

Eunmi Ko, piano

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***Buddha's hand* (subtly sweet, fragrant, splayed) from *Orchard* (2019)**

Tyler Kline

Dedicated to Eunmi Ko

For quite some time now, I have been interested in exploring agrarian values in my music. The act of farming and the act of composing probably seem like two disparate things, but more and more I am seeing correlations that are meaningful to me. You cultivate the land. You plant the seed. You care for it. You harvest the bounty. It's a life cycle, much like beginning and completing a piece of music.

I was born and raised in Kentucky, a mostly rural state (my hometown, as of the 2010 census, has just under 7,000 residents), and at any given point I was likely a mile within a farm. I even had music teachers who owned and operated family farms. After moving away, I became interested in the work of Kentucky writer Wendell Berry, and these writings have been very influential in leading me to consider composition in these ways. Not only that, but in researching my own ancestors, I have discovered that for many generations in the past they were farmers. Incorporating these values into my compositional thinking, and specifically creating music that is "about" soil, plant life, etc. is my way of honoring that legacy.

"Orchard" was born out of these considerations.

An orchard is a plot of land used to plant and harvest fruit trees. This collection includes fifty pieces, ranging from 45 seconds to just over three minutes, all titled after, and, in one way or another, inspired by botanical fruit. When composing each piece, I considered the various features of a particular fruit in order to arrive at compositional decisions. So, in essence, the music takes on my interpretation of a fruit's texture, shape, color, or flavor - either in combination or focusing on just one of those elements. To this end, given the brevity of each piece, I almost see these as "seeds" of what could be more long-form musical ideas. Each piece lasts long enough to express a specific idea - to "make a point" - and then it's over. There's no further development or variation, and no kind of extension into a formal pattern. My goal, then, is that when audiences listen to this music they will experience something similar to actually eating a fruit: the experience is brief, but satisfying.

Due to the number of individual pieces in "Orchard," and the fact that in order to perform every piece would require devoting an entire recital or concert to just this music, pianists are encouraged to pick and choose the pieces that meet their programming needs and order them however they'd like. The prospect of this is truly exciting to me as a composer, because it means that there will inevitably be combinations put together by performers that I would never have imagined. Plus, I believe ordering the pieces in various ways will put the music in different contexts, creating a unique experience each time a pianist performs the music.

"Orchard" is the result of a commissioning consortium made up of 30 pianists and supporters, and was composed from January to August 2018. – Tyler Kline

<https://www.tylerklinemusic.com/>

Tori No Yoni: in memory of Ryuko Mizutani (2020) *world premiere David Liptak
<https://www.dliptak.com/>

***I thirst* (2008) Younghi Pagh-Paan**

I took the title for this piece from the words of the crucified Christ, in John 19,28. I have been composing about the “Seven Sayings From The Cross” for four years. Two pieces have been completed, the a-cappella choir piece “Vide domini, vide afflictionem nostram” (2006), and “In luce ambulemus” for tenor and orchestra (2007). Both are based on two sources: the “Seven Sayings From The Cross”, and excerpts from the letters of the Korean priest Yang-Eop Choe (1821-1861), who was the second Catholic priest in Korea.

When Jesus Christ says “I am thirsty”, his thirst is not only physical, but also spiritual. Therein lies a lesson for all of us. When the pianist Gaya Han asked me to compose this piece, the sounds of Jeju island, where her parents come from, sprang to mind. And when I think of Jeju, I also think of the tragic events that transpired there.

1948, the inhabitants of Jeju island revolted against the right-wing local government that had been installed by the powers in Seoul. The South Korean army, along with the police, employed a ruthless “burnt earth” policy to crush the revolt, which resulted in the destruction of over 400 villages, as well as the death of tens of thousands Jeju inhabitants. The South Korean government drew a veil of silence over the bloodshed until as recently as 1999.

The Jeju fishermen break into powerful song while rowing their boats out to the sea, and their singing contains a great sadness. Tears of sorrow, buried deep inside their hearts. Many souls calling out “I am thirsty” all at once, expressing their thirst for the truth.

But this piece is not focused on their sorrows. What I want to express through this music is that the unbroken spirit of their forebearers is still kept alive by the following generations on Jeju island.

