

Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra

Friday, July 6, 2018

VOICES UPLIFTED

Our Time: Me Too (2018)

Dedicated to my sisters worldwide

Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra

(b. 1961)

Sonata (2005)

3. Variations on “Holy Manna” from *Southern Harmony*

Stephen Rush

(b. 1958)

Enough is Enough, Never Again: Sketches (2018) Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra

World premiere

I Felt a Funeral in my Brain (2007)

Elizabeth R. Austin

(b. 1938)

Belonging: A Carillon Call to Care for All (2018) Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra

World premiere

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| 1. Mo(u)rning Call | <i>Dedicated to Ekram Suleiman</i> |
| 2. Earth Blood Reprise | <i>Dedicated to Jackie Doneghy</i> |
| 3. A Voice of Weeping | <i>Dedicated to Goldie Szachter Kalib & Sylvan Kalib</i> |
| 4. Border ID | <i>Dedicated to Fidel Fajardo-Acosta</i> |

*The study and composition of **Belonging: A Carillon Call to Care for All** was supported in part by a grant from the Ronald Barnes Scholarship Fund, of The Guild of Carillonneurs in North America.*



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Keen on translucent, clear, and colorful sound, **Dr. Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra** thrives as international concert and liturgical artist (Fleur de Son and Windwerk Artists), composer, conductor, pedagogue, and author. Her explorations as Senior Researcher at the Göteborg Organ Art Center in Sweden culminated in her acclaimed publications, **Bach and the Art of Improvisation**, Volumes I–II, and her CDs of Franz Tunder's Organ Works on the new North German organ in Göteborg, Sweden. Her next CDs are **Bach, the Liturgical Year and Improvisations** (organ), **Froberger on the 1658 De Zentis** (harpsichord), **Bach's Teacher Böhm and Improvisations** (harpsichord). In her newest CD (2018), Ruiter-Feenstra performs her own organ compositions in **Ruiter-Feenstra on Richards, Fowkes & Co. Organs**.

Ruiter-Feenstra's latest hymn texts, organ and carillon improvisations and compositions focus on social justice themes and collaborations. She seeks to help children and adults to find their voices to stand up and speak their truth. As a parent and pedagogue, Ruiter-Feenstra addresses the essential multidisciplinary art of singing in **Muse in Peace**, **Muse at Work**, **Muse for the Soul**, and **Muse at School**. The engaging Muse songs teach about world peacemakers, finding peace within, academic subjects, psalms and liturgical topics, music theory and listening. **Muse** is Ruiter-Feenstra's action to keep music in the schools and promote access to the arts among underprivileged populations. Ruiter-Feenstra resides in Ann Arbor, Michigan with her spouse, two children, and petite golden doodle.

www.pamelaruiterfeenstra.com

NOTES

As an artist, I initially felt helpless and hopeless in the face of hate speech and actions that permeate our time. Then I realized that although I may not wield powerful political clout, I can do my part in creating a positive alternative: I can lift up marginalized voices through my music. Thus, the theme: VOICES UPLIFTED.

*The “Me Too” movement, a movement from our time that unlocked centuries of oppression, gave birth to **Our Time: Me Too**. A time-honored tradition of respect is to encode the letters of someone’s name in a musical alphabet. As this composition unfolded, the letters coded from “Me Too” formed a haunting musical alliance as a mantra that recurs in accents from every continent. Unlike in times past, these voices chanting “Me Too” will no longer remain silent or encapsulated.*

While Stephen Rush was composing the third movement of his Sonata, “U.S. soldiers were found to be abusing Iraqi prisoners of war at Abu Graib Prison.” [Rush] Rush quotes William Walker’s Southern Harmony:

*“Is there a trembling jailer, Seeking grace and fill’d with fears
Is there here a weeping Mary, Pouring forth a flood of tears?
Brethren, join your cries to help them Sisters, let your prayers abound;
Pray, O! pray that holy manna May be scatter’d all around.”*

