

# John Oliver: Catalogue of Selected Works

## with piano

Serial number

Selected scores can be purchased directly from the composer. Price\* Duration

### Vocal

#### **RAVEN'S CRY (VERSION FOR 3 VOICES)** for one or more voices (3 parts: high, medium, low), Piano & CD

Commissioned by Eckhardt-Gramatté National Competition for Young Performers

10:00

Raven's Cry was commissioned by the Eckhardt-Gramatté National Competition and first performed by finalists in the competition on April 30, 1999 in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada. The winner for best performance of the imposed work was Krista Scott. Also, the winner of the competition, mezzo-soprano Vilma Vitols, sang the work in the solo version across Canada as part of her winning tour in the fall of 1999.

The score was written to be sung in both of the official languages of Canada, English and French; Spanish has also been added in several places, though the rhythms have not always been completely notated due to space restrictions. When a soloist sings the piece, the story told at the centre of the piece should be spoken in the majority language of the audience. (See page iii of this Introduction for the complete text of this story in English, French, and Spanish.) The rest of the piece may be sung in any of the three notated languages (English, French, or Spanish), the three languages of the Americas, with the following two exceptions:

1] Since the story's original language is English, there are some phrases that must be sung in English; these are notated in English only in the score.

2] The sections that feature Articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR] (from bars 99 to 183) appear in the score in the two official Languages of Canada, French and English, as well as Spanish where possible. However, these passages may be sung in any language for which a translation of the UDHR exists. Translations of the UDHR in more than 40 languages can be downloaded from the "50th Anniversary" internet web site <<http://www.unhcr.ch/udhr/index.htm>> and used instead of or in addition to the text as it appears in the score. The performers would then have to adapt the notes and rhythms to fit the text to the score. A highly creative rendition of this section of the score would present a mixture of languages for each of the musical phrases.

NOTE: Other versions of the score with single high, medium and low parts are simply part extractions of this score, with the exception of the "version for solo medium voice" which was revised for Vilma Vitols.

#### **RAVEN'S CRY (VERSION FOR SOLO VOICE)** for high, medium or low voice, Piano & CD

Commissioned by Eckhardt-Gramatté National Competition for Young Performers

10:00

See program note for "Version for 3 Voices."

Note: this "version for solo medium voice" was especially revised for Vilma Vitols and should not be used when performing the work with other voices.

#### **RAVEN'S CRY (VERSION FOR HIGH VOICE)** for high voice, Piano & compact disk

Commissioned by Eckhardt-Gramatté National Competition for Young Performers

10:00

See program note for "Version for 3 Voices."

NOTE: This score may be sung as a solo or in combination with other parts as seen in the "Version for 3 Voices."

#### **RAVEN'S CRY (VERSION FOR LOW VOICE, TREBLE CLEF)** for low voice, Piano & compact disk

Commissioned by Eckhardt-Gramatté National Competition for Young Performers

10:00

See program note for "Version for 3 Voices."

NOTE: This score may be sung as a solo or in combination with other parts as seen in the "Version for 3 Voices."

#### **RAVEN'S CRY (VERSION FOR MEDIUM VOICE)** for medium voice, Piano & compact disk

Commissioned by Eckhardt-Gramatté National Competition for Young Performers

10:00

See program note for "Version for 3 Voices."

NOTE: This score may be sung as a solo or in combination with other parts as seen in the "Version for 3 Voices."

#### **UNSEEN RAIN** for Mezzo-soprano, Piano (reduction of orchestral score)

Commissioned by CBC/Music in the Morning

11:00

See program note in record entry for the original version for mezzo-soprano and Orchestra.

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## **IN THE FLESH** for Baritone Voice & Piano

Commissioned by Music in the Morning

13:00

In the Flesh was commissioned by the Music in the Morning Concert Society and first performed by Russell Braun, voice, and Carolyn Maule, piano, at the Vancouver Academy of Music's Koerner Recital Hall, Vancouver, Canada on March 15, 1994.

