The perpetual hell of your own undoing.

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University of Louisville

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THE PERPETUAL HELL OF YOUR OWN UNDOING

A Musical Dramatic Work by

Emery Miles Tackett

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, Kentucky

December 2023
THE PERPETUAL HELL OF YOUR OWN UNDOING FOR CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

By

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B.M., Ball State University, 2020
M.M., University of Louisville, 2023

A Thesis Approved on

11/30/2023

by the following Thesis Committee:

Thesis Chair – Allison Ogden

Krzysztof Wolek

Kirsten Carithers
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who have helped me through thick and thin.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Allison Ogden for being an incredible support during the creation of this thesis. Her tireless work has been indispensable from day one of this project, and without her this would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank Dr. Krzysztof Wolek and Dr. Kirsten Carithers for being a part of my thesis committee. Their help has been instrumental in the completion of this project.

I would like to thank my parents Betsy Vick and Charles Tackett, as well as my grandmother M. Anne Vick for their support of my musical journey. From a young age they have supported my musical endeavors, and for this I cannot thank them enough.

Finally, I would like to thank my high school band director Mr. Aaron Alexander, whose encouragement enabled me to pursue my dream of becoming a composer.
PROGRAM NOTE

THE PERPETUAL HELL OF YOUR OWN UNDOING

FOR CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

Emery Miles Tackett

November 30th, 2023

*The Perpetual Hell of Your Own Undoing* is a musical dramatic work for a chamber ensemble and two voices. In it, two souls trapped in the afterlife must struggle to regain their memories through dreams in order to figure out where they are and why they’ve been brought there. Over time, as their memories are regained, they learn that they were in fact lovers. However, by the end the realization that one of the pair killed the other threatens to tear the two apart.

This musical dramatic work deals with themes of death, memory, and forgiveness. It utilizes both classical and Avant Garde musical ideas to convey the drama. As the characters’ moods change and the context is revealed, the music itself changes as well to match.
PERFORMERS’ NOTES

Clarinet

Multiphonic- Use the following fingering to produce

Flute and Clarinet

Boxes- Play whatever is in the box for the duration listed

Sparse

T.R.

mp

Sparse

Slap tongue

mp
INSTRUMENTATION

Flute
Clarinet in Bb
Percussion
Piano
Soprano Voice
Baritone Voice
Violin
Cello
Contrabass
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Act I Entrance Music

Emery Miles

Flute

Clarinet in B♭

Marimba

Piano

Violin

Cello

Double Bass

\[ \frac{\text{C Score}}{\text{Emery Miles}} \]

\[ \text{Flute} \]

\[ \text{Clarinet in B♭} \]

\[ \text{Marimba} \]

\[ \text{Piano} \]

\[ \text{Violin} \]

\[ \text{Cello} \]

\[ \text{Double Bass} \]

\[ \text{Flute} \]

\[ \text{Clarinet in B♭} \]

\[ \text{Marimba} \]

\[ \text{Piano} \]

\[ \text{Violin} \]

\[ \text{Cello} \]

\[ \text{Double Bass} \]

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Aet I Entrance Music
Act I Entrance Music
Aet I Entrance Music
Aet I Entrance Music

Fl.

Bb Cl.

Mrb.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.
Act I Entrance Music
Aet I Entrance Music

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

Mrb.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.
Aet I Entrance Music
Act I Dialogue Begins

Over the course of Act I dialogue, gliss down.

Continue over the course of Scene I dialogue

Fl.

B. Cl.

Mrb.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

Change bow as needed
Scene 1

In the liminal space between life and death.

*JOHN descends a long staircase.*

JOHN

Where the hell am I? How did I get here?

JANE

I wish I could tell you…

JOHN

And why can’t you?

JANE

Because I don’t know myself.

JOHN

Haven’t you tried to figure it out?

JANE

I just arrived here, same as you.
Discoveries in the Dark

\[ \text{\textbf{\textit{\(j = 140\)}}} \]

- Flute
- Clarinet in Bb
- Snare Drum
- Piano
- Jane
- John
- Violin
- Cello
- Double Bass
How did we arrive here? How will we escape? What's become of heaven?
What's become of fate?
Am I in a coma?
Body has no weight.
Discoveries in the Dark
How do you expect me to know more than you at this point?
That fact means nothing.

