

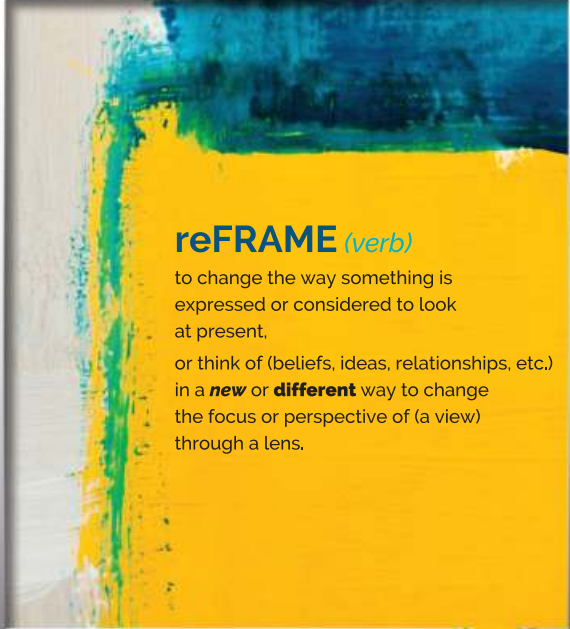


reFRAME

Jeffrey Heisler, *saxophone*

I-Chen Yeh, *piano*

Copley | Dorman | Mellits | Nishimura | Piazzolla | Williams



reFRAME *(verb)*

to change the way something is expressed or considered to look at present,

or think of (beliefs, ideas, relationships, etc.) in a **new** or **different** way to change the focus or perspective of (a view) through a lens.

ReFRAME: Reimagined Works for Saxophone and Piano

Composers are continually reframing musical conventions, musical messages, and their own compositional identities as they experience new music, people, places, and ideas. Musical traditions are being updated and re-envisioned through transcultural exchange, interaction with other art forms, and technological advancements. The pieces on this album illustrate the depth and stylistic variety of a diverse group of composers, who have reframed structural frameworks and genres, and concocted a vast array of instrumental colors and timbres.

Repertoire for the saxophone has increased substantially in the 21st century, largely due to commissions and transcriptions by prominent saxophonists. Throughout his career, in consultation and collaboration with many acclaimed composers, Jeffrey Heisler has reframed the instrumentation of musical compositions that were not originally intended to be performed on the saxophone. His saxophone transcriptions have been hailed as “brilliant” and “imaginative.”

Katahj Copley, *reFRAME* (2023)

Originally conceived as a sonata for trumpet and piano, Katahj Copley (b. 1998) writes that *reFrame* “is an exploration of finding one’s identity, inviting you to join me on a transformative journey through three distinct movements. Through musical textures, melodies, and rhythms, *reFRAME* delves into the depths of self-discovery and personal growth.”

His detailed description of the piece goes on to emphasize the work’s rumination on and self-reflection:

In the opening movement, *refRACTED*, the music is frantic and filled with intense moments, reflecting the swirling emotions and urgency that come with the search for identity and trying to express yourself in places that won’t allow you to. The fragmented phrases and intricate rhythms symbolize the complexity of this search, immersing you in the captivating atmosphere from the very beginning.

The second movement, *reFLECTIONS*, a more contemplative and thoughtful atmosphere emerges. Here, I invite you to join me in delving deep into introspection and self-reflection. I wanted to sonically create this feeling: through moments of tranquility and tension, you will experience the internal struggles and breakthroughs that shape the journey of finding one’s identity. The movement ends with the introduction of another motif that is fully realized in the third movement.

ReAFFIRMED is a merging of the rhythmic energy of the first movement and the harmonic motifs of the second. This movement symbolizes the harmonious integration of different experiences and emotions, creating a renewed sense of self. The reprise of the piece concludes in a thoughtful and gentle manner, emphasizing the affirmation of one’s identity and the profound contentment that accompanies self-discovery.

Cait Nishimura, *she danced in the rain* (2018)

Cait Nishimura (b. 1991) is a Japanese Canadian composer who resides in Waterloo, Ontario. She has composed primarily for concert band and many of her works are inspired by natural landscapes, *she danced in the rain* was originally composed for tuba and subsequently adapted for euphonium, trombone, horn, and trumpet.

The composer states:

"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass; it's about learning to dance in the rain." This phrase reminds us to be adaptable, curious, openhearted, and brave; it inspires us to find the light in the darkness and hold onto hope during challenging times. This piece was written for my friend Caitlin Jodoin, someone who has always embodied this approach to life. My hope is that this music finds others who are learning to dance in the rain, too.

