ENDNOTE

May 14, 2025

Program

Moon River (1961)
Andrew Wu, *piano*

Henry Mancini (1924-1994)
arr. Holden Mui (2023)

Fugue in E Major (2022)
Andrew Wu, *piano*

Holden Mui

Serenade and Toccata (2017–2025)
  I. Serenade
  II. Toccata

Andrew Wu, *piano*

Holden Mui

Concert Etude for Solo Flute (2024)
Jade Buckwalter, *flute*

Holden Mui

Poetry (2021)
  I. Prelude
  II. Lament
  III. Nocturne
  IV. Scherzo
  V. Postlude

Andrew Wu, *piano*

Holden Mui

Farewell (2025)
Valerie Chen, *cello*

Holden Mui

Pursuit (2023–2025)

Holden Mui

Changhwan Oh, *conductor*
Jade Buckwalter, *flute*
Kevin Wu, *clarinet*
Delia Harms, *bassoon*
Samantha Rencher, *horn*

Morgan Schaefer, *trumpet*
Frank Wang, *percussion*
William Wang, *piano*
Justin Yamaguchi, *violin*

Lizzy Joo, *violin*
Audrey Lim, *viola*
Sunmee Choi, *cello*
Berk Soykan, *bass*

Thanks

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Finally, thank you to my friends and family for their unwavering support—it means the world to me.

If you enjoyed the music you heard today,
I am taking commissions! Reach out to me
at muiholden@gmail.com for inquiries.

Biographies

Holden Mui

Holden Mui is a senior at MIT majoring in mathematics and music and minoring in physics. He currently studies piano with Timothy McFarland through the MIT Emerson/Harris Fellowship Program and composition with Charles Shadle through independent study. He previously studied piano with Kate Nir and composition with Matthew Hagle at the Music Institute of Chicago.

Holden is involved in piano performance, chamber music, collaborative piano, MIT Symphony Orchestra as a violist, conducting, and composition. He won both the junior and senior Music Teachers' National Association's national division composition competitions, the Illinois Music Education Association small ensemble and large ensemble composition competitions, and was a finalist at the New Music on the Bluff Festival in 2021. He also won the 2023 MIT Concerto Competition, performed with the Boston Pops at Tech Night, and was a recipient of the 2022 Jack and Edith Ruina Award, the 2024 Philip Loew Memorial Award, and the 2025 Louis Sudler prize.

Holden's favorite composer is Ravel and his favorite animal is a turtle.

Andrew Wu graduated from Yale with a mathematics degree, and will be pursuing graduate study in biostatistics at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health next year. He most recently studied piano with Christopher Taylor at the University of Wisconsin. Beyond music, Andrew enjoys writing, editing, running, walking, singing, and teaching at rationality programs. Andrew's inspirations include Irena, Yan, Siva, Lydia, CJ, Carissa, David, Luke, Janet, and Holden, without whom he would have been hopelessly lost.

Jade Buckwalter is a third-year undergraduate at MIT majoring in computer science and mathematics and minoring in music. She currently studies flute with Sue-Ellen Hershman-Tcherepnin through the MIT Emerson/Harris Scholarship program, and previously studied with Ashley Addington.

Throughout her time at MIT, Jade has played flute in the MIT Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Music Society, the Institooters (MIT's IAP flute ensemble), and the Ribotones. In her spare time, you can find Jade arranging and writing music, playing board games, and doing crosswords.

Valerie Chen is the founder of MIT's first cello club CelloWorld(); and the Music Unites: Songs for Equity (MUSE) Project. Chen performs around the MIT campus in contexts ranging from lobby pop-ups to solo recitals and jazz concerts with her combo "The Koalas". She has appeared as featured soloist with the Boston Pops and as Concerto Competition winner with the MIT Symphony Orchestra. Valerie is currently pursuing her PhD studies in interactive robotics advised by Prof. Julie Shah, where she misses no oppor-tune-ity to share jokes (no matter how minor).

