



COLLEGE OF MUSIC

# University of North Texas College of Music

Doctoral Lecture Recital | Friday, February 2, 2024 | 6:30 pm | Voertman Hall

**Jiaxi Liu, violin**

## **A PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO *FOUR SONGS OF SOLITUDE* BY JOHN HARBISON BASED UPON LINEAR ANALYSIS**

### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to create a performance guide for a post-tonal work, *Four Songs of Solitude* (1985) for solo violin composed by John Harbison. This research will employ a linear analytical technique that elucidates hierarchical events, the prolongation of sonorities, and instrumental techniques. I will explain John Harbison's unique post-tonal musical language in this piece by constructing a prolongational model derived from other scholarly studies using modified Schenkerian methodology. This research aims to establish a theoretical standpoint to realize a satisfactory performance and provide potential solutions for similar post-tonal works.

### Composer's Note

*Four Songs of Solitude* was composed during the summer of 1985 as a present for my wife, Rose Mary, who gave the first performance the following winter. They are songs, not sonatas or fugues. The first song often returns to its initial idea, always to go a different way; the constant lyrical outward flow is balanced by a refrain line that occurs twice. The second song begins with a folksong-like melody, which is immediately answered by a more athletic idea in a key a half step higher. The dialogue between these ideas eventually fuses them together. The most intense piece is the third song, its melody carrying large intervals and leading toward increasingly brief and intimate reflections upon itself. The last song is the most virtuosic and intricate. Starting from a slow emblem, which is often restated, it begins with a dance with an obstinate lower voice as accompaniment. This cycles out of control twice, but manages a fragile reconciliation at the end. The solitude is the composer's, but even more the performer's. The player's world is like that of the long-distance runner, especially in challenging pieces like these, and I wanted our conversation in those hours of preparation to contain subjects of equal interest to both. The listeners can, if they wish, add in their own inner distances. — John Harbison

Four Songs of Solitude (1985) ..... John Harbison (b. 1938)

**Four hundred thirty-eighth program of the 2023–2024 season  
Photography and videography are prohibited**