When the ground shakes.

James May

University of Louisville

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WHEN THE GROUND SHAKES
for mezzo-soprano, baritone, & 15 instruments

by

James May
B.Mus., The College of Wooster, 2016

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
School of Music of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Music
in Music Composition

School of Music
University of Louisville
Louisville, KY

May 2018
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A Thesis approved on
May 3, 2018
by the following Thesis Committee

Thesis Director – Steve Rouse

Krzysztof Wołek

Kimcherie Lloyd
DEDICATION

When the Ground Shakes is dedicated to the victims of gun-violence; in schools and on streets, at home and away, victims we've learned to know and victims we never will.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, to Dr. Steve Rouse; for your unending patience and guidance in both the development of this work and in my development as a composer over the last year and a half; for your comments, advice, encouragement, and conversation, and for the countless opportunities you have provided me or supported me in pursuing —

To Dr. Krzysztof Wolek and Prof. Kimcherie Lloyd; for reading my thesis, challenging my conceptions of music, introducing me to new modes of thought, providing platforms for my work, and always being ready to grab a beer —

To my other professors and mentors: Allison Ogden, Lisa Wong, Jack Gallagher, Abby Shupe, John Pippen, Peter Mowrey, Caroline Ehman, Matt Ertz, Greg Slawson, John Ritz, Christopher Brody, Mark Yeary, and Kent Hatteberg; for sharing your love and deep knowledge of music with me —

To my classmates and colleagues, especially Cully Murphy, D. Carter, Alex Enyart, and everybody who has ever agreed or been forced to perform my music; for friendship, conversation, support, and absurd humor —

To Mickey; for your constant friendship and excitement, and for your beautiful words —

To Charlotte; for bringing the best of Wooster to Louisville —

To Sarah; for your love, comfort, companionship, knowledge, passion, and understanding —

To my parents and siblings for your love, support, and visits; to my friends from Pittsburgh, Wooster, and abroad; and to the memory of Brigid “Dee” Joyce and Molly Bennett —

— thank you.
In the spring of 2017, I approached friend and writer Mickey Osthimer about collaborating on text for a song cycle. I was concerned about questions of identity, especially in America—why and how do certain ideologies lay “claim” to American values? Are protesters less representative of our values than police or government? More? Why do we ignore certain sub–communities, uphold others, and mourn or empathize with them accordingly?

What emerged from our discussions was a series of poems and prose selections about community, identity, memory, and trauma. Some of the text deals with childhood and nostalgia, while we culled other excerpts from previous essays Mickey had written for a literature blog. In total, they depict a portrait of how we build identity in childhood, and how that identity splinters in the face of violence—specifically, gun violence.

Over the course of the composition process, this topic grew ever–more relevant. While writing, the number of American school shootings since 2013 surged past 300. Among those was the 2018 Marjory Stoneman Douglass High School shooting in Parkland, FL, which gave rise to the #MarchForOurLives campaign and the public protest of high school students.

Simultaneously, America faced and continues to face an epidemic of unarmed or legally armed people of color dying in police custody or after police shootings, including Stephon Clark, killed during the revision process of this piece. The groundswell of protest against this recurring trend extends back to the 2013 trial of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, and the 2014 shooting death of Michael Brown at the hands of Ferguson, MO police officer Darren Wilson—respectively, these events gave birth and support to the ongoing #BlackLivesMatter movement, addressing another face of gun violence in America.

And, of course, neither of these contemporary histories necessarily address the often ignored gun deaths that occur every day in America, and the ineffective policies that permit for these situations. In the 37 days after the Parkland massacre, 73 teens died from shootings or gun–related injury around the country.

When the Ground Shakes does not propose a solution to America’s epidemic of gun violence, an issue deeply affected by public policy, the prison-industrial complex, our scapegoating and misunderstanding of mental illness, and racism. It offers, I hope, a glimpse into the mental and physical anguish of losing friends and family to such circumstances. It is a memorial to Americans—especially people of color, Native, queer/gender non–conforming, and mentally disabled citizens—who are disproportionally affected by gun violence. It is a challenge to the narrative of masculinity that drives white men to commit mass atrocity, a challenge to the policies and cultures that have allowed for or perpetuated indiscriminate community gun violence, and a challenge to Americans to find creative and complex solutions to protect each other.

