



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Common Threads

Faculty Woodwind Quartet

October 30, 2025 – Hinton Music Hall

Deanna Hahn – flute and piccolo

Keith Sorrels – oboe, oboe d'amore, and English horn

Todd Waldecker - B \flat clarinet, A clarinet, and bass clarinet

Staci Spring – bassoon and contrabassoon

Three Worlds (2019)

Underwater

On the surface

In the air

Konstantinos Sifakis

(b. 1994)

A musical interpretation of M.C. Escher's work 'Three Worlds'. The trio consists of three movements, each one describing a different world. The underwater world symbolises our inner self, our emotions and deep thoughts. The surface of the water represents our social life and the leaves can be seen as the masses. In the air above the water we can find our subconscious, our dreams. I attempted to translate characteristic concepts of Escher's work such as fractals, tessellation and mirrors into sound.

In the first movement, I created a musical fractal that appears in a triple canon (tessellation), creating a whirlpool that leads to the bottom of the lake of feelings and thoughts. The second movement is a techno that gets gradually decomposed, leading to the chaos of the mass. In the third movement, the flute becomes the wind and when the bassoon takes over the main melody, its mirror (retrograde) is played by the oboe at the same time, symbolising the reflection of the trees on the water. -KS

Oiseaux Romantiques de Paris (2018)

Adolphus Hailstork
(b. 1941)

Postmodern composer, pianist, and conductor Adolphus Cunningham Hailstork III, who has penned more than 250 works, was born on April 17, 1941, in Rochester, New York. He studied violin, piano, organ, and voice and was in the Choir of Men and Boys at the Albany Cathedral of all Saints. In 1959, he graduated from Albany High School, where he began composing. Hailstork studied music theory and composition with the renowned opera composer Mark Fax at Howard University in Washington, DC, and received a Bachelor of Music degree in 1963.

Upon graduating, he traveled to France, after which he studied piano and composition at the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau. When he returned to the United States, he enrolled in the Manhattan School of Music, received a second Bachelor of Music degree in 1965, and earned the Master of Music degree there in 1966. Continuing his studies in Music Composition at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan, and on the music faculty, Hailstork earned the Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1971.

A recipient of several awards and accolades, Hailstork received an Honorary Doctorate from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 2001. Hailstork's opera *Rise for Freedom*, about the Underground Railroad, was premiered in 2007 by the Cincinnati Opera Company. In 2017, he was installed in Norfolk's Legends of Music Walk of Fame with a granite medallion inset with a

bronzed star embedded in the sidewalk on Granby Street in downtown Norfolk. In 2019, Hailstork completed the cantata *A Knee on a Neck*, and from his Fourth Symphony *Survive*, “Still Holding On,” was premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In 2021, the African American conductor Thomas Wilkins highlighted Hailstork’s composition, “An American Port of Call,” with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In addition, Hailstork’s “Fanfare on Amazing Grace” was selected and performed by the United States Marine Band at the inauguration ceremony of U.S. President Joseph Biden Jr. and Vice President Kamala Harris in 2021. -Otis Alexander

This lesser-known wind trio is freely inspired by bird calls – played individually, in counterpoint, and harmonized by the ensemble. Hailstork said of the work, “Woodwinds make me think of birds. My wife and I were on a trip to Paris and the piece was fun to write. You may find a slight *bridal* moment in the piece.”

Brush Strokes (2014)

Monet

Seurat

Van Gogh

Pollock

Alyssa Morris

(b. 1984)

Brush Strokes is a musical depiction of specific works of art. Each movement briefly tells the story of a particular artist and their painting technique. The first movement, *Monet*, depicts the constant movement of water that is present in many of Claude Monet's paintings. Water lilies are the subject for approximately 250 of his paintings. I also chose to rely on the water lily theme because there are many different images of water to portray. In one part of a stream the water may be calm, while further down the water may rage. Running water is ever changing, much like the swift brush strokes of Claude Monet. An impressionist, Monet's paintings reflected his immediate impression of a particular subject of scene. He strived to capture the subject in a particular light, before the light changed. When the light changed, Monet started painting on a new canvas. I

wanted to depict Monet's swift painting and the constant changing of light with frequently shifting chord progressions.

The second movement, *Seurat*, is a musical representation of the pointillist works by Georges Seurat. This movement is primarily inspired by Seurat's paintings *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* and *The Circus*. Seurat's brush stroke technique is very formulaic. If inspected closely, one can see that Seurat's paintings are comprised of tiny strokes of "points" of pure color on the canvas. When the painting is viewed from a distance, the colors appear to blend and shimmer. This color blend effect is called "optical mixing". The music in the movement *Seurat* aims to depict the pointillist aspects of this artwork by frequently shifting the instrumentation and bouncing the melody from one player to another, and by the pointed and light attack of every note.

