

Music at Emory

2019
2020



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The Monologue of a Thousand Voices

**Zichong He,
Senior Honors Recital**

Bass and composition

Kristin Wendland, conductor

Julian Haladus-Henke, piano

Jennifer Zheng, piano

Beverley Sylvester, piano

Alejandra Munoz, piano

Janice Yutong Cai, voice

Lucas Alonso-Munoyerro Anton, violin

Tommy Sarsfield, violin

Nick Harvey, oboe

Brian Le, cello

Xavier Sayeed, drums/student assistant

Saturday, March 28, 2020, 3:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Studio
Burlington Road Building

music.emory.edu

Program

<i>Slow Dancing on the Frozen Fire</i>	Zichong He (b. 1999)
Electronic music	
<i>When I Gazed at Your Sweet Portrait</i>	Zichong He lyr. Gilles Binchois (1400–1460)
<i>The Swan</i>	Zichong He lyr. Jacques Arcadelt (1507–1568)
Janice Yutong Cai, voice; Jennifer Zheng, piano	
<i>El Carnaval</i>	Zichong He
Nick Harvey, oboe; Tommy Sarsfield, violin; Lucas Alonso-Munoyerro Anton, violin; Brian Le, cello; Zichong He, contrabass; Beverley Sylvester, piano; Alejandra Munoz, piano	
<i>Kree's Paradox</i>	Zichong He
Video with electronic music	
Scenes from <i>The Gold Rush</i> (rescored)	Zichong He
Video with electronic music	
<i>Life Under the Mask</i>	Zichong He
<i>Savannah</i>	Zichong He
<i>The Last Emperor</i>	Zichong He
Julian Haladus-Henke, piano; Zichong He, bass; Xavier Sayeed, drums	

Program Notes

Slow Dancing on the Frozen Fire is an electronic piece incorporating virtual orchestral instruments and sound effects. When I heard the original soundtrack from the movie “Kungfu Panda,” I was surprised that two non-Chinese composers—Hans Zimmer and John Powell—could write such quintessentially classical Chinese music. Listening to the most emotionally intense score “Oogway Ascends,” I sat in front of a piano and attempted to capture any inspirations as they slipped through my mind. After months of MIDI production on an intermittent schedule, it became my first orchestral piece before I formally took lessons on orchestration techniques.

When I Gazed at Your Sweet Portrait was written November 15, 2019, and is a non-traditional art song heavily influenced by jazz. As a bassist coming from a jazz and rock background, I gradually grew a strong desire to experiment by hybridizing music across genres. I drew a considerable amount of musical vocabulary from my experiences in jazz, and I arranged my ideas in the style of medium swing. It will be performed by a pianist and a vocalist both from a classical background. I strongly believe that sometimes, though not always, music and text should be narratively independent of each other. In the previous months, I collected fragments of lyrics from a medieval song by Gilles Binchois and rearranged them to one of my pre-existing melodies. While the music retained a subtle relatedness to the love theme, it develops according to its internal drives, which do not directly support the lyrics.

The lyrics for ***The Swan*** were adapted from a 16th-century Madrigal “Il bianco e dolce cigno,” written by Jacques Arcadelt. According to Peter Burkholder and Claude Palisca, the editors of Norton Anthology of Western Music, the poetic imagery is based on the traditional belief that swans sing only when they die. The poet contrasts the swan’s death with his own “happy” death, which fills him with “joy and desire.” In the realm of desire, death had at least two possible metaphorical meanings at the time. In the Neoplatonic philosophy of the Florentine humanist Marsilio Ficino, who introduces the concept of “platonic love” to western Europe, death was a metaphor for falling in love, as one’s thoughts turn entirely to the beloved. If love is mutual, both lovers die a happy death as their souls leave their own bodies and live in each other. Another interpretation of the lines alludes to the analogy between the sexual climax and a “little death,” a euphemism often used by Renaissance poets. The swan sings and yet is disconsolate, while the poet weeps but is filled with ecstasy, wishing for as many such deaths as possible.