Changhwan Oh is a fifth-year PhD student at MIT, studying Materials Science and Chemical Engineering. He plays the violin, viola, and piano. During his undergraduate years, he served as concertmaster of the Seoul National University Philharmonic Orchestra and later played in the MIT Symphony Orchestra until 2024. He began conducting in 2024 and has since led small ensemble groups on several occasions.

Kevin Wu is a current MIT sophomore majoring in computer science and math; he has played the clarinet for seven years. Kevin was a member of the Maryland Classical Youth Orchestra throughout high school and is currently involved in CMS and Ribotones at MIT. In his free time, Kevin enjoys playing frisbee on the MIT Men's Ultimate team.

Delia Harms is a junior from southern Maine studying Materials Science and Engineering. She's been playing bassoon for nine years. Outside of classes and music, she is a part of MIT's DanceTroupe!

Samantha Rencher is a senior majoring in Nuclear Engineering with a minor in music. She has played horn in the MIT Wind Ensemble for her entire time at MIT, and has also played in the MIT Symphony Orchestra. Outside of school and music, she enjoys cooking, hiking, and is a member of MIT's Sporting Clays team.

Morgan Schaefer is a Master's student in Aerospace Engineering. She has played trumpet in the MIT Symphony Orchestra, MIT Wind Ensemble, and studied with Steve Emery through the Emerson/Harris program. Outside of school and music, she enjoys making art, cooking, movies, and spending time with friends.

Suddenly, this confidence is forcefully interrupted with a harsh piano and snare rhythm, followed by a foreboding F minor motive in the low strings. These ideas signal the presence of external challenges that the protagonist must confront. The protagonist theme returns, but with undertones of uncertainty and self-doubt. These undertones grow exponentially, and in a cry of despair, the music spirals into a frenzy of shrieking chromaticism.

Only a somber interlude remains—the piano and strings represent the defeated self… until a cello melody sparks a sense of optimism. A lush transition brings back the world of E major, where soaring melodies modulate back into a C major heroic celebration…

…which again is interrupted by another frenzy of shrieking chromaticism. This time, however, the protagonist is determined to fight back. After a fierce battle punctuated by trumpet calls, the self ultimately prevails over the uncertainty and doubt that was once overwhelming. The climactic triumph is followed by a quiet moment of self-reflection, after which a coda brings *Pursuit* to its grand finale.

Pursuit brings us through moments of triumph and joy, anguish and misery, reflectiveness and reconciliation. In a heartbeat, we are carried from unyielding tranquility to frantic chaos, and from icy detachment to intimate warmth. In the end, *Pursuit* is not just a musical journey, but also a reflection of the resilience and transformation of the human spirit.

(Jade Buckwalter and Holden Mui)

—repeated, forever […]

(Andrew Wu)

Farewell

Farewell, dedicated to the community I found at MIT, is a short work for unaccompanied cello which uses thirds and sevenths to build a simple, wistful motif in D minor. After two statements of the opening phrase, a modulatory transition takes the music to D major, where the opening phrase is stated twice again. Its last statement is fragmentary, trailing off into tremolos and harmonics… and ending with a final pizzicato chord.

(Holden Mui)

Pursuit

Pursuit, a tone poem for chamber orchestra, tells the story of a universal experience: chasing dreams, confronting challenges, and emerging stronger in the end. *Pursuit* is scored for flute, Bb clarinet, bassoon, horn in F, Bb trumpet, percussion (mark tree, glockenspiel, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tam-tam), piano, two violins, viola, cello, and double bass.

Filled with curiosity and optimism, the C major opening theme is a flute and clarinet duet, and it serves as the "protagonist theme." It appears in many different settings—intimate passages, dark moments, and climactic triumph—but its underlying purpose is the same: it is a unifying representation of the self.

The opening duet is brief—a fluttering transition welcomes the world of E major, a place where dreams are brought to life through persistence and determination. Here, delicate textures contrast confident melodies, creating an orchestral richness that culminates in a heroic celebration.

