



## DEREK BERMEL

### Migrations

**Migration Series • Mar de Setembro • A Shout, a Whisper, and a Trace**

**Luciana Souza, Vocals • Ted Nash, Saxophones • Derek Bermel, Clarinet  
Juilliard Jazz Orchestra • Albany Symphony • David Alan Miller**



Derek  
**BERMEL**  
(b. 1967)  
**Migrations**

**Migration Series for Jazz Ensemble and Orchestra (2006) 29:27**

- |   |  |      |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | I. Landscape – Interlude 1   | 6:16 |
|   | <i>Soloists: Riley Mulherkar, Trumpet; David Linard, Piano</i>   |      |
| 2 | II. After a Lynching   | 4:57 |
|   | <i>Soloists: Jeffery Miller, Trombone; Enrique Sanchez, Trumpet; Andrew Renfro, Guitar</i>                                     |      |
| 3 | Interlude 2 – III. A Rumor   | 6:44 |
|   | <i>Soloists: Derek Bermel, Clarinet; Karl Kohut, Double Bass</i>   |      |
| 4 | IV. Riots and Moon Shines  | 3:18 |
|   | <i>Soloist: Jeffery Miller, Trombone</i>   |      |
| 5 | Interlude 3 – V. Still Arriving  | 8:12 |
|   | <i>Soloists: Ted Nash, Soprano/Alto Saxophones; Andrew Renfro, Guitar; Gabriel King Medd, Trumpet; Douglas Marriner, Drums</i> |      |

**Mar de Setembro**

(text: Eugénio de Andrade, 1923–2005) (2011)

**12:30**

- |    |                        |      |
|----|------------------------|------|
| 6  | Prólogo: Que voz lunar | 1:53 |
| 7  | 1. Mar de Setembro     | 3:47 |
| 8  | 2. Canção              | 1:32 |
| 9  | 3. Ocultas Águas       | 2:26 |
| 10 | 4. Frutos              | 2:52 |

**A Shout, a Whisper, and a Trace (2009)**

**16:31**

- |    |                       |      |
|----|-----------------------|------|
| 11 | I. amerikanizálódik   | 4:54 |
| 12 | II. az ejszaka zeneje | 5:12 |
| 13 | III. 'vég'            | 6:21 |

**Derek Bermel (b. 1967)**

**Migrations**

Eclecticism has been an important and popular stylistic movement in 21st-century classical music, and few do eclecticism as well as composer and performer Derek Bermel.

Bermel's biography is made out of a broad range of stories and experiences. A Bachelor of Arts from Yale led him to studies with William Bolcom and William Albright, two of the brightest and most distinctive voices in American music. Bermel himself has a clearly American quality to his music, one that comes from taking advantage of the American artist's opportunity for self-invention – he has looked outside of North America to further explorations with the great Dutch minimalist Louis Andriessen and the evocative French composer Henri Dutilleux, and he traveled widely to study various musical traditions, including Thracian folk music, Brazilian *caxixi* percussion music, and Lobi xylophone playing from Ghana.

Bermel is also a virtuoso clarinetist who grew up playing jazz, funk, and rock. Like so many of his peers and colleagues, his immersion in the popular music of his era includes pop songs and hip hop. He's made striking and authentic arrangements of songs by Yasiin Bey (a.k.a. Mos Def), and he's performed and collaborated with a range of musicians that includes jazz and classical trumpeter and composer Wynton Marsalis, violinist Midori, Brazilian singer Luciana Souza, Paquito D'Rivera and Stephen Sondheim. He also has notable careers as a teacher and administrator – he founded the New York Youth Symphony's composition program, he has taught young musicians through the Weill Music Institute, has been an artist-in-residence at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, he directs Copland House's Cultivate Institute, and he currently serves as artistic director for the American Composers Orchestra, an important relationship that began in 2006 with a three-year residency.

The selections on *Migrations* give a generous view of Bermel the composer. Classical forms and structures, world music, jazz, blues, American folk music and the like come together in a mix that reaches directly into the body

and heart. These three pieces show his superb craft: in Bermel's hands, musical styles that usually seem out of place in a classical setting sound completely natural. Then there's his expressiveness, the way his ideas are earthy and transparent, and how his music feels like the language of everyday life.