Duration // c. 30’
I. 291 – [6’25”]
II. Palisade – [4’47”]
III. Silent Day – [5’35”]
IV. Violence – [4’20”]
V. 22 (17.04.16) – [9’15”]

Contact // j.may.2394@live.com
Website // jmay2394.wixsite.com/jamesmaycomposer
I. 291

I remember…

scattering neon-shadowed children slice through food stand veins, peel lemon slivers between naïf teeth, mud-caked feet tremble nimble when the ground shakes

it rained leading up to that
the river grew to the lake and back

the old home ashed out, labyrinth walls
ground down
throughout the fair, your sheet cape
repels flames from foes for friends you meet
on that road
(it goes and goes)

fresh-squeezed, summer tint, popped away

click
click

no trace, no beat
no palm crease nor baby feet
marks how it came to this
(the storm makes the mud release)

II. Palisade*

Violence ensued upon each other cycles back onto the faulting, failing, incriminating treatment of our one true home.

III. Silent Day

strong heart pulled a string from the sky
and climbed to catch a star
ma became the nearest sun
he’d return with morning light

young blood cast a hook in the park
in the pond to catch a cloud
soft grass played like a sea-wide trap
for his eyes could see too far

clear mind knew of a blue above
and became its hidden shade
I’ll be back soon, he said to them all
for it’s you I’ll always love

captain, the way?
capturing smoke
silent house
on a silent day
IV. Violence*

Violence will ensue where it can be bred.

V. 22 (17.04.16)

the stand lights dim, shadows lost within their wits
I don’t remember the smoke

those going home replaced by next morning’s mortal reminder
I don’t remember the blood

every autumn passing wraps those remained to the vessel
of the once named, now eternally nestled
I don’t remember the shots

pop
pop
pop

I never heard the shots
I won’t remember remembering you after

*excerpts taken from posts originally published on Ploughshares literary blog, now out of copyright.
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INSTRUMENTATION

(Amplification of ensemble permitted—if available—but not required.)

Flute
B♭ Clarinet (doubling E♭ Clarinet, B♭ Bass Clarinet)
Tenor Saxophone (doubling Alto Saxophone)

French Horn (mute)
C Trumpet (harmon, straight, cup mutes)
Bass Trombone (harmon mute)

Percussion 1: Drum Set [kick drum, 3 toms (floor, mid, hi), snare, hi-hat, 3 cymbals (ride, crash, splash), triangle]
   Triangle beater, superball mallet, and cello/double bass bow required.

Percussion 2: Multi set-up [vibraphone, glockenspiel, tuned Thai gongs (F4, F#4, G4, A4 – substitute vibraphone if specific pitches unavailable), tam-tam, bass drum, djembe, bongos (low, mid), woodblocks (low, mid), bamboo chimes, susp. cymbal, medium coil, single almglocken (C#4 or D4 preferred), whip, styrofoam block]
   Triangle beater, superball mallet, and cello/double bass bow required.

Electric Guitar, Drop-D Tuning: [DADGBE]
(volume, tuning, distortion, fuzz, overdrive, chorus, delay pedals)

Piano

Mezzo-soprano
Baritone

Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass

Number of string players not specified. May be played one-on-a-part or with small sections (e.g. 4-4-3-3-2, 4-3-3-2-1). If amplified, one-on-a-part.
PERFORMANCE NOTES

GENERAL

Extended techniques are additionally explained in-score on first appearance.

All *glissandi* begin immediately and are continuous.

Hairpins with open circles indicate growing from/decaying to nothing.

Dynamics in quotation marks (“*p*”) indicate physical force required for technique, **not** necessarily resulting volume.

All trill accidentals reference the pitch a letter name above the written note.

