

The Annual John Donald Robb Concert - Sunday, May 2 - 5:00 PM

José María Vitier - *Criatura Afortunada*

[James Flora 2021 Symposium Conversation on José María Vitier's Criatura Afortunada - YouTube](#)

Matthew Forte - *The Smile*

I am normally a very slow composer, and this setting of Blake's "The Smile" represents probably the only instance of inspiration over perspiration in the whole of compositional life. It was composed in the span of around three hours during the first spring break of my teaching career, in Toledo Ohio, in March of 2018. I had known I wanted to write a piece for chamber choir, and while perusing for texts online, I stumbled onto this Blake poem, which immediately struck me as having an incredibly distinctive and piquant rhythmic structure. The slightly irregular, declamatory rhythm of the first two phrases of the setting therefore occurred to me almost immediately and –having not yet purchased a piano for my apartment– I rushed from home to the piano in my office, on the University of Toledo campus, at around 10:30pm. And there I remained until just before 2am(!), at which point the piece had taken the form that it has largely retained until today.

I have a soft spot for this piece- perhaps due to the relative speed and painlessness of its birth! And the rhythm that was its impetus, at once natural and unpredictable, probably remains its most prominent feature. But the counterpoint –albeit filled with parallels fifths and other idiosyncrasies that would make Bach blush– is something that I tended to with great care as well, and a great effort was made to ensure that each singer has a part that is melodically gratifying to perform.

The poem itself is largely about dichotomies: that a smile can be happy, and that it can be used to hide great pain– that it can be a genuine expression of love and affection, or a mask we wear in order to avoid showing our true feelings altogether. I reflect this dichotomy at all layers of the piece, even instructing the performers to pronounce the eponymous word in two different ways: the typical, one syllable "smaɪ", and the rougher, vernacular, two-syllable "smaɪ-yoʊl". Above all else, I hope that the setting makes blatant and vivid this dichotomy– and that the seeming celebration and extraversion is tempered throughout with a tinge of melancholy.

[Conversation with Matthew Forte on his piece The Smile - 2021 Composers' Symposium - YouTube](#)

Michael Mauldin - "*West*" from "*Mountain Winds*"

"Mountain Winds: Episodes for Flute, Oboe and Harp" was commissioned by the Ensemble of Santa Fe. On visiting a favorite haunt in the mountains, he realized he had been there at all times of year, and felt the wind from each direction, carrying the spirit of the lands over which it traveled. The fourth movement, "West," is featured in this video (with piccolo-trumpet replacing the oboe), performed by the Astralis Chamber Ensemble: Angela Massey (flute), Kris Marshall (trumpet) and Haley Rhodeside (Harp).

[Michael Mauldin in Conversation about "'West' from 'Mountain Winds' - 2021 Composers' Symposium - YouTube](#)

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Carrie Magin - *Between Us Now*

<http://www.carriemagin.com/>

Leo Brouwer - *Dos Canciones*

i. *Madrigallilo*

ii. *Poema*

[Olga Perez Flora in conversation about Leo Brouwer's Dos Canciones - 2021 Composers' Symposium - - YouTube](#)

Miguel del Aguila - *Absent Lights*

[Miguel del Aguila in conversation about his piece Absent Lights - 2021 Composers' Symposium - YouTube](#)

John Donald Robb - *ODA*:

I am very old tonight

String Quartet No.3: Allegretto

Tears

Sandovalito

[Ana Lopes Arechiga on choreographing to Robb pieces on the 2021 Composers' Symposium - YouTube](#)