

A Bright Sadness

Piano works inspired by
Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Native American chant

Paul Barnes
pianist and chanter

Schmitt Music

Distances Between 2 (2019)

Ron Warren
(b.1957)

Simeron Kremate (2019)

Victoria Bond
(b.1945)

Trisagion (2020)

David von Kampen

Piano Quintet “Annunciation” (2018) (world premiere)

Philip Glass
(b.1937)

Part One

Part Two

Arranged for solo piano by Paul Barnes

Program Notes

Distances Between 2 (2019)

Composer and native flutist Ron Warren wrote *Distances Between 2* for me in the spring of 2019 after hearing me chant a Greek Orthodox hymn at one of my performances earlier that year. Ron and I have collaborated on many musical projects, most importantly in Philip Glass’s monumental Piano Concerto No.2 “After Lewis and Clark” where the second movement based on Sacagawea features beautiful

dialogue between native flute and piano. A recent performance featuring myself and Ron is available on my YouTube channel. According to the composer, *Distances Between 2* is based on that infinite distance between pitches characteristic of many ancient musical traditions. Following the opening bell sound, the melodic material fits idiomatically within the range and modality of the native flute. The piece unfolds as a beautiful juxtaposition of two different types of beauty. The first, much slower and more meditative, has a direct relationship to the austere and objective beauty of nature. The tempo is constant, slow, meditative without any human sense of flexibility or rubato. The contrasting sections feature an expressive human response to this objective beauty with flexible tempos and a colorful array of tonalities. Each return of nature is presented with increasing rhythmic complexity, while each human response becomes more expressive and colorful. The final response features beautiful color shifts descending by chromatic thirds and returns to mirror the tonality of the opening bell toll. I gave the world premiere of *Distances Between 2* at the Omaha Conservatory of Music in October of 2019.

Simeron Kremate (2019)

I have had the pleasure of working with Victoria Bond for over twenty years when I first recorded her piano concerto “Black Light” on my first American Piano Concerto recording on Koch International. I have collaborated with her on two original compositions, both based on byzantine chant. The first, Potirion Sotiriu (The Cup of Salvation) began as a solo piano piece based on the byzantine communion hymn used for the feasts of the Theotokos. Bond later transformed the solo piano piece into her brilliant piano concerto ‘Ancient Keys’ which I recorded on the Albany label.

Simeron Kremate was written in the fall of 2018/spring of 2019 and is based on the Greek Orthodox crucifixion chant from the Holy Thursday service chanted during Orthodox Holy Week. Its opening five-note melody in the plagal of the second mode features the augmented seconds that are characteristic of this musically compelling mode. The text “Simeron kremate” opens the hymn emphasizing the liturgical truth that “today” (simeron), we mystically participate in this great act of love from the past thereby making the past eternally present. Ms. Bond also decided to incorporate a Jewish Passover chant “Tal” (dew) whose opening melody bears an uncanny similarity to the opening of the Greek chant. This Jewish prayer for the blessing of dew is sung on the first day of Passover, the date of which the Greek Orthodox always consider for the timing of their own celebration of Pascha, the Greek word for “Passover.” Just as the Jewish community liturgically asks God for the gift of dew, so the Greek Orthodox community contemplates the gift of God in Christ, who today is suspended on a cross. The work opens with the traditional apichima of the plagal of the second mode which aurally establishes the musical atmosphere of the mode. Ms. Bond follows this with a Jewish style cantillation which leads to the first statement of the “Simeron” chant. These opening notes of the chant are then developed in multiple ways before the intimate entry of the “Tal” melody appears. The work concludes with a ‘tranquillo’ passage of rare beauty ingeniously combining both themes. The work ends tentatively as the opening notes of the chant dissipate into eternity. The work was jointly commissioned by the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts and the University of Nebraska and the Soli Deo Gloria Music Foundation in Chicago.

Σήμερον Κρεμάται (Today is Suspended)

From the Matins Service of Holy Friday (celebrated on Thursday evening)

Today, He who suspended the earth on the waters is suspended on a cross. 3x

The King of the Angels wears a crown of thorns.

He who wraps the sky in clouds is wrapped in a fake purple robe.