*Bisbigliando* trills (\(\text{bisb.}\)) indicate a timbral trill on the same pitch.

Arrows indicate a gradual change from one technique to another (i.e. ord. \(\rightarrow\) m.s.p.).

Altered noteheads indicate different techniques and remain consistent throughout the piece.

Arrow noteheads (except for flute, inverted arrow) indicate unspecified extreme register pitch.

All accidentals (including quarter-tones) hold through the bar, only cancelled by a barline or another accidental. Occasional courtesy accidentals are included.

Ascending pitch order of accidentals, including quarter-tones:

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{\textbf{b}} \\
\text{\textbf{c}} \\
\text{\textbf{d}} \\
\text{\textbf{e}} \\
\end{array}\]

Three-beam tremolos are always unmeasured, in all instruments.

Feathered beams indicate gradual speeding up/slowing down of tempo over given time.

Groups of small eighth- or sixteenth-notes with a grace–note slash should be performed very quickly, out of time. Sixteenth–note groups have more urgency than eighth–note groups.

Aleatoric boxed or repeated notation indicates continuous, repeated activity for the duration of the horizontal line, out of time with the rest of ensemble.

“Wavy” sixteenth-note beaming indicates an out of time gesture that occurs within a specific time period; quasi–rubato.

Unmetered Notation

Unmetered notation passages are indicated with a prolation symbol in place of a time signature.

Bars are separated with dotted barlines—each bar is given a total duration in seconds (i.e. 10”).

Events within the bar occur approximately in relation to the total time of the bar.

Sustained pitches/activity are indicated with horizontal lines.

Events occurring once are indicated as a group of beamed notes or as stemless noteheads.

WOODWINDS

All quarter-tones should be fingered.

Multiphonic fingerings for specified chords are provided in-score.

Wedge noteheads indicate a slap-tongue on the given pitch.
**Flute**
Specified consonants are indicated with IPA symbols (i.e., [d]).

- Square noteheads indicate air sound with no tone while fingering the given pitch.
- Inverted arrow noteheads indicate a tongue ram, with sounding pitch in parenthesis.

Overblowing indicated with 1) solid beamed lines from the fundamental to desired register, or 2) a high multiphonic. In each case, the coloristic effect is more important than specific pitches.

- Whistle tones are always given over a specific fundamental and indicated with jagged line. Constantly fluctuate randomly and quickly through overtones.

**Clarinet**
- Square noteheads indicate toneless air sound while fingering given pitch.


**Saxophone**
- X-noteheads indicate key-clicks.

Three-beam tremolo indicates growling.

**BRASS**

All quarter-tones should be fingered. Microtones indicated as specific partial should not be adjusted for tuning.

- Dotted-circle noteheads indicate hitting the mouthpiece (removed) with palm, creating a percussive pop.

**Horn**

A significant number of horn microtones come from the harmonic series, where 📗 indicates the seventh partial of the overtone series. This will always be a slightly flattened minor 7th + 2 octaves above the fundamental.

**Trumpet**

+ and − indicate covering/uncovering the harmon mute with hand.

**Trombone**

- Wedge noteheads indicate a slap-tongue on the given pitch.

- A jagged wave indicates to “shake” the pitch slightly, with slide, for given duration.

**PERCUSSION**

**Noteheads**

X-noteheads always indicate a frame hit (drum), a normal hit (cymbal), or a closed hit (hi-hat). Diamond noteheads indicate hitting at the bell (cymbal), or an open hit (hi-hat).

- Dotted circle noteheads (cymbal) indicate holding the stick perpendicular to the blade of the cymbal and hitting against the side. Creates a bell-like tone.

**Modifications**

- Noteheads with a loop above indicate a circular rubbing motion (i.e. brushes rubbing on snare drum, activating a cymbal by rubbing top of blade instead of hitting, etc.)

- A notehead with a diagonal arrow (cymbal) indicates scraping from bell to edge with triangle beater or stick.

