

NEW FOCUS RECORDINGS

Flutist **Conor Nelson** releases *The Last Possibilities of Light*, featuring five premieres written by his close composer colleagues, all responding to the theme of nostalgia in music that highlights his virtuosity and range. Works for flute and piano by **Marilyn Shrude**, **Laura Schwendinger**, and **Donald Crockett** alongside a trio by **Mikel Kuehn** and an electroacoustic work by **Mengmeng Wang** all engage with memory in different ways, through formal elements within the work, reference to canonic repertoire, and reference to personal recollection.

Track List

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Marilyn Shrude: <i>Within the Vortex</i> | 12:01 |
| Conor Nelson, flute; Christopher Taylor, piano | |
| Laura Schwendinger: <i>Anaphora</i> | |
| 2. I. Journey | 5:05 |
| 3. II. Mists | 3:48 |
| 4. III. Contemplation | 3:22 |
| 5. IV. Departure | 1:32 |
| Conor Nelson, alto flute; Christopher Taylor, piano | |
| 6. Mengmeng Wang: <i>You Are The Colorful Withering In My Eyes</i> | 7:24 |
| Conor Nelson, flute; Mengmeng Wang, electronics/voice | |
| 7. Mikel Kuehn: <i>A Tour of the Canon</i> | 10:50 |
| Conor Nelson, flute; Lindsay Flowers, oboe; Christopher Taylor, piano | |
| 8. Donald Crockett: <i>The Last Possibilities of Light</i> | 16:09 |
| Conor Nelson, flute; Christopher Taylor, piano | |

Total Time: 60:11

Program Notes

For his second solo recording on New Focus, flutist Conor Nelson documents a recent commissioning project centered around nostalgia. Nelson's own collaborative relationship with five composers enhances the depth of the collection, adding an additional layer to the temporal trajectory behind the recording. The commissioning guidelines allowed freedom for each composer to approach nostalgia on their own terms, resulting in works that alternatively engaged older repertoire, the phenomenon of memory itself, literary references, and personal reflections. Enlisting composers Marilyn Shrude, Mikel Kuehn, Laura Schwendinger, Donald Crockett, and Mengmeng Wang, Nelson and his colleagues bring their refined virtuosity to this thoughtful repertoire, exploring the ways in which music can shine light on memory and the passing of time.

Conor Nelson:

The Last Possibilities of Light

New works written for flutist Conor Nelson exploring nostalgia

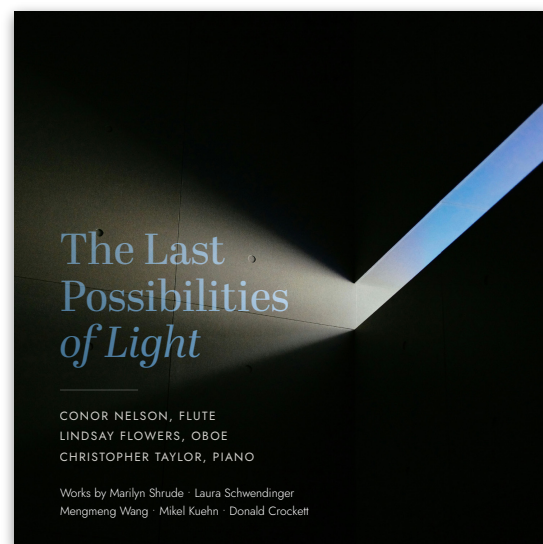
US Street Date	10/2/2026
UPC Code	613527354817
Catalog Number	FCR493
Audio Resolution	44.1kHz, 16 bit; 96kHz, 24 bit
MSRP	\$20.99
Featured Track	Track 7

For press inquiries, email New Focus Recordings

press@newfocusrecordings.com

[New Focus Recordings](#)

Conor Nelson: [Website](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)



Colleagues for nearly a decade at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, Nelson and Marilyn Shrude collaborated closely on performances of her music and through activities with their students. This intertwined working environment allowed Nelson to develop a deep understanding of Shrude's aesthetic, an approach that marries her individual compositional voice with an expansive understanding of music history. In ***Within the Vortex*** for flute and piano, Shrude embeds shrouded fragments of Bach's famous D minor Chaconne alongside ideas from her own catalogue and new material written for this work. Her presentation of existing material is not overt, instead she embeds it into a musical flow that ebbs and flows between recollection and invention.

Laura Schwendinger, a current colleague of Nelson's at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, takes a more formalist approach to the prompt, exploring the nature of memory itself through the repetition and recall of musical ideas. A flutist herself, her writing for the instrument is colorful and deft, taking advantage of the instrument in ways that demonstrate her experiential knowledge of its subtleties. The motives in the four movement ***Anaphora*** are tightly managed with the goal of lodging themselves into the listener's consciousness, not as fixed objects, but as dynamic organisms with a core identity. "Journey" is searching and flowing; "Mists" is impressionistic and evocative; "Contemplation" is reflective and inward; and "Departure" closes the piece with jaunty, angular enthusiasm.

Mengmeng Wang contributes the sole electroacoustic work to the recording with ***You Are The Colorful Withering In My Eyes***, creating a audio documentary of sorts, combining flute, fixed media, and a spoken vocal track. Nelson's flute and the fixed media soundscape complement each other elegantly, painting scenes that give the narrative text context. The fabric of the piece is sparse and meditative, reminiscent of an arthouse film that allows silence during patiently evolving scenes to carry and process meaning from significant plot events.

Also a colleague of Nelson's when he was at Bowling Green State University, composer Mikel Kuehn's music balances sophisticated processes of permutation and formal integration with a finely calibrated expressive palette. ***A Tour of the Canon*** for flute, oboe (Lindsay Flowers), and piano journeys through seventeen distinct canonic treatments of a six note cell heard in the left hand of the piano at the opening of the piece. The flute and oboe complement each other beautifully to accentuate canonic behaviors, sharing attack and decay envelopes, while possessing significant timbral individuality to distinguish themselves. Within that

instrumental dialogue, the piano speaks as a clarion voice, articulating the counterpoint with authority. Underlying Kuehn's structural cohesion is a conviction that musical memory is a function of developed relationships between ideas within a formal frame. While there is significant variation and diversity in the textures heard in *A Tour of the Canon*, the linked seeds of material tie the whole together like chains of musical DNA. Nelson's breathy, accented announcements at the work's outset usher in Kuehn's prismatic harmonic verticalities; the striking timbre reappears just before the piece's final phrase, a strain of sonic memory that reinforces the intricate matrix of pitch and harmony.

Donald Crockett's ***The Last Possibilities of Light*** closes the recording, constructed from another vaunted formal principle, a set of variations on a theme. Crockett's "elegiac" melody is in memory of those we have lost, and serves as the leitmotif of the piece, traversing through musical landscapes, transformed and evolving as they shift, but retaining its essential core. The longest and most expansive work on the album, Crockett ventures through music that is wistful, rhapsodic, impetuous, vigorous, and jagged, closing with a brilliantly virtuosic series of flourishes. Nelson is joined here, and indeed on all of the works with piano, by the excellent pianist Christopher Taylor, and both deliver commanding performances throughout, expertly transmitting the intricate details of each of these valued new contributions to the flute repertoire.

Bio

Praised for his "long-breathed phrases and luscious 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.

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.