*Migration Series* (2006) takes its title from Jacob Lawrence's 60-painting series on the movement of African Americans from the South of the US to the North, where they took factory jobs during the First and Second World Wars. The work came about as a request from Wynton Marsalis (as head of Jazz at Lincoln Center), for a piece combining the ensembles of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and the American Composers Orchestra.

Bermel describes his musical thinking here as realized in the form of a mosaic; he uses various motifs that reappear in each movement, like the repeated use of tiles to create different combinations of patterns with the same source material. This is a visual quality that Bermel identifies in Lawrence's work, but that's secondary to the physical pleasure of the music.

Bermel says that "because I'm a clarinetist, my music tends toward the lyrical and the contrapuntal ... I've always been a tactile composer, who likes to get my hands on the music, so I've gravitated toward learning traditions and styles that I love from the performers who play them." That feel of music coming through the hands is plain and strong in the swing and swagger of *Migration Series*, the rocking sensations of music that was once meant for dancing and never completely parted from those roots.

Writing jazz for a classical ensemble is tricky, but *Migration Series* is seamless and never less than idiomatic. "I taught myself to play piano by imitating Thelonious Monk," Bermel explains, "so he might be the single biggest harmonic influence on my work." The rhythms bite, the orchestration sounds like a city coming to life, the sections like songs within a larger musical

narrative, and everything is stitched together with impeccable counterpoint.

*Mar de Setembro* (2011) is Bermel's collaboration with the bell-toned Luciana Souza: "I love her voice," Bermel says. It began as a commission from the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and gave Bermel the opportunity to dig deep into his ethnographic studies in music. "I had found these gorgeous texts by the great Portuguese poet Eugénio de Andrade," he explains. "I feel his work vividly evokes *saudade*."

*Saudade* is a Portuguese word dating back to the Middle Ages – difficult to translate directly into English, it is meant to evoke the deep intensity of melancholy and longing for people and things that have been irreplaceably lost, or that have poignantly existed only in the imagination. Musically, *saudade* is expressed through the traditional Portuguese style of *fado*, and as Bermel points out, de Andrade "also wrote many *fados*."

Like *Migration Series*, *Mar de Setembro* is clear and upfront about its non-classical qualities, including the rhythms, harmonies, and the graceful, bossa nova-tinged vocal melodies. The emotions run deep and reach high – the song *Canção* begins with a light, floating feeling, brightened by the chattering wooden xylophone (reminiscent of the *gyl*, the Lobi instrument Bermel learned to play), then the last few bars take a darker harmonic turn, fading away into an unresolved and inexplicable feeling. Bermel uses haunting combinations of instruments and phantasmagorical gestures to build a unique, uncanny experience in the third song, *Ocultas Águas*. Something of a cultural travelogue, *Mar de Setembro* opens the door to more possibilities: "The one

place I've always wanted to go and have not yet been is Cuba," Bermel muses, the country is "still on my list."

In the three-movement orchestral work *A Shout, a Whisper, and a Trace* (2009), a commission from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, Bermel brings together rich strands of music history and his own artistic life. The composition honors Béla Bartók, and Bermel used Bartók's perspective on New York (where Bartók lived the last five years of his life) to see his own hometown anew. Bartók had difficulty adjusting to life in New York, and had not only temporarily stopped composing, but was ill from what would eventually be diagnosed as leukemia, the disease that took his life in 1945. Serge Koussevitzky, the great conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, commissioned the *Concerto for Orchestra* in 1943, one of Bartók's late masterpieces, along with the *Sonata for Solo Violin* and the *Piano Concerto No. 3*.

Bermel loves Bartók, whose music was deeply informed by his study of folk music. *A Shout* mixes Bermel's urban and jazz colors with Balkan rhythms and atmospheres from Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*. The lush harmonies under the lonely trumpeter and woodwinds in the second movement tease the ear with Bermel's appreciation for the vast, pan-cultural colors of French composer Olivier Messiaen. In the final, haunting movement, Bartók's ghost floats along the streets of Bermel's native New York, mingling with the other residents, past and present. As only music can, the piece collapses the distance of time into the immediate present of the listening experience.