In 1974, George Bowering had a collection of poetry published (by McClelland and Stewart) called In the Flesh. In his preface, he says "The following collection is made of magazine verse written after I turned thirty...not of a piece necessarily, but of a period that was entered upon & is done with." Later he describes this period as a time in between his lyrical twenties and the more internal thirties.

In George's twenties, he was "so busy taking in details that I was always saying or learning to say, oh, there it is out there. After turning thirty I said, oh, here it is in here. It was as if the language was not going out to meet the objects, but was being said by them from inside up to my larynx & out there.

"I used to say, as I was on the verge of turning thirty, that if I survived I wanted nothing more in the future than I wanted wisdom, though it is mixt with despair, etc. I got pain & tears & cosmic laughter that promised to bring on wisdom. I now feel that it will come, & am immediately aware of the work involved, whereas earlier I merely hoped for the promise. That make little lyrics while waiting."

Since I began writing music, I have been taking in details, experimenting with various musical voices, techniques, and so on. I have been going "out there" to find my art. During my late twenties, I traveled quite a bit, turned myself inside out, searched far afield, even went off the edge; I've had a wild time. But lately I've been coming to the same realization that Bowering came to in his early thirties: "here it is in here." In the spirit of Bowering's "little lyrics while waiting," I would describe my song cycle as cabaret tunes while waiting.

That internal place from whence comes the most profound artistic expression is a place I have called The Resting Place of Fire since my composition of the same name (1987, in Spanish, El Reposo del Fuego). Since the composition of these "tunes while waiting", new work comes increasingly from this internal place.

## **GUACAMAYO SUITE** for Tenor voice & Piano

Commissioned by Vancouver Opera

12:40

The Guacamayo Suite for tenor and piano was made at the request of Vancouver Opera several months after the first performance of the composer's first opera Guacamayo's Old Song and Dance by the Canadian Opera Company in Banff and Toronto from Feb 26 to March 10, 1991. The suite consists of four songs that concentrate on the storytelling aspect of the opera. Each song presents a different character from Guacamayo's story. In the first song, the storyteller prepares us for the stories he will tell about his ancestors Seven Macaw, the father, & Zipacna and Cabracan, the twin sons. The remaining three songs are taken from each of the three characters' first appearance in the opera, where each begins to tell their own story, through Guacamayo, the storyteller.

## **HYMN TO THE SUN** for Soprano Voice and Mixed Quartet

Commissioned by Canadian Opera Company

2:30

*Soprano Voice, Trumpet/Clarinet, Piano, Percussion, Keyboard Synthesizer*

A selection from the opera "Guacamayo's Old Song and Dance."

## **RAINSONGFOREST** for Soprano Voice, Oboe, Guitar, Piano, Synthesizer and Tape

Commissioned by GEMS (Group of the Electronic Music Studio) [McGill University]

17:00

In Memorium, Edward Oliver, the composer's father, who died May 18, 1986. Text by the composer.

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## Solo Instrument

### **HOT TEMPERED CLAVIER** for 1/16-of-tone Piano

Commissioned by Bruce Mather

11:25

The idea for these Preludes and Fantasies came to me as I considered how the 16th of tone piano afforded the composer the possibility to "compose the temperament." By this I mean that, because the 16th-of-tone is a musical interval "à la limite du perceptible" it allows for the integration of the finest possible gradations of "sound drawing", from cluster work that one could call "composed chorus effect", to more traditional approaches to sound organization, such as the use of melodic and harmonic structure. This new piano merits a catalogue of compositions that explores this new temperament in all of its implications (musical, cultural, and technical). Rather than create a series of pieces straight from my imagination, I decided to "recompose" the Well-Tempered Clavier by J.S. Bach, to provide the listener with familiar motivic and harmonic reference points while revealing the characteristics of the new temperament. Listeners will hear structural, motivic, and harmonic material from the Bach, transformed into smaller divisions of the octave, such as 1/4, 1/6, 1/8 and 1/16 tone divisions, as well as sound-organization based on the harmonic series.

