



The Last Possibilities *of Light*

CONOR NELSON, FLUTE
LINDSAY FLOWERS, OBOE
CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR, PIANO

Works by Marilyn Shrude · Laura Schwendinger
Mengmeng Wang · Mikel Kuehn · Donald Crockett

The Last Possibilities of Light

- Marilyn Shrude (b. 1946)
- 1 **Within the Vortex** (2024) 12:04
Conor Nelson, flute • Christopher Taylor, piano
- Laura Schwendinger (b. 1962)
- Anaphora** for alto flute and piano (2024)
- 2 I. Journey 5:09
- 3 II. Mists 3:52
- 4 III. Contemplation 3:27
- 5 IV. Departure 1:36
Conor Nelson, alto flute • Christopher Taylor, piano
- Mengmeng Wang (b. 1984)
- 6 **You Are The Colorful Withering In My Eyes** (2024) 7:27
Conor Nelson, flute • Mengmeng Wang, electronics/voice
- Mikel Kuehn (b. 1967)
- 7 **A Tour of the Canon** (2024) 10:48
Conor Nelson, flute • Lindsay Flowers, oboe • Christopher Taylor, piano
- Donald Crockett (b. 1951)
- 8 **The Last Possibilities of Light** 16:12
Ritornello-Variations for Flute and Piano (2023)
Conor Nelson, flute • Christopher Taylor, piano

Total Time: 60:35

“Music is the sole art which evokes nostalgia for the future.”

—Ned Rorem

AS BOTH A PERFORMER AND LISTENER, I have long been fascinated by the ways nostalgia shapes our musical experiences. While we often think of nostalgia as longing for what has been lost, music can invite textured understandings. Familiarity in music often summons memory and emotion in powerful ways. Here, newly composed pieces simultaneously evoke recognition for what we have yet to encounter. Nostalgia, perhaps inhabiting multiple temporalities at once, connects memory, imagination, and anticipation in unique ways. Rorem’s formulation—“nostalgia for the future”—suggests that memory can also propel us toward, and perhaps even aid in the creation of, what has not yet happened.

The Last Possibilities of Light grew from this fascination. The album brings together five commissioned works by composers whose music has shaped my artistic development, creating additional veins of nostalgia as a performer. The invitation was intentionally open-ended: each composer was invited to reflect upon nostalgia as a creative force. Rather than prescribing a particular subject or approach, I asked each

composer to respond from their own artistic perspective, unaware of how the others might interpret the theme. What emerged was not just a collection of pieces foregrounding nostalgia, but a set of works that reveal contrasts within how memory and experience operate within the creative process.

Across the album, nostalgia appears in many forms. It emerges through direct engagement with musical history, recurring gestures and patterns that invite remembrance, literary structures, personal reflection, and the transformation of existing materials into new artistic statements. Some works look explicitly toward the past; others examine how memory functions in the present moment. Together, they demonstrate that nostalgia need not be only passive or retrospective. It can be generative, catalyzing invention, discovery, and renewal.

In this sense, the album itself became an act of remembrance and renewal. Each commission grew from an existing artistic relationship while simultaneously creating something entirely new. The resulting works trace a web of connections between composers, performers, teachers, students, influences, and inspirations.

Rorem's phrase "nostalgia for the future" captures something essential about these works. While each composition engages memory in its own way, none remains fixed in the past. Instead, they transform recollection into possibility, demonstrating how remembrance can become a source of artistic momentum.

Within the Vortex

My relationship with Marilyn Shrude spans nearly a decade at Bowling Green State University, where I had the privilege of performing her music, collaborating with her students, and witnessing firsthand the remarkable program and community she helped cultivate. Throughout her career, Shrude has maintained a deep engagement with musical history while developing a compositional voice that is unmistakably her own. In *Within the Vortex*, nostalgia manifests not as a recollection of a single moment, but as an active dialogue between past and present. Familiar musical artifacts are drawn into a constantly shifting environment where memory, quotation, and invention coexist. The work serves as a fitting opening to this recording, immediately placing the listener in a space where remembrance becomes a catalyst for new creation.

My ongoing love for the music of J.S. Bach and the invitation from flutist Conor Nelson to write a piece based on nostalgia resulted in *Within the Vortex*. Nostalgia can be manifested in many forms. My choice of the iconic Chaconne in D minor from Partita for Violin No. 2, woven with some of my older works, along with new material de-

veloped specifically for this collaboration ("a vortex!") is what I offer in this composition for flute and piano.

—M. S.

