation concerning sin. Certainly, Christian theology more explicitly frames the medieval body-soul debate poems than Mark Volker’s contemporary setting. For example, in “Thestri,” the Body’s verbal sparring lapses into silence as the Soul gives a sermon on the Day of Judgment, when Body and Soul will be reunited and together suffer punishment for the mistakes they made in life. In “Als I Lay,” Body contemplates moldering in the grave, consumed by worms, while devils seize Soul and subject it to gruesome tortures that parody the moral errors the person made in life. In *Body and Soul, Against the Plague*, “The Bells of Eternity” evokes this deformation of earthly attachments as musical motifs associated with recollection and memory are electronically stretched and processed to evoke screams.

In the medieval poems, these terrifying fates present a definitive final word on the debate between Body and Soul, and the narrators affirm a clear moral lesson. In “Thestri,” the narrator says, “when the floor is at your backbone, the roof is at your nose [i.e., in the grave]./All the joys of this world are not worth a pea.” In “Als I Lay,” the narrator reflects on his or her sinfulness and urges all “to confess themselves and repent sore.” Yet, the apparent simplicity and clarity of these moral lessons is belied by the fact that neither Body nor Soul ever disputed them. They knew them and still couldn’t act on them. What kind of self-relation will allow for the narrator to act on the knowledge that life is transitory, to build more ethical relationships with others? The poems don’t offer a clear answer to that question. By lingering on the ways the debaters persistently misrecognize and defer mutual accountability, the ending of Mark Volker’s *Body and Soul, After the Plague* highlights this unsettled open-endedness, asking audiences to consider how we will act on our own witness to mortality.





## E S S A Y 3 by Christine Rogers

I was excited to be approached by Mark Volker to create a video to accompany his striking and epic piece of music, *Body and Soul*. Making a video in response to a piece of music is a fascinating and special opportunity for me as my practice tends to be primarily photographic. When Mark told me about the concept of the *Body and Soul* debate poem, the central image of a block of dry ice and a block of conventional ice balancing against one another emerged in my head.

As time passes, these monoliths will fuse, evaporate, melt: they are always changing until one is gone. Two equal statues at first, as one leaves the other, the other becomes more of a shell and an echo of its past.

This motif is the main thread of the work, and it is juxtaposed with imagery of people statuesquely posed in front of landscapes: stoic, eyes closed, removed from the world they are inhabiting. These human figures are intended to reflect back to the image of the ice blocks. The piece is linked together with frenetic, musical and energetic moments of nature: birds swarming a tree, flowers blowing on the side of a hill, smoke rising from the woods\*. All of these things are intended to be a present-day meditation on the *Body and Soul* debate.

Christine Rogers, 2021

\*A significant amount of footage from this video was created in India, a place that feels like a second home to me. As I write this, the second wave of COVID – 19 has created a humanitarian crisis. Please consider donating to UNICEF efforts in India or one of the many fundraisers on [covid.giveindia.org](https://covid.giveindia.org).



## COMPOSER AND GUITARIST

Composer and guitarist Mark Volker is Professor of Music at the Belmont University School of Music, where he is Coordinator of Composition Studies, and he directs the New Music Ensemble. He received degrees in Composition and Guitar Performance from the University of Chicago (Ph.D.), the University of Cincinnati (Master of Music), and Ithaca College (Bachelor of Music). Known for his colorful harmonic language and orchestration, as well as his facility with both electronic and traditional instrumentations, Mark's music has been performed and recorded by numerous performers around the world, including the Chicago Contemporary Chamber Players, eighth blackbird, the Pacifica String Quartet, Musica moderna Poland, the Pinotage ensemble, the New York New Music Ensemble, the Gryphon Trio, the Kiev Philharmonic, the Orchestra of the Finger Lakes, So Percussion, Luna Nova, the Orquesta de Baja California, the Boston Brass, the Society for New Music, the Cold Fusion Ensemble, the Young Opera Company of New England, and the Nashville Ballet. His music has also been featured at many music festivals and conferences, including the Cincinnati MusicX festivals, the Gamper Festival, SCI and CMS regional and national conferences, June in Buffalo, the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, the Chenango Summer MusicFest, the Belvedere Chamber Music Festival, International Computer Music Conferences, and SEAMUS Conferences. Mark is a past winner of the SCI/ASCAP international prize, the ERM Masterworks Award, the Tennessee Music Teacher's Association Composer of the Award, as well as numerous grants and commissions. His music has been previously released by Navona/Parma Records, Centaur Records and ERMMedia.

