

Date du récital/Date of recital: September 21, 2023

Nom/Name: Emmanuel Jacob Lacopo

Classe de/Class of: Steven Cowan

Ces notes de programme sont écrites par l'étudiant-interprète et sont présentées en tant que réalisation partielle des critères de leur cours.

These program notes are written by the student performing, and are presented by the student in partial fulfillment of the requirements of their course.

Walking me to Work - Errollyn Wallen (1958-)

Errollyn Wallen is a multi award-winning Belize-born British composer and performer. She was the first black woman to have a work featured in the Proms, and the first woman to receive an Ivor Novello award for classical music for her body of work; she is one of the top 20 most performed living composers of classical music in the world.

Written in 2002, *Walking me to Work* was a commission from the International Guitar Foundation and Festivals for the 2002 Bath Festival. In just one page, Wallen's miniature manages to showcase a world of blues and jazz aesthetics that unifies different cultural worlds of the guitar. While the piece is only separated between two voices, the simple texture presented in *Walking me to Work* is adorned by percussive techniques, rubato melodies, and passing moments of tension that allows Wallen to create a unique musical environment of her own varying inspirations.

After Dark - Emmanuel Jacob Lacopo (1996-)

After Dark is inspired by Haruki Murakami's novel of the same title. In this story, Murakami builds a surrealist world suspended between fantasy and reality. In order to replicate the atmosphere of a constantly morphing sleeping city, *After Dark* presents a conversation between a layer of un-effected guitar and a layer of effected guitar processing through two distinct guitar pedals; the *Hologram Electronics Microcosm* and the Chase Bliss MOOD.

The MOOD is a really special multi-effect guitar pedal — it has two channels that are aware of each other, and work together to morph melodic material. *After Dark* uses the MOOD to create clouds of delay that repeat melodies into dreamy sequences and create morphing textures through audio-quality manipulation of short looped material. Contrarily, the *Microcosm* is a granular effects pedal that records material and returns re-arranged interpretations using sampling, pitch-shifting, and delay techniques. The *Microcosm* is used to create the main ambient background accompaniment of the work.

Inspired by John Cage's minimalist aesthetic, *After Dark* re-contextualizes the relationship between effect pedal and guitar from a simple aesthetic detail, to a symbiotic, parallel relationship.

An Endless Battle of Contrasting Memories - Emmanuel Jacob Lacopo (1996-)

An Endless Battle of Contrasting Memories pulls from two influences — like *After Dark*, the writing of this piece was initially prompted by a short quote in Haruki Murakami's novel *1Q84*. Additionally, the piece is bookended by a particularly striking concept in Frederic Rzewski's *Piano Piece No. 4*.

In *1Q84*, Murakami explores the perspectives of two characters that travel to an alternate reality. Here, the world appears identical except for the presence of an extra moon and a group of magical dwarves who speak through the leader of a religious cult. Throughout the book, Murakami suggests a different way of looking at a familiar world, rather than presenting an alternate reality of his own creation. This is poignantly shown in the line that gives this piece its title: *That's what the world is, after all: an endless battle of contrasting memories.*

On the other hand, the opening of Rzewski's piece evokes a sense of inevitability and expansiveness. New pitches emerge at the bottom of each chord while notes are dropped from the top in a descent to the bottom of the instrument. Once the entire range of the piano is explored, Rzewski slowly introduces a triumphant folk tune that seems to appear out of nowhere, and dissipates just as quickly in the same fashion.

I decided that I wanted to use that same sense of expansiveness, but then have it turn on its head by the end of the work to replicate Murakami's chosen aesthetic in *1Q84*. *An Endless Battle of Contrasting Memories* maintains the harmonic grandiosity of the guitar vibrating throughout its entire range without strictly abiding by Rzewski's parameters. Chords are slowly built, one voice at a time, before hitting a wall and beginning anew. Each iteration moving further down the register of the instrument until we are left with a constant repetition of the lowest pitch on the guitar. This material is looped throughout the entire middle section of the piece and is used as the basis of interaction between the old world and the new. Here, new melodic material plays along with the theme of contrasting memories; always showing up slightly altered while maintaining a sense of interaction. The piece ends as it begins, slowly fading into the opening material, this time moving to the highest B on the register of the guitar - the same note that opens the work. Even when we return to ordinary and same-ness, there is always the lacklustre tinge of a failed re-creation.

***the way water breathes* - Emmanuel Jacob Lacopo (1996-)**

Water has slowly become a recurring thematic inspiration in my compositions — it may be because my parents immigrated from island towns and I grew up hearing stories of the sea, it might even be because of the calming nature of silence and vulnerability in submersion, or the intriguing textural sounds of rain against glass. Wherever this inspiration finds its roots, my approach towards my instrument in *the way water breathes* pulls from my musical influences in progressive metal, math-rock, and post-rock. Through its fusion with classical guitar, the piece presents a new way to approach the instrument by incorporating extended techniques typically found in these avant-garde genres.

I first began writing this piece after I decided to tune my guitar to the same scordatura as one of my favourite math-rock groups, *Covet*. The new tuning transposes the guitar to a beautiful open sonority that allows for previously impossible gestures to become much more accessible, and I was immediately inspired. *the way water breathes* makes use of both traditional and modern techniques like tremolo, hammer-on's from nowhere, and an extended build towards more traditional rock-type chordal strumming. Alongside the *Hologram Electronics Microcosm* as a randomized, pitch shifting delay, and the *MOOD* as a dense ambient reverb haze, the piece replicates the unpredictable temperance of large bodies of water through a unification of my musical influences.

