

**The D'Angelo Department of Music
Mercyhurst University**

Presents

The Junior Composition Recital of

VANESSA NOLAN

and

The Student Composers Concert

Featuring Music Of

Isabelle Garvey

Carmen Stewart

Tristan Yeagle



With

Special Guest Artists

and

**Students and Faculty of the D'Angelo Department of
Music**

Sunday, April 28, 2024

2:00 PM

Walker Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Lemonade Rag (2024)*

Vanessa Nolan

Nathan Hess, piano

How Many Miles are in a Life? (2023)*

Carmen Stewart

Rebecca Wunch, clarinet

Nathan Hess, piano

Songs for the Human Being (2023)
(poems by Emily Dickinson)

Vanessa Nolan

- I. Hope is the Thing with Feathers
- II. I Felt a Funeral in my Brain
- III. Wild Nights

Mary Bowen, mezzo-soprano

Nathan Hess, piano

Theme and Variations (2024)*

Isabelle Garvey

Nathan Hess, piano

A Dance of Charades and Swords (2024)* Vanessa Nolan

Angel Rhodes, violin
Alex Crinzi, violin
Amy Kelly, viola
Luke Borkowski, cello

INTERMISSION

Fantasy for Flute and Piano, Nightshade (2024)* Carmen Stewart

Nova Bolling, flute
Carmen Stewart, piano

Crystalline Daydreams (2023) Carmen Stewart

Carmen Stewart, piano

Song of Myself (2024)* Isabelle Garvey
(poem by Walt Whitman)

Shane Dexter, tenor
Christian Goulione, piano

Variations on a Theme (2024)* Tristan Yeagle

Nathan Hess, piano

9 PM Street Song (2024)* Vanessa Nolan

Rebecca Wunch, alto saxophone
Jonah Harshell, tenor saxophone
Tristan Yeagle, baritone saxophone

Sunrise Estate (2023)* Carmen Stewart

Brianna Haberman, trumpet

Kayla Price, trumpet
Jennifer Ashbaugh, horn
Rebecca Ferguson, trombone
James Singer, euphonium
Gary Viebranz, tuba

*Designates a world premiere performance

All composers on the program are composition students of
Dr. Albert Glinsky

Special Thanks to:

Our guest artists: Jennifer Ashbaugh, Luke Borkowski, Mary Bowen, Alex Crinzi, Amy Kelly, Angel Rhodes, James Singer, and Gary Viebranz; Our faculty artists and staff artists: Christian Goulione, Dr. Nathan Hess, and Rebecca Wunch; Our student performers: Nova Bolling, Shane Dexter, Rebecca Ferguson, Brianna Haberman, Kayla Price, Jonah Harshell, and Tristan Yeagle

***CONGRATULATIONS TO VANESSA NOLAN, MERCYHURST '25, B.M.
COMPOSITION, ON HER JUNIOR RECITAL PORTION OF THIS
PROGRAM***

PROGRAM NOTES

Vanessa Nolan:

Lemonade Rag is a lively piano rag set in ABA form. It was composed for Vanessa's sisters, as she wanted something upbeat and silly to make them smile and laugh. The premise of this piece was to create a sound that is both "sweet and sour," as she felt that this encapsulates her sisters. It includes sweet tonal harmonies juxtaposed with crunchy dissonances to create a comical effect. Vanessa was very inspired by the early piano ragtime music and the amusing atmosphere they created. She hopes her sisters enjoy the piece.

Songs for the Human Being is Vanessa's first major compositional work, consisting of three famous Emily Dickinson poems set to original music. The first, "Hope is the Thing with Feathers," encapsulates a feeling of melancholy and that of being lost with hope being the only thing left to hold on to. It has a somber feel, with slight moments of brightness, to represent how hope is not always something that occurs when one is happy. Her inspiration for this piece came from a time where she was experiencing a debilitating and long-term illness. The second song, "I Felt a Funeral in My Brain," represents death in its rawest form, leaving the poet with a feeling of excruciating grief and eventually eternal numbness. Vanessa wanted to capture the anguish of the poet in this piece, making it a stark contrast from the first song. The final song, "Wild Nights," represents a passionate love and longing for a person. It was inspired by her own relationship, (which is a wonderful one), and the feel of always wanting to be with the person that you adore. The themes of these songs, (hope, death, and love), make up something that is integral to being human, thus the title "Songs for the Human Being."

A Dance of Charades and Swords is a full string quartet written in sonata form. It is meant to be riveting and energetic, implying something of an elegant yet fast-paced dance leading into a brawl-like fervor. Vanessa was able to use several string techniques which the listener will be able to hear in the development section of the piece. She was briefly inspired by the masquerade and fight scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*, and she wanted to incorporate a sound of grace and beauty with undertones of violence and conflict. This piece utilizes the extreme range of the instruments to amplify the tension, sometimes soaring into the 7th octave or descending to the roaring low C on the cello. The audience should listen for all the ways the contrasting themes are hidden within each other and interwoven to create an intense mood that explodes into a ferocious coda and the sudden, blunt final chords, representing the grim yet shocking outcome of a battle.