Frank Wang is a first-year PhD student at MIT studying mathematics. He started playing percussion in fourth grade and has been a percussionist in the MIT Wind Ensemble for five years.

William Wang is a final-year PhD student in computer science. He has occasionally been spotted playing piano. Animals his friends have described him as include: capybara, miniature donkey, and beaver.

Justin Yamaguchi is currently a freshman at MIT planning on studying Mathematics and Computer Science. He studies violin with Lynn Chang through the Emerson/Harris Scholars program, and is also a composer and pianist. In his free time, he enjoys finding new ways to waste time.

Lizzy Joo is a violinist and a PhD student in Neurobiology at Boston University. She has remained active in the MIT music community since her time participating in the Chamber Music Society while working at MIT. Outside of MIT music, she has also participated in BPYO and various chamber ensemble projects in Boston.

Audrey Lim is a current sophomore and computer science major at MIT. She has played the viola since the age of 9 and currently studies with Marcus Thompson through the Emerson-Harris scholarship. Audrey has played as an orchestra member and soloist with the University of Nevada, Reno Symphony Orchestra and has also attended national summer orchestra programs such as NYO2 and NYO-USA, through which she had the opportunity to perform at Carnegie Hall. At MIT, she has been involved in ensembles such as MITSO, AXIOM, CMS, and MIT Ribotones, a club that performs chamber music concerts at senior homes.

Sunmee Choi is a MEng student studying electrical engineering at MIT. After retiring from the solar car team and being involved in too many clubs at MIT, Sunmee has returned to playing cello in the past two years. In her free time, she enjoys thinking about potential projects and hobbies.

Berk Soykan is a 2nd-year PhD student studying materials science and engineering and has been playing bass since 2013. He attended Drexel University for undergrad and currently plays with the MIT Chamber Music Society and the Mercury Orchestra. When he's not in the lab or rehearsing, you'll probably find him out hiking - rain, snow, or shine.

Program Notes

Henry Mancini composed the song *Moon River* for the soundtrack of the movie *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. His lyricist Johnny Mercer drafted a few options for the tune, including the following:

I'm Holly / Like I want to be / Like Holly on a tree / back home
Just plain Holly / With no dolly / No mama, no papa / wherever I roam

There's an almost tortured quality to the singer's continued insistence on the self. *I'm Holly, like I want to be. Just plain Holly. With no dolly, no mama, no papa.* Early on, the movie's female lead Holly Golightly, played by Audrey Hepburn, introduces us to a cat she lives with: "Poor old cat. […] Poor slob without a name. The way I look at it, I don't have the right to give him one. We don't belong to each other." Later, in a farewell scene with her former husband Doc from whom she ran away, we learn she gave herself the name Holly: "Please understand. I love you, but I'm just not Lula Mae anymore." So the lyrics fit *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, and they fit Holly. Mancini thought so too.

Mercer wasn't satisfied, though, for which the world ought to be immensely grateful. The final version is as follows:

Moon River / wider than a mile / I'm crossing you in style / someday
Oh, dream maker / You heart breaker / Wherever you're going / I'm going your way
Two drifters / off to see the world / There's such a lot of world / to see
We're after the same rainbow's end / Waiting 'round the bend / My huckleberry friend
Moon River / and me

You could listen for all these things and more—but so many brilliant moments and fantastical scenes will pass you by, as they passed me by the first time I encountered *Scherzo*; as they passed me by the first time I performed *Scherzo*; as they pass me by, even now, and as the days, minute by minute, second by second, pass by us all.

Scherzo does not remain sentimental for long. Neither will I. After the streamlet's song come the celebratory ceremony and the mid-afternoon meditation, the latter a gorgeous reminiscence on the streamlet. Nostalgia infuses the winding-down of the day.

In our reality, days end in sleep. But why should music not defy reality?

