

a breath upwards

Ah Young Hong  
sings works by  
Milton Babbitt and  
Michael Hersch





Ah Young Hong, soprano  
Miranda Cuckson, viola  
Gleb Kanasevich, clarinet  
Jamie Hersch, horn

1. **Milton Babbitt**  
**Philomel** 18:57

**Michael Hersch**  
**a breath upwards**

2. I 1:46  
3. II 2:29  
4. III 0:36  
5. IV 2:32  
6. V 3:07  
7. VI 2:40  
8. VII 1:05  
9. VIII 4:47  
10. IX 0:57  
11. X 3:49  
12. XI 6:13  
13. XII 1:57

50:58

## Milton Babbitt's *Philomel* and Michael Hersch's *a breath upwards*

*Philomel* (1964) owes its existence to three significant relationships in Milton Babbitt's creative life. First, there was the RCA Mark II Sound Synthesizer Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, installed in a former dairy in New York City in 1957. This analog machine was nothing like the digital versions so widely used today. For one thing, it was massive, taking up an entire room. Creating music on it was a laborious process that required punching holes in a roll of paper—rather like a player piano—to generate sound from analog oscillators. “The machine was totally zero,” Babbitt recalled, “nothing predetermined, and any number we punched could refer to any dimension of the machine.” The reward, however, was that he could make music that did not require the intervention of performers. Since the 1940s, Babbitt had been refining his system of serial composition to encompass duration, dynamics, and register, in addition to pitch. These additional parameters markedly increased the complexity and interpretive difficulty of his music to the point that it practically required the arrival of some form of *deus ex machina*.

Babbitt worked in the Columbia-Princeton studio for several years before presenting his first electronic work, *Composition for Synthesizer* (1961), realized on the RCA synthesizer and recorded on tape. This was followed by *Vision and Prayer* (1961), a Dylan Thomas setting for soprano and tape written for Bethany Beardslee. Babbitt and Beardslee had met after the soprano had completed her studies at Juilliard. Inspired by her remarkable musicianship and ability to negotiate the most demanding music, Babbitt wrote a song cycle for her: *Du* (1951). And

when she was awarded a grant from the Ford Foundation, Beardslee approached Babbitt to commission a new work, and *Philomel* was born.

John Hollander supplied the text for *Philomel*, describing his work as “a cantata text, somewhere between a lyric poem and a frankly programmatic libretto.” Babbitt and Hollander were kindred spirits. Both were virtuosi in their respective areas; Hollander was not only musically literate but intensely concerned with the musical aspect of poetry, while Babbitt, for his part, took a logician's delight in wordplay. (Babbitt's humor is readily apparent in his titles for certain works, like *Ensembles for Synthesizer*, *Sextets* and *The Joy of More Sextets* for violin and piano, *It Takes Twelve to Tango*, *Sheer Pluck* for guitar, *Transfigured Notes* for string orchestra, and *Septet, But Equal*.) This fortuitous overlapping of Babbitt and Hollander's aesthetic priorities fuels *Philomel*'s expressive power.

The story of *Philomel* appears in the Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses* but originated with the Greeks. It's a gruesome tale. Procne and *Philomel* are daughters of Pandion, the Athenian king. Procne marries Tereus, king of Thrace, who takes her back to his country where she bears him a son, Itys. Procne misses her younger sister terribly, however, and Tereus travels back to Athens and, with Pandit's permission, returns to Thrace with *Philomel*. During the return voyage, Tereus lusts for his sister-in-law, and when they disembark, he takes her into the forest and rapes her. She threatens to reveal this crime to her sister, so Tereus cuts out her tongue before raping her again. *Philomel* is kept captive but

weaves her tale of woe into a tapestry. When Procne discovers the truth about Philomel's disappearance, she finds her sister and brings her to the Thracian castle in disguise. During a feast, Procne kills Itys and has his body cooked and served to Tereus. When the king calls for his son, Procne presents him with the son's severed head. Procne and Philomela flee the palace, pursued by the enraged Tereus and they end up in the woods where Philomela was raped. As the king chases them, the gods intervene, and Tereus is transformed into a hoopoe, a bird known for befouling its own nest; Prone becomes a swallow, and Philomela is given a new voice as a nightingale.

Hollander later explained: "Long ago I had wanted to use the myth of Philomel for an elaborate aria because I had always felt that the story was quintessentially operatic, with a great transformation scene in which a soprano who had been singing nothing but vocalises or choppy syllables suddenly can break out into both sustained melody and language. [So] after having heard *Vision and Prayer*, the possibilities of a synthesized accompaniment for dramatic purposes seemed enormous, and...when Babbitt asked me for a text, the metamorphosis of the nightingale seemed an obvious subject." Babbitt's idea was to enhance the drama by weaving Beardslee's voice—pre-recorded and transformed via the synthesizer—into the electronic score. This pre-recorded vocal element has various roles: it allows us to hear Philomel's inner voice as she hears it or remembers it, the voices of other birds, and sometimes acts as a kind of Greek chorus. When performed in concert, the soprano sings on stage surrounded by four loudspeakers, one for each of the four channels of the recording.