### **PRELUDE AND FANTASIE #2** for 1/16-of-tone Piano

Commissioned by Bruce Mather

6:00

See program note for Prelude and Fantasie #1

### **NOT THE END** for Piano

Commissioned by Barbara Pritchard

OLI\_92\_nottheend\_sc

\$4.50 1:00

The ghost of Beethoven appears in this one-minute work that features use of the middle pedal and a special resonance effect.

### **THROUGH NIGHT** for Piano

Commissioned by Barbara Pritchard

OLI\_88\_throughnight\_sc

\$13.00 10:30

Through Night is in two movements: 1] Sunset Shadows; 2] Moonshadows. Composed at the Banff Centre for the Arts, this work is inspired by the evolving processes first explored by the early minimalists. In this case, though, I have established several different types of sonically rich musical materials and have subjected each one to different lengths of additive or subtractive processes. The pianist needs to keep these different musical gestures clearly separated. The middle pedal is used throughout to sustain a "resonance chord", one for each movement. The first movement places four musical "objects" out "in an open field", so to speak (stacked perfect fifths), as the sun sets on the objects, creating lengthening shadows as the music progresses to the sunset at the end. In the second movement, we hear four "objects" placed on a now darkened field (stacked alternating tritones and perfect fourths) as the shadows move from long to short and back as the moon crosses the night sky. A haunting melody is overtaken by short notes in the process and then restored as the moon sets.

### **LIKE THE SEA AT SUNRISE** for Piano

OLI\_82\_likethesea\_sc

\$11.50 10:00

Living near the sea in Vancouver has had a profound effect on me. This work explores the sense of time of lapping waves and harmonically sounds like the lungs full of salty sea air. The shifts in resonances and time bring me close to the sense of the sea.

### **A CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS NOTEBOOK** for Piano

OLI\_81\_childrensxmas\_sc

\$6.00 3:40

A fun collage of Christmas music for pianists of medium to advanced level.

### **HALLOWE'EN** for Prepared Piano

9:00

On October 31, 1980, I decided not to go to a party because of the rainstorm. Instead, I went to my little garage studio and played long into this night of wandering spirits. Here is the result. The work employs several "extended" techniques, such as preparing a handful of notes with coins, scraping, plucking and striking the strings with plectrum, percussion mallet, an open palm, etc. The performer also sings, speaks, and whispers, and can actually make an entire theatrical production of the piece, as have as have most who have performed the work to date. A video was made of this performance by Wayne Olin which can still be found in the Banff Centre for the Arts Library Archives.

### **SOUND AND MOTION STUDIES** for Piano

These studies are designed for the beginning and intermediate piano student with the goal of developing their sense of sonority and rhythm. Various techniques are explored that prepare the student for the contemporary piano literature. The topics covered include: modal melodies and harmonic progressions, syncopated rhythms, resonance effects, plucking the string, and preparing one or two strings by inserting a coin. In this way, the student is exposed to very simple renditions of ideas that are more fully developed in the 20th and 21st century repertoire. The student will develop a heightened appreciation of rhythm and sound colour possibilities of the piano.

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## Orchestral

**UP WIND** for Orchestra (3333 4331 Timp, 2 pc, hp, Piano, str)

OLI\_04\_upwind\_sc

Commissioned by the Vancouver Symphony

\$60.50 17:00

*3 Flutes (player 2 & player 3 double piccolo)*

*2 Oboes*

*english Horn*

*2 clarinets in B $\flat$  (player 2 doubles E $\flat$  Clarinet)*

*Bass Clarinet*

Smoke gets in your eyes. Wind gets in your ears. You can't see the wind but you know it's there because you hear and feel it. Music is the same: it's in the air, it is unseen. We tend to believe what we see, but are less sure about what we hear. Often we think music is in the notes: "here is the tune, it goes like this; here are the chords." Yet the sound of music goes far beyond these notes and chords. I am interested in the integration of traditional notions of music (e.g. the known affects that melody and harmony produce) with new forms of organizing sound based on contemporary science and thought.