The beginning of *Scherzo*'s ending is a more lyrical restatement of the opening, set to arcing arpeggios that weave around the melody. It advances, first tentative and measured, as if feeling out whether such an attempt would be welcomed. Then the bass descends and the phrases shorten, become more clipped. Like children converging upon each other in a game of tag; like wind picking up dust, then leaves, then pebbles; like a streamlet cascading into a river into an ocean; *Scherzo* accelerates, and accelerates—

—and explodes! Modulations whizzing by, chords zigzagging from register to register, the finale, a climactic practical joke, crashes into—

V. Postlude

—a distant

[ecstasy]

dissonance—

Now the world is formless and empty, darkness is over the surface of the deep [wave goodbye … wilted flowers] and the spark having been swallowed, night drones on.

A brief pause. Then a stone skips across the water, or a child declares herself the leader of the bunch, and this new voice, slightly slower and more measured, asserts itself momentarily. But whimsy has its own gravity. Thus occurs a bewildering series of short phrases, fragments from the first joke and new voice taking turns, tying themselves in knots, chasing each other's tails up and down the keys until they tire.

Punctuation muted, chase finished, the backdrop comes into focus. A peacefully flowing streamlet, it sings—first, in the way that streamlets do, steadily, with only slight perturbations; then, braver, echoing past jokes and voices. One could stay there, suspended, bathed in light and birdcalls and the streamlet's sweet song.

Like the rest of *Poetry*, *Scherzo* is simultaneously abstract and personal, like intimacy seen through the eyes of the universe. And like the rest, *Scherzo* is tightly constructed. So *Scherzo* is built upon these strange, disparate building blocks—the first joke, the new voice, and the streamlet's song. But much more so than the previous poems, *Scherzo* is built upon improvisatory mood and character changes. Everything is in constant motion, even the pace at which the motion occurs.

Such is the nature of day.

So day proceeds. You could listen for the humming, the buzzing of the low offbeat ostinato that descends by half-steps, as the world's denizens prepare for a grandiose celebratory ceremony at high noon; the staccato raucous revelry that follows, with its frenzied octave leaps; the ensuing exhale, which sinks into a mid-afternoon meditation, accompanied by luxurious upper-register runs that conjure crystals from thin air. Or instead of listening for structure and story, you could listen for snapshots: the deeply amusing measures where the right hand, written in quarters, mimics the left, written in eighths; the way the pause following the celebratory ceremony rings differently than the pause following the raucous revelry; the snippets of those upper-register runs stolen from previous melodies.

The word *capture* can mean both *describe* and *trap*. So Mercer's earlier draft captures Holly. It captures her obsession with names and autonomy and freedom; it captures her lack of family ties and her propensity to "roam." But Mercer's earlier draft also captures Holly, in that it freezes her in her present; it captures Holly, with its facts and concreteness and the way in which those limit the song.

Consider the following lyrics from the final version's first two phrases—*wider than a mile, someday, wherever you're going*. They evoke *possibility*. Whatever the moon river is, it might be as wide as the imagination stretches. The narrator might cross it decades from now. It could go anywhere. To describe Holly too well would be to trap Holly, such that the listener imagines "just" a woman, *just plain Holly*, instead of the freedom and possibility she craves. So to capture Holly, the song must not capture Holly. Mercer relinquishes the facts, *no mama, no papa*; relinquishes the spelling-out of her personality, *like I want to be*; relinquishes even her name. He gives us something surreal, something flighty, something aspirational, and in this way he captures her far better than anything grounded and concrete and true ever could.

Of course, that is why we have music—to capture what, by nature, cannot be captured otherwise.

Mancini thought that despite all the great vocalists who covered *Moon River*, Hepburn understood it best. In her rendition, listen for the rising intervals between *moon* and *river*; *I'm and crossing*; *dream* and *maker*; and so on. Imagine, as she lingers on *moon*, *I'm*, and *dream*, that she builds up energy, courage; that she wants to reach for something higher. Listen for how each effort results in a thin, wispy high note that slips back down afterward. What is aspirational is somehow less material. (It is worth noting that the fullest, most concrete of those high notes occurs on heart breaker.) On *wherever you're going*, the melody moves more measuredly—an arpeggio rather than a single interval—yet still must recede. But on *after the same rainbow's end*, Hepburn takes a breath after that high note on *same*, the one she hits on *going*, then goes one higher. That *rainbow's end* is aspirational, lyrically and melodically.