Anaphora

I first met Laura Schwendinger at the Chamber Music Conference and Composers' Forum of the East and have since had the pleasure of becoming her colleague at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. A flutist herself, her writing for the instrument truly shines, and this piece is no exception. Multi-dimensional creativity permeates every idea. While several works on this album engage nostalgia through musical quotation or personal reflection, *Anaphora* approaches memory through the mechanisms of repetition itself. The piece asks how recurring gestures acquire meaning over time and how repeated ideas become fixed in our consciousness. In doing so, Schwendinger draws a connection between the structures of language and the structures of musical remembrance.

For me, the musical and artistic analog of the concept of anaphora* is a jumping-off point to use as a device to add rhythm to a passage of music while making a phrase more pleasurable to hear and easier to remember. These repetitions are explored all the way through each movement. The musical analog of a repetition at the beginning of a phrase creates emphasis and serves the purpose of delivering an artistic effect to a passage of music. It is also used to appeal to the emotions of the audience in order to persuade them that each phrase is given some amount

of repetition for memory's sake. But that said, the process is not a simple repetitive one, but one that offers different developmental elements in each movement out of the repetition of gestures, motives, and other materials.

—L. S.

**In rhetoric, an anaphora (Greek: ἀναφορά, “carrying back”) is a rhetorical device that consists of repeating a sequence of words at the beginnings of neighboring clauses, thereby lending them emphasis. In contrast, an epistrophe (or epiphora) is the repetition of words at the ends of clauses. The combination of anaphora and epistrophe results in symploce. (Source: Wikipedia)*

You Are The Colorful Withering In My Eyes

Mengmeng Wang's contribution occupies a unique place on this recording. Unlike the other composers represented here, our collaboration began specifically through this project, introducing a new artistic relationship into an album otherwise shaped by long-standing musical partnerships. At the same time, Wang's connection to Laura Schwendinger as a former doctoral student reinforces one of the central themes running throughout the program: the transmission of artistic ideas across generations. Blending flute, voice, and fixed media, *You Are The Colorful Withering In My Eyes* offers perhaps the most intimate perspective on nostalgia in the collection, transforming ordinary moments into vivid, emotionally resonant memories whose significance often becomes clear only in retrospect.

I used fixed media to give this piece a film-like, documentary atmosphere. In this piece, the voice and the flute rep-

resent two different characters. At times, they intertwine; at other times, they stand in opposition to one another. Through this relationship, I aim to bring a more humanized and intimate quality to their interaction.

—M. W.

A Tour of the Canon

Like Marilyn Shrude, Mikel Kuehn was an important presence during my years at Bowling Green State University. Performing his music over many years revealed a composer whose technical mastery is consistently matched by imagination, intellectual rigor, and expressive depth. At first glance, *A Tour of the Canon* might seem the most formally constructed work on the album, but its exploration of canon also reflects the larger themes of memory and return that permeate this recording. Each canon revisits and transforms shared musical material, creating a sequence of encounters in which familiarity and discovery continually interact. The result is a work that celebrates both the enduring power of musical craft and the endless possibilities contained within single ideas.

A Tour of the Canon (2024, for flute, oboe, and piano) is a through-composed collection of 17 canons of various types. Each canon focuses on assorted atmospheres and interactions between the instruments, and all are related via transformations of the same six notes, found in the bass line of the piano at the opening of the piece.

—M. K.

The Last Possibilities of Light

Since 2012, Donald Crockett's music and teaching have been a significant part of my artistic life. Working together at the Chamber Music Conference and Composers' Forum of the East, I have performed his works and engaged with generations of composers connected to his teaching and mentorship. The recurring elegiac melody serves as both anchor and point of return, continually transformed by the musical landscapes that surround it. In this way, nostalgia becomes not a static remembrance of loss, but an evolving process through which memory, absence, and renewal coexist. As the flute gradually recedes at the work's conclusion, the album ends not with finality, but with a gesture toward what remains beyond reach—the last possibilities of light.

The Last Possibilities of Light, written for and dedicated to the Canadian-American flute virtuoso Conor Nelson, is a variation set loosely based on an elegiac melody, for those we have lost, which returns in ritornello fashion during the course of this 15-minute work. The title is a phrase from the poet Michael Ondaatje, whose poetry not infrequently sets the stage for my music. Following the initial statement of this elegy for flute alone, and between returns of the theme in various guises, the music is by turns floating, soaring, cascading, airy, and thunderous. After the final, expansive return of the elegy led by the piano, the music cascades toward the end when the flute ultimately disappears like a ghost.

—D. C.