The third movement is *Van Gogh*. This movement depicts one of his best-known paintings, *Starry Night*. Van Gogh lived a life of loneliness and sorrow. Despite his talent as a painter, he was mentally disturbed. In 1889, Van Gogh committed himself to an asylum in Saint-Remy. It was here that he was inspired to paint *Starry Night*. At this point in his life Van Gogh was disillusioned by religion, he had not lost belief in the afterlife. He expressed that he felt a strong need for religion, so he looked to the stars. *Starry Night* is filled with curves and rhythm, and the cypress tree in the front exudes a dark loneliness. The movement *Van Gogh* moves with a slow, rhythmic pulse, and a curving melodic contour. The overall darkness of the movement depicts the loneliness of the cypress tree, and of Van Gogh.

Pollock is the final movement and is a musical representation of the works of Jackson Pollock who used the "drip" technique. Paintings such as *One* were created by pouring paint onto a canvas with hardened brushes, stocks, or syringes. Pollock laid his canvas flat on the floor to paint. His process was called action painting. The movement in *Pollock* is fast and full of energy, with chromatic and scalar flourishes depicting the paint being dripped, poured, and flung onto the canvas. -AM

Intermission

Three-Ply Yarn (2024)

Stitch Patterns

The Hidden Neighbour

Transcendence – or, What We Leave Behind

Althea Talbot-Howard

(b. 1966)

Since early 2022, I have enjoyed a highly-productive, ongoing collaboration with American oboist Rachel Becker, the Assistant Professor of Musicology and Oboe at Boise State University in Idaho, USA. In 2024, she has featured as joint commissioner of a new grant-funded woodwind trio, Three-Ply Yarn, with two colleagues from Boise State: Professors of Music Nicole Molumby (flute) and Leslie Moreau (bass clarinet). I am truly grateful to all three of them for the extraordinary creativity, imagination and vision which undergirds this commission.

This most unusual project concerns fibre arts! Through music, my remit was to cover aspects of the history of the various fibre arts, their role within international trade (particularly as pertains to cotton); their ability to enhance community life and create cohesion; and to challenge any outstanding issues of social marginalisation related to those arts and crafts forms that were dependent, for centuries upon slavery and indentured labour. The commissioners were keen to explore the intersection between Boise's position within the Idaho and American wool trades, and Boise State University's interest in fostering healthy and thriving communities throughout Idaho. They aim to build relationships within the fibre arts community through this project, but without neglecting to explore the global, social, and human rights issues that form part of an activity that brings joy to so many people. Sweeping wool from the floor after a community class is one thing: sweeping the truth under the carpet is quite another – and the commissioners were determined to avoid doing that. Both aims are woven into Three-Ply Yarn.

The commissioners intend to invite knitters, spinners, weavers, farmers, and shop owners to bring their fibre art projects to knit and weave during their presentations. For this reason, Three-Ply Yarn is probably one of my most accessible pieces. Hopefully it contains much to interest an educated classical-music audience; but, at the same time, its overarching major tonality and minor-

major modality should present no problems whatsoever for a general community audience.

Stitch Patterns - A short minimalist fantasia about knitting

As an enthusiastic student of crafts in my youth, I was delighted to be taught how to spin at my first high school in Canberra, Australia. Australia is one of the world's great wool producers. Purchasing merino fleeces from the local wool shop, carding and combing them, washing them in a bucket filled with Lux soap flakes and boiling water, and then leaving them overnight in the garden - to find inches of fatty lanoline at the bottom of the bucket beneath a snow-white fleece, the next morning - was a great joy: as was spinning the clean wool into two- and three-ply balls. I therefore planned to compose the first movement about spinning. However, upon further reflection, I felt that the next stage in the process of producing a garment from wool – knitting - would better fulfil the commissioners' community objectives, as it is a more common skill.

The Hidden Neighbour – Concerning marginalised workers

Earlier this year, I came across a short story by the late Ursula K. Le Guin (1929-2018): *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas* (1973). Le Guin briefly taught at the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho, in the mid-1950s. I greatly enjoyed studying other works of hers (such as *The Dispossessed*) during my final year at the University of Cambridge in 1988-89, as part of a sub-topic on feminist utopias. *Omelas* deals with the uncomfortable truth about a utopian, pleasure-loving society: that there is one wretched, miserable child who resides in a dungeon, suffering night and day in utter darkness, in order to facilitate happiness for all the other citizens. Finding out about the Peruvian shepherds who manage the Idaho flocks in virtual solitude and considerable physical hardship, but whose labour helps enable fibre artists to develop their craft, reminded me of Le Guin's story. I decided to dedicate the second movement to them. Although *The Hidden Neighbour* has this specific Andean-shepherd programme – as can be seen by the focus on the *Quenacho* (an Andean flute, which can be seen on the front cover) – there is a wider application, as well. Many of us have hidden neighbours whose hard work facilitates our self-actualisation. Consider Amazon's human workers, or

workers in dark supermarket stores (which deal with online deliveries, only). I benefit daily from their work! Meat-packing plant workers, agricultural labourers and many others also carry out physically-demanding work out of public sight, but which is essential to the smooth functioning of our society. The Hidden Neighbour calls into remembrance not just Peruvian shepherds, but all of those other people, too. The question it raises is what, if anything, can – or should – we do for them?

