

**Gregory Mertl** has received commissions from the Tanglewood Music Center, the Rhode Island Philharmonic, the Phoenix Symphony, the Big Ten Wind Ensembles, and the University of Oregon. In 2017, his Barlow Endowment commission for a piano concerto for Solungga Liu and the University of Minnesota Wind Ensemble led by Craig Kirchoff was released by Bridge Records on a portrait album of his music. His newest work, *Passages*, was composed for oboist Anna Hendrickson and guitarist Kenneth Meyer, who released Mertl's solo piece, *A Seeker's Song*, on Frameworks Records in 2023. In addition to a Ph.D. from the Eastman School of Music, he has been composer-in-residence at MacDowell, the Wurlitzer Foundation, Yaddo, I-Park, VCCA, Willapa Bay AiR, the 100 West Corsicana Artist Residency, the Oberfälzer Künstlerhaus in Germany, the Château de La Napoule in France, the Fundación Valparaíso in Spain and Sweden's Visby International Centre for Composers. Recent performances and presentations of his music were at the University of São Paulo, UNESP, and UNIRIO, in Brazil and at the Wurlitzer Foundation in New Mexico. While in resi-



dency there in autumn 2024, he completed *Two Nocturnes*, with which he continues his music making with pianist Heather Lanners. He is currently embarking on a large-scale collaboration with poet Laren McClung.

#### Acknowledgements

Recorded at the McKnight Center for the Performing Arts, Stillwater, Oklahoma, May 2022

Producers: Caio Alves Diniz and Benjamin Lanners

Recording/Sound Engineer: Caio Alves Diniz

Piano technician: Vince Myrkal

#### Artwork

Nelleke Beltjens, A detail from #4 of the series "The Only Constant is Change"

Moh'd Bilbeisi, "Old Central"

Cover Photographer: Luis Mejia

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"Old Central", Oklahoma State University

## PICTURES WITHOUT AN EXHIBITION

Heather Shea Lanners, piano  
Gregory Mertl, composer



<b>PEARS ON A SILL</b>		<b>(15:31)</b>
1	I. 3 a.m. Nightingale	5:00
2	II. Spinning Waltz	2:57
3	III. Boatman's Song	0:50
4	IV. Caitlyn's Goodbye	6:36
<b>5 SOUFFLE ET CONTRESOUFFLE</b>		<b>9:53</b>
<b>PICTURES WITHOUT AN EXHIBITION</b>		<b>(36:00)</b>
6	I. Lento misterioso	5:34
7	II. Air	0:49
8	III. La Poule	3:58
9	IV. Air 2	0:53
10	V. Scherzo	7:02
11	VI. Air 3	1:42
12	VII. Languorous Clouds	3:57
13	VIII. Air 4	3:22
14	IX. Ballade	8:26

**Total Time: 61:28**

Recorded May 2022 at the McKnight Center for the Performing Arts, Stillwater, Oklahoma. Engineered by Caio Alves Diniz. Produced by Caio Alves Diniz and Benjamin Lanners. Artwork: Detail "The Only Constant is Change" #4 by Nelleke Beltjens, "Old Central" by Moh'd Bilbeisi.



## Pictures Without an Exhibition

Heather Shea Lanners,  
piano

Gregory Mertl,  
composer

## PICTURES WITHOUT AN EXHIBITION

There is a very special connection in the collaboration between composer and performer. While this connection most often exists through the veil of life and death, I have been blessed with the joy of working with a living composer. I began exploring the piano music of Gregory Mertl in 2015 when I first learned and performed his *Souffle et Contresouffle* and subsequently *Pears on a Sill*. I have always felt a deep emotional connection to the music that I perform, and I was immediately drawn to Greg's musical language. We were introduced by a mutual friend and have happily remained musically connected. It is because of this friendship that *Pictures Without an Exhibition* came into being, and it is truly one of the greatest gifts I have ever received. The sheer scope and imagination behind it are so far beyond anything I could have dreamed of when I commissioned him to write a piece for me in 2019, and I am hopeful that the musical world will delight in it as deeply as I have.

