

Natalia Merlano Gomez

DMA 1 Recital

Tuesday, May 30th, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Music Center – Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

The works selected for tonight's concert result from the research and conversations in the voice class. They are chamber music pieces, mainly from the last 20 years, created by women composers. Also, writing these notes, I realized that most composers you will listen to emigrated from their countries.

Navigating this repertory brought me thoughts, emotions, and ideas that allowed me to discover, reformulate, and realize different aspects of myself as a singer, vocalist, performer, musician, and human being.

Program

Mirage (2007) - Kaija Saariaho (Finland, France. 1953 -)

Text: Maria Sabina (1896-1985)

For voice, cello, and piano

Meadow Song (2010 / 2013) - Iris Szeghy (Slovak, Switzerland. 1956 -)

For voice and violin

Text: From Slovak hay-harvesting song

De las hojas secas del verano (1967) - Jacqueline Nova (Colombia, Belgium. 1935-1975)

For voice and piano

Text: Jose Puben (1936-1996)

Only The Words Themselves Say What They Say (2011) - Kate Soper (USA. 1981-)

For voice and flute

Text: Lydia Davis (1947-)

Lullaby (2016) - Nasim Khorassani (Iran. 1987-)

For voice and piano

Text: From Iranian folk lullaby

Artefact #2 (2019) - Sara Glojnaric (Croatia, Germany. 1991-)

For voice drum set and electronics

Collaborators

Piano: Kyle Adam Blair

Drums: Eric Derr

Flute: Teresa Diaz De Cossio

Cello: Peter Ko

Violin: Ilana Waniuk

Program Notes

Mirage is a work for voice, piano, and cello written by Kaija Saariaho in 2007, commissioned originally by the Orchestre de Paris, BBC Symphony Orchestra, and Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and adapted a couple of years later to her friends Pia Freud, Anssi Karttunen, and Tuija Hakkila.

Working on the piece, I learned about Maria Sabina. She was a healer, wise, oral poet, and Shaman from Mexico who introduced the use of psilocybin mushrooms and their sacred and healing power to help her community. Unfortunately, her practice was taken by the Western world, and this issue affected her and her community profoundly.

I am a woman who flies

I am the secret eagle woman [the mushroom] says:

I am the Lord eagle woman;

I am the lady who swims;

Because I can swim in the immense,

Because I can swim in all forms.

I am the shooting star woman,

I am the shooting star woman beneath the water,

I am the lady doll,

I am the sacred clown,

Because I can swim,

Because I can fly.

Meadow Song is a piece by Iris Szeghy that I listened to for the first time around 2015 in the two voices version. After that, I wrote the composer on social media and could access the scores of different versions of the same piece, like the voice and flute, voice and saxophone, and voice and violin version you would listen to tonight. After some conversations via email, she sent me her piece for solo voice, Psalm, which I had the pleasure to perform and record in my album *Resonancias Entrelazadas* in 2021. Although we have not met in person, I feel grateful to collaborate with her in all these fantastic works.

Hrabala, hrabala, nič ňenahrabala,

od vel'kehožal'u, hrabl'e polamala.

She raked, raked, raked nothing together,

she broke the rake our of great sorrow.

Jaqueline Nova was a pioneer in electroacoustic music in Colombia and Latin America. She was the first woman to graduate from the Colombia National Conservatory of Music as a composer. The first piece I listened to her was Creacion de la Tierra (Creation of the Earth) at elementary school when my music teacher showed us an excerpt of the piece to exemplify Contemporary Music. It was probably the first electro-acoustic piece that I listened to. *De las hojas secas del verano* is one of her songs closer to an experimental and contemporary language. Other songs by her have more rhythmic structures with patterns and tonal sounds. In the piece you will listen to, the rhythm has more space and freedom, and the melody is created more atonally.

Esas hojas, las secas.

Silenciosos otoños

que arrastraban la muerte

que arroparon la tierra,

de susuros y diálogos

como si un manto oscuro,

nos trajera el olvido,

nos cubriera de vida indiferente.

Those leaves, the dry ones.

Silent autumns

that dragged death

that covered the earth

as if a dark cloak

brings us the oblivion

would cover us with indifferent life.

Lydia Davis is one of my favorite American writers and poets, and the way the composer Kate Soper used her text in the piece *Only the Words Themselves Say What They Say* is incredible. Soper is a talented composer who explores voice in many different ways. Being a singer allowed her to impregnate the piece of many explorations of the instrument that made the performance pleasant and exciting. Additionally, how the flute and the voice create textures and meanings is very simple regarding the tools but rich in the complexity both make simultaneously.