You've been here longer.
You've been here longer tell me what I'm missing!
You need to take a deep breath and
c

Discoveries in the Dark

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

S. Dr.

Pno.

Jane

calm your self

John

How can I be calm with nothing to go on?

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.
Oh god, oh god, oh god, oh god!
Oh god, oh god, help me, my lord

Deep breaths
Here is what we know
No-thing to see, no me-mo-ry, no-thing to do

No-thing to see, no me-mo-ry, no-thing to do
yet who are you?

yet who are you?

How do I know you didn't kidnap me?
What reason would I have to kidnap you?

That isn't proof you aren't guilty you see.
Why would I be missing my memory too
Don't you remember walking down the stairs?
'Course I re-mem-ber walk-ing down the stairs!

Tell me what hap-pened be fore that.
Discoveries in the Dark

Like I said, I don’t remember a thing.
Frankly it seems that we’re in the same boat. So I propose...

How can I...
pose that we work together we could be just

trust you? I don't know who you are May-be you're a demon
like a pair of detectives. listen to
just trying to trick me hiding in the dark hoping to outwit me.
Fl.
B♭ Cl.
S. Dr.
Pno.
Jane
John
Vln.
Vc.
D.B.
me we don't have to be ad ver sar ries
Two heads are better than one are they not?

That's a pretty good point you've
Besides, don't you think I want to know as badly as...
Discoveries in the Dark

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

S.Dr.

Pno.

Jane

John

A temporary truce you've given me no reason not to trust you

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.
Discoveries in the Dark

finally you're coming to your senses

now that we've agreed let's
But remember:

Nothing to see,

swing for the fences

Nothing to see,
no me mor y,

nothing to know,

no where to go

So I sup
Discoveries in the Dark

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

S. Dr.

Pno.

Jane

John

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

pose we should rest and gather strength so that

pose we should rest and gather strength so that
we can face the new day together.

we can face the new day together.
Scene 2

JANE

I had the most wonderful dream last night.

JOHN

What was it?

JANE

Let me tell you!
Out on a Boat

Lightly $\frac{\text{d}}{} = 115$

Flute

Clarinet in B♭

Vibraphone

Piano

Jane

John

Violin

Cello

Double Bass

sul tasto

pizz.
Out on a boat, the wind in my hair, I think we were
Out on a Boat

Jane:

fishing my father was there.

John:

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.
So, did you have a dream as well?
I don't want to talk about it.

Why's that?

Let's just focus on your dream.
While it's fresh in your mind

I felt so excited just looking over board.

While it's fresh in your mind
I didn't have my sea legs, my feet left the floor.

I think you mean
Out on a Boat

Fl.

Bs Cl.

Vib.

Pno.

Jane

John

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

What - e - ver My fa - ther jumped in - to a - ction

deck.
sul tasto
Out on a Boat

Fl.

B. Cl.

Vib.

Pno.

Jane

With a life preserver he pulled me in

John

Based on what you're telling me

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

42

45
It seems that this might be a memory

It felt so real, real and ex-
Out on a Boat

Fl.

Bs Cl.

Vib.

Pno.

Jane

ci-ting. Oh the wa-ter was so blue, felt just like fly-ing

John

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

56

51
There was something I needed to tell him.

Something important.
Out on a Boat

Jane: I couldn't muster the courage

John: What was it?

D.B.: arco

Vib.: mp

Vc.: arco

Pno.: p

Fl.: Tuba

B.C.: Trumpet

Vln.: p

Vlln.: p

D.B.: p
Out on a Boat
Out on a Boat

Fl.

B. Cl.

Vib.

Pno.

Jane

John

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

Okay we can talk about my dream. My parents were
I blamed my self

It wasn't your fault

fighting I blamed my self
I know that now, but not at the time. They didn't.
It wasn’t your fault
It wasn’t your

I blamed myself

even notice me crying

Jane

mf

John

Out on a Boat

Fl.

B's Cl.