I dedicate this recording to my family: To my husband Tom, and sons Ben and Joel, all three of whom bring me constant laughter

and musical inspiration; to my father Michael Shea, who first sat me on his lap as an infant and introduced me to the piano; to my mother Kathryn Shea, for her constant love and belief in me; and to my brother Peter Shea, for the lifelong infectious joy he found in music.

~Heather Lanners

When I was a young child, as the story in my mind goes, my father would play a composer-guessing game with me during the many hours we listened to music. I see us in the car, me behind while he drives, a cassette-tape playing or the radio on, and the notion of what a composer is beginning to seed itself in me. Apparently, I got pretty good at the game. This one sounded this way and that one sounded that way – a burgeoning understanding of what “composer” means.

My father was responsible for bringing music into my world and, once introduced, I gravitated to it with a certain voracity. As I expanded out of the bounds of his listening sphere, music became my own. He too, previously, had been graced with music through his father who would travel many kilometers by train with one of his three boys to hear

his favorite sopranos sing.

“Futuro ancestral” or ancestral future, the indigenous sage Ailton Krenak has recently written, is a sensibility brought to our awareness by rivers, “entities who always inhabit the world in various forms and have suggested that if there is a future to be thought of, this future is ancestral, because it has already been here.” This conversing across time occurs as well when we experience music of centuries past today, and even more obviously in the transmission of music from grandfather to a grandson he never knew. It still amazes me how a melody written by Machaut in the 14<sup>th</sup> century can float across time and space and penetrate our hearts. This recognition has become an essential part of my music, since I see myself as conversing with the past (and perhaps with the future).

As I compose, I listen to what the music tells me it wants to be. I stay attentive, lovingly, critically, to how it needs to unfold. It's about being in a state of receptivity. In this regard I feel closely aligned with the work of the artist Nelleke Beltjens, [work on the following page] whose process is so similar to mine. She is keenly aware of detail – how

one element can affect the whole, how surprise and intuition activate her creativity, how the work is an entity beyond her that she must coax into fullness as one does a child, respecting it at every point along the way. As such, I think of each movement on this recording as having its own essence and its own unfolding. I am also attentive to how each movement fits into a work's larger trajectory.

What makes a composer's sound world so distinctive, what makes their individual voices speak across time, remains a mystery, yet, they tap into something ineffable that makes them sing. My music celebrates others, but it draws from its own source and is filtered through my own singularity. I sense this is one of the reasons that attracted Heather Lanners to it. And it may be, as evidenced by this recording, why, as she merged fully with my work, it has become her own.

~Gregory Mertl



**Link to complete program notes, including descriptions of the movements**



Detail “The Only Constant is Change” #4 by Nelleke Beltjens

**Heather Shea Lanners** has performed extensively throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Brazil and China as both a soloist and chamber musician. Recent engagements include performances in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, the Tenri Cultural Center in NYC, the American Matthey Association Festival, a seven-city concert tour of China with Pangaea Chamber Players, concerto performances with the Bulgarian State Orchestra of Vidin and solo performances at the Dublin International Piano Festival. Ms. Lanners has also performed as pianist for the Cleveland Opera on Tour, the prestigious Meadowmount School of Music, and the Holland Summer Music Sessions. Throughout her career she has given guest classes and performances at numerous universities including Penn State University, the Eastman School of Music, the University of Washington, Bowling Green State University, The Ohio State University, the Idyllwild School for the Performing Arts, the Universidade de São Paulo, UNESP and UNIRIO, Brazil. After receiving her bachelor's degree in piano performance from the University of Western Ontario



in London, Canada, Lanners continued her studies in Paris with French pianist, Cécile Ousset. While in Paris, she earned the Diplôme Supérieur en Musique de Chambre at the École Normale de Musique. Since the completion of a master's degree in performance at the Eastman School of Music, Ms. Lanners has worked as Opera Coach at the Cleveland Institute of Music and the University of Akron. She currently serves as Professor of Piano at the Michael and Anne Greenwood School of Music at Oklahoma State University where she has been the recipient of numerous awards.