The Spanish title, *El Carnaval*, translates to “The Carnival.” The melody for the piece is borrowed from my pre-existing epic orchestral music, which I arranged in the style of tango. Initially, I was inspired by original soundtrack written by an internationally acclaimed Japanese composer Joe Hisaishi. He wrote music for the movie *The Sun Also Rises* directed by Jiang Wen, who defies the gravity of linear storytelling to produce sheer visual poetry and a new aesthetic of magical realism. In *El Carnaval*, I desire capturing visual beauty—the fluid motion and glorious colors of the romantic fantasy—depicted in the film *The Sun Also Rises*.

The Kree are a technologically advanced race of aliens in the Marvel universe. In *Kree’s Paradox*, I imagined that they attempt to dominate the earth. Using stock videos and images, I created an electronic score that portrays two sides of an apocalyptic world. The first half shows how the landscape is altered by the Kree. The second half is inspired by the film *The Matrix* and shows the Kree using data to alter the virtual reality built by humans. These two worlds have confrontations and conflicts that I see as a paradox. I combine musical elements such as progressive rock, epic orchestra, and experimental trap-techno soundscape to present destruction as something beautiful.

The Gold Rush is an American film directed by Charlie Chaplin in 1925. In this film, a lone prospector ventures into Alaska initially looking for gold. Eventually he finds romance and forever changes the lives of characters he meets. For scenes from *The Gold Rush*, I rescored the film clip from 27:09 to 40:00, the scenes in which the prospector returns to town, becomes interested in romance, and struggles to survive. My approach to scoring combines improvisation and composition. I improvised several passages of music on a MIDI keyboard connected to virtual orchestral instruments. In addition, for scenes that demand “hitting the cut,” I composed a suite of piano music and then orchestrated it for virtual string, woodwind, and brass ensembles.

The final three pieces of the program, *Life Under the Mask*, *Savannah*, and *The Last Emperor*, are jazz tunes I composed for a trio-setting performance—a standard jazz rhythm section consisting of piano, bass, and drums. I arranged them in contrasting styles: *Life Under the Mask* will be performed in medium up-tempo swing, *Savannah* in slow bossa nova, and *The Last Emperor* in medium swing in waltz. As a jazz bassist, I never stopped searching for the balance between through-notated composition and improvisation. However, now I believe I have found my compositional voice in jazz music. Due to its improvisational nature, I am able to focus on developing dynamics, articulations, chord voicing, and solos in real time without strictly following a detailed score. In this case, composing in the style of jazz gives me enough room to experiment with notations as well as the actual delivery of musical notes during performances.

—Program notes by Zichong He.

Zichong He

Zichong He, a native of Chongqing, China, came to the United States to pursue undergraduate studies at Emory University. He is a senior double-majoring in psychology and music. He began playing the violin at age eight but switched to the electronic bass in the middle of high school, finding interests in music beyond classical. While in high school, he performed with numerous bands at various regional music festivals and venues, in which he absorbed musical influences from various genres, such as funk, blues, pop, country, and metal. At Emory, he has played double bass with an Emory Jazz Combo since freshman year and the Emory Tango Ensemble since last year.

He has developed a professional profile across several fields of arts and sciences since freshman year. As a representative of the Emory Jazz Studies Program and an honor student, he performed on a tribute program for the late novelist Toni Morrison. In addition to performing, He is also a music entrepreneur and founder of the Green Island Studio in Chongqing, China, in which he serves as a jazz bass instructor, band director, and curriculum editor. He is a score composer for Emory Chinese Theater Club and scored two jury-awarded films in the 2019 Campus Movie Festival. In addition, he held an internship position at Ping An Technology, Shanghai, China, where he conducted research on human-computer interactive composition and AI music content analysis.

Striving to find his inner voice and determine the existential meanings of being a musician, he composes music across jazz, R&B, pop, orchestral, and many other genres.



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COVER PHOTO By Mark Teague.

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