Holden's arrangement does not feature the voice. But the piano is a vehicle for other dimensions of expression. His *Moon River* consists of three iterations of the melody—each with different harmonies, accompaniments, and characters, set in different registers. Between the second and third is an interlude. These iterations correspond to scenes from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

First, the melody appears in sparkling octaves over ostinato triplets. This section corresponds to the movie's opening. Holly Golightly exits a cab and walks by Tiffany's, a jewelry store she loves, which she later says feels like a place where "nothing very bad could happen to you." So those octaves—simple, open, airy—have a childlike innocence to them. As the second verse begins, we move down a register, and the accompaniment increases in complexity: growing up, as it were.

After a key change comes the second iteration of the melody, which corresponds to the scene where the movie's male lead Paul Varjak watches Holly sing *Moon River* as she sits on her windowsill. So this iteration is like the human voice: lower, intimate, more free, in a single line rather than octaves. In the scene, the second verse is accompanied by the orchestra. Appropriate, given the lyrics—*two drifters, we're after*—and how they compare to the *I*'s and *you*'s of the first verse. As such, in Holden's arrangement, at *two drifters* the music becomes fuller, with thirds and octaves and inner voices.

Then comes a surreal interlude. A four-note motif emerges, initially alone. We hear it again, slightly higher. Then again, even higher, and it begins to interrupt itself. After a brief peak, the music winds down, until a moment of stillness.

All those *someday's*, those *wherever's*, those aspirations—they culminate in the final iteration of the melody, a brilliant orchestral transcription. In the corresponding scene of the movie, the closing, Paul tells Holly that her fear of being caged is itself a cage. "I'm in love with you," he says, as she insists on fleeing to Brazil. "People do belong to each other, because that's the only chance anybody's got for real happiness." Gone are the

The next phrase brings us another color: perhaps royal purple, still dark and steady. Deep blue returns, brightening imperceptibly. In the final phrase of the opening, low grey clouds drift into view. The phrase closes with a measure without a sustained bass note, without pedal—where the hazy, dusky colors give way for specks of pink.

Then the colors come all at once—after pinks come ambers, golds, violets, the world unfurling with increased urgency and intensity. The sun appears; ascends, from a single-voice melody to octaves; at its climax, becomes too bright to behold. One must look away.

A variant on the opening theme returns, in a higher register, marked by a sparkling broken-octaves accompaniment—morning's bells, or birdsong. Blue again, but brighter. Sunrise is asymmetric. Whereas previously the east surged, luminous, the west proceeds unhurriedly.

Nocturne, originally from French, means of *the night*; thus its closing heralds day. The sun's theme appears one last time—now without its restless accompaniment, the horizon's other hues and textures—in radiant octaves that leave the world suspended in adulation. There is beauty in moments, after all.

At the end, the stars, twinkling as they do in the fairytales, wave good-bye.

IV. Scherzo

Scherzo's opening might be punctuated with anything, really—the splashing of pebbles, or the snickering of schoolchildren. What matters is that it is punctuated. Unlike *Lament* and Nocturne, *Scherzo*—in English, joke—is angular, witty, sharp.

Where *Nocturne* was dawn, *Scherzo* is day, and day begins playfully. The first joke is repeated thrice; initially as a single line; next, in thirds; then, in thirds, with the left hand. Each iteration is followed by what might be an explanation (or an elaboration) until the whole thing spills into pitchy peals of laughter.

So grief is offbeat, unanchored, suspended; and *Lament* is grief, the sort of grief that is difficult to externalize yet deeply felt—in the chromaticism, the half-steps in melody and accompaniment alike; in the way the music never reaches stability.

