

# Finding Joy

Program notes:

## **Sonata for Clarinet and Piano**

Amanda Harberg:

“Sonata for Clarinet and Piano has three contrasting yet closely related movements: 1. Gently, Playful, 2. Interlude, and 3. Agitato. The first movement begins with a sweetly mellifluous opening melody contrasted by a playful secondary theme and is a nostalgic exploration of youthful innocence. The second movement serves as a bridge into another emotional space, colored by sadness and loss. The final movement transforms the material from the opening movement into an insistent dance full of dark, agitated energy. The thematic materials emerged as emotional reactions to the death of a dear friend, and to the terminal illness of a close family member.”

## ***Five for Three***

Shawn commissioned this piece for Dr. Javier Rodriguez’s birthday in 2023, as a final contribution to Hammers & Reeds, the ensemble that they began in 2015, with a commission from Nansi Carroll. The piece bears a dedication to Jovanni-Rey De Pedro, our colleague, who passed away in 2019. Loosely structured as a suite, the second and forth movements are based on the texts that follow:

### II. Song

#### **Elephant Ears**

I’ve given up wearing earrings.  
Like my mother’s, my ears are large –  
and mine are lopsided. Now, with age,  
the loves show a crease, and seem to droop  
like a Buddha’s. But Buddhist tradition  
links such big ears to wisdom –  
should that console me? My big-eared mother,  
although not foolish, was not so much wise  
as ardent, responsive, eager to learn.  
At the age I am now, she still wore her various pairs  
of beautiful earrings with confidence,  
and they became her. Perhaps that éclat  
was her wisdom – for now, and maybe forever,  
a wisdom beyond my reach.  
Should I call upon Buddha, on Ganesh,  
upon that part of my mother  
which lies in me, for enlightenment?  
For the *chutzpa* to dangle jewels  
from long and uneven lobes?

-Denise Levertov

#### IV. **A Song of Pilgrimage**

Deep river – my home is over Jordan,  
deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground.  
O children, don' you want to go to that Gospel seat, that promised land,  
that Land where all is peace?  
Walk right into heaven, and take my seat,  
and throw myself at Jesus' feet.  
Lord, I want to cross over into campground.  
-African American Spiritual

#### ***Lucas's Garden***

Amanda Harberg:

“Like much of my music, *Lucas's Garden*, for clarinet, violin, cello and piano, was inspired by personal experience. My son, Lucas, an avid botanist, asked for free- range for a section of our New Jersey backyard to indulge his passion for growing things. The three-movement piece is about the inner world of my family as it grows and evolves, told through the lens of my son's garden.

The first movement, Backyard Paradise, reflects on the beautiful wildflower haven that Lucas created with its abundance of native plants and wildlife. The second movement, Moonlit, is a nocturnal, dream-like fantasy, combining quirky gestures with exotic and jazz-influenced melodic lines. The third and final movement, Wild Roses, enriches the garden with its thorny beauty, full of marcato gestures and changing meters. At the climax of the movement, the main melody from Backyard Paradise reemerges triumphantly through the thorns. A hint of the second movement's moonlit dream-world mischievously reappears, before the wild roses race back in for the final coda.

*Lucas's Garden* was originally commissioned in 2018 by the Vandoren Company for their Emerging Artist Competition. Ever the restless composer, I had long wanted to make substantial revisions to this earlier version of the work- first called Inner Latitudes.

In 2021, the New World Symphony commissioned me to re-imagine the work for pianist Thomas Steigerwald. The second movement- my favorite part of the initial work- became the new first movement. I extensively revised the middle movement, and I wrote a new third movement from scratch. The concept of *Lucas's Garden* finally unlocked the musical and programmatic solutions for me of how to conceptualize the piece in a way that felt complete.

*Lucas's Garden* is dedicated to my family- Micah, Lucas and Sydney.”