*Philomel* is in cast in three sections. Hollander en-

visioned the first as the equivalent of a recitative interspersed with "bits of arioso." We hear Beardslee's pre-recorded voice before we hear the "live" soprano's. Both the taped and live voices cling to the pitch "E," and the text begins with what Hollander described as "a sustained presentation of the vowel nucleus /iy/, the core of the phrase 'I feel,' for it is from her fear, fancied outrage, and remembered pain that Philomela's psychic energy in the song is generated." The singer's phrases are choppy and often slip from song into a song-like speech. Poetically, Hollander wrote, "the opening section develops by permutations of the phonemes of the words *Philomel* and *Tereus*, the sequences *feel a million, filaments and tears, trees, tears* (verb), etc. eventually expanding into more coherent phrase groups and finally stanzaic clauses."

In the second section, Philomel has been transformed and is conversing with other species of bird as she explores her new identity. Hollander imagined this as an echo song, a satiric verse form popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. His aim was for an "horrific" effect "in a kind of baroque way" that avoided the coy humor traditionally associated with echo songs. In the score, the echoing reply to Philomel's queries comes from Beardslee's taped voice. The cantata closes with an extensive aria. Philomel has found her voice and new being, and (as Hollander put it) we finally hear "the fully realized singing of the fully formed nightingale."

Philomel's transformation is accomplished with great finesse in both music and verse. Babbitt's music can be perplexing because of its complexity, even when its surface is elegant—and it almost always is. For historian Richard Taruskin, "Babbitt's achievement was a joyous affirmation of formalism," and the course of

his career could be viewed “as a tireless quest [for] greater and greater beauty (or ‘elegance,’ as mathematicians use the word), for its commitment to an ever increasing, all-encompassing orderly control of an ever more multifarious and detailed complex of relationships... What sets *Philomel* apart from most of Babbitt’s music is its representational dimension, which provides a metaphorical context for interpreting serial procedures that are more often presented as wholly abstract.” Indeed, even if one is unaware (or uninterested) in Babbitt’s procedural legerdemain, the music can be appreciated for its ability to illustrate and illuminate the text.

Right from the very beginning, when we hear the soprano emerge, stuttering, from a thicket of electronic sounds—including the pre-recorded sound of Beard-slee’s voice—we can imagine *Philomel* fleeing frenziedly through the forest pursued not only by Tereus but also by the dreadful demons of her memory. Babbitt’s score evokes a scene teeming with life: creatures scuttling and scurrying out of *Philomel*’s way, and the poor woman’s breathless desperation. Then, at the end of the first section, there are subtle hints of the imminent transformation, like the lyrical emphasis on the phrase “a new self,” with its long-held high A-Flat—one of the soprano’s first sustained notes in the score thus far. Babbitt’s word-painting can be even more obvious, as in the echo song, where the word “scream” is sung (both live and on tape) with an expressive, scream-like *glissando*. There’s even a musical backwards glance to the Baroque in the final aria, where *Philomel* sings “I ache in change / Though once I grew / At a slower pace” with vaulting, Handelian phrases.



Like Babbitt’s *Philomel*, Michael Hersch’s *a breath upwards* (2014) was the result of several significant artistic relationships. In a program note for the work’s New York premiere, Hersch wrote:

*The artwork of Michael Mazur (1935-2009) has held a significant place in my life ever since I encountered it over fifteen years ago at the American Academy in Rome, which was hosting an exhibition of his L'Inferno di Dante etchings during the autumn of 2000. Seeing these particular etchings was at once a disturbing and deeply moving experience, as is often the case with Mazur's work in this medium. The artist was present at the exhibition and it was then that our friendship began. Mazur was not a musician, but I felt his art, like much of the artwork to which I am drawn, was particularly musical. A few months after Mazur's death in 2009, I began work on a string quartet entitled Images From a Closed Ward, after etchings Mazur made in the early 1960s documenting patients in a Rhode Island psychiatric hospital. The horrors visited upon those figures from life reminded me very much of the figures in Mazur's Dante, which I had seen almost a decade earlier. I revisited the Dante etchings and consequently spent time reacquainting myself with Dante's The Divine Comedy.*