In Up Wind, I use only a few notes to create three contrasting movements that draw different lines and shapes. The first movement presents mostly fast upward lines and slower lines moving down or in zigzags. The second movement uses only the extreme registers of the instruments. The high register clusters produce difference tones in the listeners' ears: the music literally invades your body (safely). The third movement pulls a wandering melody out of quickly rising lines.

**DEVOLUTION** for Orchestra (3333, 2 picc, e.hn, e-flat cl, b.cl, ctr bn, 4331, timp, 3 pc, Piano, hp,

21:00

Master's thesis for McGill University, based on observations about the Gestalt of melody and how a chosen melody can be transformed in various harmonic contexts. Overall graphic structure inspired by sculptural and architectural ideas.

## Chamber with electroacoustic

**POINTS OF ENTRY** for Flute &/or melodic instrument(s), disklavier (or MIDI Piano + GM synth),

Commissioned by Kathryn Cernauskas

15:00

Points of Entry was especially commissioned by Kathryn Cernauskas for our two special performances at the Vancouver International Airport in December 2004. An open-scored piece that requires improvisation on the part of a melody-instrument soloist, the accompanying material features an ever-changing texture that periodically includes that national anthems of the world that are generated according to the statistical presence of those nationalities at the local international airport. Max/MSP software custom-designed by John Oliver is used to generate this interactive accompaniment, though the nature of the "interaction" is complex and must be performed by someone who has intimate knowledge of the software (i.e. the composer). A future version of the piece is in the planning stage to allow public to interact and affect the performance.

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## Chamber Music

### **A DAYDREAM OF ROBERT DZIEKANSKI** for Chamber Ensemble

OLI\_07\_RobertD

Commissioned by Vancouver Miniaturist Ensemble

\$12.50 2:45

*Flute, Bass Clarinet, Alto Sax, Horn in F, Drum Set, Guitar, Soprano Voice, Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello, Contrabass*

Subtitle: Waiting at an airport. I only discovered as I was finishing this piece that it somehow evoked the mixture of hope, expectation, and melancholy that a traveller experiences while waiting in an airport to travel. In the case of Robert D, he arrived in a new land (Canada) that was supposedly a land of peace that welcomes immigrants with open arms, but instead was faced with confusion, lack of assistance, and ultimately death. **DISCLAIMER:** Although the title bears the name of the Polish man killed by police at the Vancouver International Airport in the fall of 2007, the piece does not claim to represent the feelings of those affected by this terrible event, but, rather, intends to convey the state of mind of the world traveller: vulnerable, floating, free of nation-state bonds yet subject to their authority at every airport.

### **DRIVEN** for Chamber Ensemble

OLI\_03\_driven\_sc

Commissioned by Ensemble Symposium

\$29.50 7:00

*Flute and/or electric violin (optional), Alto Sax, Cello (baritone sax doubling optional), Vibes, Guitar (optional Synthesizer plays bass and flute parts), Electric Bass (optional), Piano, Drum Set.*

Driven is music for mind, body and soul. It makes you want to get up and dance, then it transmogrifies to take you for a canonic ride where the individual voices race after one another until they merge in a frenetic energy that lets tumble "the tune." Thanks to J. S. Bach for continued inspiration.

### **3 TRAINS** for Cello and Piano

OLI\_00\_3trainscello\_sc

Commissioned by Ian Hampton

\$11.00 9:20

3 Trains evokes the experience of listening to trains from a distance, from across the valley, across the lake, over the field, rather than the noisy experience of standing near the engines and cars that squeak and grind. If you have ever sat quietly in a park, in your back yard, or on a porch, listening to distant trains, then you are ready to play and hear this piece.

About a month after Ian Hampton invited me to write a work for cello and piano, he called to let me know that he had been listening to trains a lot lately, usually in the wee hours, and that he'd like to fax a page of chords he had jotted down in the middle of the night. And so he did.

I have lived within earshot of trains at various point of my life, and especially during the seven years before writing this piece. So these train sounds were already familiar to me. However, I was particularly taken by the echo that Ian spoke about.

