

# SOW THE SEEDS



Featuring the poetry of  
New York Times Best-Seller

**Michael Tyler**



## Program Description

Black Moon Trio collaborates with New York Times Best-Selling author and Chicago-native, Michael Tyler, and Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods to develop an experience for audiences to actively address subjects of wellness and community through music, poetry, and nature. Guided by Tyler's *Sow the Seeds: A Composition in Verse*, this program features musical works inspired by local green spaces and encourages audience members to converse and reflect on the ways they treat themselves and their neighbors. Each poem plows the surface of daily living, to plant and nurture the meditations that yield our understanding of life.

## Program

***Pale In Your Shadow*** (2022, rev. 2023)  
*Commissioned by Black Moon Trio*

Griffin Candey (b. 1988)

***Trio for Horn, Violin, and Piano*** (2016)

Richard Bissill (b. 1960)

***With Eyelids Shut*** (2023)  
*Commissioned by Black Moon Trio*

Natalia Camargo Duarte (b. 1996)

***Horn Trio*** (2008)  
*I. Windsong*

Carson Cooman (b. 1982)

***Group Improvisation on "Crazy 15"***

Black Moon Trio & Michael Tyler

***Horn Trio*** (2008)  
*II. Interlude I - Forest Bells*  
*VI. Small Bear, Large Telescope*

Carson Cooman (b. 1982)

## Program Notes

### Pale In Your Shadow

Griffin Candey (b. 1988)

Commissioned by Black Moon Trio

*Pale In Your Shadow* responds to the question: what responsibility do we have for what happened before we were alive? The question immediately brought to mind the concept of generational curses—specifically, breaking generational curses.

That language—“breaking curses”—summons up distinctly violent imagery, a hammer blow that promises to, in one fell swoop, rid us of generational loose ends. It imagines our forebears as the antagonists and us as the protagonists, neatly delineating consequence and blame. In reality, intergenerational trauma rarely divvies up so neatly: some wounds are intentional, some not—some people had choices, some less so—sometimes, someone’s harmful actions were reacting, in large part, to the broken circumstances they themselves inherited. In some cases, blame is warranted, but we really only reach that space once we soften to a difficult reality: sometimes, those who caused the harm we inherit were simply people trying (if perhaps failing) to do their best. While this doesn’t relieve anyone of blame, it might help us right the ship away from destructive cycles. *Pale In Your Shadow* approaches, in its own small way, that duality: moving between the desire to break curses with sheer force and the reality of breaking them with an openness of understanding.

- Griffin Candey



### Trio for Horn, Violin, and Piano

Richard Bissill (b. 1960)

The trio starts cheerily with the horn and violin passing the theme between them in keys that momentarily settle. A change of gear from the piano announces a snappy scherzando, putting to one side the smooth pastorage of the opening. The music becomes ever impassioned before, in unison, the horn and violin protest the need to rest. Tentatively the piano recalls the opening theme as the horn and violin comment lugubriously. Fully recovered, the main theme then gradually builds, scampering and lunging, to its inevitable peak. Once again the horn and violin signal in unison to stop. This time the piano takes time to crank the music back up, leading to a final, joyful 6/8 finish.

- Richard Bissill



## With Eyelids Shut

Natalia Camargo Duarte (b. 1996)  
Commissioned by Black Moon Trio

As it opens, the music paints the atmosphere of a blowing harmonic breeze and its stimulus. The violin tremolo and muted horn achieve a smooth, bright and airy sound, introducing the main melodic materials. Intensity increases in the violin, and the constant interactions between the instruments lead us to a more dynamic and passionate section in which we can hear the influence of different jazz styles and rhythms.

After a small build up of energy, time slows down abruptly. The horn and violin dance together tenderly accompanied by colorful bright chords as if we are remembering the beginning.

As both instruments begin to fade out, the piano introduces a characteristic walking base that steadily builds in tempo and intensity through thick textures and agitated rhythms. There is independence, but also some interplay between the instruments.

