

DAVID KECHLEY began composing as a teen after years spent listening to his composer and music professor father Gerald at the piano. At 19, The Seattle Symphony premiered his Second Composition for Large Orchestra and since then more than 1,000 performances of his work in a variety of genres have been performed by orchestras, Chamber groups and college musical ensembles throughout the United States and abroad. His music draws from 20th Century classics and from vernacular, popular, and ethnic music. Time in Kyoto, Japan, profoundly affected his compositions. His pieces are marked by a distinctive style, but his musical narratives are known for sharp contrasts involving lyricism, virtuosity, and dramatic gesture. Kechley's work has been recognized and applauded by such organizations as the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the North Carolina Arts Council, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Born in Seattle, Kechley was educated at the University of Washington, Cleveland Institute of Music, and Case Western Reserve University. He also followed his father into music education, teaching at the University of North Carolina in Wilmington, and teaching and chairing the Music Department at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts where he remains professor emeritus.

At the Dragon's Gate, the violin, cello, and piano trio that serves as grand finale of this collection, was written in 1993, long before the other pieces. It was the impetus for their creation. Soon after a long-awaited recording session, I proposed to performers, Doris Stevenson, Joanna Kurkowicz, and Nathaniel Parke, that I create solo pieces for each of them to be included on a future disc. It is the only disc I have ever planned in such a way, and it was a great plan. However, to paraphrase Robert Burns, even the greatest plans don't always work out. I finished the last of the solos shortly before coming close to death during a disastrous surgery in 2013 (another great plan that didn't work out.) I survived, but getting the newer pieces recorded in my now impaired condition was another matter, starting with a glaring miscalculation when I timed the new pieces. The accurate combined length of all the pieces exceeded the maximum 80-minute time limit of a disc. You see here Plan B: a two-disc set ordered roughly as planned, but broken up differently. Disc One opens and closes with the dramatic gestures of Episodes and Soliloquies (2004). Disc Two opens with Premonitions (2013) followed by Darkening Images. (2012) This is a good pairing of pieces that are mirror images. The third piece on Disc Two, Pogled U Budu'cnost/ Pogled U Prošlost (2011), begins and ends with a lyrical phrase based on the opening motif of At the Dragon's Gate. This connection is easy to hear. The solo piano pieces also draw heavily on the extended sequential patterns in Episodes and Soliloquies.

Connections and organic relationships unite these pieces, so many of them, in fact, that I have lost count after all these years.

EPISODES AND SOLILOQUIES was written for, and premiered by Joanna Kurkowicz and Doris Stevenson in 2004.

The five episodes are connected by brief violin solo passages. These musical soliloquies reflect on what has already occurred or suggest what lies ahead. The episodes range in style and mood from energetic and barbaric, contemplative and delicate, to humorous and satirical. However, the form and scope of each episode is well defined as it explores one or two ideas suggested by the soliloquy that connects it.

I. Episode with Mirrors
II. Distant Calls and Sequences
III. Episode with Variations
IV. Ritual Dance and Revelation
V. Episode with Chorale

(played without pause)

Disc 2

PREMONITIONS: A **Brief Drama for Solo Cello** was written for Nathaniel Parke as a companion piece to **DARKENING IMAGES:** A **Dramatic Monologue for Solo Violin**, written for Joana Kurkowicz. They are stand-alone pieces but closely related, not only as part of the plan for the *At The Dragon's Gate* collection, but by dint of their similar structure and dramatic content. They both begin with a sustained lyrical line followed by a slow dance-like groove. Explosive outbursts intrude on these lines, until the lines gradually supersede and the grooves reappear a final time.

These two pieces are blurred mirror images that move in opposite directions—dark to light and light to dark.

POGLED U BUDUĆNOST/POGLED U PROŠLOST: Seven Piano Pieces from Sarajevo, is a single work, inspired by a 2010 visit to Sarajevo, where many Bosnians wish to move forward, but still live with the bitter memory of the four-year siege endured during the 1990s war. The title "Looking Forward/Looking Back" also refers to the musical ideas originating from the two chamber works in this collection (continued)

which precede and follow the solo piano pieces. Each of these takes an idea from one of the chamber works as its starting point, so that the piano pieces end up alternating between modality and chromaticism.

Prologue and Mirrors Revisited show this contrast well. Narrow Lines and Dramatic Sequences is the most fully developed and Epilogue brings back the opening, only this time transformed.

