

# MARK ABEL



4.4.2

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I mostly favor poetic or abstract titles for albums, but “4.4.2” instead echoes a hallowed American cop-show catchphrase: “Just the facts, ma’am”. And rightly so. We have four pieces for two musicians here, each occupying a distinct sonic and timbral space. *Vive le duo!*

The songs that comprise the cycle *As the World Turns* progress from heady romantic fulfillment to growing dissatisfaction, then to joy at separation’s freedoms, concluding with an acknowledgement that in the end, things haven’t quite worked out as planned. The expressive content is brought to life compellingly by rising Swiss-Canadian mezzo-soprano Simone McIntosh and pianist Michael McMahon, an acclaimed master of the art song idiom.

The piece’s title is borrowed from America’s longest-running TV soap opera (1956 – 2010) and the individual songs can certainly be read as episodes in one person’s continuous story. But I consider *As the World Turns* a gallery of views into the living rooms and psyches of different people at various stages of their relationships, the device exploited memorably by Alfred Hitchcock in *Rear Window*.

*Samantha Sketches* was written with the outstanding American flutist Alice K. Dade very much in mind. The featuring of piccolo in the middle movement took root in my thoughts after seeing her perform Erwin Schulhoff’s bracing 1925 trio *Concertino*, in which viola and double bass are the accompanying instruments. The superb Lithuanian pianist Ieva Jokubaviciute provides her trademark dynamism and vivid tonal coloration.

I would describe *Samantha* as an episodic journey in the interior life – more cheerful than some of my other compositions but also taking dreamy and dark side trips here and there. Alice and Ieva masterfully handle the soaring and turn-on-a-dime moments in the writing.

*Symbiotica*, one of my most unusual pieces, pairs solo violin with organ. Occasionally an artist realizes it’s time to try something off his or her well-beaten track, and in this case I sought to create a work combining multiple stylistic planes with further exploration of writing for the violin. Though dissimilar in most respects, *Symbiotica* was inspired by a piece that has long resonated with me, Frank Martin’s *Sonata da Chiesa*, a haunting gem from 1938 (originally for organ and viola d’amore).

To realize my conception, I was very fortunate to encounter Jennifer Choi, a highly respected bicoastal violinist who does not shrink from demanding projects and is known for seeking them out. Her task here was to depict a multilingual solo voice unfolding at length over a *bouillabaisse* of widely varied organ lines and textures. Jennifer does a marvelous job of capturing the dynamics needed to propel the piece forward and render its emotional content clearly.

*A Door Opens* is my third collaboration with the wonderful West Coast cellist Jonah Kim – following the title track on his Delos album *Approaching Autumn* and *Out the Other Side*, performed by his Trio Barclay on my previous collection, *Spectrum*. Jonah is joined for this recording by the fine pianist Keisuke Nakagoshi, a significant figure in the San Francisco classical scene for more than two decades.

While its title might bring the late, great Tōru Takemitsu to mind, *A Door Opens* is at heart an extroverted voyage of discovery, searching for answers that are explored but also subject to being discarded along the way. The music swings between poles of sweet lyricism and fervid passion – playful at times, seeking refuge in introspection at others, closing with a question mark. Jonah and Keisuke lock in perfectly from start to finish.

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# AS THE WORLD TURNS

TEXT: MARK ABEL

## 1. Rising High

Rising high, the sun will warm the waking hills.  
I see you rising too, gathering up your energy.  
We will be blessed once again, if I know anything.  
And do I?

You belong next to me, my dearest.  
We'll ride the storms that come with the weather.  
There was a time when I doubted the auguries;  
they can be so hard to read.  
You could see a pattern emerging,  
two circles closing together.  
Love makes us stronger, we still can believe.

This is the bounty of days unfolding, fall days.  
These are the hours we will fill  
with dance and song and laughter.

A shifting spectrum, rippling freely  
then pulling away, parting with a wistful wave.  
Only to meet again beneath  
the tower that marks the time.

Light comes in so many shades,  
splintering back and forth as we come into  
focus.  
I can feel the future taking shape,  
welcoming all we bring,  
my so-precious one.

## 2. Might Makes Right

"Might makes right".  
That seems to be your motto  
when you deal with me.  
I feel tired and I perspire  
when I have to deal with you.

You're supposed to be my lover  
and no other could come between us.  
Now I must sort matters out once more.

Can you be believed after everything?  
All the scars and stings?

Once you were a nice man, full of life and  
kindness.

Now I see you in a different light  
and I think I should stay out of sight.