Mark is an active guitarist, specializing in the performance of new music for classical and electric guitar in chamber settings. He has premiered numerous chamber and solo works and performs regularly with the Luna Nova Ensemble and flutist John McMurtery.

In addition, the wide ranging subjects of his writings and research run from fifteenth century English music to modern electroacoustic music.

A native of Buffalo, NY, Mark holds degrees from the Ithaca College School of Music (BM), the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (MM), and the University of Chicago (PhD). He has studied composition with Greg Woodward, Dana Wilson, Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon, Darrell Handel, Shulamit Ran, Samuel Adler, and Marta Ptaszynska, electroacoustic music with Howard Sandroff and Mara Helmuth, and classical guitar with Pablo Cohen, Edward Flower, Fred Hand, and John Sawers. Prior to his appointment at Belmont, Mark taught at Colgate University. He lives in Franklin, TN with his wife Alyssa and two children, Molly and Jacob.

## VISUAL ARTIST

Christine Rogers (born 1982, Cincinnati, Ohio) lives and works in Nashville, Tennessee. She received her BA in anthropology from Oberlin College in 2004 and her MFA in studio art from Tufts University in 2008. She has exhibited widely across the United States and was in a two-person show at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Santiago, Chile, in the fall of 2012 and at MoCA Tucson in 2018. She is a two time Fulbright Nehru Senior Research Scholar for India (2012-2013 and 2018-2019) Her first solo show in India was in the spring of 2013 at 1 Shanthi Road Gallery in Bangalore, Karnataka and she has since shown again in Mumbai in group shows at Clark House Initiative, Project 88, and Chemould Prescott. Her work has been written about in Time Out Bengaluru, The Bangalore Mirror, The Hindu, New Landscape Photography, Hyperallergic, Dazed Digital, Burnaway, The Tennessean, and The Nashville Scene. She is an Associate Professor of Photography at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee.

## MEDIEVAL SCHOLAR

Suzanne Edwards is Associate Professor of English of English and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Lehigh University. Her research and teaching explore how the study of the past can help us to think in new ways about ethics and justice in the present. A winner of Lehigh University's Lindback Award for Distinguished teaching, Professor Edwards teaches a wide range of courses in medieval literature and culture, law and literature, and gender and sexuality studies.

Her book, *The Afterlives of Rape in Medieval English Literature*, was published in 2016 as part of Palgrave Macmillan's New Middle Ages. This book examines the literary tropes and philosophical concerns associated with surviving sexual violence in a wide range of medieval texts and in contemporary feminist theory. As a scholar-teacher, she has published in traditional scholarly journals, edited volumes, and reference works as well as in public-facing venues including *The Washington Post* and *Salon*.

Currently, she is working on two new projects. The first, a book, will explore how the medieval dialogue form frames encounters across difference--between bodies and souls, between youth and old age, between vices and virtues, between men and women, between Christians and Jews--in light of contemporary feminist theories of intersectionality and assemblage. The second, an interdisciplinary project with her colleagues in the humanities, arts, and library sciences, focuses on Gloria Naylor's collected papers. Inspired by Naylor's own political and aesthetic vision, the Gloria Naylor Archive project uses the arts and digital tools to make this 20th-century writer's papers accessible to audiences inside and outside the academy. Professor Edwards has published work on Gloria Naylor in *The Chaucer Review* and, co-authored with Trudier Harris, in *African American Review*. For more about this project, visit the archive website: <https://wordpress.lehigh.edu/naylorarchive/>