So a few weeks after I started writing the music, I set out to Ian's neighbourhood to hear what he had been hearing. When I arrived at Belcarra Park near Ian's house, it was 6:00 on a chilly summer morning, clouds hugging the horizon to the east where the sun was rising. I could hear and identify most sounds in the dead quiet of that hour. After listening for twenty minutes to birds awaking and the lapping of water, I heard a low rumble, very distant at first, then louder, then, finally, the West Coast Express horn ("B" above), short toots, then longer ones. The echo across the water of Burrard Inlet came just over one second after each toot.

It is this very quiet listening experience that I want to capture in the first of these pieces, Midnight Train. I use the grand piano's middle pedal extensively in this and the third piece to create the echo effect. The second piece, Train of Thought is a melody I sang and wrote down as I played the piano accompaniment (train "C" above) over and over again. It is similar in intention to the 13th century troubadour alba, or 'dawn song.' The third piece returns to a representation of the train horns—train "A" above this time—as well as the locomotion sound in the circular phrase that the cello repeats over and over. The last section is a jazzy celebration of trains.

### **3 TRAINS** for Viola and Piano

OLI\_00\_3trainsviola\_sc

Commissioned by Ian Hampton

\$11.00 9:20

See program note for cello version.

### **RETOUR** for Chamber Ensemble (Octet)

Commissioned by Vancouver New Music

14:30

*Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Double Bass, Piano, Percussion*

Return to the source, to the wellspring of artistic creation, to the origins of music. there is a reason for music. "Es muss sein" said Beethoven as he broke new ground. "Without music, life would be a mistake" claims Nietzsche. Enough fetishism. Enjoy the wealth of musical creation, the multiplicity. Let the imagination fun free. If the soul is dancing, the music will dance. "Retour" begins where my piece "Aller-retour" left off ten years ago. Here is a new beginning.

### **JUNE'S SHORTWAVE BIRTHDAY GIFT** for 2 Pianos

OLI\_94\_Junegift\_sc

Commissioned by Music in the Morning

\$6.50 2:40

Written for June Goldsmith as a surprise birthday gift on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of her chamber music series Music in the Morning. This work takes the notes and phrasing of the famous Happy Birthday tune (written by New Yorker Mildred J. Hill) and completely rearranges them to create a hocketing between the pianos that gets closer and closer to the tune we all know until audience bursts forth in song at the end. Please insert the name of your guest of honour in place of "Music in the Morning" and enjoy!

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## **UNMASKING** for Cello and Piano Commissioned by Andras Weber

14:00

This work, composed using the resonance of F, employs the special Bösendorfer piano with the low F extension (although it may also be performed on a standard-range piano). The Unmasking of the title refers at once to the unmasking of the higher harmonics of the low F and to the unmasking of the cello's character, or characteristic melodic sound, during the course of the piece. When the piano plays low resonant chords, the cello sounds best, most in character, when it plays clear melodic material above. When the piano ascends the harmonic series to play clusters, the dramatic tension between the instruments forces various attempted solutions. Once the piano is playing both the generative resonant low chords and the resulting "harmonics," the cello may struggle to stay in character, but in the end can only gain the upper hand by performing a sound of which the piano is not capable, namely, a continuous glissando. The central tension in this music is caused by the opening proposition: listen to all of the sounds produced by any single note played on the piano. Only the lowest two of these complex sounds are actually in tune with the equal-tempered tuning of the piano. The piano proposes the sound field; the cello proposes the line to draw on that field.

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## **AUGURY MUSIC** for Mixed Quintet

Commissioned by Group of the Electronic Music Studio (GEMS) [McGill University, Montreal]

9:00

*B. Clarinet, Baritone sax, Piano, 2 perc*

The entrails of birds were read in ancient times to foretell the future.

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## **SEPTET** for 2 Flutes, Oboe, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Piano

6:00

My "Opus 1" contains many seeds that reappear in later works.

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To buy scores and parts online, and for more information, and to listen to sound clips, please go to  
the web site [www.johnolivermusic.com](http://www.johnolivermusic.com)  
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You may also order by email to [jo@johnolivermusic.com](mailto:jo@johnolivermusic.com) or phone (604) 527-2358.

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