*Soon after Mazur passed away, my work for horn and cello, Last Autumn, premiered in Philadelphia. The cycle was a culmination of sorts of the relationship I've had with my hornist brother, Jamie. Growing up hearing Jamie's playing profoundly shaped my thinking about the instrument. It was during this performance that I determined I would include horn in the instrumentation of any Dante settings.*

*I spent most of 2010-2012 composing On the Threshold of Winter, a monodrama rooted in the experiences of a friend's premature death from*

cancer, and my own confrontation with the disease several years before that. The soprano Ah Young Hong was selected to sing the work's solitary role. As the experience over the years working with Jamie had deeply impacted my approach to writing for the horn, Ah Young's remarkable vocal abilities made me rethink much of how I approach writing for the voice. It was also during this period that violinist Miranda Cuckson, a musician who I have worked with more than any other over the past decade, performed the viola part of an early duo of mine. I had never heard Miranda play the viola before, and the experience was exhilarating. It was with all this in mind that I decided to compose a breath upwards, a work which brought together many of these seemingly disparate elements.

Although Hersch made the acquaintance of Mazur's work through the artist's *Inferno* series, the composer's choice of texts for this song cycle came instead from *Purgatorio*. Hersch explains that, following work on his opera, he wanted to "at least make the attempt to get away from illness, fear, and loss," and that he found Dante's *Purgatorio* as "more nuanced" than the "uniform, overwhelmingly terrifying limbo we often imagine."

The twelve movements of a *breath upwards* span the breadth of Dante's *Purgatorio* and also incorporate texts from Ezra Pound's *Cantos*. Hersch recalls that after he viewed Mazur's *Dante* exhibition in Rome a fragment of Pound's Canto XXVIII came to mind: "Borne into the tempest, black cloud wrapping their wings, / The night hollow beneath them". These lines eventually found their way into movement 7, the second of the cycle's three instrumental interludes; the text itself is not sung. Pound fragments also inform the other instrumental interludes: movements

3 (Canto LXXVI) and 9 (Canto LXXIV). Only one Pound text is sung: Canto XC in movement 5.

Hersch also remembers that when he heard Mazur had passed away, lines from *Purgatorio* resonated:

... I saw the bird of Jove drop  
Down through that tree, ripping the bark, As well as  
the flowers and the new leaves ...

These lines from the book's penultimate canto are sung in the opening movement of a *breath upwards*. But when Hersch went to set these verses, he removed reference to "the bird of Jove," so we don't necessarily envision an eagle swooping down and stripping the great tree (which Dante meant to symbolize persecutions of Christians under the Roman Empire). In doing this, Hersch allows the music—which plunges destructively—to generate its own imagery.

Movement 2 flips back to Canto III of *Purgatorio*. Dante and Virgil are standing with the sun setting red behind them. Dante sees his shadow but not his guide's, and fears he may have been abandoned—but Virgil is there beside him. Dante casts a shadow because he is still human. Where the music of the previous movement was shrill and frenetic, here we find uneasy, mysterious quiet, the instruments providing a wheezing accompaniment, like a temperamental village organ, perhaps. The words "only in front of me that the ground was darkened" are separated, musically, from the beginning of the sentence, and this phrase reappears—significantly—in movements 8 and 12.

Intermezzo A, with its unsung Pound fragment, continues the eerily quiescent mood of the preceding

movement, so the violent opening of movement 4 hits with hurricane force, although the writing is spare. The text here comes from early on in Canto XXIV, where Dante is walking and discussing poetry with Forese Donati. They are watched by shades with sunken eyes who wonder how Dante can look so alive—an image that recalls Dante's surprise at Virgil's lack of a shadow in movement 2.

In movement 5, we shift from Dante's verses to Pound's, though the transition feels seamless as the poetic images of "boughs" and "umbrella pines" recall the cycle's opening. Musically, however, we are in new territory suffused with expressive and unnerving silences. Hersch repeats the words "viper stirs" with a sudden, poisonous leap, and at the movement's end, the "grey wing, black wing" in the boughs plummet with equal ferocity.

Hersch turns to Canto XXV of *Purgatorio* for both movements 6 and 10. In movement 6, Dante is ascending a treacherous, narrow path, buffeted on one side by flames from Purgatory's seventh terrace (lust) and with a precipice on the other. The music moves in slow, deliberate steps, conveying a mood of intense loneliness that seeps into movement 7: Intermezzo B (Pound's Canto XXVIII). Movement 8 brings fragments of verses from Dante's Canto III heard in movement 2. It begins with an extensive instrumental introduction in which Hersch has the clarinet recall the chant-like music for the line "only in front of me that the ground was darkened." When the soprano sings at last, it is with this same music again, slightly varied. Movement 9: Intermezzo C (Pound's Canto LXXIV) opens with bittersweet counterpoint that is quickly silenced by nervously insistent, repeated notes from the horn.

