

Bold New Music, Passionate Performance



Join us for the August Edition of First Mondays!



On **Monday August 2nd at 7pm (PDT)**, we will present an encore performance of Andrew Conklin's *I am not Prokofiev* (2020) written specifically for the incomparable [Brenda Tom](#). Please join us on our [YouTube channel](#) to experience this exquisite performance. Program

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I am not Prokofiev

Brenda Tom, piano
[Andrew Conklin](#), composer
Video by Omid Zoufonoun
Audio by Bruce Bennett
Produced by Andrew Conklin
Earplay commission

ABOUT "I AM NOT PROKOFIEV"

I wrote this short piece for the wonderful pianist Brenda Tom as she was beginning to play piano again after taking a hiatus to recover from an injury. Brenda had been using Prokofiev's Second Piano Concerto to get her hands back up to speed, so I decided to base my piece on material from the first movement of the concerto. I Am Not Prokofiev begins with a direct quotation from the introductory phrase of the Prokofiev concerto and goes on to clearly state the piece's primary theme, yet it also references the piece more obliquely by borrowing from its gestural and harmonic language. Because I filtered Prokofiev's music through my own musical sensibilities, it is likely no surprise that the result sounds very little like Prokofiev; fragments of the original concerto spiral outward and inward, with recognizable melodies

periodically returning and just as quickly embarking on unexpected flights of fancy.

This piece also prompts a reflection on the politics of citation in music composition. As feminist scholar Sara Ahmed explains in *Living a Feminist Life*, "citation is how we acknowledge our debt to those who came before" (17). To Ahmed, citations "can be feminist bricks: they are the materials through which, from which, we create our dwellings" (16). In his six-part blog, *Music Theory's White Racial Frame*, music theorist Philip Ewell writes that when we cite an author, "we grant them legitimacy and authority, potentially turbocharging their worth to the field. Historically, the only authors who get so turbocharged in music theory are white males." The same can be said for classical music: historically, the composers whose work is referenced by other composers, whether explicitly or implicitly, are overwhelmingly white and male. My citation of Prokofiev in the previous paragraph of this program note is a contribution to that composer's legitimacy and authority. An instance in which a white man contributes to the perceived legitimacy of another white man may seem too commonplace to warrant comment, but I believe it is important that we notice and name these occurrences. Scholars working at the intersection of music and critical race theory have demonstrated the necessity of calling attention to the systems and structures that perpetuate the centrality of whiteness and maleness. This piece is an opportunity for me to acknowledge my complicity in upholding these systems and structures

Andrew's website is andrewconklin.net.



Stay safe, and we'll see you online, and in the concert hall again when we can.

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