In *Lament*'s second section, the accompaniment sixteenths smooth themselves out. The melody, glass-like in its fragility and clarity, floats above them.

The ensuing escalation is marked by restraint: no acceleration, minimal range and dynamic increases, subtle shifts in the alignment of the accompaniment and melody. Tension builds primarily through the harmony, through half-step shifts in the accompaniment that give each arpeggiated figure a slightly different color from the previous one.

After the climax, which moreso fades than concludes, the bass vanishes entirely. In its place appears a whispering offbeat ostinato. The original melody returns, but much of what gave it substance is absent. *Lament* hangs like fog—irresolute, choking, omnipresent.

Diary entry, October 2018: Yet still I found her everywhere—in each note I played, in each piece I heard; in candy bars and cigarettes, in white hair and wilted flowers…

III. Nocturne

Unlike the other poems, *Nocturne* opens monochromatically—the first phrase, built entirely from the white keys, comprises notes from one single Lydian scale.

In capturing beauty, the snapshot-aesthetic of dawn—kaleidoscopic, the sun bisected by the horizon—neglects its essence. Beauty is not from moments but from processes. What is a gorgeous harmonic resolution without the preceding tension? So *Nocturne* is dawn, and in reality dawn begins not with crimson or magenta, but with deep blue.

innocence of the opening, the ever-so-vocal freedom of the second iteration, the surrealism of the interlude; in their place comes *real happiness*, brimming with harmony, grounded by deep bass notes and arpeggios that traverse the keyboard.

Moon River is a song of contradictions. It evokes self-assuredness and uncertainty; childlike wonder and the wistfulness of old age. It is infinitely far and yet tantalizingly close—*the moon and its reflection in the water.* So it seems beautiful and appropriate to end with this last iteration and its corresponding dialogue, which declare not *someday*, not *wherever*, but rather *I love you, here and now.*

(Andrew Wu)

Fugue in E Major

Fugue in E major is a three-voice keyboard fugue inspired by Bach's prolific fugal output. Like Bach's fugues, *Fugue in E major* features episodes, stretti, inversions, augmentations, and pedal points. However, it differs in several notable ways; for example, a tonal answer is not used despite the prominent fifth in the fugue subject, time signature changes and cadential subversion delineate the work's sections, and planned dissonances along with extended harmonies permeate the work.

The fugue subject begins with a declarative ascending fifth and descends stepwise until the second voice enters. A brief codetta full of spicy sevenths leads to the entrance of the third and final voice, then a short episode modulates to the relative minor key. Two stretti are featured before a deceptive cadence builds to the "recapitulation": a section that mimics the opening, including a descending chromatic bass line that visits every note. A final episode transitions into a "magical" coda (as Andrew describes it), featuring elegantly voiced harmonies and a triumphant, satisfying stretto finish.

(Holden Mui)

Serenade and Toccata

I. Serenade

What comes before the first *I love you?*

Heartbeats. First like the flickering of a candle, weak and wavering; then faster, fluid, swaying, driven not by chance but by conviction. The heartbeats cascade over themselves; the lover ruminates, then they sing—

I love you. It is a simple melody, built from a sequence of four ascending notes. A simple melody for a simple phrase with a simple meaning. *I love you*, the lover sings again, this time with a different inflection; then *I love you* once, twice, thrice more, and each time with something else in mind; a smile, a kind act, a midnight tryst. *You, you, you* until the sounds become meaningless.

Are words not so temporary, so ineffectual? How can the lover sing them so that their love knows it not once but continuously—forever? Why even try? Time passes. The heartbeats accelerate. Twos turn into threes; threes turn into fours. Fours are dizzying; *how does my love appear so composed, so graceful, when I cannot help but—*

I love you spills out, almost involuntarily, and as the lover sings they realize the words have changed. The words are broader and warmer. They reverberate with the weight of shared meals and shared kisses and shared dreams. *I love you*, a simple melody for a simple phrase. *I love you* thrice more, and this time each repetition—*you, you, you*—seems more solid than the next, bringing more details into relief: the way their love brushes their hair from their eyes; the way their love tilts their head and blinks away their fatigue in the morning; the way their love squeezes the lover's hands when together, they map out their future, which seems so immense, so infinite.