Avner Dorman, *Vocalise* (2024)

Avner Dorman (b. 1975), a native of Israel, is a graduate of the Juilliard School and currently serves on the composition faculty at Gettysburg College. A vocalise, a vocal passage consisting of a melody without words, usually involves singing. Dorman's note acknowledges Felix Mendelssohn's introduction of compositions titled "song without words" into the piano repertoire, and specifies how he treats the piano and saxophone as a singing duo.

Vocalise is meant to be a tribute to both the beauty and power of the saxophone. In "song without words," the piece begins with a nod both to the Baroque era and to the introspective elegance of Beethoven's Sonata No. 14 ("Moonlight"). The piano sets the stage in the opening with arpeggios reminiscent of Baroque preludes, creating an atmosphere of contemplation and reflection. Against this backdrop, the saxophone introduces a lyrical theme that serves as the emotional anchor of the work. As the tempo quickens in the second section, the saxophone and piano convey a sense of urgency and motion. Gestural phrases, characterized by rising and disappearing motifs, gradually build towards a climactic point, where the saxophone's voice becomes more melodic and emotive. Returning to a modified recapitulation of the opening material, harp-like glissandos over scales in the piano evoke an expressive character, with scales drawn from Middle Eastern traditions. The saxophone reintroduces the opening theme, but now it appears fragmented, changed by the experiences throughout the journey of the composition. As *Vocalise* approaches its conclusion, a gentle coda emerges, drawing on the fading qualities, from earlier in the work. The piece avoids a "big finish" and instead concludes softly, leaving the listener with a sense of contemplative tranquility. I hope this piece can serve as a vehicle for expression and technique for saxophonists, as well as an opportunity to play collaboratively with the piano in a meaningful and constructive way. Many thanks to the Smart Repertoire Project, led by Joshua Thomas, for allowing me to take part in this important endeavor for saxophone repertoire.

Astor Piazzolla, *Oblivion* (1982)

Composer and bandoneon player Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) energized global appreciation for Argentine tango by popularizing *nueva tango*, a fusion of traditional tango with classical and jazz styles. *Oblivion* appears as an instrumental track on the film soundtrack for Marco Bellocchio's *Henry IV*, but became better known when released as a song by Italian singer Milva with French lyrics by David McNeil. A haunting melody and jazz harmonies coalesce with the underlying tango rhythm.

John Williams, *The Days Between* (1998)

Over the course of his storied career, film composer John Williams (b. 1932) has scored over 130 films and composed orchestral music and instrumental concertos for esteemed performers, including Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax. *The Days Between*, originally featuring solo guitar, appears in the 1998 film *Stepmom*. Williams' penchant for crafting sweeping melodies resounds in this poignant and lyrical piece.

Marc Mellits, *Discrete Structures* (2024)

Marc Mellits (b. 1966) currently serves on the composition faculty at the University of Illinois-Chicago. He writes:

Discrete Structures is a set of connected miniatures, each sharing musical material and each movement completing each other. Sometimes they complete a movement that has already happened, sometimes they complete it before it even begins. However, they are all based on the same musical material, and as I was writing each movement that material became more and more clear, completely on its own. I wanted to create a sound world that connected to itself serendipitously, creating connections throughout the work. The music of each movement on their own are very structured, the building blocks of each are all manipulations of each other, keeping the entire piece connected.

Some structures depict events that happened to me during the summer of 2024, for example, *III: Survival Structure*, inspired by an encounter with a homeless girl reading philosophy in the center of Bucharest, Romania; stay strong, tomorrow is another day. Other structures compare similar material, however, from different perspectives: a wooden clock turns into gold then melts into a liquid. Serendipity can sometimes be joyous or can sometimes give pause. Events happen seemingly on their own, but often have an impact, from moment to moment, measure to measure.

Album Notes by: Dr. Jessica Payette, Associate Professor of Musicology, Oakland University

Jeffrey Heisler, saxophone

Award-winning saxophonist, pedagogue and soprano chair of the acclaimed Assembly Quartet, Jeffrey Heisler serves on the faculty of Oakland University as Professor of Saxophone. Dr. Heisler holds degrees in Saxophone Performance and Music Education from Bowling Green State University (DMA, MM) and Central Michigan University (BME). Prior to his appointment at Oakland University, Heisler served on the faculties of Kent State University and Wayne State University.

Among Heisler's significant accomplishments are a Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition Gold Medal, prizewinner in the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Chamber Music and Young Artist Competitions, and honors as "Outstanding Classical Soloist" in Downbeat Magazine. Heisler has concertized throughout North America, Asia, and Europe performing with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Michigan Opera Theatre, Detroit Opera, Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra, Benny Goodman Orchestra, John Philip Sousa Band, Toledo Symphony Orchestra, and Stuttgart Ballet Orchestra. In demand as a guest soloist and recitalist, he has appeared at the BGSU New Music Festival, Michigan Music Conference, CBDNA Conferences, North American Saxophone Alliance (NASA) Conferences, World Saxophone Congresses and many more.