Vib.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.
Out on a Boat

How can you know that for sure? I might have done something something to set them
Out on a Boat

Jane

That's it!

off, I can't remember what it was

D.B.
I remember what I needed to tell my father it's the simple fact that I was
Out on a Boat

So you used to be a man
No I never was a man
From a

I don't think I understand
Out on a Boat

young age I knew that I wanted to be a girl
just as sumed that’s what you were

Right - ful - ly so

Out on a Boat
Scene 3

JOHN

I had a dream last night.

JANE

What was it about?

JOHN

It was about my father.

JANE

More specifically…

JOHN

The way he raised me growing up, and what he taught me.
My Father's Son

My father taught me to

Flute

Clarinet in B♭

Snare Drum

Piano

Jane

John

Violin

Cello

Double Bass

Piano
My Father's Son

He raised me with a specific plan. He be a man.
wanted me to be strong to know right from wrong and to be a Christian
Love the Bible
Stay on the straight and narrow
And not be a homo
That's really messed up

It was a heavy burden to carry
Heav y like a sword
He wan ted me to be
warrior for the lord

It sounds like your relationship
No! I am grateful to my father. He wasn't the best.
made me what I am today

Think pensively
It always seemed so hard to please him, it
al-ways seemed im-possible to reach. His bouts of an-ger did con-

My Father's Son
Fl.
B Cl.
S Dr.
Pno.
Jane
John
Vln.
Vc.
D B.

My Father's Son

fuse me as to what he was trying

Just be a

sul tasto

sul tasto

mp
Man, don't have any feelings. Keep your head held high, in all your
And don't ever stray dealing.

And don't ever stray
from the path of righteousness. But how could I stay,
on that path with no mistakes

I might know some way how you feel, my

My Father's Son
My Father's Son

My Father's Son

Father never quite accepted me.
He wanted me to become...
some thing that I could ne-ver be

I don't think we're si-mi-lar at all in this re-gard
though I'm sure what you went through with your father was hard.

You don't have to be so defensive.
I was just trying to relate

As if we could ever be so similar
Wow, you must have really been so popular

Believe it or not... I had many friends the
list seemed to go on without an end. But who was I close to it seems like so few may-be sim.
I was lonely

Who could I trust?

With my feelings

With-
what is it you were concealing

out concealing

My desire to be so close with
How my heart fluttered at the thought

another person

My Father's Son
It sounds like you were wanting
of all the secrets I'd unlock
to fall in love

How I longed to find a person
who fit like a glove
Oh it seemed so impossible
for me to fall in love
to find a person who could be there
When ever push came to shove
Scene 4

JANE

I had the most amazing dream last night!

JOHN

Me too!

JANE

And the craziest part: You were in it.

JOHN

You were in my dream as well.

JANE

You know what this means. We must have known each other during our lives.

JOHN

I wonder what the connection between us was.
It Could Have Been Love

might have known you before we came here
may-be we were some-thing like__
It Could Have Been Love

friends or just peers

I think we met at some city bar
I remember you
seemed so far a way from your self like you weren't real-ly there I re-mem-ber think-ing you
It Could Have Been Love

had pretty hair
It Could Have Been Love

We talked for hours before it was time to go.
But yet there was something I wanted to know. Could it be something more?
Fl.

B.Cl.

Mrb.

Pno.

Jane

John

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

It Could Have Been Love

What do you mean?

May be we fell in love

Right at the scene
Jane: could've been love

John: there is no way

Jane: because I know

John: I am not gay

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.
It isn't gay to like a girl

Think about the

I think my head is starting to swirl
It Could Have Been Love

Jane: possibility it could be love beautiful love wonderful love

John: 

Fl.: 

Bb Cl.: 

Mrb.: 

Pno.: 

Vln.: 

Vc.: 

D.B.:
It Could Have Been Love

Jane
love opens a door

John

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

Fl.

B. Cl.

Mrb.

Pno.

Mrb.
It Could Have Been Love

So it seems we knew each other better.
It Could Have Been Love

fore we came here

But what was our relationship were we friends or just...
It Could Have Been Love

Fl.

Bsn.

Mrb.

Pno.