Time passes. As the lover and their love go about their lives, the shops

Now come growling bass chords underneath an unsettling ostinato, and as the lonely voice speaks, *a melody ghostlike in its gloom* and malevolence manifests. The spark's newest light seems to exist only to cast shadow. The ghostlike melody reaches a high, splitting the ostinato into running sixteenth notes.

The ensuing escalation is marked by anxiety, chromatic scales swaying back and forth. The world shudders, unaccustomed to escalation, and those once-distant dissonances begin to crescendo, begin to clamor.

Now in octaves, as if accompanied by a twin, the lonely voice screams. In search of the ghost of a spark, the world tears apart the lonely voice, tears apart that once-distant dissonance, tears apart the broken mirror and rusty bells, tears apart all its foundations. Fragments of dissonance fly in every direction, faster and faster, as the world rends itself open—

II. Lament

To externalize deeply felt emotion first at *fortississimo*, through frantic, jagged chords, then at *piano*, through offbeat rhythms and unanchored harmonies, is a curious decision.

Lament begins with a four-against-three rhythm. With the third of the four accompaniment sixteenth notes absent, the sound remains momentarily suspended after the first melodic note.

In 2018, when Irena—my piano teacher of six years—passed, I was a high-school junior. It was May 8th, exactly one month before we'd scheduled my recital. We'd had a lesson a few weeks ago. It was shocking. My memories of the time have faded, except for one incident. At school, down the hallway from Spanish class, at the little round table above the music room, I'm doing homework with my friend Luke. I'm off-balance and desperate. I want to tell him about Irena, but it feels like something physically stops me from speaking the words, leaving me open-mouthed and anxiety-ridden whenever I make an attempt.

Poetry

Poetry is a five-movement piano suite. *Poetry* is "vastly complex and motivically interwoven." *Poetry* is gorgeous; *Poetry* is clever; *Poetry* is personal. *Poetry* is lonely and frantic, delicate and wistful, plain and broad, playful and ecstatic. *Poetry* is the piece of music I love most.

I. Prelude

—a distant

dissonance—

repeated thrice. Repeated forever, perhaps, without the interruption—a bass note that imposes upon the chord.

Now the world was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep […] And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Anxious light from a single spark—but light indeed. The chord unravels, elaborates upon itself; a lonely voice emerges. *Prelude* is the lurching of an unstable world, a world torn in two: emptiness, formlessness, distant dissonances juxtaposed with all the possibilities the spark brings.

A glint on a rusty bell—*it sings, and streamlets perturb the echoing voices*—is snuffed out. Darkness, still and eerie, reigns again.

The spark finds a broken mirror; light reflects across the crack, and the new melody—*burnt amber, black gold, purple nightshade*—begins off-sync with the accompaniment. The world, unaccustomed to color *too bright to behold* beyond that of the distant dissonance, attempts to engulf the foreign material whole, to envelop it in those unraveled chords. *One must look away.* Colors bleed into the dissonance, which grows and warps, until it remembers itself.

and footpaths they so often frequent take on a certain density. A coffeehouse is first for freshly-brewed coffee; then for conversation; even later for co-working, the lover's music and their love's painting or physics or poetry. Time passes. Memories accumulate. The words go unspoken, or are spoken every day and night. Does it matter? Any limp repetition captures little of reality. Flimsy as the words are, the feelings they represent only intensify. Around their love, the lover's heartbeats become almost tangible, *material*, like quakes from the footsteps of a giant—

I love you bursts from the lover's chest. The notes sweep through the once-still air and whip it into a whirlwind. *I love you*, still the same four notes, but each word somehow more substantial than ever before, deep and full and heavy with harmony. There is so much more *you* to love than when *you* were just a heartbeat and a smile. Four times more the lover sings it, *I love you*, as if trying to grasp the enormity of the sentiment; to the lover's surprise, on the fifth, the heavens echo fragments back to the pair, as if to reinforce the claim. With relief at the acknowledgment, the lover lets their song fade. The air stills.

