



## Constructing Thought, One Note at a Time

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GREY BIRD MUSIC 

## Selected Excerpts from Reviews

### **Concerto (In The Form Of Variations) For Viola And Orchestra**

"...a poetic, beautiful, and intelligent exploration of a long, eloquent melody, through variations that are at first musing and gentle, then passionate, finally simple, confident, and serene. The work is a dramatic *scena* for the soloist; the orchestra provides at once a setting and a cast of conversants and commentators." *Andrew Porter, The New Yorker*

"The program took a distinct upswing when Paul Neubauer soloed in the longest and by far **best work on the program:** Joel Phillip Friedman's *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra*. **This is a magnificent work of tremendous expressive force,** often poignant and threnodic, yet always inspiring in its fecundity of ideas and assured development." *Bill Zakariasen, Daily News*

"The **scoring for solo viola is brilliant...**" *James R. Oestreich, The New York Times*

"...the viola sang a mournful, rich melody that the orchestra generally accompanied and underscored. **It was a genuine concerto,** giving a prominent, virtuoso role to the viola..." *Peter Goodman, Newsday*

"The Concerto is a **magnificent, twenty-minute viola declamation: dramatic, passionate, lyrical, eloquent, acerbic, tender, rough, sentimental,** and yet pleasant and approachable by twentieth century standards. It is a completely qualified candidate to be programmed by a good orchestra and mature soloist as a serious part of a subscription-series concert.

...the **overall impression is of originality...The concerto is masterly constructed,** doubtless with compositional complexities, contrapuntal cunning, and clever connivances enough to keep the high-minded occupied as long as they want to be...**Mr. Friedman really does know how to put what he wants on paper...his orchestration is meticulous,** reminiscent of Tchaikovsky or Mahler in attention to detail.

The **solo part is for a virtuoso,** and Mr. Neubauer certainly is one of our finest. The soloist is allowed to show the best side of our instrument, and without having to compete overly with the orchestral forces.

All in all, this is a **splendid addition to the repertoire.** One can only hope that it will not languish in obscurity, since it is so attractive and practical." *Thomas G. Hall, Journal of the American Viola Society*

### **All Things Are Set Ablaze**

"The largest, most ambitious work was Joel Phillip Friedman's "All Things Are Set Ablaze," during which the singers accompanied themselves on triangle, drum and tambourine, providing an earthy undergirding for more abstract elements in **a diverse yet cohesive work of considerable power.**" *Patrick Rucker, Washington Post*

### **Elastic Band**

"An added bonus was a performance of composer Joel Phillip Friedman's "Elastic Band," **a work of serious fun,** which also draws on pop and jazz... **[Friedman] has ingeniously transformed popular themes in a chamber setting.** He even cops (his admission) Ringo Starr's famous, thudding drum solo from the Beatles' "Abbey Road" and turns it into a motif. The second movement takes on Duke Ellington's "jungle music" of the '20s when the great Sonny Greer sat behind the traps." *Richard Scheinin, The Mercury News*

### **What The Living Do**

"...the real treats are the handful of surprises... Friedman's epic "What the Living Do," based on the title poem of Marie Howe's 1998 collection, clocks in at nearly seven minutes and feels much larger than an art song. But who says art songs must be brief and aphoristic?" *Frank Oteri, NewMusicBox*

### **When the World Disintegrates Before Your Eyes**

"**Most impressive of all** was Joel Friedman's *When the World Disintegrates Before Your Eyes* (2013) for solo viola. Using the Scherzo from Beethoven's Ninth, Friedman wrote the piece after witnessing a friend having a nervous breakdown. Fragments of the Beethoven appear and retreat, then reappear, angrily and obsessively, with more frenzied harmonizations. In [Andrew] Gonzalez's hands, the results were harrowing." Bruce Hodges, *The Strad*

### **Personals**

"**The most effective songs are by Seth and Joel Friedman.** Their '*I Think You Should Know*', '*A Little Happiness*', and '*Picking Up The Pieces*' leave the other five composers in oblivion. One cannot help but wonder if the finished product might not have been much more cohesive had they written the entire score." *Larry Ledford, Christian Science Monitor*

"PERSONALS is a winner!...**The brightest revue of the year**, and indeed of many a year." *Clive Barnes, New York Post*

"*Personals* is a revue that brims with good songs, good laughter and good performances... **In 'Mama's Boys,' Tim Reynolds, Lauren Coberly and Kristina Muhlker join in a rocking number reminiscent of those girl group songs of the Sixties. It's one of the show's highlights...** *Personals* is good-spirited and good-hearted, and if you see it, you'll have a good time." *Bryan Wiggin, The Almanac*

"Once in a blue moon, a show comes along that makes the whole elaborate charade worthwhile. This satirical revue... **Personals is one such gem.**" *James Christopher, The Times (London)*

" However, it is not just the hilarious sketches that make this show outstanding, it is also the songs with their great lyrics that are sung by a very talented cast. ... If there was a show deserving of a West End transfer, this is it. Go see it now!" *Darren Dalglish, London Theatre Guide Online*

### **Let Freedom Sing**

"...there is room for **one serious number and it is a knockout.** Called '*Knock on the Door*' by Joel Phillip Friedman (music) and Seth Friedman (lyrics)...**the retelling is haunting.**" *Hap Erstein, Washington Times*

### **Trio De Janeiro**

"Mr. Friedman asks much of the performers: odd metrical constructs, virtuoso technique, and bizarre improvisation all were faced down successfully by the trio. Yet he did not ask quite so much of the audience. The piece certainly requires ears that can deal with, say "Charles Ives In Rio." But the good-natured fun of Friedman's ideas easily took the squeamish listener past the elements that might put them off in something more serious.

Once one understood that this was funny music, the movement called "Communication Breakdown" had the audience in stitches. As the players kept on missing what the others were doing, each going off on a tangent while trying to get back on track, the grins began in the audience. When the players finally gave up and began zooming up and down their instruments faster and faster as if berserk, the grins became out-right laughter from some. The sudden interruption of a bell (whether it was an old-fashioned telephone or a wind up alarm-clock hardly mattered) was a surreal comic end to the movement.

Surely the most peculiar movement was "Slippery Slope" in which Friedman asked Mr. Smith (the cellist) to tune his C-string down to E... Then Smith and Ms. Supové played fast chromatic figures, she on a synthesizer stop of tubular bells. It was an incomparably eerie idea.

So how did it all fit into its Latino setting? Rhythms, both overlaid and unison, were totally recognizable as standard Latino dances and patterns. Most notably Latino was the clapping and foot-stomping interlude between movements four and five. Here players put down their instruments to produce pure rhythm.

As if to show he has a real doctorate in music, Friedman's finale began with an almost academic fugue subject but soon got back into the fun-loving mood and brought the piece to a cheer-filled conclusion." *Paul Somers, Classical New Jersey*

### **String Trio No.1**

"A work that alternates between very dramatic and intense music and music that might be called of an elegiac tone. In particular there is one movement here that is almost all pizzicato and percussive effects that is quite striking." *Steve Elman, WBUR-FM, Boston*