I. Prologue
II. Mirrors Revisited
III. Beyond the Gate
IV. Quiet and Still
V. Fast and Loud
VI. Narrow Lines and Dramatic Sequences
VII. Epilogue

At the Dragon's Gate was inspired by visits to Ryoanji, a temple in Kyoto, Japan. Ryoanji—"dragon temple"—is famous for a Zen garden of 15 rocks placed with precise randomness within a rectangle of immaculately raked small white stones. Low earthen walls surround the garden. In this tranquil setting, the visitor is free to imagine the garden's many meanings.

In the Dragon's Garden for guitar and alto saxophone, premiered in 1992 at the World Saxophone Congress in Pesaro, Italy. Voices from the Garden for guitar quartet premiered in 1993 at the Guitar Foundation of America International Festival in Buffalo, NY. This piece, At the Dragon's Gate, premiered in Williamstown, MA in 1994.

The pieces are similar in form and aesthetic approach. Each begins at a fast tempo projecting underlying energy. Seemingly random accents sound within the flowing rhythms. In the background a less obvious melodic line unfolds, slows to a reflective, inner series of movements then winds back to a virtuoso conclusion.

I. Origin
II. Dialogue
III. Transformation

Joanna Kurkowicz is a prize winner in numerous competitions and praised in the magazine Gramophone for her "disciplined virtuosity," is a soloist, recitalist, chamber musician and concert-mistress. She has performed in such venues as Carnegie Hall in New York, Jordan Hall in Boston and the Große Saal, Salzburg, and has appeared as a soloist with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Brussels Philharmonic, Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra, New England String Ensemble, Berkshire Symphony, Jefferson Symphony Orchestra, San Luis Obispo Symphony, Pozna Philharmonic Orchestra and Polish National Radio Orchestra in Katowice, as well as with the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra in which she serves as concert-mistress. She is an Artist in Residence at Williams College and on the faculty at Tufts University and the New England Conservatory of Music. She is a strong advocate of contemporary music and has premiered many works by living composers. Her Chandos CD of Bacewicz' Violin Concertos has received the Diapason d'Or Award (March 2010) and was nominated for the 2009 German Record Critics Award as well as Poland's most important music recording Award "Fryderyk 2010." The CD has been placed sixth on Amazon.com's list of top 25 Best Classical Albums of 2009. Recipient of 2008 New England Conservatory Outstanding Alumni Award and a founding member of the Chameleon Arts Ensemble of Boston, she has been a guest artist at the Mozarteum Festival in Salzburg, Ravinia Festival, Bargemusic in New York, Asia Pacific Festival in Wellington, Rockport Chamber Music Festival, Warsaw Music Gardens Festival, International Orpheus Music Academy in Vienna and others. She plays a violin made by Pietro Giovanni Guarneri in 1699.

Nathaniel Parke is principal cellist of the Berkshire Symphony. He has been a member of the Boston Composers String Quartet and of the Bennington String Quartet. He is an Artist Associate in Cello at Williams College and Instructor of Cello at Bennington College. He also maintains a studio of private students, many of whom have won competitions and awards. He has served as a faculty member and chamber music coach at the Longy School of Music, Skidmore College, SUNY Albany, the Manchester Music Festival, and Taconic Music. He is a member of the faculty of the Chamber Music Conference and Composers' Forum of the East. He can be heard on Albany Records and MMC Recordings performing chamber and solo cello music. He performs on an instrument made in 1721 by C.G. Testore.

Doris Stevenson has won lavish praise in performances around the world. She has soloed with the Boston Pops, played at Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall in New York, the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., Salle Pleyel in Paris, Sala de Musica Arango in Bogota, and Suntory Hall in Tokyo. Her acute sensitivity and musicianship have made her a sought-after partner for some of the leading lights in string playing. She has performed with Gregor Piatigorsky, Ruggiero Ricci and Paul Tortelier. Early in her career Jascha Heifetz and Piatigorsky invited her to perform in their chamber concerts. She was pianist for the cello master classes of Piatigorsky, who described her as "an artist of the highest order."

This is her third CD of music by David Kechley. Her other recordings include the Saint Saens violin sonatas with Andres Cardenes, the complete Mendelssohn cello works with Jeffrey Solow and the Brahms cello sonatas with Nathaniel Rosen. Her Stravinsky CD with violinist Mark Peskanov was nominated for a Grammy. She taught for 10 years at the University of Southern California and has been the Lyell B. Clay Artist in Residence at Williams College since 1987.