Deep December, I remember.

On the road to riches you have lost your compass.  
I've watched as you abandon what you most  
held near and dear.

And now we must go our separate ways.  
You cannot hold me, so please don't try.  
When you learn how to breathe once again  
choose a different trajectory.

### **3. Oh, What a Glorious Thing**

Oh, what a glorious thing to be on my own again.  
Free of the guilt gnawing away my vital thoughts  
at a time when I need them more than ever.  
Stroll on the cliffs and behold the endless horizon.  
Erase those paralyzing poisons.

Groping now along thick slippery walls,  
equilibrium is struggling.  
The earth is trembling.  
Breathe in deep, find the center again.  
The future waits for a sign, I must re-enter.

There is the doorway beckoning me.  
I wish for something  
but can't know what it might be.  
Far on a distant shore  
shining, swelling above the ocean's roar.

I've asked permission from myself  
to explore what feels like freedom.  
Passing before me is a caravan  
of glittering gems.  
"You must come closer," she sings to me.

"Come to me". That is the music  
I've been longing to hear.  
Waves of pleasure, I must trust them  
as they're washing over me.

#### **4. Counting the Years**

Counting the years elapsed since we fell apart.  
Long, lonely roads placing in perspective  
all that is no longer here.  
Am I growing or just sowing seeds of bitter  
regret?  
Hard to determine.

A left turn here and there a right.  
Can't say if it's day or night.  
The hours dissolve into a trembling pond,  
portal to the great beyond.

Memory's path is ever winding,  
twisting fragments of time.  
Can they align? Is it a sign  
that love is a shifting thing?  
Never to be captive when it's on the wing.  
Live and learn while you still can.

Finally, in silence,  
crouching, staring, focused  
on atoms only you can see.

**MARK ABEL**  
COMPOSER



American composer Mark Abel's style is a sturdily constructed hybrid of classical, rock and jazz. Known initially for his vocal works, he has recently moved into chamber music. Mark's projects have garnered critical acclaim and attracted esteemed musicians including sopranos Hila Plitmann and Isabel Bayrakdarian, clarinetist David Shifrin, cellists Fred Sherry and Jonah Kim, and pianists Carol Rosenberger, Robert Koenig and Dominic Cheli. A powerful lyricist himself, Mark has also set poetry by Rainer Maria Rilke, Marina Tsvetaeva, and California poets Kate Gale and Joanne Regenhardt. "4.4.2" is his seventh album for Delos.

**SIMONE McINTOSH**  
MEZZO-SOPRANO



Mezzo-soprano Simone McIntosh is regarded as one of the most promising singers to emerge from Canada in recent years. The Vancouver native has won acclaim for her performances in European and North American venues, appearing at San Francisco Opera, Opernhaus Zürich, Canadian Opera Company, Deutsche Oper am Rhein, Staatsoper Hamburg, Bayerische Staatsoper and with the Cleveland Orchestra. Simone was the First Prize Laureate for the Concours musical international de Montréal – Aria Division and a finalist (Song Prize) at the 2023 Cardiff Singer of the World Competition.

## MICHAEL McMAHON

PIANO



Michael McMahon is one of Canada's premier collaborative pianists. The five-time Juno Award nominee has performed with prominent singers in Canada, Europe and the U.S., and recorded for labels including Marquis Classics, CBC Records and Analekta. He has made broadcast recordings for the English and French networks of the CBC, as well as for the BBC, RBTF, Radio Suisse Romande and Radio France. An Associate Professor at McGill University, Michael has had a long association with Atelier lyrique de L'Opéra de Montréal and the Banff Centre for the Arts. In 2012, he received the Ruby Award from Opera Canada and in 2025 was made a Member of the Order of Canada.

## ALICE K. DADE

FLUTE



Alice K. Dade is one of the most respected American flutists, both as an award-winning player and inspiring pedagogue. She has performed with many orchestras, including the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Alice, an Associate Professor at the University of Missouri's School of Music, has presented masterclasses at numerous universities in the United States, Latin America and Asia. A frequent guest star on the PBS series *Now Hear This*, she recorded a solo album for Naxos, *Living Music*, in 2018.

## IEVA JOKUBAVICIUTE

PIANO



Lithuanian pianist Ieva Jokubaviciute made her orchestral debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. A much sought-after chamber musician and collaborator, she regularly appears at international festivals, including Marlboro, Ravinia, Chamber Music Northwest and Festival Mozaic. She was a founding member of Trio Cavatina, winner of the Naumburg International Chamber Music Competition. A graduate of the Curtis Institute and Mannes School of Music, Ieva is Professor of Piano at Duke University. She has made three acclaimed albums, most recently *Northscapes* on Sono Luminus.