He who freed Adam in the Jordan accepts to be slapped.
The Bridegroom of the Church is fixed with nails to the cross.
The Son of the virgin is pierced with a spear.
We worship Your Passion, O Christ. 3x
Show us also Your glorious Resurrection.

Trisagion (2020) by David von Kampen

I have been chanting in Orthodox churches for twenty-five years and playing the piano for fifty years. Combining these two sacred activities has been a professional priority ever since Victoria Bond wrote her beautiful pianistic meditation on the Greek Orthodox communion hymn *Potirion Sotiriu* “The Cup of Salvation” back in 1999. Since that time several composers including Philip Glass (Piano Quintet “Annunciation,” 2018) and Ivan Moody (Nocturne of Light, 2010) have written beautiful piano works based on byzantine chant. When I asked my composer friend and Glenn Korff School of Music colleague David von Kampen to write a piano piece for me based on byzantine chant, I had selected the beautiful baptismal hymn *Osi Is Hriston* “As Many of You as were Baptized into Christ” from Galatians 3:27. But life is full of unexpected events. While David was writing the piece, I chanted the funeral of our priest’s wife Veda Anna and was deeply moved by the beauty of the processional chant that is sung as the body is brought to the front of the church at the beginning of the funeral service. This hymn is also sung on Holy Friday when Orthodox Christians remember Christ’s passion and experience the truth of a God who died for all. This hymn had such a powerful effect on me that I asked David to incorporate it into his new work. Thus, *Trisagion* was born. *Trisagion* or “Thrice Holy” is an ancient hymn based on the trinitarian revelation of God found in Isaiah 6. Revealing a mystical vision of heavenly worship, the seraphim sings: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts.” In the byzantine hymn, the seraphic utterance is rendered as “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.” Thus David’s piece combines what Orthodox Christians proclaim as the two beginnings of humanity – our new birth into Christ, and our entrance into eternity.

David’s work also recalls my previous life as an evangelical pianist where my own hymn arrangements were central to my role in worship. David, a confessional Lutheran, is clearly steeped in this tradition going all the way back to Bach. While some of my traditionalist Orthodox friends may wonder about this multicultural marriage of piano and byzantine chant, or perhaps of David’s jazz infused style, I’m thrilled to combine my love of the piano with my love of these byzantine melodies. Both melodies used in *Trisagion* can be found in the 1945 Greek Byzantine Liturgical Hymnal by George Anastassiou, the student of the famous Athenian chanter and composer John Sakellarides whose reformed melodies Anastassiou used in his hymnal. These melodies are beloved by Greek Orthodox here in the US, and it was at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Lincoln Nebraska where I first heard them in their liturgical context.

David begins *Trisagion* with a complete statement of the funeral hymn which is then beautifully developed before the entrance of the baptismal hymn. This hymn is developed in a variety of ways including a clear reference to the Lutheran Bach’s contrapuntal textures. The work concludes with a powerful restatement of the funeral hymn as we have musically experienced the two beginnings of baptism and death.

Trisagion was commissioned by the Nebraska Music Teachers Association and the Music Teachers National Association as part of their Commissioned Composer program. The work will have its world premiere at the NMTA State Conference to be held on Oct 22-23 at the Glenn Korff School of

Music of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I was written for pianist Paul Barnes with a special choral version written for the UNL Chamber Singers under the direction of Marques Garrett.

Piano Quintet “Annunciation” (2018) by Philip Glass

One of my very first conversations with Philip Glass soon after we met in the mid 90s explored the musical and spiritual intersection of Buddhist and Eastern Christian byzantine chant. This mutual interest has culminated in Glass’s latest composition, the Piano Quintet “Annunciation.”

I also serve as head chanter of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Lincoln, Nebraska and sang the beautiful byzantine communion hymn of the Annunciation for Glass in January of 2017. Glass then agreed to base his first piano quintet on this melody and to title the work “Annunciation.” The text of the hymn comes from Psalm 133:13, “The Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired her for his dwelling place.”