I. Go Away

When he says, “Go away and don’t come back,” you are hurt by the words even though you know he does not mean what the words say, or rather you think he probably means “Go away” because he is so angry at you he does not want you anywhere near him right now, but you are quite sure he does not want you to stay away, he must want you to come back, either soon or later, depending on how quickly he may grow less angry during the time you are away, how he may remember other less angry feelings he often has for you that may soften his anger now. But though he does mean “Go away,” he does not mean it as much as he means the anger that the words have in them, as he also means the anger in the words “don’t come back.” He means all the anger meant by someone who says such words and means what the words say, that you should not come back, ever, or rather he means most of the anger meant by such a person, for if he meant all the anger he would also mean what the words themselves say, that you should not come back, ever. But, being angry, if he were merely to say, “I’m very angry at you,” you would not be as hurt as you are, or you would not be hurt at all, even though the degree of anger, if it could be measured, might be exactly the same. Or perhaps the degree of anger could not be the same. Or perhaps it could be the same but the anger would have to be of a different kind, a kind that could be shared as a problem, whereas this kind can be told only in these words he does not mean. So it is not the anger in these words that hurts you, but the fact that he chooses to say words to you that mean you should never come back, even though he does not mean what the words say, even though only the words themselves mean what they say.

II. Head, Heart

Heart weeps.

Head tries to help heart.

Head tells heart how it is, again: You will lose the ones you love. They will all go. But even the earth will go, someday.

Heart feels better, then.

But the words of head do not remain long in the ears of heart.

Heart is so new to this.

I want them back, says heart.

Head is all heart has.

Help, head. Help heart.

III. Getting to Know Your Body

If your eyeballs move, this means that you’re thinking, or about to start thinking.

If you don’t want to be thinking at this particular moment, try to keep your eyeballs still.

I met Nasim Khorassani when I started my Doctorate last Fall. A couple of months later, I learned about her project MOAASER, in which she teaches composition online to support and promote the works of young Persian composers, engaging them with all her energy, creativity, discipline, and big heart. When planning this recital, I wanted to include a piece by her. Right after I mentioned it, she sent me the score, and we talked about the work. **Lullaby** is a song she composed one night when she couldn't fall asleep. It is a melody to calm the mind, and the soul, to lull the thoughts, fears, and sadness.

Lalaei lalaei, ay gole peste lalaei, shodam az geryehat khaste lalaei

Sleep, my sweetheart sleep, I suffer when you cry, sleep.

Sara Glojnaric is interested in the aesthetics and socio/political consequences of pop culture, among other topics. We met during my Master's at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Stuttgart, Germany. In **Artifact #2**, she wants to evoke nostalgia from pop music, using drum intros from renamed rock songs from the 90s and 80s and doing different electronic treatments to create new sonorities and meanings.

Can't / ha no / wipe / no / long/ immune / dug / sunday/ no

low/ out/ how/ out/ a no /us / hey / a/ hard/ find/ hey/ now/ us /no

fall/ find/ fall/ wall/ luck/ wash/ wall/ no/ hey/ now/ no/' wash/ luck/ hey/ wall/ luck/ find/ fall/no

no/ wash/ luck/find/ us/ hey/ wall/ us/ ha/ wall/ how/ no/ how/ lust/ life/ how

lust life guy ear film loan the brains

drugs skin starts oh got hag wall fall

glass scream past way no you sing swing

go town know slow noe eat hist hat

ought to head flowers just buy fire high

knees skies wheels bomb suns brave killer one

run line give mind touch kind up eyestime

game aye her aloud hero race best

About Natalia Merlano Gomez:

Musician, singer, improviser, and creator. She has been captivated by Experimental Music, worldwide Folk Music, improvisation, graphical notation, and extended vocal sounds. Additionally, she is curious about theater and explorations around video and photography. She studied an M.A in Contemporary Music - Singing at Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Stuttgart, Germany, being part of different multidisciplinary projects combining music, theater, dance, literature, and visual arts. Yielding good results, she did her undergraduate program at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas in Bogota, Colombia. She is pursuing a Doctorate in Music Arts at the University of California San Diego. Since 2009, she has premiered many works by composers worldwide and commissioned new pieces. In 2021, she presented her first album called: Resonancias Entrelazadas. It includes 15 works written by women composers and improvisations with female performers. Also, in 2022, she premiered the project CINCO with audiovisual pieces by Latin American composers written primarily for her.

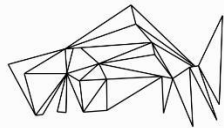
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