## PERFORMERS

### REBEKAH ALEXANDER, SOPRANO

A strong advocate of contemporary music, Rebekah Alexander has performed works by Jake Heggie, George Crumb, Gyorgy Kurtag, Georges Aperghis, Osvaldo Golijov, Elliott Carter, and Kaija Saariaho as well as the premieres of several new compositions with Guerilla Opera, Time's Arrow Ensemble, the Studio for New Music Ensemble, ALEA III, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Lorelei Ensemble and soundSCAPE festival. In February 2018, Rebekah performed works by John Cage and Michael Pisaro with the avant-garde Atlanta-based ensemble Bent Frequency. Invited to present at the 2015 Summer Institute of Contemporary Performance Practice, Rebekah performed Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird by Lukas Foss and Litany for the Whale by John Cage. Winner of the Pittsburgh Concert Society Grant in 2009, Rebekah has competed and advanced in several competitions including the International Boulanger Voice/Piano Duo competition, the Mario Lanza competition, the Concert Artists Guild competition, and the Young Concert Artist competition. In April 2011, she was invited to the prestigious Gaudemus Interpreter's competition in Amsterdam to perform repertoire involving voice and electronics including Phenomena by Milton Babbitt. An avid recitalist, Rebekah performed and recorded the June 2011 premiere of composer James Funkhouser's song cycles "In Between Worlds" and "Dusk". She has toured New England with the classical guitarist David McLellan, presented the chamber music of George Crumb and Ned Rorem with pianist Akiko Hosaki and clarinetist Ken Ellison.

### EMILY BOWLAND, CLARINET

Clarinetist Emily Wasson Bowland maintains an active career as performer and teacher. An equally versatile performer on clarinet, E-flat, and bass clarinets, she enjoys an interesting and diverse career, both live and in the recording studios. Emily currently holds the positions of Principal Clarinet of Orchestra Kentucky, 3rd/Bass Clarinet of the Chattanooga Symphony Orchestra, and the Nashville Opera Orchestra. As a soloist, she has appeared with Orchestra Kentucky and on recitals at the International Clarinet Association's ClarinetFest, University of Oklahoma Clarinet Symposium, and the Society of Composers, Inc. Emily was a part of several recordings with the Nashville Symphony under the direction of Leonard Slatkin; and was a part of the world premiere of Trey Anastasio's "Time Turns Elastic" with Orchestra Nashville.

An enthusiastic supporter of contemporary music, she is a core member of Nashville-based new music ensembles Intersection and chatterbird. Emily is active in the Nashville studio scene, having performed on many movie and video game soundtracks and recording for publishing companies to solo artist projects. She can be heard on Jack White's Grammy-nominated debut solo album, "Blunderbuss." She is also featured in a recording with roots musician Pokey LaFarge, as a part of the film soundtrack for The Lone Ranger (2013). Emily holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and a Master of Music degree from the University of Southern California. Her major teachers have included Yehuda Gilad, Mitchell Lurie, and Richie Hawley.

### SEBASTIAN BUHTS, PERCUSSION

Sebastian Buhts is a solo, chamber, and orchestral percussionist based in St. Louis, MO. He currently teaches percussion at Lindenwood University and has appeared as a recitalist and clinician throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. Sebastian's passion for chamber music and new music brought him to Italy as a Fellow for the 2018 Cortona New Music Sessions, where he collaborated with composers to premiere three works for pierrot ensemble. He also performed in the world premiere of David Biedenbender's percussion quartet, Ferrum, at the 2017 Percussive Arts Society International Convention.

In addition to performing and teaching western classical percussion, Sebastian specializes in North Indian tabla drumming. His doctoral dissertation analyzes the form and structure of a traditional tabla solo in the North Indian musical lineage known as the Benares gharana. As part of this research, Sebastian spent six months in Varanasi, India, where he studied tabla with Pandit Kishor Kumar Mishra.