Transcendence – or, What We Leave Behind: Liberation through mechanisation

A bittersweet paean to the industrialisation of cotton production, recognising the important role that it has played in liberating human beings from enslavement, bondage and brutal labour, Transcendence is the longest piece in the set.

Like Stitch Patterns, it is as much minimalist as post-minimalist. This style reflects the relentless, mechanical nature of the machinery that harvests the cotton boll, then takes it through every stage of processing to being spun into a yarn, before finally being woven into fabric.

Left behind are centuries of slavery, indentured labour and back-breaking, dangerous work. In order to make the connection with slavery, as desired by the commissioners, I selected the passacaglia chord progression from my work Dahomey from The Door of No Return, a piece memorialising the transatlantic slave trade. This chord progression forms part of the A1 and A2 sections of Transcendence, but with differences of key and character from Dahomey. -ATH

Spider Suite (2009)

Along came a spider...

The Spider's Flight

Spinning Song

A Wicked Waltz: The Spider and the Happy Bug (unsuspecting)

The end of the day...begin again

Jenni Brandon

(b. 1977)

We are first introduced to the world of spiders through the fast and many-legged theme in “Along came a spider...,” full of skittering, racing, and lurking. In movement two a young spider takes flight – baby spiders will spin a balloon out of silk and fly away from their mother’s web to embark on their own journey, letting the wind take them wherever it might. Our spider lands gently and immediately begins to make his web in “Spinning Song.” Once the web is spun, it is time to wait for dinner to come along. Our spider dances “A Wicked Waltz,” laughing manically as he waits for the “Happy Bug (unsuspecting)” to get stuck in his web. As the bug flies and sings, he gets increasingly stuck in the web – listen as the timbral trills in the oboe become more and more frequent. In the final movement the spider reflects on his day (flying, spinning, and hunting...), tearing down his web, as spiders often do, to begin again the next day.

Spider Suite for oboe, clarinet, and bassoon was commissioned by the California Association of Professional Music Teachers and was premiered by the Vientos Trio at the CAPMT state conference in February 2010 at the Pacific Palms Resort. The version for flute, clarinet, and bassoon is recorded by Ceora Winds on their debut CD, *Postcards*. -JB

Tarantella, Op. 6

Camille Saint-Saëns
(1835-1921)
arr. DRH

When he composed this *Tarantelle* in 1857, Camille Saint-Saëns may have been relatively young chronologically but not developmentally. An extremely precocious child prodigy, Saint-Saëns had already completed three symphonies (amid much else) and won first prize in organ at the Paris Conservatoire as well as the admiration of musicians such as Berlioz, Liszt, and Rossini.

It was Rossini, in fact, who helped Saint-Saëns’ *Tarantelle* win universal acclaim in clique-ridden Paris, with a generous and clever ruse. Long since retired from his active opera career, the Italian composer reigned as the grand old man of musical

Paris, famous for his glittering salon, to which he invited Saint-Saëns to present this *Tarantelle*.

“As there was never a written program for these evenings, Rossini made it known that the piece was by him,” Saint-Saëns wrote much later. “You can imagine the scale of the success under such conditions! When the piece had been encored, Rossini led me into the dining room and made me sit down next to him, taking me by the hand so that I could not escape. Then came a procession of admirers and courtiers. ‘Ah, Maître! What a masterpiece! What wonderful music!’ And when the victim had run through the gamut of congratulations, Rossini replied calmly: ‘I entirely agree. But the work is not by me, it’s by this gentleman here.’ Such a combination of kindness and finesse says more about this great man than many an essay.” Saint-Saëns played the piano part himself, with flutist Louis Dorus and clarinetist Adolphe Leroy. The work retained its early popularity, and, in 1879, the composer orchestrated the piano part.

The *tarantella* was a dance that took its name from the town of Taranto in southern Italy. The idea that this lively dance somehow dispersed the toxin of a tarantula’s bite has long been debunked, but the dance was quite popular as a concert piece in the 19th century, prized for its wild energy. Saint-Saëns’ example requires all of the athletic virtuosity you might expect from the two wind players, underpinned by a remorseless ostinato in the piano. -John Henken

The version presented tonight for flute, English horn (doubling oboe), clarinet, and contrabassoon (doubling bassoon) was arranged by DRH.