

Senior Project

As we all know, times have changed with the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic. This has drastically affected the world of music performance as live performances have ceased and musicians have widely moved to online performances. Normally, I would have sought to prepare a live recital to offer my work as a culmination of my time at Sonoma State. Instead, I have utilized the full range of my skills learned through my degree to record, perform, and produce an album showcasing my work in classical piano performance, composition, recording arts, and traditional Mbira music. I express my deepest gratitude to my many mentors and supporters, especially Dr. Thom Limbert, Dr. Brian Wilson, Dr. Marilyn Thompson, Dr. Alexander Kato-Willis, my Grandmother Joan Garrett, my number one fans-my family, and my wife Erin Anderson. I dedicate this project to you all.

-Michael Garrett

Program Notes

Part One: Bachmaninoff

J.S. Bach- Prelude no. 24 in B minor

Emil Cioran once said, "If there is anyone who owes everything to Bach, it is certainly God". I couldn't agree more. In many ways Bach is at the foundation of the music I love and has been my most major inspiration in composition. To me and many others, he is the king of counterpoint and indeed sent me on my journey to study and compose with counterpoint. This piece is from the *Well Tempered Clavier, Book One*.

J.S. Bach/A. Siloti - Prelude in B minor

This piece represents one of my favorite phenomena in all music-Russianized Bach. It is a transcription by Alexander Siloti, a 19th century Russian pianist, composer, and cousin of Rachmaninoff. The original comes from Bach's *Prelude No. 10* from the *Well Tempered Clavier, Book One*.

Sergei Rachmaninoff- Op. 3. No.2 Prelude in C-sharp major

Rachmaninoff's famous dramatic prelude came to be nicknamed "it" as he was constantly asked to play "it". In many ways this prelude is a showpiece often used for encores. I play it to show off a bit, as well for the sheer enjoyment of playing full power on the piano.

Alexander Scriabin- Op 16. No. 1 - Prelude in B major

Scriabin was a contemporary of Rachmaninoff. In their early years they studied counterpoint and composition together under Serge Taneyev. This composition is from his earlier work before his exploratory period where he was all but shunned by Taneyev.

Sergei Rachmaninoff- Op 33. No.3 - Etude no. 3

This is the most deeply studied piece of music in this presentation. I spent many a month studying the complex phrasing and voicing of the harmonies, melodies, and countermelodies of this piece. It is truly a fine example of Rachmaninoff's use of counterpoint in addition to his wonderful development of texture and musical arch.

Part Two: Composition

Michael Garrett - Prelude in G-flat Major

I wrote this piece during a 30 day composing challenge to write a piece a day for a month. This piece is an exploration of pentatonic melody and harmony.

Michael Garrett - Variations on a Google Search (Oh! Sussana), performed by Sequoia

One day I searched google for a "pentatonic melody", and found the tune presented in this piece. I wrote this set of variations based on the melody and later realised it is the melody to an old folk tune called *Oh! Sussana*. This piece draws upon my study of counterpoint from which I developed the harmony and various textures. The rhythm is inspired by the use of polyrhythm in traditional mbira music.

Michael Garrett - Prelude and Fugue in D Major, performed by Sequoia

This piece draws most heavily upon my study of counterpoint. Influences can be heard from Shostakovich's *Fugue no. 1*, Bach's *Fugue No. 8*, and Siloti's transcription of *Bach's Prelude no. 10*.

Michael Garrett - Firebrand, performed by Michael Garrett, Austin Missner, Matt Bailey, Max Lesser, and Andrew Moses

This piece was originally written to be performed live by my friends in the fire fighting community (hence the fire reference). However, I have first produced this individually tracked recording to present on this project. My first piece for a "Chamber Ensemble Rock Band", is a departure from my composition for solo piano. I decided to write a piece that was simply for the fun of composing and playing, which resulted in *FireBrand*. This is also my first major recording and production of an ensemble of mixed instruments.

Michael Garrett - A Walk Home

A Walk Home, was the winner of Sonoma States 2020 Orchestral Composition Competition. This piece is inspired by a week-long journey walking in the mountains with my good friend, Jay Sliva to whom the piece is dedicated. Many of the melodies are simple tunes that we sang while we walked together. The various sections of the piece represent images or events of the journey. The singing at the end is one of the tunes that we sang together on our hike.

Part Three: Traditional Shona Mbira

Tadzungaira, performed by Dr. Thom Limbert and Michael Garrett

An unexpected turn in my studies at Sonoma State was the study of traditional Shona Mbira music. A Mbira is an ancient instrument from Zimbabwe made from metal keys attached to a soundboard that are struck with the fingers. I first heard the instrument at a friend's house and was surprised to find out Dr. Thom Limbert's involvement in a major publication of a book on Mbira music with ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner. I jumped headfirst to the study of Mbira music. It has added a layer to my musical life that I now could never go without. *Tadzungaira* means "we are suffering" and is played to end all suffering in the world.