



American Aria
May 10, 2025

PROGRAM NOTES

Piccolo Concerto

Amanda Harberg
(b. 1973)

I composed my *Sonata for Piccolo and Piano* in 2018 as the result of a consortium spearheaded by Regina Helcher Yost, involving 23 piccoloists from all over the world. Erica Peel, piccoloist of the Philadelphia Orchestra, later gained support through a fundraising campaign to commission me to expand the sonata into a full-blown *Concerto for Piccolo and Orchestra*.

Originally set to be premiered by Peel at the 2020 National Flute Association convention, the Concerto

performance was cancelled due to COVID-19. As one door closed, another opened, and the Philadelphia Orchestra premiered the work in 2021 on its Digital Stage, with Erica Peel as soloist and Maestro Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting.

Concerto for Piccolo and Orchestra is scored for piccolo, strings, harp, percussion, and timpani, and is in three contrasting movements. The first movement is in a traditional sonata form. It explores the singing and virtuosic qualities of the piccolo in the contrasting lyrical and rhythmic materials, featuring an extended cadenza before the final coda. In the cantabile second movement, a gentle lullaby bookends a dream-like middle section. The finale is a dynamic vivace, featuring the athleticism of the instrument, driven home by extended techniques of singing while playing and flutter-tonguing. Contemporary and classical influences are woven together throughout the three movements.

The *Concerto for Piccolo and Orchestra* is dedicated to Erica Peel, and the *Sonata for Piccolo and Piano* is

dedicated to Jeffrey Allan Yost. I am endlessly grateful to everyone who supported me in creating this work.

– *Amanda Harberg*

Broken Rondo

Miguel Del Aguila
(b. 1957)

Broken Rondo is a one-movement English horn concerto. The work begins with a slow introduction where the English horn, accompanied by the strings and clarinet, sings quasi-free cadenzas and arabesques, setting a calm, somewhat nostalgic mood. Soon, the rondo theme begins. This simple, upbeat modal theme drives the piece forward with an ostinato rhythm of Andean character. At first light and dance-like, it becomes progressively more dramatic until the rondo is interrupted by an extended

orchestral interlude. The English horn finishes the piece with a slow, somber, extended cantilena as the piece dissolves in darkness. The orchestration is light, bright and always focused on the solo instrument. The word “broken” of the title suggests not only the fact that the rondo form breaks down towards the end, but also implies an unexpected emotional struggle and a fracture from which the piece never recovers. The work was commissioned by Johanna Cox with a grant from the University of Oklahoma Research Council and from Mr. Carl Rath. The work is dedicated to Johanna Cox who premiered it on June 26, 2010 in Norman, Oklahoma during the International Double Reed Society Conference with the IDRS Orchestra under conductor David Lockington.

– *Miguel Del Aguila*

27-72

(World premiere of orchestral version; commissioned by Justin Vance, lead commissioner, and The Chelsea Symphony, 2024)

Alyssa Morris
(b. 1984)

“27-72” is a tribute to the wonderful oboist, teacher, and mentor, Doris Deloach. The title comes from a statement Dr. Deloach posted on social media in November of 2017: “I came to Baylor to teach oboe. I turned 27 on my first birthday at Baylor. This year, I turned 72....and this happened! All great things have to conclude. Tomorrow morning the job description for the best job in the world will be posted. I have loved every minute of my time here with fabulous students and wonderful colleagues! Sad and happy simultaneously. Thanks to all.” This piece was commissioned by a consortium of Dr. Deloach’s students, who from her learned how to make beautiful music and how to live a beautiful life.

I. A Day in the Life

What does “A Day in the Life” look like for an oboe professor? What does it sound like? One might assume that it is filled with music making, but it also might consist of putting out fires and calming troubled hearts. Surely it is filled with constant raps on the door, phone calls, and messages from students who have lots of questions!

II. Inside the Box, Outside the Box

Every day a teacher strives to find teaching methods that will reach each student. Since every student learns differently, sometimes this requires teaching “Inside the Box” and sometimes it requires teaching “Outside the Box.” This movement is filled with quotations of excerpts from oboe orchestral audition lists, an “Inside the Box” part of oboe curriculum. The delivery of each excerpt quotation, however, is “Outside the Box,” since the framework of the movement takes each excerpt out of their typical “habitat.”

III. Blood, Sweat, and Tears (Reed Making)

“A Day in the Life” of an oboe professor is filled with reed making! Every student who has learned to make reeds can attest that a lot of blood, sweat, and tears went into learning the craft. The whole process requires time, patience, reed testing, playing, and listening. Each oboist has developed their own “reed noodle,” (often without really thinking about it,) to test out their reeds. Several “reed noodle” sound clips were collected from Dr. Deloach’s former students. Dr. Deloach’s “reed noodle” was also recorded by a student. Parts of each of these “reed noodles” have been transcribed and can be found in this movement. Dr. Deloach’s “reed noodle,” in its entirety, can be heard at the beginning of the movement.