As we approach the end, the instruments furiously build tension through the reiteration of dissonant melodies and clustered chords to a disruptive saturation of sound, followed immediately by small soloistic highlights on each instrument. The piece concludes with an upbeat and intense return to the main theme.

*With Eyelids Shut* was commissioned by Black Moon Trio in collaboration with New York Times Best-Selling Author Michael Tyler. I was inspired by the cadence of the poem and its vivid descriptive qualities. I hope the audience can dive into the music and relate to the poem's descriptions through their own experiences, evoking a powerful journey.

- Natalia Camargo Duarte



## Horn Trio

Carson Cooman (b. 1982)

The *Horn Trio*, written in 2004 is based on a shared set of musical material, founded upon the interval of a perfect fifth. The work is a celebratory contemplation of the relationship between this world and the cosmos that contains it—not a pretentious “summing up” of this relationship, but rather an awe-filled contemplation.

The last movement, *Small Bear, Large Telescope*, returns us to earth. It is inspired by a drawing of a small bear gazing into a huge telescope—awed by the cosmic vision he sees. A quiet, tolling pattern in the piano is the basis for simple melodic development—recalling material from the previous movements before tolling into eternity.

- Carson Cooman



## Selections from *Sow the Seeds: A Composition in Verse*

### To Think

Michael Tyler

*Inquisition gives birth to cognition.  
"To ask" is Discernment's keystone.  
As answers are offspring to Quandary,  
Solutions are kin to Dilemma's unknown.*

*Without "Where?" a "There" has no existence  
And "This" won't respond without "How?"  
"That" can't define or tell without "What?"—  
The commencement of thought does query allow.*

*Without "Who?" we're unknowable no ones.  
"Because" can't explain without "Why?"  
When we probe we gain comprehension—  
The substance of knowledge is Question's reply.*

## With Eyelids Shut

Michael Tyler

*The first note you hear opens every pore  
Then, like air through a screen door,  
A harmonic breeze blows through you—  
Ventilating, stimulating, purifying, electrifying.*

*You have to close your eyes to really hear it;  
The audio receptors of the soul are muted by vision  
And this is spiritual music,  
The kind that connects your Being to its being.*

*With eyelids shut,  
You can see the colors of every melody,  
Masterful compositions painted from Passion's palette,  
That infinitely hued, multichromatic spectrum we call  
Emotion.*

*With eyelids shut,  
You can taste the flavor of every rhythm,  
Tantalizing tempos seasoned by Life 's spices,  
Those chances, circumstances, actions, interactions we call  
Experience.*

*With eyelids shut,  
You can feel the saturation of every note,  
Lush tones soaked by Labor's rain,  
That blood, that sweat, those tears we call  
Meaning.*

*Hear it. See it. Taste it. Feel it.*

*Jazz.*

## What I Have Become

Michael Tyler

*I have seen the landscapes of gruesome and great  
And have walked in valleys of love and hate.  
I have trudged through swamps and tripped on blunders  
And conquered mountains to view my wonders.*

*I have braved violent storms on malevolent seas  
And confessed in forests with unfeeling trees.  
I have bathed in streams that wash away tears  
And laid in meadows that hush away fears.*

*I have fallen down hills and broken dreams  
And wailed in deserts with silent screams.  
I have baptized in fields at Dawn's arrival  
And fished from rivers that fed my survival.*

*I state not these things to vent or boast.  
I'm no worse than many, no better than most.  
I offer them solely for this understanding-  
We are made from the Peaceful and the Demanding:*

*We are where we are going and where we have gone.  
We are what we are doing and what we have done.  
We are what we've been given and what we have earned.  
We are what we don't know and what we have learned.*

*We are all we convey and all we conceal.  
We are all that we hurt and all that we heal.  
We are acts warm and tender, cold and extreme.  
We are what we despair and what we still dream.*

