

Dear audience,

It appears I am now a senior, so naturally this is a great excuse for putting together a concert that contains only the things I want it to. Never before or since has been or will there be a time when people are so charitably willing to keep their feelings and reservations to themselves and let me do whatever strikes me as interesting or funny. This could be a recipe for disaster. And though a senior concert should be a venue for the repetition of work one knows to be successful, much of this material is new and untested. Still, it will be gem of a night in my heart whatever goes down. In the mean time, I hope you won't be bored or secretly annoyed, and will approach this evening of music and song with magnanimity. Many of you have been sitting here since 6:30, what with the term's last music workshop and everything, so you are already displaying an admirable commitment, and I thank you for it.

My parents and sister, whom I love, have come from California to be in the audience tonight. And while we're on the topic of things I love, I'd like to mention my performers, who have brought to the table their hard work, beautiful artistry, and their gutsy imperviousness to embarrassment. Thanks to Ron Anderson, Kitty Brazelton, Nick Brooke, Mark Wunderlich, Gladden Schrock, and my advisor, Allen Shawn for teaching me the things I needed to know to write these pieces. Thanks to Yoshiko Sato for the incredibly disproportionate amount of time you put into the work of one crazy student composer this term. And my Bennington friends. I am so glad to have you.

Yours devotedly,

Matthew Souther

an
evening
concert

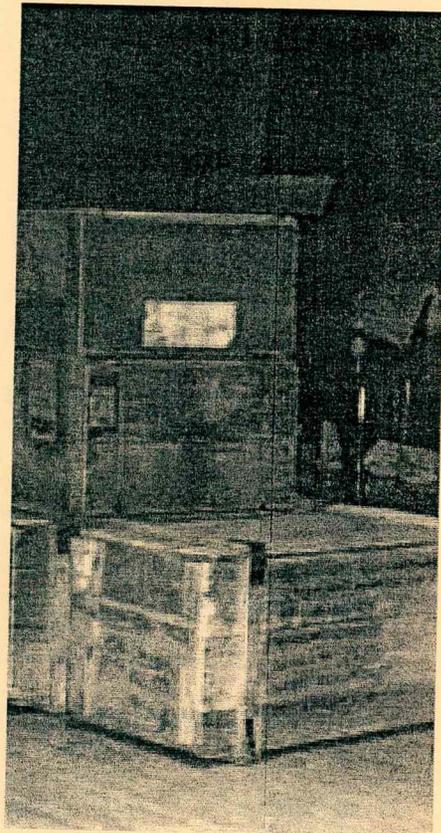


**by Matthew Souther '07,
& some other people.**

**May 29, 2007 • 9:15 p.m.
Greenwall Music Workshop
Bennington College**

The Carnival Lights A MINI-OPERA

Written for Kitty Brazelton's class, titled "Whose Opera?", and premiered May 23 in Greenwall with the same cast. Libretto by Kaley McMahon, music by Matthew Souther. The first scene aria, "The Carnival Lights", is by Annie Schwartz, text by Morgan Whitaker, & was used as a starting point for the remainder of the opera. Lyzy Lusterman deserves credit for writing one of the melodies that is employed and developed.



Yoshiko Sato, piano; Mike Del Prete, bass; Doug Von Korff, clarinet; Matthew Souther & Eli Phillips, trumpets

The Clown (baritone)

The Child (soprano)

The Fortune Teller (mezzo-soprano)

Danny Brylow

Annie Schwartz

Rae Noyes

SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE

Outside at the Carnival

In the Fortune Teller's Tent

Outside at the Carnival

A SET OF THREE with texts taken from MATTHEW ROHRER'S A HUMMOCK IN THE MALOOKAS (1995)

an evening concert (2006-07)

Annie Schwartz, soprano; Lara Hoffman, alto; Danny Brylow, baritone; John Eagle, horn; Matthew Souther, trumpet; Stefan Anderson, trombone; Alexandra Powell, violin; Kate Ritter, violin; Michela Mastellone-Schottman, violoncello; Liz Sculley, piano; Samuel Clement, guitar; Jesse Bartlett-Webber, percussion; Kirkland Kenney, conductor

the girl with a rock always in her pocket (2006)

Lara Hoffman, alto; Yoshiko Sato, harpsichord

a partial foreign policy (2007)

Matthew Souther, bass; Reid Ginoza, trombone; Kirkland Kenney, Portuguese guitar

A SET OF THREE with texts taken from my own poems from the autumn of 2004

Night (2005)

Danny Brylow, voice; Yoshiko Sato, piano

Wishes Are Like Guitars (2006)

Caleb Rupp, voice; Yoshiko Sato, piano

The Mime (2005)

Matthew Souther, voice; Yoshiko Sato, piano

the evening concert

There is a moment early in the evening
when everything seems possible.