## JENNIFER CHOI

VIOLIN



Hailed by *The New York Times* as a “soulful, compelling... excellent violinist,” Jennifer Choi is known for her broad stylistic taste. A founding member of the Miró Quartet, she has performed for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Guggenheim Museums, MOMA, Ravinia, Caramoor and other series and festivals across North America, Europe and Asia. As a soloist, Jennifer has appeared with the Oregon Symphony, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and String Orchestra of New York City. She has championed contemporary composers including John Zorn, Susie Ibarra, Annie Gosfield, Ches Smith, Yuka Honda and Wadada Leo Smith.

## JONAH KIM

CELLO



Jonah Kim is one of America's leading cellists, celebrated for his dynamism in concert settings and deeply felt interpretations. Making his solo debut with Wolfgang Sawallisch and the Philadelphia Orchestra at age 12, Jonah has moved forward to excellence as an in-demand chamber performer and recording artist. He has made two albums for Delos: *Approaching Autumn* and a recording of the Rachmaninov and Barber sonatas with pianist Sean Kennard. Jonah's Trio Barclay, which includes Kennard and violinist Dennis Kim, is a potent and popular feature of musical life in Southern California.

## KEISUKE NAKAGOSHI

PIANO



Keisuke Nakagoshi is a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players and a pianist in the creative teams of Opera Parallèle and West Edge Opera. He has performed at the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Hollywood Bowl and Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco. Receiving training from such eminences as Emanuel Ax, Gilbert Kalish, Menahem Pressler and Paul Hersh, Keisuke has collaborated with conductors including Michael Tilson Thomas, Herbert Blomstedt and Nicole Paiement. He is also celebrated for his work with ZOFO, the Grammy-nominated piano-four-hands duo he founded with Eva-Maria Zimmermann in 2009.

## RECORDING DETAILS

### **1-4:**

Jennifer Velva Bernstein Performance Hall,  
Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada  
April 21, 2025

Producer: Martha de Francisco  
Engineer: James Clemens-Seely

### **5-7:**

Fay and Daniel Levin Performance Studio,  
WFMT, Chicago, USA  
May 29, 2024

Producer: Mark Abel  
Engineer: Christopher Willis

### **8-9:**

Skywalker Sound, Nicasio, California, USA  
February 4, 2025

Producer: Mark Abel  
Engineer: Dann Thompson

### **10-11:**

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church,  
Belvedere, California, USA,  
January 9, 2025

Producer & Engineer: Matt Carr

All post-production: Matt Carr

### **Artistic Director**

Charles Adriaenssen

### **Executive Producer**

Timothée van der Stegen

### **Score publisher**

Oceangoing Music (ASCAP)

### **Design**

Pragma Création

### **Cover art**

"After Kandinsky," AI

### **Inside photos**

Mark Abel © Marie Ramos

Simone McIntosh © Ian G McIntosh

Michael McMahan © Tam Photography

Alice K. Dade & Ieva Jokubaviciute © Mike Kelly

Jennifer Choi © Lisa-Marie Mazzucco

Jonah Kim © Marie Ramos

Keisuke Nakagoshi © Sachiko Minowa

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# MARK ABEL 4.4.2

(b. 1948)

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**Simone McIntosh**

*mezzo-soprano*

**Michael McMahon**

*piano*

**Alice K. Dade**

*flute and piccolo*

**Ieva Jokubaviciute**

*piano*

**Jennifer Choi**

*violin*

**Jonah Kim**

*cello*

**Keisuke Nakagoshi**

*piano*

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## AS THE WORLD TURNS

1. Rising High 5:32
2. Might Makes Right 4:57
3. Oh, What a Glorious Thing 5:44
4. Counting the Years 3:44

Simone McIntosh mezzo-soprano | Michael McMahon piano

## SAMANTHA SKETCHES

5. Best of Intentions 7:26
6. Skyward\* 4:48
7. An Urgent Matter 4:58

Alice K. Dade flute and piccolo\* | Ieva Jokubaviciute piano

## SYMBIOTICA

8. I 7:01
9. II 11:43

Jennifer Choi violin | Mark Abel organ

## A DOOR OPENS

10. I 5:48
11. II 9:22

Jonah Kim cello | Keisuke Nakagoshi piano

**Total Running Time**

**71:32**