The text of movement 6 came from the end of Canto XXV; for movement 10, Hersch selects a strange passage from that Canto's center. Dante is asking Virgil about biology and the human body. The answer, however, comes from the shade of the poet Statius, who explains embryology and the role of blood in creating new life. Hersch appears more concerned with Dante's rich language and imagery than with Statius' scientific lecture. The movement begins and ends haltingly but holds at its center a raw, wrenching duet for viola and bass clarinet.

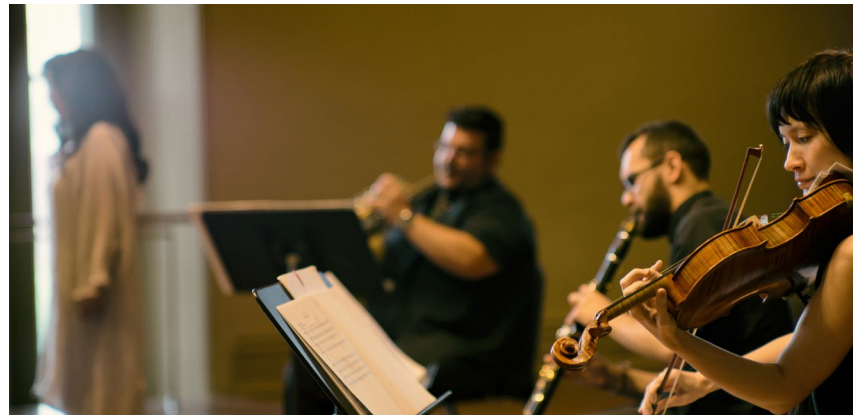
In several of his large-scale works, like *The Vanishing Pavilions* and *Images from a Closed Ward*, Hersch places the most substantive, emotionally hard-hitting movement near the end, and so he does here, too. Movement 11 draws on disconnected passages from Canto XXI, where Dante first meets Statius who is just completing his purgation, in one of the most extraordinary and moving scenes in all of *Purgatorio*. Statius was a later Roman poet who has been largely forgotten but was highly regarded in Dante's day. Statius does not know that it is Virgil who is guiding Dante, and in conversation expresses his admiration for *The Aeneid*, which he describes as having been his "mamma" and nurse in poetry. He tells Dante that he'd gladly spend another year in Purgatory for the opportunity to have lived during Virgil's time and known him. Virgil signals for Dante to remain silent, but Dante can't suppress a smile. Statius is perplexed, and Virgil gives Dante permission to reveal his identity. Statius kneels in homage and goes to embrace Virgil's feet, but Virgil stops him with the reminder that they are both shadows. Rising, Statius declares: "Now you can understand / The quantity of love which warms me to you, / When I put out of mind our vanity, / Treating shadows as if they were solid things."

Hersch gradually and inexorably ratchets the intensity, repeating the lines “let me know who you were” and “let me understand.” The movement peaks at a terrifying climax marked by dotted rhythms that hark back to movement 4. Yet Hersch removes the literal heart of Statius’ speech, leaving the words of love unsung—although the fervor is palpable. And at the very moment where Statius expresses his tenderest feelings, the music abruptly drops to a whisper.

The final movement features a slow, repeated, arpeggiated B-flat minor triad in the bass clarinet, giving the music a chilly air of rustic melancholy—an effect reminiscent of the hurdy-gurdy’s drone at the end of Schubert’s *Winterreise*. The horn plays a figure heard in Intermezzo A before the soprano enters at the end singing fragments of text from Canto III: “This is a human body.” And we are left with the image of two artists, one with his shadow, the other shadowless but steadfast in spirit.

— Andrew Farach-Colton

*Andrew Farach-Colton is a regular contributor to Gramophone, BBC Music Magazine, Opera News, and The Strad. His essays and analytical notes have appeared in the program books of the New York Philharmonic, BBC Proms, and the San Francisco Opera, as well as in CD booklets of Decca and Harmonia Mundi recordings.*





Milton Babbitt (music), John Hollander (text):

*Philomel*

**TAPE**

(Eeeeeeeeeeeeeee)

Not true trees—

Not true tears—

Not true trees—

Not Tereus; not a True Tereus—

Trees filled with mellowing

Felonous fame—

Is it Tereus—

Is it Tereus—

I.

**PHILOMEL**

Eeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

Feeeeeeeeeeeeee!

I feel—

Feel a million trees

And the heat of trees

Feel a million tears

Is it Tereus I feel?