I don’t know when we will finally hear the cries of “I am thirsty” from the realm of the dead. I don’t know when our ears will be ready to listen.

“Here lies the truth. Please take a look, here they lie. Our grandmothers and grandfathers...” - Younghi Pagh-Paan <https://pagh-paan.com/index.html>

***Land of Waking Dreams* (2018) Juhi Bansal**

Inspired by the night sky seen from the desert backcountry, *Land of Waking Dreams* borrows the shapes, gestures and colors of a murmuring nightscape. Pointillistic stars and murky clouds against a carpet of shifting blues. Whistling wind across open plateaus, silence and a deep resonance. *Land of Waking Dreams* was commissioned by Piano Spheres, and written for pianist Nic Gerpe. - Juhi Bansal <https://juhibansal.com/>

***Night Music: Ten Variations on a Lead Sheet* (2022) John Liberatore**

Dedicated to Eunmi Ko

- I. Realization
- II. Four Lines

- III. One Line
- IV. Run
- V. Precipitato
- VI. Invention
- VII. Dovetail
- VIII. Overlay
- IX. Klang
- X. Nocturne

For a long time, I have been reading lead sheets and studying jazz harmony, a musical pursuit that started as a hobby but has become less peripheral to my composition practice over time. I am always curious about the question: “what counts” when it comes to the realization of a harmony. In practice, any tone can “belong” to any chord, or nearly so. The terrain between what can and cannot reasonably suggest, say, “A7” is richly ambiguous, and perpetually surprising. More so than my other works, “Night Music” is a conscious investigation of this question. It is ten “realizations,” in the loosest possible sense, of a lead sheet.

I wrote the work over a long stretch of time, probably starting sometime in late 2019 and finishing in early 2022. Commissioned by pianist and long-time friend and collaborator Eunmi Ko, we originally expected a premiere in Summer 2020. The work was intended for a midnight concert under the stars, one of the main events of the festival “En Blanc et Noir” in Lagrasse, a small village in the French Pyrenees. The evocative and unusual setting of the premiere made me think of the jazz standard, “Stella by Starlight,” a tune I had been playing with at the time. The rich voice-leading embedded in the song’s distinct harmonic progression made the process of “lead sheet realization” especially fruitful.

The intended premiere, like practically everything at that time, was cancelled. Feeling adrift in the first weeks of the pandemic, I found myself writing a nocturne in the style of Chopin, curiously enough, following the “Stella” progression, perhaps finding solace in the music and style of this long-admired composer. When the premiere was officially canceled, I stopped working on the piece, and was left with this nocturne, orphaned from its intended context. Nearly two years later, I picked up the pieces of this project and brought it to fruition. The piece did indeed premiere in idyllic Lagrasse in Summer 2022 (though not at midnight).

The work begins with a somewhat-standard, if idiosyncratic realization of “Stella.” Following this the work goes through numerous stylistic transformations, exploring different ways of thinking about Harmony, progression, and at times, jazz. The work is dedicated to Eunmi, the pluralistic nature of the piece showcasing many aspects of her pianism that I admire. As Ella Fitzgerald sang, “she’s all of these and more.” – John Liberatore <https://johnsliberatore.com/>

***basil eyes* (2020) Tyler Kline**

Commissioned by and dedicated to Eunmi Ko

Performer Bio:

Hailed as “exceedingly interesting” (New York Concert Review) and “kaleidoscopic” (San Francisco Classical Voice), pianist Eunmi Ko concertizes as a recitalist and chamber musician throughout Asia, Europe, and the Americas. As a sought-after collaborator and champion of new music, she works with contemporary composers, ensembles, and performers from around the world.

Ko is the co-founder and President of the [Contemporary Art Music Project](#) (CAMP). She teaches at the University of South Florida as Associate Professor of Piano. Her past positions include co-advisor of USF New Music Consortium (2016-2021), artist faculty on the Rebecca Penneys Piano Festival (2013-2018), and the assistant director of the Women in Music Festival at Eastman (2011).

Ko holds graduate degrees (MM and DMA) from the Eastman School of Music. She may also be heard on the recently published [CD release](#) of solo and chamber music. Follow her on [YouTube](#) and [iTunes](#).