George Grella

Special thanks to: David and Enea Tierno, James and Ellen Marcus, Ralph Crispino, Augusta Gross and Leslie Samuels, Leslie and Jo Garfield, Cherie L. Halladay, Melanie Clarke, Debora Haines, John Kerr, Peter Lurie, Yvonne Marcuse, Frederick Peters, Susan W. Rose, Aaron Flagg, Lor and Mike Gehret, Andrew Swartz, Annette McEvoy and Harold Bronheim, Rhea Cohen, Anne Reeves, Ingrid and Marvin Reed, D'vora Tirschwell and Pat Goldman, Barbara Earl Thomas, Sociedade Portuguesa de Autores, Alexis Levitin, Gervásio Oliveira Moura, Joyce and Al Bermel, Andreia Pinto-Correia, Todd Vunderink, Elizabeth Dworkin, Derek Smith, Michael Geller, Luciana Souza, Ted Nash, Jeffrey Kahane, Wynton Marsalis, the Koussevitzky Foundation, Civitella Ranieri, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, Sacatar, and Yaddo.

## MAR DE SETEMBRO

Lyrics: Eugénio de Andrade / Music: Derek Bermel

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### 6 PROLOGO: QUE VOZ LUNAR

Que voz lunar insinua  
o que não pode ter voz?

Que rosto entorna na noite  
todo o azul da manhã?

Que beijo de oiro procura  
uns lábios de brisa e água?

Que branca mão devagar  
quebra os ramos do silêncio?

### 7 1. MAR DE SETEMBRO

Tudo era claro:  
céu lábios, areias.  
O mar estava perto,  
freme de espumas.  
Corpos ou ondas:  
iam, vinham, iam,  
doces, leves - só  
ritmo e brancura.  
Felizes, cantam;  
serenos, dormem;  
despertos, amam,  
exaltam o silêncio.

Tudo era claro,  
jovem, alado.  
O mar estava perto,  
Puríssimo. Doirado.

## SEPTEMBER SEA

### 6 PROLOGUE: WHAT MOONLIT VOICE

What moonlit voice intimates  
what cannot find a voice?

What face spills upon the night  
all the bluish light of morning?

What golden kiss seeks after  
lips of breeze and water?

What white hand slowly  
breaks the boughs of silence?

Translation: Alexis Levitin

### 7 1. SEPTEMBER SEA

It was all luminous:  
sky, lips, sand.  
The sea was near,  
trembling with foam,  
Bodies or waves:  
to and fro, to and fro,  
sweet, light - just  
rhythm and whiteness.  
Happy, they sing;  
calm, they sleep;  
awakened, they love,  
swelling the silence.

It was all luminous,  
young, with wings.  
The sea was near.  
Golden. Utterly pure.

Translation: Alexis Levitin

## 8 2. CANÇÃO

O último passaro  
canta nos álamos.

A luz fatigada  
tropeça nos ramos.

A terra é só vaga  
memória de lábios.

Ah canta, canta  
rouxinol da água.

## 9 3. OCULTAS ÁGUAS

Um sopra quase,  
esses lábios.

Lábios? Disse lábios,  
areias?  
Lábios. Com sede  
ainda doutros lábios.

Sede de cal.  
Quase lume.  
Lume  
quase de orvalho.

Lábios:  
ocultas águas.

## 10 4. FRUTOS

Pêssegos, pêras, laranjas,  
morangos, cerejas, figos,  
maças, melão, melancia,  
ó música de meus sentidos,  
pura delícia da língua;  
deixai-me agora falar  
do fruto que me fascina,  
pelo sabor, pela cor,  
pelo aroma das sílabas:  
tangerina, tangerina.

## 8 2. SONG

The last bird  
sings in the poplars.

The tired light  
stumbles over the branches.

The earth is but a vague  
memory of lips.

Ah, sing, sing  
water-nightingale.

*Translation: Derek Bermel*

## 9 3. HIDDEN WATERS

Almost a whisper of air,  
those lips.

Lips? Did I say lips,  
or sands?  
Lips. Thirsty  
still for other lips.

Thirsting for white.  
Almost flame.  
Flame  
almost dew.

Lips:  
Hidden waters.

*Translation: Alexis Levitin*

## 10 4. FRUITS

Peaches, pears, oranges,  
strawberries, cherries, figs,  
apples, melon, honey dew,  
oh, music of my senses,  
pure pleasure of the tongue;  
let me speak now  
of fruit that fascinate,  
with the flavor, with the hues,  
with the fragrance of their syllables:  
oh tangerine, oh tangerine.