Feel a million filaments;

Fear the tearing, the feeling

Trees of ephemeral leaves

Trees tear,

And I bear

Families of tears—

I feel a million Philomels—

I feel trees in my hair

And on the ground, [vines,]

Honeymelons fouling

My knees and feet

Soundlessly in my

Flight through the forest;

I founder in quiet

Pillowing melody,  
Honey unheard—

Feeling killed

(Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee)

Here I find only  
Miles of felted silence  
Unwinding behind me,  
Lost, lost in the wooded night.

My hooded voice, lost.  
Lost, as my first  
Unhoneyed tongue;  
Forced, as my last  
Unfeathered defense;  
Fast-tangled in lust  
Of these woods so dense.  
Emptied, unfeeling and unfilled  
By trees here where no birds have  
trilled—

Feeling killed  
Philomel stilled  
Her honey unfulfilled.

What is that sound?  
A voice found;  
Broken, the bound  
Of silence, beyond  
Violence of human sound,  
As if a new self  
Could be founded on sound.

The trees are astounded!  
What is this humming?  
I am becoming  
My own song. . . .

## II. Echo Song

### TAPE

O Thrush

Stung, stung, stung;  
With the sting of becoming  
I sing

Stung!  
I sing  
I sing

O Hawk

Die, die,

O Hawk in the high and widening sky,  
What need I finally do to fly  
And see with your unclouded eye?

O Owl

Slight, slight, slight;

O—  
Slight—

### PHILOMEL

O Thrush in the woods I fly among,  
Do you, too, talk with the forest's tongue?

I sing

O Hawk in the high and widening sky,  
What need I finally do to fly  
And see with your unclouded eye?

Die;

Let the day of despairing  
Be done

O Owl, the wild mirror of the night,  
What is the force of the forests light?

With the slipping away of  
The sun

O sable Raven, call me back!  
What color does my torn robe lack?

Black, black,

Blood

O sable Raven, call me back  
What color does my torn robe lack?  
Blood

Scream!

Scream,

O—  
Scream—

Bird

Bird

The world's despair should not be  
heard!  
Fear and terror not be stirred:  
The Gods who made this hubbub  
erred!

Thrace, Thrace, Thrace!

Black;  
As your blameless and long-  
Dried blood

O bright Gull, aid me in my dream!  
Above the riddled breaker's cream!

Scream,

For the shreds of your being!  
Be shrill

The world's despair should not be  
heard!  
Fear and terror not be stirred:  
The Gods who made this hubbub  
erred!

Bird, bird

You are bare of desire:  
Be born!

Oh green leaves! Through your rustling  
Lace  
Ahead, I hear my own myth race.

Thrace!  
Pain is unchained,



There is change!  
The woods of Thrace!

There is change!  
In the woods of Thrace!

There is change!  
In the woods of Thrace!  
Oh ... oh Hawk  
Be shrill  
Be born!

### III. Philomel

Living, growing, changing, being in the hum always  
Of pain! The pain of slow change blows in our faces  
Like unfelt winds that the spinning world makes in its turning:  
Life and feeling whirl on, below the threshold of burning.

(with tape) I burn in change.  
Far, far I flew  
To this wailing place.  
And now I range  
Thrashing, through  
The woods of Thrace.

If pain brush again the rushing wings of frightened change,  
Then feeling distills to a burning drop, and transformation  
Becomes intolerable. I have been defiled and felt my tongue  
Torn out: but more pain reigns in these woods I range among.

(with tape) I ache in change,  
Though once I grew  
At a slower pace.  
And now I range  
Thrashing, through  
The woods of Thrace.

Pressed into one fell moment, my ghastly transformation  
Died like a fading scream: the ravisher and chased  
Turned into one at last: the voice Tereus shattered  
Becomes the tiny voices of night that the God has scattered.

I die in ...  
Pain tore in two  
Love's secret face.  
(with tape) And now I range  
Thrashing, through  
The woods of Thrace.

Love's most hidden tongue throbbed in the barbarous daylight;  
Then all became pain in one great scream of silence, fading,  
Finally, as all the voices of feeling died in the west  
And pain alone remained with remembering in my breast.

I screamed in change.  
Now all I can do  
Is bewail that chase.  
(with tape) For now I range  
Thrashing, through  
The woods of Thrace.

Pain in the breast and the mind, fused into music! Change  
Bruising hurt silence even further! Now, in this glade,  
Suffering is redeemed in song. Feeling takes wing:  
High, high above, beyond the forests of horror I sing!

I sing in change.  
Now my song will range  
Till the morning dew  
Dampens its face;  
Now my song will range  
As once it flew  
Thrashing, through  
The woods of  
(with tape) Thrace.