IV. Guide Us as We Onward Go

In 1931, Mrs. Enid Eastland Markham, wife of Baylor music professor Robert Markham, penned the words to the Baylor Alma Mater, to be sung to the melody of “Good Old Summertime.”

That Good old Baylor Line
That Good old Baylor Line

We'll march forever down the years
As long as stars shall shine
We'll fling our Green and Gold afar
To light the ways of time
And guide us as we onward go
That Good old Baylor Line

The title of this movement is taken from these lyrics, and the melody of this movement is an adaptation of this melody. Dr. DeLoach's legacy will touch the lives of students "forever down the years, as long as stars shall shine."

– *Alyssa Morris*

Gathering at Lanting

(World Premiere)

Aaron Dai
(b. 1967)

Gathering at Lanting is based on a historical literary event that took place in China in the spring of 353 CE. The celebrated calligrapher Wang Xizhi (王羲之) had invited forty-one scholars to Lanting, or the Orchid Pavilion, on Mount Kuaiji for the Spring Purification Festival. At the event, cups of rice wine were floated down a small winding creek, with the men sitting along its banks.

Whenever a cup stopped, the man closest to it was required to drink the wine and then write a poem. By the end of the day, twenty-six of the participants had composed thirty-seven poems. Wang Xizhi himself authored the *Lantingji Xu* (蘭亭集序), or Preface to the Poems Collected from the Orchid Pavilion, which described the special occasion and the beauty of the landscape around the pavilion.

The melody that makes its way through *Gathering at Lanting* is based on a very old melody written for the guqin, an ancient, seven-string Chinese zither that dates back to at least 3,000 years. It is very likely that a guqin was played at the Lanting Gathering, as it was customary for literati to play the instrument for each other at a yaji (雅集), or “elegant gathering.”

– *Aaron Dai*

Poem in October

John Corigliano
(b. 1938)

What appeals to me most about Dylan Thomas's poetry is the sound of his words. Phrases from *Poem in October* like "a springful of larks in a rolling cloud" and "the blue altered sky streamed again a wonder of summer" are in themselves musical. Then there is Thomas's incredibly rich and concentrated imagery. Within a single sentence he will have three or four images in addition to the main one, so that a composer has a tremendous amount of material to work with.

Further, I love the cadential irregularity in the Thomas poems I have set, for it allowed me to write rhythmically irregular music without violating the pulse of the words. And I admire Thomas's organization. For instance, near the end of a poem he tends to recapitulate not only words but earlier moments, so that building a musical structure on his texts seem an extremely natural undertaking.

Poem in October is cast as a rondo, where interludes for various combinations of the solo instruments separate the seven verses. The music itself is unabashedly lyrical. I sought to convey a pastoral feeling that would match the directness and simplicity of the text, to deal in understatement and succinctness rather than in complexity and theatrical effect.

– *John Corigliano*

Poem In October

It was my thirtieth year to heaven

Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood
And the mussel pooled and the heron
Priested shore
The morning beckon
With water praying and call of seagull and rook
And the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall
Myself to set foot
That second
In the still sleeping town and set forth.

My birthday began with the water-
Birds and the birds of the winged trees flying my name
Above the farms and the white horses
And I rose
In rainy autumn
And walked abroad in a shower of all my days.
High tide and the heron dived when I took the road
Over the border
And the gates
Of the town closed as the town awoke.

A springful of larks in a rolling
Cloud and the roadside bushes brimming with whistling
Blackbirds and the sun of October

Summery

On the hill's shoulder,
Here were fond climates and sweet singers suddenly
Come in the morning where I wandered and listened
To the rain wringing
Wind blow cold
In the wood faraway under me.

Pale rain over the dwindling harbour
And over the sea wet church the size of a snail
With its horns through mist and the castle
Brown as owls
But all the gardens
Of spring and summer were blooming in the tall tales
Beyond the border and under the lark full cloud.
There could I marvel
My birthday
Away but the weather turned around.

It turned away from the blithe country
And down the other air and the blue altered sky
Streamed again a wonder of summer
With apples
Pears and red currants

And I saw in the turning so clearly a child's
Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother
Through the parables
Of sun light
And the legends of the green chapels

And the twice told fields of infancy
That his tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved in mine.
These were the woods the river and sea
Where a boy
In the listening
Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy
To the trees and the stones and the fish in the tide.
And the mystery
Sang alive
Still in the water and singingbirds.

And there could I marvel my birthday
Away but the weather turned around. And the true
Joy of the long dead child sang burning
In the sun.
It was my thirtieth
Year to heaven stood there then in the summer noon
Though the town below lay leaved with October blood.

O may my heart's truth

Still be sung

On this high hill in a year's turning.

– *Dylan Thomas*