*We are who we've forgotten and who we now know.  
We are what we 're still holding and what we've let go.  
We are who we have been and whom we'll conceive.  
We are what we suspect and what we believe.*

*So be worthy of praise or charged to be damned,  
I have come to be, the "Me" that I am  
And neither bolstered by pride nor broken with shame,  
What I have become, I accept and I claim.*

## Crazy 15

Michael Tyler

*Fifteen minutes—*

*Minor time for major doing.*

*Fifteen minutes—*

*Rewind what your mind 's been viewing.*

*Fifteen minutes—*

*Scrutinize what you've seen.*

*Fifteen minutes—*

*Analyze what it means.*

*Fifteen minutes—*

*Meditate on what you've heard.*

*Fifteen minutes—*

*Formulate it in your words.*

*Fifteen minutes—*

*Write it down to comprehend,*

*Fifteen minutes—*

*What you need to transcend:*

*Corruption, confusion, deception, delusion,*

*Harsh rejection and ill-affection,*

*Bad decisions, impositions,*

*Complications and frustrations,*

*The ground you're not gaining,*

*All your complaining,*

*Worries that trouble,*

*Problems that double,*

*Doubts and suspicions,*

*Sinful admissions,*

*Dreams you defer,*

*That face in the mirror.*

*Fifteen minutes—  
Take the time to appraise,*

*Fifteen minutes—  
The living that makes up your days.*

*Fifteen minutes—  
Write out the crazy in your brain.*

*Fifteen minutes—  
Don't lose control. Don't live in pain.*

*Fifteen minutes—  
Express yourself so you will know,*

*Fifteen minutes—  
What to release and what to hold.*

*Fifteen minutes—  
The profit gained from introspection*

*Fifteen minutes—  
the knowledge of your life 's direction.*



## Nature's Ballerina

Michael Tyler

*I have often stared at you,  
Held hostage by my fascination,  
Dazed in a gaze, hypnotic;  
With subtlety and shimmer,  
You move in ways fickle and familiar,  
Fleeting and everlasting;  
Yours is an unpredictable choreography,  
Timed to a music only you can hear,  
An orchestral arrangement  
Of shifting breezes;  
Confined to a space of stark singularity,  
Your allure captures millions,  
As easily as it does one,  
Enslaving concentration,  
Commanding fantasy;  
I have often witnessed  
The service of your dance,  
A purpose called for many reasons,  
Those regaled and romantic,  
Sacred and somber;  
I comprehend your motion  
Defining the elemental,  
Interpreting the emotional,  
Suggesting the eternal—  
A flame, flickering in mystery.*

## Sow the Seeds

Michael Tyler

*Between the borders of your heart,  
You'll find the earth for every emotion,  
The soil and clay of any feeling  
In the realm of comprehension.*

*You can plant and nurture love  
In the gardens of your affection,  
And yet germinate the weeds  
Of cruelty and hate.*

*You can farm the fertile deltas  
Of your hopes and expectations,  
Or perish in the deserts  
Of your doubts and indecision.*

*You can stroll along the shores  
Of soothing grace and healing mercy,  
Or heave in the septic marshes  
Of bitter envy and disdain.*

*You can play upon the pastures  
of serenity and bliss,  
Or ramble across the prairies  
Of self-pity and regret.*

*You can quench from the welcomed rains  
Of caring words and praising voices,  
Or be scorched by the fiery showers  
of molten malice and contempt.*

*You can stand on the solid ground  
Of deserving honor and proven trust,  
And still be ruined by the quakes  
That can destroy all reputations.*

*Now amongst the many acres,  
Of your sentiments and moods,  
Lies a field between the rivers  
Of Awareness and Concern.*

*It is the land whose cultivation  
Yields those selfless acts of giving,  
That console and inspire  
With the promise of new birth.*

*Here grows the wheat of true compassion,  
The staple grain of all good will,  
That which feeds the moral conscience  
Of humane consideration.*

*Till this lot with empathy  
And water it with kindness.  
Enrich its soil with noble value  
And sow the seeds of your good deeds.*