- Small noteheads in parenthesis indicate shadow hits, played extremely softly to fill in the pattern.
**ELECTRIC GUITAR**

Type and brand of guitar, amp, and pedals are left to performer discretion—however, tone should be warm and even throughout range and colors. Tube amplification preferred over solid state, Humbucker or double-coil pickups preferred over single coil.

Guitar tuned to Drop-D (DADGBE) throughout, and further de-tuned in movement V.

Pitches in full score are written **where they sound**—fingerling adjustments for lowest string are necessary.

Tablature is occasionally included to facilitate fingerings.

Dashed hairpins indicate volume manipulation with the volume pedal or volume knob.

“z” on the stem indicates pick scraping of different kinds. Pitches given should be fingered.

Staccato dots indicate palm mute.

Pedal changes are indicated with ±[pedal].

Harmonics are indicated as diamond noteheads at the **fingered** pitch, with guitar string included.

“+” over a note indicates a tap without plucking the string, used by both hands.

Bends are indicated with angled braces connecting beginning and end pitches.

**PIANO**

X-noteheads indicate percussive knocking on various parts of the piano.

Square noteheads indicate pitches depressed silently and/or held with Sostenuto pedal.

Dashed arrows with a crescent above indicate to scrape that piano string inside the piano with coin or fingernail, away from the dampers.

A small circle above a notehead indicates harmonics inside the piano, struck at the given pitch.

The desired overtone is sometimes specified.

“+” indicates muting the pitch inside the piano, behind the dampers. Pitch should be heard.

Pizz. Crescent over a noteheads—accompanied with “pizz.”—indicates plucking that string (or group of strings) inside the piano with fingernail.

Silently depressed pitches accompanied by circle and a trill line indicate to rub the hand (left or right) over those strings inside the piano, while the keys are held down, for the given duration.

**VOICES**

In both parts, it is preferred that the vocal tone and style remain simple throughout.

IPA indications are used frequently throughout to indicate 1) isolated consonant sounds, 2) isolated vowel sounds, 3) metered ending consonants, 4) other effects. Shadow vowels or unvoiced consonants are indicated with X-noteheads, when specified. Otherwise, sing normally.

Headless stems indicate either a repetition of the previous sound, or a general pitch contour.

A three-line staff is occasionally used. This indicates a general pitch range, from high (top line) to low (bottom line). Pitches sung in these passages should be exaggerated, and need not conform to the other singer (if applicable) or pitch content of the ensemble.
“x” over a note/through a stem indicates growl or vocal fry. Singers should approach this technique healthily within their mechanism—in general, the sought effect is a noisy distortion of the pitch.

| Arrows through a stem, pointing left, indicate an audible inhale.

**Baritone**
Noteheads with an open circle above indicate falsetto tone production.

**STRINGS**

**Abbreviations:**
- (m.)s.p. – (molto) sul ponticello
- (m.)s.t. – (molto) sul tasto
- flaut. – flautando
- ord. – ordinario; cancels previous playing instruction

Harmonics are mostly indicated with diamond noteheads at the **fingered** pitch, clarified with string number.

- Square noteheads indicate dampening the strings with the left hand and bowing.
  - Should produce distorted, airy noise.
- Square noteheads with a fall-off indicate to dampen high on the fingerboard, then quickly swipe down while bowing. The strings should remain dampened throughout the motion.
- X-noteheads indicate to bow directly on the bridge, producing airy noise.
- Circles indicate circular bowing. Bow continuously in circles, moving from m.s.p. to m.s.t. and back. Do not lose contact when moving between locations. Creates a pulsing tone with intermittent airy bow noise.
- Dashes indicate knocking on the body of the instrument with knuckles/fist.
- Rounded wedges indicate to perform given action behind the bridge on the given string.
- Headless stems with a thick line through the top indicate bowing directly on the tailpiece, producing a hum.

