

Composer Spotlight: The Stories Behind Three of Our Favorite Pieces

Every musician has a few favorite pieces, ones they look most forward to playing and sharing because of a special connection to the music or to the composer.

VALPARAISO, INDIANA, UNITED STATES, June 28, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- We have many. As a duo, we perform what we like to call “wickedly great” works from our repertoire featuring living composers. A few come with fantastic backstories, and we’d like to share them. This way, when you listen, you might have something extra to listen for.

Crystal Healing by Gary Schocker (2016)

This piece by flutist-composer Gary Schocker is truly special to us, because it came directly from my return to music. In 1992, Duo Sequenza performed at the Bar Harbor Music Festival in Maine. The next year, I (Deb) went back alone and performed Gary Schocker’s Regrets and Resolutions for flute and piano while on crutches after having had hip replacement revision surgery. There, I connected with Gary.

A note on Gary: A gifted composer and flutist, Gary has written music for many instruments, with almost 300 works in print—half of them including flute. Many of his compositions are part of the standard flute repertoire. Gary is also a wunderkind who made debuts with the New York Philharmonic and Philadelphia Orchestra at 15. Today he teaches and performs around the world.

After 1993, life circumstances dictated my stepping away from concert performances—for 21 years. Those 21 years without concertizing were incredibly painful for me. In 2014, I attended the National Flute Convention and was inspired by reconnecting with friends and colleagues. I began to contemplate a return to music. While at the convention, I happened to pick up a biography of Gary Schocker, which included a certain familiar reference among his “significant events:” my performance of his work in Bar Harbor in 1993.

I couldn’t help but think it was a sign. Upon my return home, my husband encouraged me to track down Paul to ask if he’d be interested in bringing Duo Sequenza back together.

Yes, he was.

Our reunion and return to concertizing coincided with Indiana's bicentennial. Yet there was also another 200th birthday to celebrate: that of my crystal flute, an 1816 Claude Laurent four-keyed flute—which I had no idea how to play (but would soon learn).

What came next was the perfect convergence. I reached out to Gary and told him about the flute, which he termed the "crystal beast." He was so inspired by the idea of composing for it that *Crystal Healing* was in my inbox two weeks later. Because our connection in Bar Harbor had been during my recovery from surgery, and the composition marked our duo's return to the stage years later and the restoration of my sense of purpose, *Crystal Healing* was named as an acknowledgment of the healing power of time and music. It's a piece written expressly for the tonal qualities of the crystal flute as a duet with guitar by a masterful composer.

Duo Sequenza premiered *Crystal Healing* in January 2017. We have since recorded it for what will be our third Navona Records album, featuring the Laurent crystal flute.

Gazzedolphylloni by Harvey Sollberger (2008)

This jazz-inspired duet is a meeting of the minds between Italian flutist Severino Gazzelloni and American jazz alto saxophonist, bass clarinetist, and flutist Eric Dolphy—written by pre-eminent American contemporary flutist Harvey Sollberger.

Severino Gazzelloni was the principal flutist with the RAI National Symphony Orchestra in Turin, Italy for more than 30 years and an inspiration to many composers of new music in the 1950s and 1960s. He also inspired many flutists, among them Harvey, who played with the Group for Contemporary Music in New York under Charles Wuorinen. Gazzelloni also inspired and taught flute to Eric Dolphy, who admired his style greatly.

The 1950s and 1960s marked a period of intense innovation and inspiration. Art, music, and life were all intertwined with each other. *Gazzedolphylloni* looks to capture the spirit and tension of this unique period. The guitar part invokes Gazzelloni with recognizable elements like angular staccato notes and large interval leaps that would be familiar to listeners of midcentury contemporary classical music. The flute part is largely an improvisation with extended techniques; in an eight-page score, five pages are open for improvisation with a few text directions from Sollberger, like "enter into a quiet duet with guitar's sliding dyads" and "play hide and seek with the guitar." And the parts where flute and guitar play together are mostly in a jazz style, leading up to the end as a wild finish where the instruments jam the theme to an exciting *accelerando* that lands on a funky jazz chord with a flute high F.

This is a very special piece. As Paul says, "I admire that Deb really took on the spirit of the improv. She wove a part with imitation that fits into the cracks between my part and stays in the tonality of the chords I play. It's remarkable—and a joy to play."

Four Romantic Songs by Kent Holliday (2014)

This piece was a joyful discovery we made through music publisher Cayambis Music Press. When we found it, we thought 'wow, what a great piece of music!'

Yet we had no connection to Kent, a departure from our usual experience. Holliday is based in Virginia and was, until retirement, on the faculty of Virginia Tech University. His Four Romantic Songs is a beautiful, neo-Romantic piece in four movements with interesting rhythmic treatments and beautiful expressive passages for both instruments. Each of the four movements explores a mood in a slow-fast-slow-fast pattern: Pensive, Passionate, Nostalgic, Reflective-Determined.

One of the most interesting parts of this piece from a flute perspective is that Holliday wrote several indications of *espressivo* and *legato*, words usually connoting the use of slurs but with a conspicuous absence of slurs actually written in the score—leaving the player a bit of a puzzle for interpretation.

[Find out more here.](#)

Debra Silvert

Duo Sequenza

+1 219-628-0914

admin@duosequenza.com

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