PHILOMEL  
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Music by Milton Babbitt  
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## Michael Hersch

*a breath upwards: twelve songs after poetry of Dante and Pound*

1. Never did fire descend with such swiftness  
From thick cloud, then it falls from the remotest  
Regions of the atmosphere ...  
  
Down through the that tree, ripping the bark,  
As well as the flowers and the new leaves ...  
  
(Dante Alighieri c.1265-1321)
2. The sun, which was burning red behind us,  
Was interrupted in front by my shadow;  
For its rays were stopped as I stood there.  
  
I turned to one side with the apprehension  
That I might have been abandoned, when I saw  
That it was only in front of me that the ground was darkened.  
  
'Without you asking I will confess to you  
That this is a human body that you see;  
That is why the sunlight on the ground is broken.'  
  
(D.A.)
3. The mountain and shut garden of pear trees in flower  
Here rested ...  
  
(Ezra Pound 1885-1972)
4. ... And the shadows, who appeared as things twice dead,  
Looked at me through their sunken eyes, and wondered  
When they perceived that I was still alive.  
  
(D.A.)

5. mermaid, upward ...  
the viper stirs in the dust ...  
and in the boughs now are voices  
grey wing, black wing ...  
and the umbrella pines ...  
(E.P.)
6. So we had to go on the open edge,  
One at a time; and on one side I feared the fire,  
And on the other, I was afraid of falling off.  
(D.A.)
7. Borne into the tempest, black cloud wrapping their wings,  
The night hollow beneath them  
And fell with dawn into ocean ...  
(E.P.)
8. ... only in front of me that the ground was darkened.  
Without you asking I will confess to you  
That this is a human body that you see;  
That is why the sunlight on the ground is broken.  
(D.A.)
9. ... and there was a smell of mint under the tent flaps  
Especially after the rain ...  
(E.P.)



- And, joined to the other, it begins to operate,  
First coagulating, and then giving life  
To what it has brought together ... (D.A.)

- ... Now may it please you to let me know who you were,  
And why you have lain here so many centuries;  
Let me understand all this from your lips.
- ... Now you can understand  
... Treating shadows as if they were solid things.
- (D.A.)

- ... only in front of me that the ground was darkened.  
Without you asking ...  
That this is a human body ...
- (D.A.)

By Ezra Pound, from *THE CANTOS OF EZRA POUND*,  
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## BIOGRAPHIES

Soprano **Ah Young Hong** has interpreted a vast array of repertoire, ranging from the music of Lassus, Monteverdi and Bach, to works of Wolf, Berg, Poulenc, Sondheim, Babbitt, and Kurtág. Best known for her work in Michael Hersch's monodrama, *On the Threshold of Winter*, *The New York Times* praised her in the work's world premiere as "the opera's blazing, lone star". Other operatic performances by Ms. Hong include the title role in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Morgana in Handel's *Alcina*, Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Fortuna and Minerva in Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, and Asteria in Handel's *Tamerlano*. She has also appeared with Opera Lafayette in Rebel and Francoeur's *Zélindor, roi des Sylphes* at the Rose Theater in Lincoln Center and as La Musique in Charpentier's *Les Arts Florissants* at the Kennedy Center. As Poppea, Ms. Hong was deemed "a triumph" whose "tonal gleam filled the hall beautifully" (*The Baltimore Sun*).

In high demand as a concert and chamber soloist, Ms. Hong has performed with Konzerthaus Berlin's ensemble in residence, Ensemble unitedberlin, acclaimed Netherland-based contemporary music group Ensemble Klang, Daedalus Quartet, The Phoenix Symphony, Charleston Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, Wiener KammerOrchester, Concert Artists of Baltimore, and Tempesta di Mare, amongst others. During the 2017-2018 season, she will perform with pianist Mark Wait, violinist Carolyn Huebl, and cellist Felix Wang (Nashville); Ensemble Dal Niente (Chicago); Utah Opera (Salt Lake City); and ending the season at the Ojai Festival (Ca.) with violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja

in György Kurtág's complete *Kafka Fragments* (Ojai, Berkeley, Aldeburgh-UK).

Ms. Hong recorded the American premiere of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Alles mit Gott und nichts ohn' ihn*, BWV 1127, for National Public Radio's Performance Today. Other recordings include the world premiere of Rebel and Francoeur's *Zélindor, roi des Sylphes* (Naxos), Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* (Peter Lee Music), and *Sentirete una Canzonetta* with Harmonious Blacksmith. In the autumn of 2017, Ms. Hong appeared as featured soloist on Ensemble Klang's recording of Michael Hersch's *Black Untitled* and *cortex and ankle*.

Ms. Hong currently serves as faculty on the voice department at the Peabody Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University.



