

*Violinist Shem Guibbory  
with Percussionist Rex Benincasa*  
**Evolution of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Violinist**

**March 19, 2014, 8 P.M.  
Deane Carriage Barn  
Bennington College, Bennington Vermont**

*"I have played everything from Bach to Debussy, for real art should be international"  
violinist Eugene Ysaÿe*

**Adagio and Fugue in G Minor, BWV 1001 (circa 1722/23) J.S.Bach 1685-1750**

**Ballade Op. 27 #3 - Georges Enesco (1923) Eugene Ysaÿe 1858-1931**

**Sonata #2 for Solo Violin (1954) Grazyna Bacewicz 1909-1959**

**Ingrained from Childhood Op. 531 (2014) John McDonald b.1959  
for violin and four pairs of wooden bowls**

**World Premier Performance**

Commissioned by Shem Guibbory for Innovative Music Programs / Evolution of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Violinist

Economical—Pizz 1—Tranquil—Pizz 2—Emphatic—Pizz 3—Maitreiya

**Danse Alhambra (2007) Simon Shaheen b.1955**

Commissioned by the Argosy Contemporary Music Fund for Shem Guibbory and *A Night at the Alhambra Café*

**Romanza Andalusá op.22 (1879) Pablo de Sarasate 1844-1908**

**Madagascar Variations (1988) Guibbory b.1956/Hemingway b.1955**

**Slowly She Turned (2010) Douglas J. Cuomo b.1958**

Commissioned by Shem Guibbory for Innovative Music Programs / Evolution of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Violinist

*Devised by Shem Guibbory and Innovative Music Programs*  
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## ***Ingrained From Childhood, for violin and four pairs of wooden bowls, Op. 531 (2013-2014)***

Commissioned by Shem Guibbory for Innovative Music Programs / Evolution of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Violinist

The first idea for *Ingrained From Childhood* sprouted in the summer of 2012 when Shem Guibbory and I worked together for a week at The Chamber Music Conference and Composers Forum of the East. Shem presented me with a short slideshow of extraordinary photographic images of trees by Peter Laytin that he had integrated with a performance of *Memories of Childhood* for violin and piano, by George Enescu (1881-1955). Shem asked me to think about making a piece that could be related to the Enescu performance. Though I eventually decided not to react directly to the Enescu work, the ideas of childhood and wood persisted.

One of the consistent elements I recall from my childhood was time in the woods. Hunting salamanders in early spring; the smell of pine. By high school I had developed a habit of running or hiking in the woods. Now I jog and walk my dog in the Middlesex Fells near Boston. Composing quickly became part of the flow of these times in the woods, even when I was a kid—the mind opens, one can breathe, and “proper” thinking seems to take place more easily.

My wife Janaki was raised Bhuddist in Kotte, Sri Lanka. Her memories of childhood include the formidable Kumbuk tree in the front garden of her house; spirits nestled there! Then there were the Bo trees full of bats, kids searching for fallen skeletons of leaves on the ground (you don't pick leaves from the tree under which the Buddha found enlightenment). And there was the comfort of chanting Pali verses at home, when priests would come for housewarmings, funerals, memorials.

The miniatures I have made for this little suite-as-ode to childhood and wood (trees) can be heard rather like Dhammapada verses, using refrains and chant-like lines to make expressive points. “Economical” starts the sequence with in a plainspoken manner. The three “Pizz” refrains that connect the miniatures are variants of the same alternating pizzicato violin patterns and clapped wooden-bowl figures. “Tranquil” creates a distant effect with violin practice mute and bowls played delicately with wooden pencil-backs. “Emphatic” features more dramatic violin music, followed by a wooden-bowl “cadenza” (which in turn leads to the last “Pizz” connecting music). The final “Maitreiya,” meaning “loving kindness,” “mercy,” or the “Buddha that is to come” (as “friend”), indicates that “it is possible that the next Buddha...may take the form of a community...practicing understanding and loving kindness.” (paraphrasing Thich Nhat Hanh; born 1926; Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk). Inherent in my musical representation of “Maitreiya” is a sadness about its too infrequent manifestations. Loving community doesn't happen enough in our lives, does it?

Filling bowls with Sri Lankan country red rice, pistachio shells, and almonds for different subtle sounds was a pleasure, as was designing bowl combinations and playing styles for Rex to consider when performing with Shem. Percussionist Fabio Pirrozzolo, a graduate degree candidate in ethnomusicology at Tufts University, was a great help to me in this regard.

I am enormously grateful to Shem Guibbory and Rex Benincasa for their commitment to this work. (John McDonald, March 2014)

**John McDonald** is Music Department Chair and Professor of Music at Tufts University, where he served as Director of Graduate Music Studies from 2000 to 2010 and previously as Department Chair from 2000 to 2003. He is a composer who tries to play the piano and a pianist who tries to compose. McDonald was named the 2007 MTNA—Shepherd Distinguished Composer of the Year by the Music Teachers National Association, and received the 2009 Lillian and Joseph Leibner Award for Distinguished Teaching and Advising from Tufts University. In 2010, he received the Waring Prize from Western Reserve Academy, the highest award given to alumni of that school. His recordings appear on the Albany, Archetype, Boston, Bridge, Capstone, Neuma, New Ariel, and New World labels, and he has concertized widely as composer, pianist, and collaborative performer. New releases include pianist Andrew Rangell's performance of McDonald's Meditation Before A Sonata: Dew Cloth, Dream Drapery, on Bridge Records. McDonald's violin and piano music with soloist Joanna Kurkovicz: *Airy* on Bridge Records.

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