Note: performance materials available from Keiser Classical,
keisersouthernmusic.com

Praised for his “long-breathed phrases and luscious tone” by the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Canadian flutist **Conor Nelson** is established as a leading flutist and pedagogue of his generation. Since his New York recital debut at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall, he has frequently appeared as soloist and recitalist throughout the United States and abroad.

Solo engagements include concerti with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Flint Symphony, and numerous other orchestras. In addition to being the only wind player to win the Grand Prize at the WAMSO Young Artist Competition, he won first prize at the William C. Byrd Young Artist Competition. He also received top prizes at the New York Flute Club Young Artist Competition, the Haynes International Flute Competition, as well as the Fischhoff, Coleman, and Yellow Springs chamber music competitions.

With percussionist Ayano Kataoka, he performed at Merkin Concert Hall, Tokyo Bunka Kaikan Hall, and Izumi Hall. A recital at the Tokyo Opera City Hall received numerous broadcasts on NHK Television. Their CD, entitled *Breaking Training*, was released on New Focus Recordings (NYC). His second CD, *Nataraja*, with pianist Thomas Rosenkranz, is also available on New Focus. He has also recorded for the Centaur, Albany, and Toccata Classics (London) labels. Other recent releases include Telemann’s 12 Fantasias for solo flute, issued by Blue

Griffin Recordings, and Telemann’s Sonatas for Two Flutes with Eric Lamb for the paladino music label (Vienna).

He has collaborated with Claude Frank on the Schneider concert series in NYC and appeared at numerous chamber music festivals across the country, including the OK Mozart, Bennington, Skaneateles, Yellow Barn, Cooperstown, Salt Bay, Look and Listen (NYC), Norfolk (Yale), Green Mountain, Chesapeake, and the Chamber Music Quad Cities series.

He is the Principal Flutist of the New Orchestra of Washington in Washington, D.C., and has performed with the Detroit, Toledo, and Tulsa Symphony Orchestras. He also performed as guest principal with A Far Cry, Orquesta Filarmónica de Jalisco, and the Conciertos de la Villa de Santo Domingo.

A respected pedagogue, Dr. Nelson has given master classes at over one hundred and fifty colleges, universities, and conservatories. Prior to his appointment at UW-Madison, he served as the flute professor at Bowling Green State University for nine years and as the Assistant Professor of Flute at Oklahoma State University from 2007 to 2011. His recent residencies include Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea, the Sichuan Conservatory in Chengdu, China, the Conservatorio de Música de Puerto Rico, and the Associação Brasileira de Flautistas in São Paulo. He is also a regular guest of the Texas Summer Flute Symposium and has been the featured guest artist for eleven flute associations across the country. His former

students can be found performing in orchestras and teaching at colleges, universities, and public schools nationwide. They have also amassed over sixty prizes in young artist, concerto, and flute association competitions.

He received degrees from the Manhattan School of Music, Yale University, and Stony Brook University, where he won the schoolwide concerto competitions at all three institutions. He is also a recipient of the Thomas Nyfenger Prize, the Samuel Baron Prize, and the Presser Award. His principal teachers include Carol Wincenc, Ransom Wilson, Linda Chesis, Susan Hoeppner, and Amy Hamilton. Conor is an artist with Powell Flutes and the flutist with the Wingra Wind Quintet at UW-Madison, one of the longest-standing wind quintets in the nation.

Dr. Lindsay Flowers is the Assistant Professor of Oboe at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Mead Witter School of Music, where she is a member of the Wingra Wind Quintet and guides student-generated community engagement projects. She received a Doctor of Music degree from Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music under the tutelage of Linda Strommen and Roger Roe. Her background in athletics distinguishes her pedagogical approach in her emphasis on performance visualization, disciplined commitment, and supportive teamwork.

Lindsay is currently an Oboist and English Hornist with the Madison Symphony Orchestra and Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra. She previously was the Principal Oboist of the Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra, and a member of the New Mexico

Philharmonic, Quad Cities Symphony Orchestra, and Civic Orchestra of Chicago, where she served as a Civic Fellow under the mentorship of Yo-Yo Ma, with whom she appeared as a chamber musician on WFMT radio and in venues across the city. Lindsay has also performed with the Milwaukee, Chicago, San Francisco, Indianapolis, Utah, and Nashville Symphony Orchestras, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and during summers with the Santa Fe Opera, Grant Park, Midsummer’s, Lakes Area, Apollo, Bach Dancing and Dynamite, Lake George, Castleton, Aspen, and Banff Music Festivals. She has performed under conductors including Riccardo Muti, Charles Dutoit, Lorin Maazel, Edo de Waart, Sir Andrew Davis, Carlos Kalmar, Jaap van Zweden, Michael Tilson Thomas, Robert Spano, Marin Alsop, Jane Glover, Nicholas McGegan, Nicholas Kraemer, Rafael Payare, Ken-David Masur, Michael Stern, James Gaffigan, Karina Canellakis, Andrey Boreyko, and Giancarlo Guerrero.