Violinist/violist **Miranda Cuckson** is a favorite of audiences for her performances of a range of repertoire and styles, from music of older eras to the most current creations. From a deep background in the classical repertoire, she has become one of the most acclaimed performers of contemporary music. *Downbeat* magazine recently stated that she "reaffirms her standing as one of the most sensitive and electric interpreters of new music."

Called "a prodigiously talented player who [can] make even the thorniest contemporary scores sing" (*The New York Times*), she appears as soloist and chamber musician in halls large and small, universities, galleries and informal spaces. Venues include the Berlin Philharmonie, Teatro Colón, Carnegie

Hall, Suntory Hall, Library of Congress, Miller Theatre, 92nd St Y, Guggenheim Museum, Barge-music, Museum of Modern Art, BAM, Monday Evening Concerts in LA, Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, and the Marlboro, Bard, Lincoln Center, Bridgehampton, Portland, Music Mountain and Bodensee festivals.

Among the works recently written for Miranda are compositions by Georg Friedrich Haas, Michael Hersch, Jason Eckardt, George Lewis, Lu Wang and Steve Lehman. She recently collaborated in performance with composers Vijay Iyer, Nina C. Young, Huang Ruo and Philip Glass. In addition to working with numerous emerging musicians, Miranda has collaborated with renowned composers including Dutilleux, Carter, Adès, Sciarrino, Adams, Boulez, Hyla, Mackey, Crumb, Saariaho, Davidovsky, Ran, Hurel, Bermel, Wyner, Murail, Wuorinen and Currier. In 2012, the Library of Congress commissioned a work for her by Harold Meltzer.

Her 2017 album of violin music by Wolpe, Carter and Ferneyhough (Urlicht AV) adds to her varied, adventurous discography. Her first album for ECM Records - sonatas by Bartók, Schnittke and Lutoslawski - was released in 2016, and her re-recording of Nono's *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura* for violin and electronics was named a Best Classical Recording of 2012 by the The New York Times. Also on Urlicht, she released *Melting the Darkness*: solo microtonal and electronics pieces, and works by Carter, Sessions and Eckardt. Her discography also features the Korngold and Ponce concertos, solo and duo music by Finney, Shapey and Martino, *the wreckage of flowers*: music of Michael Hersch, and music by Jeffrey Mumford, Anna

Weesner, Philip Glass and Dai Fujikura. Miranda is founder/director of Nunc, a member of counter)induction, and a performer/curator at National Sawdust. She studied at The Juilliard School, where she received her BM, MM and doctorate and won the Presser and Richard F. French Awards. She is on faculty at the Mannes School of Music.



**Gleb Kanasevich** has garnered acclaim as a clarinet soloist, composer, chamber music collaborator, and contemporary music specialist. He has appeared as a soloist with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Belarus National Philharmonic, soundSCAPE Ensemble, Atlantic Music Festival Orchestra, Peabody Symphony Orchestra, and more. As a resident artist, Mr. Kanasevich has made feature appearances on stages of Spoleto Festival USA, soundSCAPE Festival for Contemporary Music (guest artist faculty in 2013/14/15), 50th SCI National Conference, Audeamus International Music Festival in Zagreb, MusicArte Panama, and has been invited as a visiting artist at various educational institutions, like University of Oxford, Brandeis University, Northern Arizona University, Montclair State University, and more. As a member Lunar Ensemble, Mr. Kanasevich visited Tulane University, SUNY Fredonia, and The Frost School at University of Miami for a variety of contemporary music residencies, working closely with composition students and performing numerous concerts that consisted of premieres and the ensemble's core repertoire. Since 2013, Mr. Kanasevich has been a core member of Ensemble Cantata Profana – a group based in New York City and the recipient of the 2016 ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary

Music. The ensemble has since garnered significant critical acclaim from publications like the New York Times, New Yorker, Boston Globe, and has established a strong foundation with its sister project – Heartbeat Opera.

In 2017 Mr. Kanasevich performed with Ulysses Ensemble, a new music group comprised of outstanding emerging young professionals and organized by Ulysses Network in Europe. Together, the ensemble has performed feature concerts under Heinz Holliger, Jean-Philippe Wurtz, and others at ManiFeste 2017 in Paris, Aldeburgh Festival, and the Royaumont Foundation. At this point, he has premiered over 300 works of living composers and has worked closely with a tremendously diverse list of figures.