Jane

John

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

I think we know more than we did, why are you keeping your peers
feelings hidden away from yourself
like you're not really here
do I have to scream this
It Could Have Been Love

Could it be love? I am not sure, but you know love

Jane in your ear
It Could Have Been Love

Jane: It could have been love

John: has an allure

Jane: It could have been love

John: It could have been love
It Could Have Been Love

Jane

it could have been love

John

it could have been love
It Could Have Been Love

Jane: it could have been love Beautiful love

John: it could have been love Beautiful love
It Could Have Been Love

Jane

love o - pens a door

John

love o - pens a door

D.B.
Scene 5

JANE

My dream last night was horrifying.

JOHN

What happened?

JANE

Stay away from me, you monster.

JOHN

Just tell me what happened.
Fl.
B. Cl.
S. Dr.
Pno.
Jane
John
Vln.
Vc.
D.B.

To bass drum

killed me, you killed me
This cannot be true. How could I have killed you?
The Final Song

"killed me"
"you killed me"
When I found out what you had done there, I was so scared. I thought I...
must be gay what would my father say? I'm
To snare

sor-ry for-give me
How can I forgive the life I cannot live?

You
The Final Song

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

B. Dr.

Pno.

Jane

murdered me

John

you

strangled me

Vln.

sim.

Vc.

D.B.
Fl.  B. Cl.  B. Dr.  Pno.  

Jane  You killed me you killed  

John  

Vln.  Vc.  D.B.  

The Final Song
The Final Song

Jane
me
My
life
cut

John

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.
The Final Song

Fl.  B. Cl.  B. Dr.  Pno.  Jane  John  Vln.  Vc.  D.B.
Fl.

Bb Cl.

B. Dr.

Pno.

Jane

John

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

To snare

Can we calm down and talk about this

What is there to

- hurts

-
The Final Song

say? You took my life away

I hate you
I hate you
The Final Song

give me for give me
Look what you did to me don't you see? What you took away I could be alive today
The Final Song

I'm sorry I'm sorry after I killed you I was so distraught I for-
so that’s why you’re here

I held you so

I took my own life
The Final Song

dear yet you betrayed me
The Final Song
The Final Song
To vibraphone

I had friends and family
so much on the line
I just wish I had a little more time
Time to
The Final Song


3 ap pre ci ate the life that I loved be - fore you shoved me in - to death I had so

John

Vln. Vc. D.B.
much life to live
so much more to give
yet you took that away

why can't I stay de-spair this is not fair how can I find
peace or a new lease on death

my life my life is over
my death  my death so pointless  I felt the magic
The Final Song

of love only to be ripped away now should I stay and let myself dissolve?
Or should I go and try for a new life?
What should I do? I know what is true
I want to live again

Before you go forgive me forgive me

The Final Song
The Final Song

There is no thing to do
I can not for give you
you'll have to

please for give me
The Final Song

158

Jane

for - give your - self

John

How can I for - give my - self when I killed you

Vln.  

Vc.  

D.B.
you'll have to find a way unless you want to stay and dissolve

killed you
May be I should dis-solve

The choice is yours, I am at peace with my death

and dis-solve

The Final Song
Jane exits through door.

John thinks pensively.

The choice is yours the choice is yours

What should I do should I follow you?
Outro Music

\( \text{\small \textit{MUSIC}} \)

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\( \text{\small \textbf{MUS}} \)
Outro Music

Fl.

Bb Cl.

Mrb.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.
Scene 5

JOHN

Should I stay and let myself dissolve? Or should I go and live a new life? Do I deserve to live again?

At this point the actor playing JOHN makes a decision about whether to stay or go. If they stay, they should sit and think pensively. If they go, they should exit through the door onstage.
CURRICULUM VITAE

Emery Miles Tackett

Education:

2021-2023 Master's in Music Composition; University of Louisville, Louisville KY (in progress, expected graduation Fall 2023)

2017-2021 Bachelor's in Music Composition, Cum Laude; Ball State University, Muncie, IN

2013-2017 Academic Honors Degree; Clarksville High School, Clarksville, IN

Public Performances/Workshops/Commissions:

11/11/22 4evermore for String Trio performed by Amorsima Trio

10/30/21 we are bound by rules we cannot see for Tenor Saxophone and Guitar. Performed by Erin Rogers and Jay Sorce of Hypercube as part of the CubeLab workshop