9 PM Street Song is a saxophone trio for alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone. It was inspired by Vanessa's late-night drives home from her less-than-ideal job at a supermarket. It is loosely structured in rondo form, with three distinct themes representing the daydreams of someone who is in a place where they do not want to be. The A theme represents the reality of the dreamer, which is rainy and foggy with an overall feel of hopelessness. For this part of the piece, Vanessa was greatly influenced by the music of old noir films. The B section depicts

the desire of the dreamer, allowing the world to melt away and imagine a life as a performer. The music takes on a tango flare here, before melting back into reality. The brief C theme represents the shock of realization while also recalling the dreamer's past aspirations. The piece ends with a smokey and longing chord that trails away like the desires of the dreamer.

Carmen Stewart:

How Many Miles are in a Life? is a piece written for clarinet and piano that follows a journey of discovery in sonata form. This composition came about when asking questions of purpose and what it means to live a meaningful life. The path of a composer can seem nebulous and terrifying for what the future has in store for young composers/composition students.

This composition constantly begs questions without obvious answers and explores many realms and themes to try to make sense of itself. The first section has a feeling of being trapped, stuck in an unfulfilling path. The clarinet tries to climb higher and higher over the fear of the unknown that blocks the path to discovery. Soon, the piece manages to burst out into a world of confusion and lack of cohesion, as breaking out of rituals can feel foreign and strange to many. The development section truly brings the ideas of exploration and discovery into the forefront, as now the compositional and storytelling effects show a myriad of expression and choice. Following the development there is a much happier return to the old life, now having seen what else the world has to offer. The last section is humorous and free, playing with the audience's expectations of the recapitulation.

The structure of this piece is sonata form, with an exposition, development, and recapitulation. There are two main themes that are expressed and then explored later, which programmatically fits in line with the themes of the piece. The use of minor tonalities in the A theme as well as a tragic klezmer-type feeling creates a dark and desperate atmosphere. The B section however completely contrasts the A section, with an utter lack of tonality and quirky, bouncy clarinet lines. The development section is where the exploration themes are felt through the techniques applied, with Japanese scales, French impressionist feelings, comedic fake outs, and bombastic frivolity. The recapitulation brings major tonality qualities to the A section with focuses on

extensions of the chords to generate open expansiveness, with the B section being more obvious with its lack of seriousness, bringing a happy, hopeful answer to the question the piece poses.

Fantasy for Flute and Piano, Nightshade is the second in a set of flute and piano fantasies written on the theme of poisonous flowers. A fantasy in musical terms consists of a piece with a lack of defined form. This piece was composed as a passion project as an addendum to my piece, *Foxglove*, as if it were a natural progression.

Nightshade develops the idea of wandering in uncertainty and delirium. Hallucinations and blurry vision can come from ingesting deadly nightshade, and this is where two main feelings are made known in the piece. The jazzy section displays a sort of delirium and confusion in its effects, with semi-stilted flute lines against the chromatic descending sonorities of the piano chords. The somber sections bring a quiet pain and search for a freedom from it, with flute lines reaching out and the piano drowning out the calls to freedom with a melancholic wash.

The piece is strangely in an ABAC-type form, once again following the lack of a traditional form. Even though there are “distinct sections” in the piece, they often meander and muddy their purposes within the thematic context. The closest comparison is to a rondo form that doesn’t return to the A section, leaving an unresolved taste in the mouths of the audience. Chromaticism is an important catalyst in this piece, giving it a strange character and delving into ambiguous harmonies. Lastly, the use of dark scalar patterns paint ideas of tragic romanticisms, with large emphasis on diminished chords and creative use of modes.

Crystalline Daydreams is a solo piano work developed over the span of two days, created with the intention of generating a light and serene soundscape. Simple melodies and repeating harmonic and rhythmic textures create a calming atmosphere.

During my stay in Ireland, our contingent took a daytrip to Waterford with the intention of taking a tour at Waterford Crystal in the latter half of the day. After a tour of seeing many beautiful and sparkling crystal items and the process of doing so, I was filled with a sort of whimsy. We had returned to the lobby where many would look upon the expensive yet beautiful products in a modernistic setting. The vibes were too harsh

and I had been sitting down bored on an uncomfortable “fancy” chair. I then asked if I would be able to sit down and play on a piano that had conveniently been nearby, and after getting permission and unlocking the thing, I was at a loss of what to play. Being a lackluster pianist with nothing memorized, I had started playing arpeggiated major seventh chords with the intention of just setting a calming atmosphere. After receiving many compliments, I got the idea to compose a piece with the same effect that I could play at events.