*Translation: Alexis Levitin*

## Derek Bermel



Photo: Richard Bowditch

GRAMMY® Award-nominated composer and clarinetist Derek Bermel is artistic director of the American Composers Orchestra, director of Copland House's 'Cultivate', and curator of the Gamper Festival of Contemporary Music at Bowdoin Music Festival. He has performed as a clarinetist worldwide and has collaborated with an eclectic array of artists, and received commissions globally from the Pittsburgh, National and St. Louis Symphony Orchestras and the Pacific Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, WNYC Radio New York, Tanglewood, Eighth Blackbird, Asko/Schönberg Ensemble, Veenfabriek (Netherlands), the Guarneri and JACK string quartets, and violinist Midori. His many honors include the Alpert Award in the Arts, the Rome Prize, Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellowships, the American Music Center's Trailblazer Award, and an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters; commissions from the Koussevitzky and Fromm Music Foundations, Meet the Composer, and Cary Trust; and residencies at Yaddo, Tanglewood, Aspen Music Festival, Banff, Bellagio, and Copland House. He recently served as composer-in-residence for the Seattle Symphony and as artist-in-residence at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study.

[www.derekbemel.com](http://www.derekbemel.com)

## Luciana Souza

Photo: Kim Fox



GRAMMY® Award-winner Luciana Souza is a leading jazz singer and interpreter. Born in São Paulo, Brazil, Souza was raised in a family of bossa nova innovators – her father a singer and songwriter, and her mother a poet and lyricist. Souza's work as a performer transcends the traditional boundaries of musical styles, with roots in jazz, a sophisticated lineage in world music, and an enlightened approach to new music. Souza has released numerous acclaimed recordings since 2002, including her six GRAMMY® Award-nominated records *Brazilian Duos*, *North and South*, *Duos II*, *Tide*, *Duos III*, and *The Book of Chet*. Her debut recording for Universal, *The New Bossa Nova*, was produced by her husband, Larry Klein, and was met with widespread critical acclaim. Souza's recordings also include two works based on poetry – *The Poems of Elizabeth Bishop and Other Songs*, and *Neruda*. Her 2015 release, *Speaking in Tongues*, was praised by *The New York Times*.  
[www.lucianasouza.com](http://www.lucianasouza.com)

## Ted Nash



Multiple GRAMMY® Award-winning artist Ted Nash enjoys a career as a performer, conductor, composer, arranger and educator. Born in Los Angeles, Nash's interest in music started very young, exposed to music and encouraged by his father, trombonist Dick Nash, and uncle, reedman Ted Nash, both well-known studio and jazz musicians. Nash has been a composer since the age of 15. He first came to New York at the age of 18, and soon after released his first album as a leader, *Conception* (Concord Jazz). He is a co-founder of the Jazz Composers Collective. One of Nash's most important associations is with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, with whom he has played for over 20 years. Nash's composition, *Portrait in Seven Shades* was commissioned and recorded by the orchestra, and earned Nash his first GRAMMY® Award nomination for best arranger. In 2017 Nash received the Composer of the Year award from the Jazz Journalists Association.  
[www.tednash.com](http://www.tednash.com)

**Juilliard Jazz Orchestra**  
**James Burton III, Director**



Photo: Richard Termine

The Juilliard Jazz Orchestra (JJO), the premier large ensemble for Juilliard Jazz, was founded when the program began in 2001. Comprising Bachelor's and Master's degree students, the orchestra is led by resident conductor Jerome Jennings, a Juilliard Jazz alumnus, and performs ten times during the academic year on campus, in Alice Tully Hall, and at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Dizzy's Club. The JJO performs a wide spectrum of American jazz music, from Jelly Roll Morton, Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Ornette Coleman, and Machito to



James Burton III

contemporary composers including Jimmy Heath, Wynton Marsalis, Elio Villafranca, Ted Nash, and many others. The orchestra has performed with the Princeton Symphony Orchestra and Albany Symphony and in 2019 it was the featured large ensemble at the Jazz Education Network Annual Conference in Reno, Nevada. Recent guest conductors have included José Madera, Scotty Barnhart, Jon Faddis, Vince Giordano, Bill Charlap, and the director of Juilliard Jazz, Wynton Marsalis. Alumni of the JJO perform in various professional ensembles including the Maria Schneider, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Afro Latin Jazz and Vanguard Jazz Orchestras, the WDR, Christian McBride and Terraza Big Bands, Ryan Truesdell's Gil Evans Project, Darcy James Argue's Secret Society, and with artists such as Michael Bublé.