Lindsay was a founding member of the Arundo Donax Reed Quintet, Bronze Medal Winners of the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition. With the Wingra Wind Quintet, she has co-commissioned works by George Lewis and Hong-Da Chin, and she was heard on Wisconsin Public Radio’s “Sunday Afternoon Live” at the Chazen Art Museum with Lori Skelton, who also hosted her concerts with JJ Koh and Garret Ross at Midsummer’s Autumn Music Fest. Lindsay gave the American premiere of “Interconexiones: New Quartets for Oboe and Strings,” which included works by John Richard Durant, Althea Talbot-Howard, Maricarmen Asenjo-Marrodán, Pilar Miralles, and Luke Styles in collaboration with Sarah Roper and

Cuarteto Emispherio. As a duo partner with Andrew Parker, she released an album, *From the Sea to the Stars* under PARMA Recordings/Navona Records. She has also performed duo oboe works by Morris with James Button, by Rathbun with Youn-Joo Lee, and by Albinoni, Handel, and Zelenka with Margaret Butler. Lindsay has performed the Bach Double Concerto for Oboe and Violin with David Perry, and she has appeared as a soloist on concertos by Cimarosa, Hidas, Marcello, Martinů, Strauss, Ticheli, and Vaughan Williams.

In addition to performing and teaching, Lindsay is recognized for her maintenance and repair of oboe and English horn gouging machines, particularly those designed by Ferrillo, Graf, Kunibert, and Gilbert. Lindsay presented on this topic at the International Double Reed Conference and at Midwest Musical Imports, and she hosts annual gouger clinics for students and professionals to learn this specialized skill. She can be heard in interviews on the podcasts “Double Reed Dish” and “Reed Talk” and has presented at the Fundación Universitaria Bellas Artes Conference in Medellín, Colombia, the Conservatorio Superior de Música Manuel Castillo in Seville, Spain, the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music in Bloomington, Indiana, and the Wisconsin Idea Conference in Madison, Wisconsin. Lindsay is also the Treasurer of the International Double Reed Society’s Midnorth Regional Chapter and a F. Lorée Musician.