*Harvest every sprout and stalk  
And offer up your bounty.  
Give the most that you are able,  
With no thought of compensation.*

*For a heart that cannot give,  
Without demand or expectation,  
Will foster those conditions  
That starve its decency to shame.*

*Remember this and learn the value  
of your thoughtfulness and favors,  
For you will never know your wealth  
Until you see what you can give.*

## About the Musicians: Black Moon Trio

**Black Moon Trio** is committed to collaboratively affecting positive change in communities through chamber music. They reimagine the breadth of a horn, violin, and piano trio by showcasing underrepresented voices in their artistic programming and original commissions, inspiring young musicians and non-musicians alike through captivating educational programs, and connecting community members through the arts. By engaging with diverse audiences, youth, and artists of every type, Black Moon Trio works to prove that classical music is for everyone.

Black Moon Trio was founded in 2022 by Parker Nelson, Jeremy Vigil, and Khelsey Zarraga. Each rooted in musical, cultural, and community organizations across the Chicago region, Parker, Jeremy, and Khelsey aim to continue making classical music available and relevant to everyone. Harnessing the experience from years of professional chamber music performance, music-making in social service settings, facilitating workshops at universities, and developing curriculum for youth in schools and community development through music, Black Moon Trio is excited to provide a classical music experience that resonates far beyond the reverberations of a final chord.

Recent projects include *Spilling Over*: a program created in collaboration with the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago inspired by the works of visual artist and activist, Bob Thompson; *Honeybee*: a co-created performance and workshop of Candace Fleming and Eric Rohmann's award-winning children's book, *Honeybee: The Busy Life of Apis Mellifera* promoting the understanding, appreciation, and preservation of honeybees and other migratory pollinators; and *Sow the Seeds*: a collaboration with New York Times Best-Selling author and Chicago-native, Michael Tyler, in an interactive concert and journaling experience for audiences to actively address subjects of wellness and community through music, poetry, and nature guided by Tyler's *Sow the Seeds: A Composition in Verse*.

Reaching thousands of students annually through its arts-integrated educational programs, Black Moon Trio connects K-12 core curricula to vivid, custom-crafted, and interactive musical experiences which challenge students to share and lead. Black Moon Trio has presented performances and residencies at numerous Chicago public schools in partnership with Classical Music Chicago and Ravinia's Reach\*Teach\*Play program.

Black Moon Trio is ensemble-in-residence at **Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods**.



## About the Author: Michael Tyler

Since 2003, Tyler's been putting pen to paper, authoring *Water for the Soul: A Father's Hope for His Son*, a collection of life lessons, and *Sow the Seeds: A Composition in Verse*, a poetry journal.

But in 2005, when one day his son came home from elementary school and shared that he'd been called a racially disparaging name by a classmate on the playground, Tyler began thinking differently about his writing. He knew he wanted to talk with his son about what happened, so he looked to children's books to help him approach this challenging conversation in a way his 5-year-old could grasp. So, Tyler started reading...

After two weeks and 347 children's books later, Tyler concluded that the book he needed to help explain to his son race and racism didn't yet exist, so instead he'd need to write it. That's how Tyler's first children's book, *The Skin You Live In*, was born.

As an African American man and father to biracial children, Tyler is acutely aware of the world's "-isms." To combat racism, sexism and more, he writes affirming, empowering stories to engender self-worth in kids.

Through verse and rhyme, Tyler transforms meaty topics and difficult concepts, including race, acceptance and equity, into language kids can both understand and enjoy. He is passionate about arming parents and educators with the resources and tools (including social and emotional learning curriculum around two of his titles) they need to start tough dialogues with their kids and students. When he's not writing, hosting a virtual reading hour or participating in programming around his books, Tyler gets satisfaction through cooking for others. One of his favorite ways to give and receive love is watching someone's eyes light up after taking their first bite of his butter cake.

Tyler resides in Chicago with his wife, Alicia.