Sebastian holds degrees from Michigan State University (D.M.A. in Percussion Performance) and Belmont University (M.M. and B.M. in Percussion Performance; B.A. in German). He also studied orchestral percussion at the Hochschule für Musik in Dresden, Germany, and at the Aspen Music Festival and School. Sebastian proudly endorses Marimba One and Black Swamp Percussion instruments.

### RYAN COCKMAN, VIOLIN

A performer and educator in high demand, Ryan Cockman is known for his unique tone and exciting live performances. After graduating from the University of Colorado at Boulder with a MM in Violin Performance and Pedagogy, Ryan's path has lead him to Nashville to pursue his freelance and teaching careers. Currently, Ryan maintains a busy schedule that includes appearances with an array of orchestra and chamber groups in the area, such as the Gateway chamber Orchestra, Huntsville Symphony, Orchestra Kentucky Bowling Green, and the Louisville Orchestra.

### JOSHUA DENT, CELLO

Joshua Dent began playing cello at the age of fourteen in Kissimmee, Florida. Two years later they began learning improvisation and exploring genres outside of the classical umbrella of music. Towards the end of their studies at Florida State University, they decided it was best to pursue music by learning in the professional world in different ways. Since then, they moved to Nashville, Tennessee where they currently reside. Their career is always changing; currently, their work ranges from playing in chamber music groups, vaudeville style bands, rock groups, and jazz ensembles, to playing with singers/songwriters, recording for studio sessions, and teaching improvisation workshops for cello studies around the country. Currently they are an artist in residence with abrasiveMedia, principal cellist for Strings of Saturn, and active member of chatterbird since its beginning. Spending much of the year away from their home, Joshua frequently travels around the U.S. are Europe playing music and collaborating with artists of other mediums such as painters, dancers, writers, and actors.

### MEGAN GALE, PIANO

Born in Tokyo, Megan Gale grew up on Whidbey Island in Washington state. She holds degrees from Oberlin Conservatory and the University of Southern California and has done additional studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder, the Music Academy of the West, and the Aspen Music Festival. Megan is sought after as a collaborative partner by an array of performers and has presented more than 400 recitals during her career. In Nashville she is currently on the faculty of the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University as a collaborative pianist. Megan performs frequently on the Nashville Symphony Orchestra chamber music series and for their Accelerando program and has more recently played with the Alias Chamber Ensemble. She previously held positions at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, the Aspen Music Festival, the William Bennett Summer Flute Academy, and the Gateway Chamber Orchestra. In her free time Megan enjoys running, reading, and hanging out with her 6-year-old daughter Hilda and her husband, bass player Tim Pearson.

### JOSEPH LEE, CONDUCTOR

Joseph Lee serves as Resident Conductor of the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra, Music Director of the Huntsville Youth Orchestra, and conductor of the Huntsville Youth Symphony and the Sinfonia Orchestra. Mr. Lee is the Principal Conductor of the Campamento Internacional de Musica Pochote (Costa Rica), Music Director of Music Ministries at East End United Methodist Church of Nashville, and serves on the conducting staff of the Sewanee Summer Music Festival. In addition to his regular conducting activities, Mr. Lee frequently travels the Southeast US and Central America leading clinics, adjudicating band and orchestra festivals, and guest conducting. Mr. Lee has participated in music festivals and master classes both at home and abroad. He graduated cum laude from Vanderbilt University.

### JESSE STRAUSS, PERCUSSION

Jesse Strauss specializes in chamber music, orchestral music, and improvised music for dance & film. A graduate of Belmont University, he studied percussion under Christopher Norton focusing heavily on keyboard percussion repertoire. As an accompanist and performer, he has worked with Nashville based dance companies Epiphany, FALL Dance, Belmont University Dept. of Dance, Nashville Contact Improvisation, Chinese Arts Alliance, and Tennessee's Governor's School for the Arts. Solo and chamber music appearances include TEDx Nashville, Sideshow Fringe Festival, OZ Arts, WPLN's Radio Fest, ALIAS Chamber Ensemble, Memphis Crosstown Arts, Princeton's Unruly Sounds Festival, Nashville Symphony's Free Day of Music, and the Pittsburgh New Music Festival. He also performs as an extra section percussionist with the Nashville Symphony.