**Cello & Double Bass**

Notes with an "M" through stem indicate a multiphonic, explained in-score. The given note is an approximation of the finger location, played like a standard harmonic. Strive for distinct pitches more than noise; vary bow position and pressure to maximize partials. For more information, including fingering charts and demonstrations, visit: http://www.cellomap.com/index/the-string/multiphonics-and-other-multiple-sounds.html
When the Ground Shakes

I. 291

Text by Mickey Oshimer

James May

Distant and hazy
wait until distinct tones audible from Taran-Tatn at least 7-10
fluently speak text below directly into instrument, quickly and clearly
with normal speaking voice—follow contour of line for pitch variation

Mud-caked fast tremble nimble when the ground shakes. The escaping tiv
singing out the breath like pulsing lemon slices from between old nail,
supplied by Strachey's Festival incessant stanzas thru mid-August to come.

Transposed Score

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<tr>
<td>Fl.</td>
<td>fp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eb Cl.</td>
<td>fp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten. Sax.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Tpt.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Bb Thn.</td>
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<td>Dr.</td>
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**M.S.**
- throughout the fair
- your sheet
- repeat
- for

**Bar.**
- throughout the fair
- repeat
- for

**Vln. 1**
- p
- fp

**Vln. 2**
- p
- fp

**Vla.**
- p
- fp

**Vc.**
- p
- fp

**Db.**
- fp
- p

\[ \text{( } \text{ } 76 \text{ )} \]
Abrasive ($\lambda = 100$) \[\text{senza misura}\]
III. Silent Day

Nostalgically ($\approx 54$)

Flute

Bb-Clarinet

Alto Saxophone

F Horn

C Trumpet

Bass Trombone

Drum Set

Glockenspiel

Electric Guitar

Piano

Mezzo-soprano

Nostalgically ($\approx 54$)

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass
46 Urgently (\( \dot{\alpha} = c. 72 \))

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Fl.} & \quad \text{B- Bass Clarinet} \\
\text{Bs. Cl.} & \\
\text{Alto Sax} & \\
\text{Hn.} & \quad \text{beamy} \quad \text{fit} \\
\text{C Tpt} & \quad \text{open} \\
\text{Bs. Tbn.} & \quad \text{stix} \\
\text{Dr.} & \quad \text{Fp} \quad \text{muted} \\
\text{Perc.} & \quad \text{Vibraphone} \\
\text{Vln. 1} & \quad \text{pizz.} \\
\text{Vln. 2} & \quad \text{pizz.} \\
\text{Vla.} & \quad \text{pizz.} \\
\text{Vc.} & \quad \text{pizz.} \\
\text{Db.} & \quad \text{pizz.}
\end{align*}
\]
Calmly (÷ = 54)
IV. Violence

**Menacing ($\omega = 80$)**

- **Flute:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **Bb Bass Clarinet:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **Tenor Saxophone:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **F Horn:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **C Trumpet:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **Bass Trombone:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **Drum Set:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings
  - text: “go to piano, stand in bend”

- **Vibraphone:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **Electric Guitar:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **Piano:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **Baritone:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

**Menacing ($\omega = 80$)**

- **Violin:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **Violin 2:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **Viola:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **Violoncello:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

- **Double Bass:**
  - notated notes
  - dynamic markings

Text:

- “s.t.”
- “fl.”
- “p”
- “cresc.”
- “dim.”
- “take out mouthpiece”
- “put mouthpiece with palm”
- “remove mouthpiece”
- “drag superball mallet over harp along interior bend of piano - produces low growl”
Fl.

Bs. Cl.

Ten. Sax.

Hn.

C Tpt.

Bs. Tbn.

Dr.

Perc.

E. Gtr.

Phn.

