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Monster - Anican Yu (1999-Present) and Dennis Saddleman (1951-Present)

Dennis Saddleman, Poet and Residential School Survivor, and Pianist Anican Yu collaborated on a project creating a Musical Composition aligned with Mr. Saddleman's inspirational poem "Monster," which is about Mr. Saddleman's horrifying experience in Residential School. The piece aims to educate and notify the nation and our upcoming generation of the truth about Residential Schools in Canada. In the year 2021, the remains of 215 children were found at a BC residential school, and the nation took notice of the horrifying truth about Residential Schools. As the years go on, the matter becomes less pressing, and unfortunately, they are still uncovering buried children around residential schools all across Canada to this day. The piece aims to show everyone that we will always remember the truth and horror of Residential Schools. Words will never be enough to get the matter across; therefore, the power of music will get the message across clearly.

During the composition process, Mr. Yu moved away from the traditional norm of creating a piece with written Meter, Harmony, Dynamics and Articulations; the performer will speak the words and improvise on the piano simultaneously. Mr. Yu's decision to format the piece in such a way is so the performer can be more engaged with the Poem's words and become present within Mr. Saddleman's story. During the collaboration between both artists, Mr. Saddleman explained to Mr. Yu the importance of presence and how we must trust ourselves and commit to whatever we're engaged in. This interpretive composition style explores the realm of *Word Painting* and how words of a text can influence spontaneous art creation. To further enhance the piece, extended piano techniques were implemented to express some words and give them more emphasis and signify space within the piece. Within the first stanza of the piece, the Pianist strums the steel strings inside the piano, describing the Monster's steel bones. Between various stanzas of the piece, the pianist taps the cast iron plate, signifying time passing. Extended piano techniques showcase that the piano can have the texture and colour of a contemporary orchestra. Although the entire piece is improvised, and there are no specific instructions on when to use extended piano techniques, there is one direction Mr. Yu keeps within the piece, specifically at the beginning and end. During Mr. Yu's interview with Mr. Saddleman, when discussing the poem's imagery, he envisioned that the poem begins at the bottom of the staircase, going up to the Residential School, and ends with him leaving down the staircase. Before the performer reads the text, the piece will begin with the performer walking up the piano's keys, bringing out anger, frustration and dark themes. In the end, once the poem concludes, the performer will walk down the piano's keys, expressing forgiveness, pain, and anxiety.

MONSTER, A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE
By Dennis Saddleman

I HATE YOU RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL
I HATE YOU
YOU'RE A MONSTER
A HUGE HUNGRY MONSTER
BUILT WITH STEEL BONES
BUILT WITH CEMENT FLESH
YOU'RE A MONSTER
BUILT TO DEVOUR
INNOCENT NATIVE CHILDREN
YOU'RE A COLD-HEARTED MONSTER
COLD AS THE CEMENT FLOORS
YOU HAVE NO LOVE
NO GENTLE ATMOSPHERE
YOUR UGLY FACE GROOVED WITH RED BRICKS
YOUR MONSTER EYES GLARE
FROM GRIMY WINDOWS
MONSTER EYES SO EVIL
MONSTER EYES WATCHING
TERRIFIED CHILDREN
COWER WITH SHAME
I HATE YOU RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL I HATE YOU
YOU'RE A SLIMY MONSTER
OOZING IN THE SHADOWS OF MY PAST
GO AWAY LEAVE ME ALONE
YOU'RE FOLLOWING ME FOLLOWING ME WHEREVER I GO
YOU'RE IN MY DREAMS IN MY MEMORIES
GO AWAY MONSTER GO AWAY
I HATE YOU YOU'RE FOLLOWING ME
I HATE YOU RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL I HATE YOU
YOU'RE A MONSTER WITH HUGE WATERY MOUTH
MOUTH OF DOUBLE DOORS
YOUR WIDE MOUTH TOOK ME
YOUR YELLOW STAINED TEETH CHEWED
THE INDIAN OUT OF ME
YOUR TEETH CRUNCHED MY LANGUAGE
GRINDED MY RITUALS AND MY TRADITIONS
YOUR TASTE BUDS BECAME BITTER
WHEN YOU TASTED MY RED SKIN
YOU SWALLOWED ME WITH DISGUST
YOUR FACE WRINKLED WHEN YOU
TASTED MY STRONG PRIDE
I HATE YOU RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL I HATE YOU
YOU'RE A MONSTER

YOUR THROAT MUSCLES FORCED ME
DOWN TO YOUR STOMACH
YOUR THROAT MUSCLES SQUEEZED MY HAPPINESS
SQUEEZED MY DREAMS
SQUEEZED MY NATIVE VOICE
YOUR THROAT BECAME CLOGGED WITH MY SACRED SPIRIT
YOU COUGHED AND YOU CHOKED
FOR YOU CANNOT WITH STAND MY
SPIRITUAL SONGS AND DANCES
I HATE YOU RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL I HATE YOU
YOU'RE A MONSTER
YOUR STOMACH UPSET EVERY TIME I WET MY BED
YOUR STOMACH RUMBLED WITH ANGER
EVERY TIME I FELL ASLEEP IN CHURCH
Your stomach growled at me every time I broke the school rules
Your stomach was full You burped
You felt satisfied You rubbed your belly and you didn't care
You didn't care how you ate up my native Culture
You didn't care if you were messy
You are a piggy
You didn't care as long as you ate up my Indianness
I hate you Residential School I hate you
You're a monster
Your veins clotted with cruelty and torture
Your blood poisoned with loneliness and despair
Your heart was cold it pumped fear into me
I hate you Residential School I hate you
You're a monster
Your intestines turned me into foul entrails
Your anal squeezed me
squeezed my confidence
squeezed my self respect
Your anal squeezed
then you dumped me
Dumped me without parental skills
without life skills
Dumped me without any form of character
without individual talents
without a hope for success
I hate you Residential School I hate you
You're a monster
You dumped me into the toilet then
You flushed out my good nature
my personalities
I hate you Residential School I hate you
You're a monster.....I hate hate hate you

Thirty three years later
I rode my chevy pony to Kamloops
From the highway I saw the monster
My Gawd! The monster is still alive
I hesitated I wanted to drive on
but something told me to stop
I parked in front of the Residential School
in front of the monster
The monster saw me and it stared at me
The monster saw me and I stared back
We both never said anything for a long time
Finally with a lump in my throat
I said, "Monster I forgive you."
The monster broke into tears
The monster cried and cried
His huge shoulders shook
He motioned for me to come forward
He asked me to sit on his lappy stairs
The monster spoke
You know I didn't like my Government Father
I didn't like my Catholic Church Mother
I'm glad the Native People adopted me
They took me as one of their own
They fixed me up Repaired my mouth of double doors
Washed my window eyes with cedar and fir boughs
They cleansed me with sage and sweetgrass
Now my good spirit lives
The Native People let me stay on their land
They could of burnt me you know instead they let me live
so People can come here to restore or learn about their culture
The monster said, "I'm glad the Native People gave me another chance
I'm glad Dennis you gave me another chance
The monster smiled
I stood up I told the monster I must go
Ahead of me is my life. My people are waiting for me
I was at the door of my chevy pony
The monster spoke, "Hey you forgot something
I turned around I saw a ghost child running down the cement steps
It ran towards me and it entered my body
I looked over to the monster I was surprised
I wasn't looking at a monster anymore
I was looking at an old school In my heart I thought
This is where I earned my diploma of survival
I was looking at an old Residential School who
became my elder of my memories

I was looking at a tall building with four stories
stories of hope
stories of dreams
stories of renewal
and stories of tomorrow