**Trumpets**  
 Riley Mulherkar  
 Gabriel King Medd  
 Enrique Sanchez  
 Nate Sparks

**Trombones**  
 Jeffery Miller  
 Kalia Vandever  
 Kyle Johnson

**Reeds**  
 Zoë Obadia  
 (Flute, Soprano/  
 Alto Saxophone)  
 Taylor Herron  
 (Piccolo, Flute, Soprano/  
 Alto Saxophone)  
 Ruairidh Pattison  
 (B flat Clarinet, Soprano/  
 Tenor Saxophone)  
 Lukas Gabric  
 (B flat Clarinet,  
 Tenor Saxophone)  
 Anthony Orji  
 (B flat Clarinet,  
 Baritone Saxophone)

**Piano**  
 David Linard

**Double Bass**  
 Karl Kohut

**Guitar**  
 Andrew Renfroe

**Drums**  
 Douglas Marriner

**Albany Symphony**



The Albany Symphony fulfills its mission by performing, commissioning, and recording the works of established and emerging American composers. Founded in 1930, the Symphony serves a diverse regional audience covering more than seven counties of New York and parts of three states. Its annual programming includes a nine-concert "Classics Series" with performances throughout New York's Capital Region, each featuring a recent or world premiere composition by a living composer; the annual American Music Festival, its capstone multi-day celebration of new music, including a performance by the new music ensemble Dogs of Desire; a Family Series with costumed cast which inspires new generations of Symphony patrons; and holiday and pops concerts, in collaboration with area youth performing arts groups. The orchestra's flagship education programs, Adopt-a-School and Meet the Maestro, bring musicians into classrooms for interactive music education, and Literacy-through-Songwriting, its in-school composer residency program, works with students on songwriting, storytelling, improvisation, teamwork, and self-expression. [www.albansymphony.com](http://www.albansymphony.com)

## David Alan Miller



Photo: Gary D Gold

GRAMMY® Award-winning conductor David Alan Miller has established a reputation as one of the leading American conductors of his generation. Music director of the Albany Symphony since 1992, Miller has proven himself a creative and compelling orchestra builder. Through exploration of unusual repertoire, educational programming, community outreach and recording initiatives, he has reaffirmed the Albany Symphony's reputation as one of the nation's leading champions of American symphonic music and most innovative orchestras. A native of Los Angeles, Miller holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley and a Master's degree in orchestral conducting from The Juilliard School. From 1988 until 1992 he was associate conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and from 1982 to 1988 he was music director of the New York Youth Symphony, earning considerable acclaim for his work with that ensemble.

[www.albanysymphony.com/musicdirector](http://www.albanysymphony.com/musicdirector)

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**BERMEL**  
(b. 1967)

**Migrations**

- 1–5** Migration Series for Jazz Ensemble  
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- 6–10** Mar de Setembro  
(text: Eugénio de Andrade,  
1923–2005) (2011) **12:30**
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and a Trace (2009) **16:31**

**Luciana Souza, Vocals** **6–10**

**Ted Nash, Soprano/Alto Saxophone** **1–5**

**Derek Bermel, Clarinet** **1–5**

**Juilliard Jazz Orchestra** **1–5**

**Albany Symphony • David Alan Miller**

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

Recorded: 17 May 2015 at the Experimental Media  
and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC), Troy, NY, USA **1–5**,  
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Producers: Silas Brown and Derek Bermel

Engineers: Silas Brown and Doron Schachter

Booklet notes: George Grella • All works published by  
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Cover painting: *The Migration Series, Panel No. 3:*  
*From every southern town migrants left by the hundreds*  
*to travel north (1940–41) by Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000).*  
Casein tempera on hardboard 12 x 18 in.; 30.48 x 45.72 cm.  
The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC. Acquired 1942.



AMERICAN CLASSICS

*Migrations* provides a generous view of Derek Bermel's superb craftsmanship and eclectic style, in which classical forms, world music, jazz, blues and American folk music create a mix that reaches directly into the body and the heart. Commissioned by Wynton Marsalis, *Migration Series* has its roots in African American music, its impeccable counterpoint and biting rhythms expressed through orchestration that sounds like a city coming to life. *Mar de Setembro* was inspired by Luciana Souza's bell-toned voice and the intense feelings of Portuguese *saudade*, while *A Shout, a Whisper, and a Trace* honors Bartók's last years in New York, referring to the *Concerto for Orchestra* as well as to jazz and Balkan music.

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

[www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com)

Playing  
Time:  
**58:41**