Time passes.

I love you, whispers the lover. It has been decades, or perhaps a half-century. *I love you*—sung so many times, always with a different lilt or thought or cadence—now seems to the lover a strange phrase. After all, the memories are gone. It is just a melody they have always sung and must continue to sing to their love. And despite the lack of intent, their love understands the phrase as a simple, sweet statement of how things are. *I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you.*

Time passes. Humans forget. Words evolve. Melodies erode. But—still-familiar, still-fluid—the heart beats as it did before.

II. Toccata

Toccata is a uniquely physical experience. It interrupts itself with deep accented bass notes, which produce reverberations we can *feel*; its volatile perpetual-motion engine leaves no time for thought or meditation. Its rhythm registers as much in the body as it does in the mind. In this sense, and in many others, *Toccata* is the opposite of *Serenade*.

Toccata's main motif, a series of four descending notes in half-steps that ends in a *bang!*, proceeds at a pace that lends it a certain brutality. It is a warped, inverted version of *Serenade*'s *I love you*: percussive rather than lyrical, dissonant rather than harmonious.

Beyond the harmony of chords, *Serenade* is a story of the harmony of lovers. So *Toccata* is dissonant in more ways than one, too. In addition to its chromaticism, *Toccata*'s individual sections clash; if they were wrestled into a narrative, it would be jagged, uneven. Designed to be abstract, *Toccata* resists such easy categorization.

Beyond the lyricism of *Serenade*'s songlike melody, *Serenade* swells and fades much like the human voice. So *Toccata* is percussive in more ways than one, too. In addition to its deep accented bass notes and rhythmic intensity, *Toccata* features mostly short, clipped melodies, almost like vulgar utterances. In fact, the sharp cutoff of *Toccata*'s main motif's last note simultaneously functions as an abrupt truncation of *Serenade*'s song —from extended melody to four-note motif.

As such, the differences in their themes are a microcosm of their overall differences. So it makes sense that where *Serenade* ends gently, harmoniously, tapering the way singers do, *Toccata* ends with a dissonant, percussive, blood-and-guts coda—the last note predictably unpredictable.

(Andrew Wu)

Concert Etude for Solo Flute

Concert Etude for Solo Flute is an exploration in juxtaposition: between motives, between keys, and between textures.

The etude opens with an ominous motive anchored around the flute's low D. This idea steadily grows and expands, ascending in a flourish that lands in the shimmering high register. Despite having similar structure and contour to the opening, the sweet melody introduced in the middle of the piece provides a welcome contrast in mood while showcasing the purity and versatility of the flute. As the piece unfolds, these two motives become increasingly intertwined, but in the end, the ominous motive prevails.

While the etude begins in D, after the initial statement of the opening theme, we are unexpectedly transported a tritone up to Ab, around which the theme is restated. The melody is passed between the two keys, alternating at faster and faster frequencies before reaching a frantic explosion upon convergence. In the contrasting middle section, the melody emerges in C and is then restated up a minor third in Eb, a more consonant shift. The final statements of the two motives are in D and A—a perfect fifth—providing a sense of harmonic closure that counters the tension of the opening tritone.

When it comes to texture, the etude navigates between sections featuring lyrical melodies and wide-ranging runs, and sections where the melody is submerged beneath repeated notes in the low register that are constantly growing in dynamic and intensity. The sweet melody eventually manages to break through the insistent repeated notes and soar in the flute's upper register, reaching one of its highest notes. Interspersed are manic bursts of energy during which you will hear trills, harmonics, and tremolos that create turbulence while showcasing some of the flute's extended techniques.

(Jade Buckwalter)