*I began composing **Enough is Enough, Never Again: Sketches** just after the Lakeland, Florida school shootings. The alto ostinato sings “enough is enough is...”; the bass theme repeats “never again”; while the first name of each beautiful person massacred in Lakeland is set in the trebles. At the March 26, 2018 Washington DC March for our Lives, 11-year-old Naomi Wadler spoke of how African American women are disproportionately affected by gun violence, but their stories are rarely reported. Naomi is right. After searching for weeks, I found a small representative list of African American women from Kimberlé Crenshaw’s TEDWomen talk of 2016. I then had to search each woman’s name individually. Many of the stories are incomplete, but what I learned was that most of these women were unarmed and many of them were murdered by police. The names of these women live on in the soprano voices of the carillon and their names stand framing the names of the schoolchildren and teachers before and after. I use the word Sketches because each life here has and should have had so many more stories to tell, and tragically, the names here represent thousands of more names that could be added.*

Elizabeth R. Austin based ***I Felt a Funeral in my Brain*** on snippets of Brahms' Intermezzo #2, Op. 118, and on Emily Dickinson's poem from Book IV Time and Eternity, LXXXII:

"I felt a funeral in my brain, And mourners, to and fro
Kept treading, treading, till it seemed That sense was breaking through.
And when they all were seated, A service like a drum
Kept beating, beating, till I thought My mind was going numb.
And then I heard them lift a box And creak across my soul
With those same boots of lead, again. Then space began to toll
As all the heavens were a bell, And Being but an ear,
And I and silence some strange race, Wrecked, solitary, here."

In ***Belonging: A Carillon Call to Care for All***, I seek to lift up the voices of individuals in communities that have been marginalized historically and recently: specifically, Arab and Muslim, African American, Jewish, and Latina/o global sisters and brothers. To prepare for composing ***Belonging***, I interviewed many beautiful, generous, articulate people, who bravely spoke of personal joys and struggles, the strangle-hold of prejudice, and the powerful work they do to honor their heritage and to promote peace and understanding among all people. The carillon pieces are programmatic in that each piece tells a story.

1. The framing portions of ***Mourning Call*** imitate the haunting peaceful chanting of Muslim azans, as they call people to morning prayers. The centerpiece is a Semâi, a traditional Arab musical form with Arab melodic modes, 10/8 meter, and four monophonic verses, each followed by the refrain. ***Mourning Call*** is dedicated to Ekram Suleiman, an optimistic Ethiopian-born U. S. citizen who, despite "three strikes against me: I'm a woman. I'm black, and I'm Muslim," perseveres successfully in studying engineering.
2. ***Earth Blood Reprise*** refers to earth, the home of all humans, originating from the first humans found in Ethiopia; blood, as in bloodshed in the inhumane acts of slavery; and reprise or ritornello, meaning a recurring section, and the vexing, insanely recurring acts of cruelty, injustice, and prejudice by humans to humans who share the same earth and blood. ***Earth Blood Reprise*** features swatches of the Underground Railroad tune "Follow the Drinking Gourd," the African American spiritual "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," and "Lift Every Voice and Sing." A swath of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata symbolizes the prejudicial racial abuse dedicatee Jackie Doneghy experienced when she auditioned at a Midwest conservatory in 1970.

As she played, a white male professor who didn't wish to admit an African American menacingly marched around the piano muttering disparaging remarks. Her light shines brighter and her voice sings on.

3. ***A Voice of Weeping*** activates long-forcibly-suppressed emotional responses to the horrors Jews experienced during the Holocaust. ***A Voice of Weeping*** reveals the story of Holocaust survivor, Goldie Szachter Kalib, who was seven years old when Nazis invaded her native Poland and who barely survived the last selection to the Auschwitz gas chambers. Sylvan Kalib, author of *The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue*, provided Eastern European Hebrew chants and songs for ***A Voice of Weeping***, which he recorded from oral traditions of Eastern European cantors in the 1970s.
4. ***Border ID***, speaks to the identity crisis that many Latina/o immigrants experience as they straddle two cultures and wonder where they belong. Professor Fidel Fajardo-Acosta is a Mexican-born U.S. citizen and brilliant teacher and scholar, who opens up new cultures, languages, and perspectives to students through global literature. Fidel has been targeted by professorwatchlist.org, a white supremacist group of billionaires who, by donating millions of dollars to specific universities, are pressuring university administrators to "cleanse" their faculty rosters of "liberal" (often people of color) professors in the name of "free speech." In the heart of ***Border ID***, a traditional Roman Catholic "Et in terra pax" ("And on earth, peace") chant becomes a fugue (meaning "to flee") subject, with a Latin salsa montuno dancing as its countersubject. ***Border ID's*** bookends are Sanguinely Salsa snippets of "De Colores," a Latina/o song celebrating all of the colors of the world.