

# The 43rd Annual Bowling Green New Music Festival

October 12-15, 2022

College of Musical Arts - Bowling Green State University

## Concert 4

Friday, October 14 - 10:30am - Bryan Recital Hall

**b(locked.orders)** (2019) .....Emily Koh

Joshua Heaney, alto saxophone

video by Michiko Saiki

**Lesions** (2017) .....Catherine Likhuta

Andrew Pelletier, horn - Yevgeny Yontov, piano

**Memories of Xiaoxiang** (2003) .....Lei Liang

John Sampen, alto saxophone

**The Solitude of Stars** (2020) .....Stacy Garrop

Caroline Chin, violin - Laura Melton, piano

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## Program Notes

Executive Order 13769 of early 2017, more commonly known as the travel ban, affected thousands of American immigrants. *b(locked.orders)* sonifies the stifled voices of immigrants in their adopted countries, as well as silenced minorities within their home countries. The video takes place in an artificial world where two societies co-exist. As a curious observer, the protagonist enjoys praising or ridiculing the other society, but she seems to never question her own wrongdoings. This piece serves as a reminder that through consistent self-awareness and reflection, each of us can choose to truly connect with one another through curiosity, openness, empathy and compassion.

*Lesions* (2017) was originally written for a trio of horn, clarinet and cello, and commissioned by Paul Dean for Ensemble Q (Brisbane, Australia). This 2018 version for horn and piano was created for Peter Luff and myself to include in our 2018 US tour. The term "lesions" refers to regions in organs and tissue which have suffered damage through injury or disease, such as a wound, ulcer, abscess or tumour. I first heard this term in 2004, when my mother (age 42 at that time) was diagnosed with an aggressive form of Multiple Sclerosis. While she had suffered from many disturbing, unexplainable and painful symptoms for sixteen years prior to that, the diagnosis of MS did not bring us any relief or closure. Virtually every family has a loved one who is suffering or suffered from an incurable illness. While this is a very heavy subject, I believe it is definitely worth talking about, for two simple reasons: 1. To show those who are affected that they are not alone and that there are millions of people in the world who are going through similar struggles; 2. To remind those lucky few who have not been affected that we have to keep looking for cures every day. *Lesions* is written in four parts that represent four most common stages of dealing with incurable illness: Sadness, Anxiety, Denial and finally Acceptance. The absence of a pause between the last two movements has an extra-musical meaning: though denial and acceptance are antithetical states of mind, many patients find themselves stuck between these two for a long time, sometimes for the rest of their lives. The new reality is too difficult to accept, yet the symptoms are just as difficult to deny. *Lesions* is a collaborative piece that does not have a clearly defined soloist. Instead, horn and piano work together to create the atmosphere of sadness, struggle and seclusion through the joint exploration of textures, colours and emotions.

Xiaoxiang refers to the region in Hunan Province, China where the rivers Xiao and Xiang intersect. A tragic event took place in that region during the Chinese Cultural Revolution: a woman's husband was killed by a local official. Without the means to seek justice, she decided to take revenge on the official by wailing like a ghost in the forest behind the official's residence every evening. Months later, both the official and herself went insane. My friend, the Chinese composer Mo Wu-ping (1958-1993) once planned to compose an opera based on this story. However, he only finished the overture before he died of cancer at age 34. I composed Peking Opera Soliloquy for alto saxophone in his memory in 1994. In the summer of 2002, I met with his family in Beijing and heard more descriptions of his unfinished project. The story still deeply disturbs me, as I continue to be moved by the power of his soul. I decided to revisit pieces of these memories in this project for electronics and saxophone. In this piece, I use some of the materials from my earlier saxophone composition, Mo Wu-ping's singing, as well as materials related to that part of the region (including field recordings of the Yao minority people and excerpts from the ancient Chinese zither composition Water and Mist over Xiaoxiang). It is the woman's search for her husband, my friend Mo Wu-ping's search for her, and my search for him--we are all searching for memories of realities, fragments of truths in this broken, fractured and scattered soundscape. -LL

In 2014, I enjoyed a wonderful residence at the Ucross Foundation in Clearmont, Wyoming. Ucross is an artist colony that gives writers, composers, and visual artists the gift of time, space, and support to follow their artistic pursuits; we are provided with studio space, housing, and meals so that we can work continuously on our projects. I have been in residence at numerous artist colonies; however, nothing in my previous experiences prepared me for living in such isolated, wild country. Ucross is situated on a 20,000-acre cattle ranch at nearly 4,000 feet in elevation with fewer than 150 people living within the town. But what Clearmont lacks in population, it makes up for abundantly and spectacularly in wilderness and wildlife. I composed the sextet Postcards from Wyoming to offer three glimpses of what I found to be the most striking aspects of my residence. The Solitude of Stars, the third and final movement of the original sextet, was inspired by the stunning nightly display of the heavens above. Without city lights dimming the night sky, countless stars shone brightly over the vast expanse of the prairie.

During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, I undertook *The Solitude of Stars* Project, which contains multiple duo and trio arrangements that I made for colleagues and friends. -S.G.

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Composer and performer bios and ensemble rosters are available online at [bgsu.edu/festival](https://bgsu.edu/festival). Scan the QR code with your phone or device for quick and easy access.