The work is in two parts. The Part One opens with a meditative chromatic chord progression which eventually leads to the first entrance of the chant first stated in the piano. Glass develops this beautiful theme as it is shared by the various members of the quintet culminating in an opulent neo-romantic closing section recapping the introductory chromatic chord progression. A partial restatement of the theme ends the movement with a brooding D minor coda. Part Two is a poignant musical meditation on Part One revealing Glass’s innate ability to connect the transcendental ethos of the original chant with his own spacious approach to musical time. A particularly expressive section features the piano in soaring sparse octave melody over undulating eighth notes in the violin and cello. The work ends with an increasingly energetic and ecstatic 7/8 coda based on the opening chant transformed into scale passages that ascend and dissipate into a pianissimo chromatic flourish evocative of incense rising.

I gave the world premiere performance with the Chiara Quartet at the Lied Center for Performing Arts on April 17, 2018. The Journal Star described the performance as “*meditative...striking...touchingly played by Barnes and the Chiara Quartet, “Annunciation” is a romantic, late-period Glass masterwork.*” Fred Child, host of APR’s Performance Today was present for the premiere and wrote: “*Pianist Paul Barnes put together and performed a thrilling evening of music!*” Barnes’ interview with Glass and Fred Child was featured on Performance Today in late June along with the broadcast of the world premiere performance. The New York premiere took place on May 12, 2018 in the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York Classical Review called the quintet a “fascinating mosaic of Glass’s late style...with a warm inner expression that seemed to echo Brahms.” And New York Music Daily labeled the quintet “magically direct....lushly glittering.” Barnes recorded the quintet with Brooklyn Rider in January of 2019 for an Orange Mountain Music recording release for late spring.

Funding for the commission of the Annunciation Piano Quintet was provided by the Pearle Francis Finigan Foundation, Mike & Amber Kutayli, Rhonda Seacrest, and the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts at the University of Nebraska.

Notes by Paul Barnes

Paul Barnes, pianist

Praised by the New York Times for his “Lisztian thunder and deft fluidity,” pianist Paul Barnes has electrified audiences with his intensely expressive playing and cutting-edge programming. He has been featured seven times on APM’s *Performance Today*, on the cover of *Clavier Magazine*, and his recordings are streamed worldwide.

Celebrating his twenty-three-year collaboration with Philip Glass, Barnes commissioned and gave the world premiere of Glass’s *Piano Quintet “Annunciation.”* From the New York premiere at the Met Museum, New York Classical Review called the quintet a “a fascinating mosaic of Glass’s late style...with a warm inner expression that seemed to echo Brahms.” The world premiere performance was recently featured on *Performance Today*. Barnes recorded the quintet with Brooklyn Rider in January of 2019 on Glass’s label Orange Mountain Music and was released internationally in October of 2019 to critical acclaim. *ResMusica* in Paris wrote: “Paul Barnes, whose pianistic lines are always clear, is a marvel of dialogue with Brooklyn Rider.”

Barnes latest recital *A Bright Sadness: Piano music inspired by Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Native American chant* features a contemplative and cathartic program of piano works inspired by the mystical world of chant. Barnes, also a Greek Orthodox chanter, has collaborated most recently with Philip Glass and Victoria Bond to create piano works based on ancient byzantine and Jewish chant. Barnes has also been a passionate champion of the works of Liszt and performs Liszt’s late masterpiece, *Via Crucis*, the Way of the Cross exploring the painful but ultimately hopeful journey of Christ to the cross. The overall theme of “bright sadness” permeates the program as the tremendous depth and intensity of ancient chant is seen through the bright prism of hope and love. New chant-based works by Native flutist Ron Warren, David von Kampen, and Matthew Arndt are given their premiere performances.

Barnes is Marguerite Scribante Professor of Music at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Glenn Korff School of Music. He teaches during the summer at the Vienna International Piano Academy, the Interharmony International Music Festival, and the Piano Plus Summer Piano Institute in Corfu, Greece. In great demand as a pedagogue and clinician, Barnes has served as convention artist at several state MTNA conventions, most recently in Virginia and was named “Teacher of the Year” by the Nebraska Music Teachers Association. Barnes’ recordings are available on Spotify, Pandora, Apple Music, YouTube, and Amazon.