***Phosphorescence* - Emmanuel Jacob Lacopo (1996-)**

Phosphorescence is a process in which energy absorbed by a substance is released relatively slowly in the form of light. I wanted this piece to evoke a feeling of poignant awe when faced with the emittance of an incomprehensible source of energy without any perceptible source. *Phosphorescence* makes use of the entire register of the 8 string electric guitar through non-traditional technical approaches, and incorporates granular delays and looping techniques.

The opening of the work showcases the guitar's ability to execute pianistic arpeggio figures through two hand tapping on the fretboard while granular delays process thematic material at different speeds and registers to achieve an expansive sonic landscape. The loop station is treated as another instrumentalist, filling up harmonic territory for the guitar to overlay the main theme of the work.

Following the opening of the piece, a freeze functioned is applied on the *MOOD* to create the textural backdrop of the piece and serves a significant role in the piece's closing moments; after all the separate layers of the work have faded away, the textural element is the only remaining segment. *Phosphorescence* closes with an unexpected cut of the textural *MOOD*, signifying a sudden extinguished light.

***Murmurations* - Emmanuel Jacob Lacopo (1996-)**

Starlings find themselves flying in groups of hundreds, sometimes even thousands, in whirling, ever-changing patterns. This phenomenon is called a murmuration, and it's where the piece draws its title from. These starlings appear to be connected together as they change directions instantaneously. However, these flying patterns are believed to function similarly to other systems like the formation of crystals, avalanches, and evaporation; always teetering the edge of being transformed in an instant.

The piece makes use of a MIDI controller to trigger two samples that function as the grounding of the piece. While the guitar and cello explore drastic new territories throughout the piece, the grounding of the samples provides a sense of comfort amongst the unexpected.

Extended techniques pulling from progressive metal guitarist, Tosin Abasi, were used throughout the writing of the guitar part. These include, *thumping* (a percussive technique similar to the slap bass playing of Victor Wooten), *selective picking* (a de-synchronous approach to the instrument where the left and right hands articulate different notes), and *hybrid picking* (the combination of classical open-right hand technique and closed hand plectrum playing).

To replicate the uneasiness and unexpectedness present in starling murmurations, the cello somewhat exists in its own world. The instrument begins by working alongside the guitar, presenting a melody over harmonic changes. However, it slowly transforms into growing cross rhythms that continuously increase in tension before slowly compressing to a close.

***Pour guitare* - Claude Vivier (1948-1983)**

Pour guitare is Claude Vivier's only work for guitar. He was commissioned in 1974 to compose a set of 8 pieces for the *Tremplin International Competition*, one of Canada's most prestigious events for young performers. Each of the commissioned works explore the full extent of their respective instruments, and provide the performers with the opportunity to showcase

their virtuosity. However, *Pour guitare* also features more subtle forms of technical prowess. Large amounts of silences fill the work in increasing anxiety, and typically boisterous virtuositic material is instead treated with delicate articulations at low volumes. What is most significant about this work, however, is how it seems as though Vivier leans into the guitar's inherent shortcomings of lack of volume and sustain, and instead uses them to the work's advantage; creating a growing conversation within the instrument's register and technical capacities.

Transmutation ii: *We Never Talk on the Bus* - Emmanuel Jacob Lacopo (1996-)

We Never Talk on the Bus is part of my *Transmutation* series — where a piece of original artwork is translated into music. In these works, I allow the colours of my paintings to dictate formal and technical parameters, while the images and forms themselves usually influence the melodic and harmonic material I compose. While the guitarist moves through pre-written material in an improvised fashion, the drummer follows symbols imprinted in the artwork which denote different levels of involvement. Electronic processing of the drummer's choosing is used to transition between fully digital and fully acoustic sounds on the drumset while MIDI controllers, the *MOOD*, and *Microcosm*, are utilized by the guitarist throughout.

Visually, the painting is split into three sections that are formally structured by their colour schemes; creating thematic ideas that are re-visited a little differently every time, due to differences in brush stroke, texture, or shade. The work is meant to evoke a sense of conversation and interaction that's slowly pulled apart and viewed from new perspectives. Whether the focus is placed on anxiety fuelled walls of sound, or a sterile lack of connection between players, both remain equally interesting concepts to explore and pull-apart.

***To the Edge of Dream (Yume no Heri e)* - Torū Takemitsu (1930-1996)**

To the Edge of Dream by Torū Takemitsu creates a twilight dreamscape for the guitar amongst a crystalline orchestra. Performed here as a reduction for guitar and piano, this work inspired the title of this whole program; to exist on the edge between worlds, in a beautiful dreamscape, is all that one can hope for in art. Takemitsu states: *in this music, the interval of a fifth plays an important role and melodic fragments float in transparent space like so many splinters of dreams. This is an homage to the Belgian visionary painter Paul Delvaux – these sounds winging their way towards the boundary between night and day that is our dreams.*

My pull to Takemitsu has always been found in the paradoxical parallel between *his* language and that of *Debussy* and *Messiaen*. Takemitsu's music doesn't impose itself, instead it exists in a permanent state of ethereal ethos — shimmering and lightly suggesting itself and its modularity. The aforementioned impressionist and contemplative exist strangely close to this world, yet present severely different outputting effects. Instead of the sensuality found within Debussy's melodies, it's replaced by something crystalline and objective in its pacing. Instead of the heaviness of Messiaen's methodical approaches, we have space and detachment.

However, what perplexes me is how these languages remain similarly intertwined. I've long-since given up in trying to find its meaning as I believe the answers are found within the titles Takemitsu adorns his work with - the ephemeral nature of in-betweenness is where his music lies.