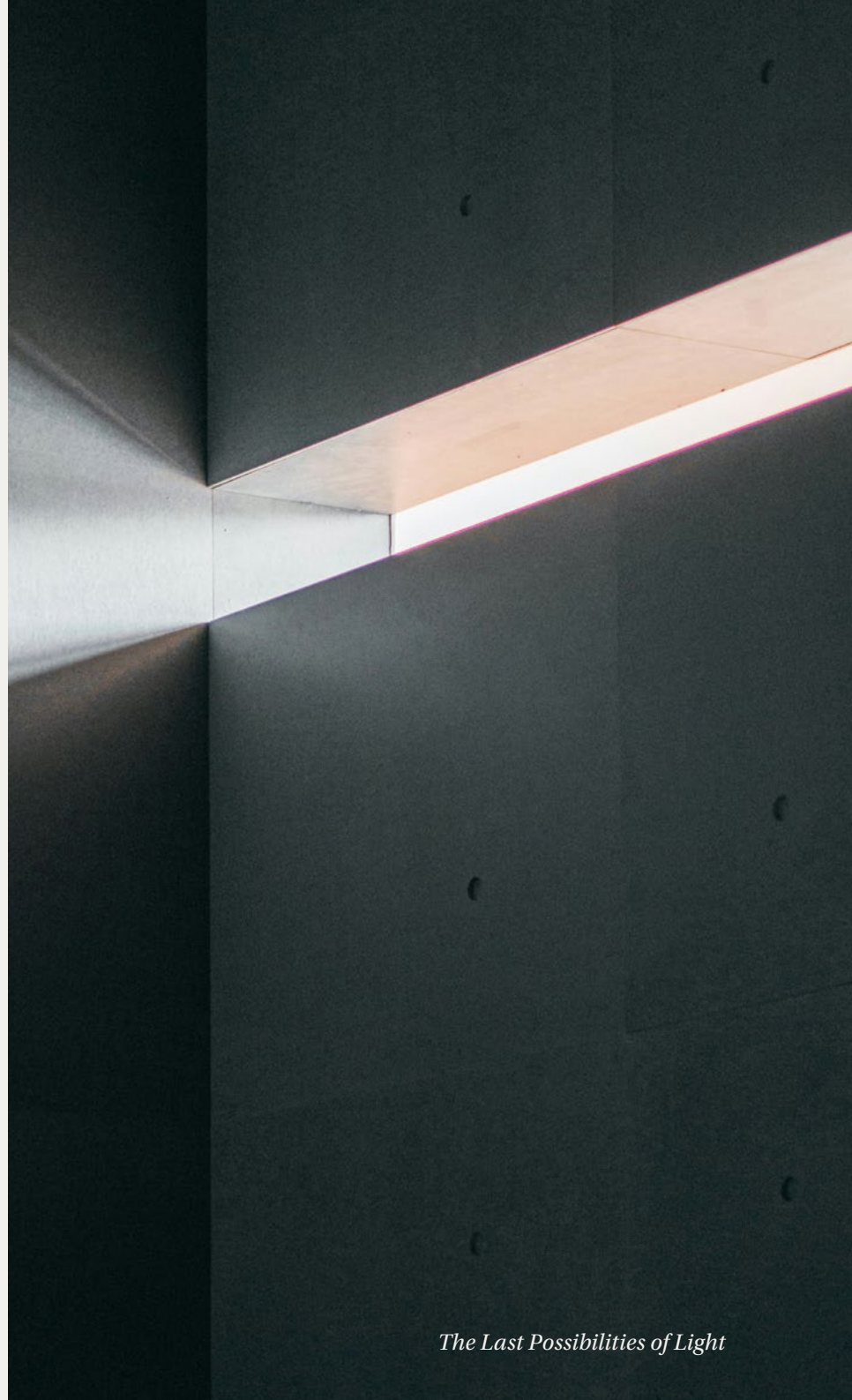
Hailed by critics as “frighteningly talented” (*The New York Times*) and “a great pianist” (*The Los Angeles Times*), **Christopher Taylor** has distinguished himself throughout his career as an innovative musician with a diverse array of talents and interests. He is known for a passionate advocacy of music written in the past 100 years — Messiaen, Ligeti, and Bolcom figure prominently in his performances — but his repertoire spans four centuries and includes the complete Beethoven sonatas, the Liszt Transcendental Etudes, Bach’s Goldberg Variations, and a multitude of other familiar masterworks. Whatever the genre or era of the composition, Mr. Taylor brings to it an active imagination and intellect coupled with heartfelt intensity and grace.

Mr. Taylor has concertized around the globe, with international tours taking him to Russia, Western Europe, East Asia, and the Caribbean. At home in the U.S., he has appeared with such orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, and the Milwaukee Symphony. As a soloist, he has performed in New York’s Carnegie and Alice Tully Halls, in Washington’s Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Ravinia and Aspen festivals, and dozens of other venues. In chamber settings, he has collaborated with many eminent musicians, including Robert McDuffie and the Borromeo, Shanghai, Pro Arte, and Ying Quartets. His recordings have featured works by Liszt, Messiaen, and present-day Americans William Bolcom and Derek Bermel. Throughout his career, Mr. Taylor has become known for undertaking memorable and unusual projects. Examples include: a recent tour in which he performed, from memory, the complete

transcriptions of Beethoven symphonies by Liszt; performances and lectures on the complete etudes of György Ligeti; and a series of performances of the Goldberg Variations on the unique double-manual Steinway piano in the collection of the University of Wisconsin. He has actively promoted the rediscovery and refurbishment of the latter instrument, and has also built a prototype for a modernized version of it, a project that relied on his computer and engineering skills.

Numerous awards have confirmed Mr. Taylor's high standing in the musical world. He was named an American Pianists' Association Fellow for 2000, before which he received an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 1996 and the Bronze Medal in the 1993 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. In 1990, he took first prize in the William Kapell International Piano Competition and also became one of the first recipients of the Irving Gilmore Young Artists' Award.

Mr. Taylor owes much of his success to several outstanding teachers, including Russell Sherman, Maria Curcio-Diamond, Francisco Aybar, and Julie Bees. In addition to his busy concert schedule, he currently serves as Paul Collins Professor of Piano Performance at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. He pursues a variety of other interests, including: mathematics (he received a summa cum laude degree from Harvard University in this field in 1992); philosophy (an article he coauthored with the leading scholar Daniel Dennett appears in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*); computing; linguistics; and biking, which is his primary means of commuting. Christopher Taylor is a Steinway artist.



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