Jesse cofounded Make Music Nashville, a free day of music that brings outdoor concerts and participatory musical activities to neighborhoods around the city. In addition to performing, he has worked with many non-profit arts organizations in various capacities, including Tennessee Performing Arts Center, Nashville Symphony, and Belcourt Theatre. Currently, he writes grants for the Nashville Symphony and a handful of other small arts organizations. Musical influences include Sufjan Stevens, Sondre Lerche, John Prine, Tristan Perich, Sam Amidon, Steve Reich, John Cage, PJ Morton, Dan Deacon, Kendrick Lamar, Paul Simon, Joni Mitchell, Nico Muhly, and Johann Sebastian Bach.

### CELINE THACKSTON, FLUTE

Flutist Celine Thackston is a versatile musician, delivering expressive, sensitive performances that blur the traditional boundaries of classical music. She completed her doctorate in flute from the University of Oregon, where she was a Graduate Teaching Fellow and studied with Molly Barth, founding flutist of eighth blackbird. She has performed often with a wide array of ensembles from traditional to the avant-garde, including the New York New Music Ensemble, Pocket Opera Players, Opera Theater Oregon, Nashville Symphony, Alabama Symphony, Memphis Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Classical Revolution, Filmusik, and Salem Chamber Orchestra, among others. She has a special interest in creating musical experiences that emphasize the accessibility and vitality of both contemporary and traditional classical music. Celine received her master's degree in flute performance from New York University as a student of revolutionary flutist Robert Dick. Celine has served on the faculty of Middle Tennessee State University and Fisk University. In addition to her expertise as a flutist, Celine has experience in arts and nonprofit management. She currently works as a grant-writing consultant, and regularly supports arts organizations and individual artists across the country.

### JOHN LOGAN WOOD, TENOR

Based in Nashville since 2015 John Logan Wood ensemble of the Nashville Opera in the company's productions of Mozart's Don Giovanni, George Bizet's Carmen, as well as Turandot and Tosca by Giacomo Puccini. Since then John Logan has also served St. George's Episcopal Church choir as a tenor staff singer, performing stunning choral works by composers ranging from William Byrd to Arvo Part. He has served as music director and pianist for several local non-profit theaters such as Fountain Square Players and BG-Onstage Inc., accompanied various recitals at Western Kentucky University where he received his degree in Vocal Performance, and taught privately for over 5 years in both Kentucky and Tennessee. Outside of the classical scene, John Logan enjoys regular opportunities to sing and play southern gospel, barbershop, and jazz, in both studio work as well as in concerts with various ensembles within the region. For two and half years, he had the pleasure to work with students at Ensworth Schools as their choral pianist and a private voice teacher through their after school program. John Logan also enjoys leading outreach opportunities with Nashville's local chapter of Opera on Tap, a non-profit organization that brings operatic repertoire to audiences in local breweries throughout the Nashville area, as well as spending 2 years accompanying and assistant directing a music therapy group for patients with Parkinson's disease, through the Peterson Foundation for Parkinson's. This organization provides regular singing in a choral setting to help preserve vocal health through regular vocalization and progress tracking with a speech pathologist from Vanderbilt University.

In June of 2019 John Logan had the honor of performing as Tenor soloist for Off's Carmina Burana with Nashville Symphony and Nashville Ballet, followed by a performance with Nashville Symphony Chorus, Wichita Symphony Chorus, and Camerata at Smetana Hall in Prague, Czech Republic, under the direction of Tucker Biddlecomb and Michael Hanawalt and with Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University. John Logan has continued to teach virtually and record beautiful choral music during the COVID-19 pandemic and has recently been working on a film adaptation of Kurt Weill and Berthold Brecht's "Die Sieben Todsünden".





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