



TUESDAYS @ MONK SPACE

2025-26 Season

WILLIAM ROPER: Big Themes for Small Ensemble

Tuesday, November 18

A Silence Waits for Us There 2010

Stacey Fraser, soprano
Sara Andon, flute
Mattie Barbier, trombone

My Head is Always Down for I No Longer Look for You 2005

Shalini Vijayan, violin

The Wings of Azrael 2011

Mattie Barbier, trombone

You Are Responsible, Forever, For What You Have Tamed 2020

Shalini Vijayan, violin I
Mona Tian, violin II
Debora Silva, viola
Maggie Parkins, cello

presented by

Brightwork
newmusic





INTERMISSION

The Love that Forgives

Stacey Fraser, soprano
Sara Andon, flute

The Summons of Azrael

Scott Graff, voice
Brian Walsh, clarinet
Shalini Vijayan, violin
Maggie Parkins, cello

Hippopotamus

William Roper, actor-tuba, percussion
Brian Walsh, clarinet
Debora Silva, viola
Nick Terry, percussion

UPCOMING @ MONK SPACE:

December 9, 2025 – Brightwork Digital Mixtape

January 20, 2026 – M.A. Tiesenga

February 24, 2026 – Cold Blue Music

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PROGRAM NOTES

A Silence Waits for Us There was composed in the Fall of 2010, mostly in airport hospitality lounges. It is part of the series *Postkarten aus Schwandorf* and was premiered in that town. Schwandorf is surrounded by farmland and forests. This text is from Harumi Makino's poem collection, *Rengezousekai* (The World Created from Lotus Flowers). The original text is Japanese. In this composition, it is set in Bairisch, the Bavarian regional language, and translates as:

We are bound for the unknown woods.
A silence waits for us there

You take my hand
And we are bound for the unknown woods.
A silence waits for us there.

My Head is Always Down for I No Longer Look for You (2005) was composed for Robin Lorentz. The motivation given to the soloist: Finally you are free of the ties that bind. It seems as though it has taken forever to get to this point. You have just noticed that you are free, but you may, in fact, have been free for a considerable time. Certainly you are happy about your emancipation. At the same time, there is a certain melancholy about vacating the mind space that you have inhabited for so long. Sorrow, after all, can be sweet. Finally, you are able to greet the sun. Congratulations.

The Wings of Azrael - a musical drama (2011) is a remembrance of the bombing of the marshalling yards near the town of Schwandorf, Bavaria on April 17, 1945. 167 Lancasters and 8 Mosquitos of the Canadian and British air forces attacked the railway yards, causing severe damage. The yards were the target; much more than the yards were bombed. 1,250 civilians were killed in the 15-minute bombing and 75% of the city destroyed. There is a bomb casing from the Canadian Air Force in the Stadtmuseum.

You Are Responsible, Forever, For What You Have Tamed (2020) was commissioned by the Koan Quartet. It is loosely based on the story, *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. The movements are titled: 1. A Hard Fall. 2. The Fox's Lesson. 3. All the Stars Are Laughing.

The Love That Forgives (2006) was composed for Thaddeus Watson. It is a memorial to Addie Mae Collins, Carole Robertson, Cynthia Wesley and Denise McNair, four children that were killed in the bombing of the 11th Street Baptist Church of Birmingham, Alabama on September 15, 1963. 22 others were injured. The church became a target because of the congregation's involvement in the Civil Rights struggle. *The Love That Forgives*, was the title of the sermon that the children heard immediately preceding the bombing. The attack frightened some people, but it galvanized more. Black people were not asking for much. You have to wonder at the level of hatred that motivated the perpetrators.

The Summons of Azrael (2006) was composed for Thomas Buckner. Azrael (whom God helps), is one of the names of the Angel of Death. Azrael originated as a human but ascended to heaven without tasting death. As an archangel under the command of God, he resides in the third heaven. Azrael has four faces and four thousand wings. His whole body consists of eyes and tongues, the number of which corresponds to the number of living persons on earth. He records and erases names in a large book at the birth and death of each human. He is a scrivener. A civil servant.

Hippopotamus - Alice Inez (1994) is a memorial to my mother. It is about water, roundness, the subconscious, hippos, all those mother things. She died the summer of my first trip to Italy. That summer two Popes also died. One day I was walking with a friend (a violist) through the streets of Spoleto. The sky clouded over, strong winds suddenly began blowing, black smoke rose from the churches and the bells began to ring. This is all reflected in the music, as is Alice's solitary, anguished death. I can't help but believe that she died fighting.



COMPOSER BIO

William Roper is a multidisciplinary artist who performs primarily on tuba and primitive aerophones. He has toured the Americas, Europe and Japan as a solo and ensemble tubaist. He has released 16 recordings as a leader/co-leader and is represented on 70+ recordings. He has performed or recorded with artists and ensembles as diverse as Lorin Maazel, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Gustavo Dudamel, Anthony Braxton, Wadada Leo Smith, Yusef Lateef, Francis Wong, Elton John, Leon Russell, Aluna George, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Wild Up, Pan Afrikan People's Arkestra, Luckman Jazz Orchestra and others. He has played on motion picture scores for such composers as Hans Zimmer, John Williams, Terrance Blanchard, Justin Hurwitz and John Powell. His work on primitive aerophones can be heard on scores for movies, television series and video games. He is a founding member of several ensembles including Purple Gums, Judicanti Responsura and CuZns. He co-founded Tomato Sage Consortium, a presenting organization that continues to exist as an independent record label.



As a creator, Roper's work often merges music, stage performance, extemporaneous spoken word and visual elements. The work is located in African American oral traditions, exploring histories of place; ethnic and cultural groups; and self-history. His practice embraces and explores the interactions that occur when disparate disciplines abut. His compositions incorporate improvisation in classical music, demanding compositional contributions from the performers, while sustaining Roper's recognizable musical language. Much of his work has an overt political component, investigating how we, as diverse groups of Americans, have arrived where we are today and the pain of that arriving. His compositions have been performed throughout the United States, in Germany and Tokyo.

Roper creates art videos as well as documentary works that examine the lives of African and Asian American artists. His videos have been featured on live and online festivals. As a visual artist his mediums are painting, assemblage, digital art and graphic scores.

Collaboration plays an important role in his output. He has created works in partnership with musicians, choreographers, dramatists, performance artists and videographers.

Roper has held residencies at Djerassi Resident Artist Program, the Oberpfalzer Künstslerhaus in Germany and was a Fellow of the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission in Japan. He has received awards for work in composition, performance, theatre and dance from the National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council, Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, American Composers Forum, Meet the Composer, American Music Center, Durfee Foundation, Eastside Arts Initiative, Center for Cultural Innovation and NewMusicUSA. He has fulfilled commissions from the Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center, Heidi Duckler Dance, Gloria Newman Dance Theatre, Rudy Perez Dance, Koan Quartet, University of Southern California Max Kade Institute, Society for the Activation of Social Space Through Art and Sound, The Smudges, Arts Council Tokyo and individuals.