08/26/21 Co-taught a high school level composition course at the Youth Performing Arts School in Louisville, KY. This was a 10 week course which took place during the Fall semester of 2021 and the Spring semester of 2022. This course was co-taught with composer Isaac Smith and supervised by Dr. Matilda Ertz

11/12/2020 Waves of Silver Waves, fixed media. Performed on EM|Two with live 8-channel diffusion
11/04/2020  *Behind a Lonely Cloud* for small ensemble. Performed on the New Music Ensemble spring concert

11/19/2019  *Kingslayer* for String Quintet. Sightread by critically acclaimed string quintet Sybarite5

09/08/2019  *Approaching Nothing*, fixed media. Performed on EM|One, Ball State’s electronic music concert series

04/22/2019  *My Eyes Moved to the Branches Outside the Window* for small ensemble. Performed on the Ball State New Music Ensemble Spring Concert

08/27/2018  Received a commission to produce music for *Undertaking: the Podcast*. This was an ongoing project from 08/27/18 - 04/23/22

11/15/2017  *So Long to Solitude* for Piano and Alto Sax. Ball State Student Composers Forum

**Group/Ensemble Involvement:**

- Fall 2021 - Spring 2022  University of Louisville Technology Ensemble
- Fall 2021 - Spring 2022  University of Louisville New Music Ensemble
- Fall 2020 - Spring 2021  Ball State Electroacoustic Ensemble member
- Fall 2020 - Spring 2021  Student Advisory Committee member
- Fall 2019 - Spring 2021  Ball State SCI Student Chapter President
- Fall 2019 - Spring 2020  Ball State Chamber Choir member
- Fall 2018 - Spring 2021  Ball State New Music Ensemble member
- Fall 2017 - Spring 2019  Ball State Concert Choir member
Employment:
Fall 2020 - Spring 2021  Music Theory and History Tutor, Ball State Learning Center
Summer 2017, 2018  Busser, Derby Dinner Playhouse

Private study:
Amelia Kaplan
Daniel Swilley
Eleanor Trawick
Chin Ting Chan
Marc Satterwhite
Allison Ogden

Additional Studies:
Chris Arrell
Pang Chun-ting
Erin Rogers
Katherine Balch
New Music Performance Experience:

With the Ball State New Music Ensemble:

11/04/2020  Jackson Roush, On Right Bird Left (premiere) (alto sax)
11/25/2019  Missy Mazoli, Set That on Fire (piano)
04/22/2019  Emery Miles, My Eyes Moved to the Branches
            Outside the Window (premiere) (alto sax)
03/14/2019  Erin Rogers, Gorilla (tenor sax)
12/06/2018  Andrew Norman, Frank’s House (piano)
Solo:
10/16/2020  Free Improv, Ball State General Recital Hour (piano)

Additional Skills:

Soundpainting
Max/MSP
Ableton Live
Free improvisation
Academic Writing

Instrumental performance:

Piano, saxophone, voice, synthesizer, electronics
Works List:

The Perpetual Hell of Your Own Undoing (2023), for Flute, Clarinet, Percussion, Piano, Soprano, Baritone, Violin, Cello, Double Bass

4evermore (2022), for String Trio

Gained in Translation (2022), for flexible ensemble

we are bound by rules we cannot see (2021), for Tenor Saxophone and Guitar

Shuttering Flimmers (2021) for Alto Sax

Waves of Silver Waves (2020), stereo fixed media

Behind a Lonely Cloud (2020), for Oboe, Piano, Violin, Double Bass

Shortness of Breath (2020), for Trumpet

Kingslayer (2019), for String Quintet

Ideation 1 (2019), for Piano

Approaching Nothing (2019), stereo fixed media

My Eyes Moved to the Branches Outside my Window (2019) for Clarinet, Alto Sax, Violin, Viola, and Piano

Sandburg Songs (2018-2019) for Soprano Voice and Piano

Human Sound Machine (2017) for Voice and Body Percussion

Three Short Inventions (2017) for Piano

Five Miniatures (2017) for Piano

Wind in the Grass (2017) for Alto Sax

Stranger at the Door (2017) for Piano

Rhythmica (2017) for Piano

So Long to Solitude (2016) for Alto Sax and Piano