An advocate of contemporary music, Heisler promotes the creation of new repertoire for the saxophone by commissioning and premiering works by composers such as Jennifer Higdon, David Lang, John Mackey, Marc Mellits, Steve Reich, Marilyn Shrade, and Chen Yi. In addition, he has worked with the Pulitzer-Prize winning composer Ellen Taaffe Zwilich on a transcription of her violin work Episodes for soprano saxophone and piano, as well as collaborated with electronic music pioneer Morton Subotnick in creating a new version of his In Two Worlds for alto saxophone and interactive computer (MAX/MSP). Heisler has also performed the American premieres of Recit (Chemins VII) by Luciano Berio, RASCH II by Franco Donatoni, and Entführung (Abduction) by Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Heisler's acclaimed debut solo album Gradient, subsequent album titled Vent, and the Assembly Quartet's in search of stillness and re-Mix, are released on the AMP Recordings label. Additionally, Heisler can also be heard on Centaur Records, White Pine Music, Mark Custom Records and Navona Records. Heisler's research interests include arranging existing works from prominent composers for the saxophone. His adaptations for the saxophone are published by the Theodore Presser Co., Schirmer Music Co., SMP Press, and Edizioni Berben.

Heisler is a Selmer Paris and Légère Reeds Performing Artist-Clinician.



I-Chen Yeh, piano

A native of Kaohsiung, Taiwan, award-winning pianist I-Chen Yeh enjoys an international career as a solo and collaborative performer. Among her significant accomplishments include competition prizes throughout Taiwan, Japan, and the United States. A performer devoted to contemporary music, Yeh's solo and collaborative performances strive to highlight a new and exciting repertoire. Her passion for new music has led to collaborations with notable composers such as Pulitzer Prize winners Steven Stucky and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich. In addition she has commissioned and premiered works for solo piano and other chamber music by David Rakowski, Marc Mellits, Greg Sandow, Andres Carrizo, Timothy Stulman, David Gillingham, Andrea Reinkemeyer, Anthony Donofrio, and Jeff Weston.

Yeh has appeared at many world renowned music festivals, including the Aspen Music Festival, the Bowdoin Music Festival, Bowling Green State University's New Music and Art Festivals, Eastern Music Festival, the Internationale Wiener Musik Seminar, Threshold Electroacoustic Festival, and the Ball State University New Music Festival. Recent concert appearances include performances at (le) poisson rouge (NYC), the Interlochen Center for the Arts, the Yamaha Performing Artist Center (Taipei, Taiwan), the Taiwan National Concert Hall, and many Universities and Conservatories throughout the United States.

Yeh holds degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music (BM), the Eastman School of Music (MM), and Bowling Green State University (DMA). Her primary teachers include Laura Melton, Angela Cheng, and Thomas Schumacher. She has also performed in master-classes led by internationally renowned pianists such as Stephen Hough, Nelita True, Robert Levin, John Perry, and James Giles. Yeh is an active member of Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), where she served as coordinator of the Ohio junior and senior division piano competitions. In addition, she is a member of several professional chamber music ensembles, including the Heisler/Yeh Duo with saxophonist, Jeffrey Heisler, the Primary Colors Trio (saxophone, piano, and percussion), and an exciting new piano duo with pianist Jiung Yoon. Currently, Dr. Yeh serves on the faculty of Oakland University (MI) as Instructor of Applied Piano and Coordinator of Instrumental Collaborative Piano.



reFRAME

Katahj Copley

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|----|-------------------------------|--|
| 01 | I. reFRACTED | 5:11 |
| 02 | II. reFLECTIONS | 4:55 |
| 03 | III. reAFFIRMED | 4:27 |
| 04 | she danced in the rain | <i>Cait Nishimura</i>
6:35 |
| 05 | Vocalise | <i>Avner Dorman</i>
6:40 |
| 06 | Oblivion | <i>Astor Piazzolla arr. Anderson</i>
4:53 |
| 07 | The Days Between | <i>John Williams trans. Heisler</i>
4:23 |

Discrete Structures

Marc Mellits

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|----|-------------------------|------|
| 08 | I. Circular Structure | 1:44 |
| 09 | II. Red Structure | 1:02 |
| 10 | III. Survival Structure | 2:01 |
| 11 | IV. Gold Structure | 2:01 |
| 12 | V. Blue Structure | :50 |
| 13 | VI. Tight Structure | :38 |
| 14 | VII. Clock Structure | 1:12 |
| 15 | VIII. Liquid Structure | 2:03 |
| 16 | IX. Shiny Structure | 1:09 |
| 17 | X. Square Structure | 2:13 |

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