An old man sits on a porch
eating,

telling you about sitting
on a porch eating.

Routing alone keeps an old man alive
on the first days of another spring.

Who knows what will happen next?
Then they hang the leaves back on the trees.

Everyone is on the edge of their seats
as the sun snuffs itself out

and the moment is over. It is night,
there are bats squeezed behind the shutters.

In the distance, a car drives off the dock.
The cry of men running to help lifts up, a song.

the girl with a rock always in her pocket

I was surprised to find that the burial chamber was intricately decorated
on the inside, in its blackness.

There were designs best suited for my fingertips.
It was a story, though I couldn't find the beginning—
that was familiar to me:

the lovers, the eiderdown, a party, travel.

I had to climb the walls to follow the rest of the story.

In it the lovers kept meeting and parting, they enjoyed
each other's company

and the company of train conductors.

Farther along the wall they met in the city,
outside the butcher shop.

Her head was wrapped in blue.

His eyes were the size of a discontinued coin.

I followed them around the walls.

There were dark men smeared with what I assumed was her lipstick,
joyless men carved to look like beer steins.

Priests drugged by Arabs.

Furniture that sighed. Her old car scared of being junked.

I followed the lovers to the farthest corner of the chamber.

It was a typical ending: the man was in her bed
with the sheets pulled to his chin. He was trying to think
of what hadn't already been said.

a partial foreign policy

The giant sunflower stood guard outside the stucco palace,
thwarting our little revolution.

Its petals hung like a white Amish beard,
its green leaves old and scarred.

My men dozed on their catapults. Marijuana and bees.

Softly the fieldmice relieved them of their crackers.

I steeled myself, accentuating my jaw
in case the scene might be rendered in marble.

Nothing breathed.

Winged flight seemed unusually compelling.

I heard the sap dripping from the trees like a drumroll.

Every morning the gardener on his ladder
took off his shirt and spoke to the sunflower.

He was the key! But by men were too busy
accosting the goats, having worked something out with the goatherd.

Seeing this, I became uncomfortably conscious of the hairs
on my body,

which are black, though my pompadour is blond.

It occurred to me I will never know what to trust.

The Mime

My mask is starched
And greased, and spotted.

I wear it like hell.
I can defraud even myself.

A vegetable may mold;
My neck has its stubble.

My wrist would contort, snap
Since the fingers are frozen, but

Not now. Only the still lull
Is acceptable. Yes, I will move,

Sometime. But a tree does not move
As it dons and doffs its disguise.

I wish I were as clever,
Am just about so—except

I have no shred of wit. A while back,
It gave way to this lousy stupor...

A hawk can snatch rabbits
In their moments of lapse.

I have yet to be masticated.
I'd wipe my brow in relief,

But am paid by the gesture,
And who will fund a sweaty hand?

They will not pay
For anything this mime can do.

They do not want to see me
Inside a box, palms against its walls

Pretending I cannot get out.
Perhaps they are wise.

Perhaps they can tell
I am actually not pretending.

Night

When I came back across the lawn
toting ease in a bag,
I forgot to check if the bag had any holes.

When the conical moon stood up
and watched me through my window,
I was distracted, and thought it was someone else.

When the yellow lamps neglected to fade like the sun,
I noted a false step, and looked twice:

Blank walls, six shoes, a cord.
A mirror I could not

The crickets were strident outside
when I went to the door, and remembered it was sealed shut.

Wishes are like guitars

They decided, after trying
the other thing for a while,
that crowds were best.

Meanwhile, I was on the ceiling trying
to hold a spoon on my nose.
They never asked my opinion on the matter.

I had just finished practicing F major,
and my fingers' fissures were leaking
all over the floor, causing me to give up

the endeavor and try some new, useful trick.
And I was having some success until
I sweated, and the spoon slipped off

like a disenchanting woman and quibbled
against the linoleum. It was promptly
trodden upon by the mob, which had since been invited.

Some miles due east, a lady sat editing a kitten calendar.
She failed to notice that my 10th grade portrait
had been placed, by mistake, above April.