Bar.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

only air

hit mouthpiece with palm
insert mouthpiece

ppp

ff desposto

violence

(a) 2002

p

p
Thai Gong. (Vls. if specific pitches unavailable)

I don't re - mem - ber the blood.
Broadly \( \left( \frac{j}{i} = 69 \right) \)
CURRICULUM VITAE

JAMES MAY
1500 S. 5th St. #126 // Louisville, KY 40208
jmay2394.wixsite.com/jamesmaycomposer

Education
University of Louisville, May 2018
• M.M. Composition
The College of Wooster, 16 May 2016, summa cum laude
• B.Mus. Theory & Composition; B.A. English

Training
Composition
• Steve Rouse, University of Louisville, 2016 – present.
• Federico Garcia-De Castro, 2011-2012.
Conducting
• Orchestral, Kimcherie Lloyd, University of Louisville, 2016 – 2018.
• Choral and Orchestral, Lisa Wong, The College of Wooster, 2015 - 2016.

Compositions and Performances (selected)
When the Ground Shakes, mezzo-soprano, baritone, chamber orchestra (2018) [30:00].
Sculpture V, string quartet (2017) [6:00].
• Performed 10 & 15 November 2017, 11 February 2018, Aion String Quartet.
Redacted, piano (2017) [7:00].
• Performed on 90.5 WUOL Classical Louisville, 7 August 2017, and 11 August 2017, Renate Rohlffing.
Sculpture IV, flute, viola, guitar, percussion (2017) [6:00].
• Performed 2 November 2017, University of Louisville graduate students.
Lensing, full orchestra (2017) [1:30].
• Performed 28 January 2018, University of Louisville Orchestra, Kimcherie Lloyd, director.
Sixteen Dead Men, text by Dora Sigerson Shorter, bassoon, English horn, tenor, piano (2017) [4:30].
• Performed 15 November 2017, Dylon Crain tenor, Katherine Evans E. horn, Jackie Royce bassoon, Elliot Eckel piano.
Mini Wiconi, text by Zitkála-Šá, Pierrot Ensemble plus percussion (2017) [8:30].
• Performed 15 April 2017, Alex Enyart, conductor.
The Garden, text by H.D., unaccompanied SATB chorus (2016) [3:45].
• Performed by San Francisco Choral Artists, 19 – 26 March 2017, Magen Solomon, director.
Waves, chamber orchestra (2016) [5:00].
• Performed 23 April 2016 by musicians from the College of Wooster, James May, director.
Sea Gods, text by H.D., extended song for solo soprano and piano (2016) [11:00].
• Performed 23 April 2016 by Abigail Shupe, soprano, James May, piano
In Passing, text by Rabindranath Tagore, three poems for unaccompanied SATB chorus (2014) [10:00].
• Performed 23 April 2016 by musicians from the College of Wooster, Lauren Vanden Broeck, soprano, James May, director.

Masterclasses, Festivals, Conferences
Composition
• Bent Sørensen, April 2018.
• David Drubay (Indiana University), Nov. 2017.
• Michael Fiday (CCM), June 2017.
• Andrew Norman (USC), April 2017.
• Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez (Eastman Conservatory), Nov. 2016.
Conducting
• Andrea Vela (Loja Symphony Orchestra), Feb. 2018.
• Robert Porco (Cleveland Orchestra Chorus), April 2016.
New Music on the Point, Composer Participant, June 2018.
Charlotte New Music Festival, Composer, June 2017.
New Music Gathering, attendee, 2017.

Awards and Honors (selected)
George J. Mitchell Scholarship 2018-19, award recipient.
• Funding study at University College Cork for the 2018-19 academic year.
San Francisco Choral Artists New Voices Project 2016, co-first prize winner for The Garden.
Bombhard Fellowship, University of Louisville, 2016 – present.
Composer’s Circle, featured composer, July 2016, October 2016.
Fulbright Undergraduate Summer Study Institute Grant, Belfast, Northern Ireland, 2013.
• Queen’s University, Belfast, Understanding Ireland: Northern Perspectives.
Pi Kappa Lambda Music Honor Society, inducted spring 2016.
Phi Beta Kappa National Honor Society, inducted spring 2015.
Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society, inducted spring 2015

Professional Presentations (selected)
• “Thoughts on Composing,” University of Louisville MUS100 Guest Lecture, December 2018.
• “Dealing with Influence,” University of Louisville Composition Seminar, October 2018.