The piece follows a simple intro, A section, B section, and outro. The left hand consistently plays arpeggiated chords to create rhythmic interest while the right hand plays flowing and sustained melodic lines typically landing on the extensions of the chords to further create that wistful and dreamy feeling. The two sections are harmonically similar but different mostly in the range and left hand, being tighter and sparkly in the B section compared to the expansive and buoyant A section.

Sunrise Estate is something of an anthem for those who find themselves needing a break from reality during such busy lives. The story begins as the character we see ourselves through leaves a busy party to walk out onto a deck outside to get away from the stuffy environment inside to take a breath and take in the sights of a sun setting over a beautiful tropical beach. The water glistens warm oranges and purples, with the orange sun rippling across the view and causing the sand to take a velvety texture. The character then finds themselves daydreaming in a world entirely different than the one around them, one with jazzy quirks and fantasy. The character is in a whole world of their own as the mesmerizing waves keep them in a relaxed trance. The return to the bossa type soundscape brings the character back to the real world, as the beautiful worldscape comes to rest, and their social batteries are recharged to go back and enjoy the party.

This piece is an ABA ternary form, switching between bossa and jazz styles to keep the mood comfortable and fun. The A section is focused on soft rising harmonies to reflect the gentle laps of the sea, while the melodic sections harken to the sun overseeing it all. The B section is rooted in a less tonal world with jazzier overtones. The emphasis on the offbeats keeps this driving and almost jarring daydream in effect, with tighter harmonies and irregular melodic lines. The return to the A section gives us a return to calmness from the adventure before it,

giving a gentle and soothing end to the piece to show the character refreshed and ready to reenter the party.

Isabelle Garvey:

Theme and Variations is the first compositional project I started at Mercyhurst University. Theme and Variations is assigned to every freshman composition student because it teaches the composer how to expand and develop their melody in order to add variety and diversity to their piece which keeps the listener engaged. The theme is a cheerful melody in the key of A Flat Major that has a waltz-like feel. There are fifteen variations that use a variety of techniques, including inversion, retrograde, canon, octave displacement, diminution, augmentation, rhythmic change, motivic development, intervallic change, augmentation, melodic embellishments, and there is even a minimalistic variation.

Song of Myself, an art song setting of the 52nd and final poem from Walt Whitman's collection of the same name, was inspired by the film *Dead Poets Society* which is very dear to me. There was a scene in the movie where the kind-hearted English teacher, Mr. Keating, encouraged his student, Todd, to stand up in front of the class and "sound his barbaric yawp" in order to overcome his shyness. I wanted to represent Todd's character in this piece, a soul that is filled with youthful wonder and yearning. The piece is in D Major, creating a bright and warm sound. Midway through the piece, the mood changes to something more tender and delicate, the piano playing broken chords mimicking the timbre of a harp. At the finish, the piece drifts away rather than having a definite ending, giving the listener the illusion that the singer is waiting patiently for something or someone.

Tristan Yeagle:

Variations on a Theme was written as a study on the development of an idea. Commonly, the theme and variations structure is utilized to practice and train a growing composer's ability to develop a theme or motivic idea. Hence, why all of Dr. Glinsky's students are required to compose such material. Like most themes and variations, an original theme is presented then reintroduced in various ways. Common variations include, retrograde, inversion, change of harmony, embellishment, et cetera. Throughout this piece's fourteen variations,

the mood subtly shifts from joyful to crazed, going from the original theme in major, to minor, then atonal.

BIOS:

Vanessa Nolan (b. 2001) is a Junior Composition Major at Mercyhurst University. This is her fifth semester studying under Dr. Glinsky as a Composition Major, as she studied vocal performance in her freshman year. In addition to composing, she studies piano and voice as a lyric coloratura soprano. This is her second Composer’s Concert, where she is very excited to share her music with others.

Carmen Stewart (she/they; b. 2002) is a junior year BM composition major at Mercyhurst University. She primarily focuses on the bassoon as her main instrument, but she also plays piano and clarinet. Her approach to music is one of story and emotion, using herself as a vector to bring out the most from her compositions and performances. She takes regular study with Dr. Albert Glinsky to study and work on her compositional style. She has been composing for 6 years, particularly writing chamber music and solo pieces with accompaniment. She is an open class winner of the 2021 PMEA Composition contest, as well as a member of the Jazz Syndicate on keys.

Isabelle Garvey (b. 2005) is originally from Los Angeles, California, and is a student attending Mercyhurst University, double majoring in Dance and Music Composition. She began taking piano lessons at the age of three and started taking composition lessons at her high school, Rolling Hills Preparatory School, at the age of fifteen.

Tristan Yeagle (b. 2004) is currently a first-year student studying music composition under the guidance of Dr. Albert Glinsky at Mercyhurst University. As well as composition, Yeagle also studies saxophone with Dr. Scott Meier. While at Mercyhurst, Yeagle plays with their wind ensemble, jazz ensemble, civic orchestra, athletic band, pep band, sax quartet, and clarinet choir. In his free time, he enjoys collecting and repairing instruments, discovering new music, 3D modeling and computer programming.