Currently in pursuit of a PhD degree in Composition and Theory at Brandeis University in Boston, MA, Mr. Kanasevich holds a Masters Degree (2013) in clarinet from the Yale School of Music (studied with David Shifrin), and a Bachelor of Music Degree (2011) in clarinet from the Peabody Conservatory of Music, where he studied under New York Philharmonic's principal clarinetist Anthony McGill. His works have been interpreted by Ensemble Intercontemporain, International Contemporary Ensemble, Spoleto Festival Orchestra, Lydian String Quartet, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Ensemble Cantata Profana, and many more. He currently works primarily with feedback, noise, and live electronics, and will take his work for solo clarinet and electronics "Subtraction" to Dark Music Days Festival in Reykjavik, Iceland in January, 2018. Mr. Kanasevich also works as a curator and video maker for the online new music database and audio/video/score resource ScoreFollower/Incipitsify.



Widely considered among the finest hornists performing today, **Jamie Hersch** is currently co-principal horn with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. An active soloist and chamber artist throughout the world, Mr. Hersch has performed as soloist with the Boston Pops, the George Enescu Philharmonic, the Romanian State Radio Orchestra, the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, Network for New Music, Eastern Music Festival, and in various chamber orchestras and ensembles in the United States, including those in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C., among others, and throughout Europe and Asia. As a lecturer, Mr. Hersch has given master classes at institutions and universities internationally. Playing professionally since the age of 17, when he performed regularly and recorded with the National Symphony Orchestra under Mstislav Rostropovich, Mr. Hersch remains the only musician to have ever recorded with that orchestra while still in high school. Mr. Hersch began his formal musical studies with Edwin Thayer, continuing on at Boston University where he won the Concerto and Aria Competition in 1995.

In 2009, along with cellist Daniel Gaisford, Mr. Hersch gave the world premiere of Michael Hersch's *Last Autumn* for horn and cello. The performance was listed as among the year's top classical events by *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Mr. Hersch plays on Patterson Custom horns and is a Patterson artist.



The compositional and intellectual wisdom of **Milton Babbitt** (1916-2011) has influenced a wide range of contemporary musicians. A broad



array of distinguished musical achievements in the dodecaphonic system and important writings on the subject have generated increased understanding and integration of serialist language into the eclectic musical styles of the late 20th century. Babbitt was also renowned for his great talent and instinct for jazz and his astonishing command of American popular music. His *All Set*, for jazz ensemble, reveals an extraordinary compositional flexibility, uniquely American and vintage Babbitt.

Babbitt was born on 10 May 1916 in Philadelphia, and studied composition privately with Roger Sessions. He earned degrees from New York and Princeton Universities and was awarded honorary degrees from Middlebury College, Swarthmore College, New York University, the New England Conservatory, University of Glasgow, and Northwestern University. He taught at Princeton and The Juilliard School.

An extensive catalogue of works for multiple combinations of instruments and voice along with his pioneering achievements in synthesized sound have made Babbitt one of the most celebrated of 20th-century composers. He was a founder and member of the Committee of Direction for the Electronic Music Center of Columbia-Princeton Universities and a member of the Editorial Board of Perspectives of New Music. The recipient of numerous honors, commissions, and awards, including a MacArthur Fellowship and a Pulitzer Prize Citation for his "life's work as a distinguished and seminal American composer," Babbitt was also a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.



Described by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* as a composer writing works of "devastating emotional impact," whose music possesses "an unrelenting and unforgettable intensity," (*The Washington Post*), **Michael Hersch's** (b.1971) work has been performed in the U.S. and abroad with ensembles including the String Soloists of the Berlin Philharmonic, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Ensemble Klang, the Kreutzer, Blair and Flux Quartets, NUNC, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, the Network for New Music Ensemble, and the major orchestras of Cleveland, Saint Louis, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, and Baltimore, among others. Mr. Hersch has written for such soloists as Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Shai Wosner, Thomas Hampson, Miranda Cuckson, Garrick Ohlsson, and Boris Pergamenschikow.

Recent and upcoming premieres include his *Violin Concerto* commissioned by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and Patricia Kopatchinskaja, with additional performances at the Avanti Festival in Helsinki, and Switzerland's Lucerne Festival; the NYC premiere of *Zwischen Leben und Tod*, at National Sawdust in Brooklyn, new productions of his monodrama, *On the Threshold of Winter*, in Chicago and Salt Lake City, and a new work for the 2018 Ojai Music Festival. In 2019/20 Mr. Hersch will be the resident composer of Camerata Bern. Recently completed works include *End Stages*, commissioned by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and new pieces commissioned by the Library of Congress, Ensemble Klang, and a work for solo violin commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, premiered at the orchestra's Biennial. Mr. Hersch has also been the recipient of the Rome Prize, the Berlin Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, awards from the American Academy of Arts & Letters, and other honors. Also a noted pianist, Mr. Hersch has appeared throughout the U.S. and Europe.

## CREDITS

All works recorded at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD  
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Produced by Ed Tetreault, Ah Young Hong, and Michael Hersch

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