

THE AMHERST COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
PRESENTS

The Antidote Is Optimism

*A senior thesis in composition
by Eli Quastler*

Saturday, November 6, 2021 at 8:30 PM
Buckley Recital Hall

The Antidote Is Optimism

Composed and arranged by Eli Quastler

I. Introduction

II. Michael

III. Be Careful What You Wish For

IV. Home

V. Rollerblade

VI. 2009 Sedona

VII. Simply Who Speaks First

VIII. Optimism

IX. New Kid In Town

Performers:

Adrian Friedman, drums
Dean Gordon, tenor saxophone
Eli Quastler, guitar
Emma Ratshin, piano/voice
Gabriel Proia, trumpet
Masahiro Nishikawa, trombone
Quentin Jeyaretnam, bass

Please silence your mobile phone, watch, or any other electronic noise-makers during the concert. Please refrain from using electronic devices with light-producing screens, as they are distracting to your fellow audience members. **Use of cameras or recording devices is strictly prohibited.**

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

The Antidote Is Optimism is an album's worth of songs, each capturing a different slice of Eli's life during the period of quarantining due to COVID-19. The work, arranged for drums, bass, guitar, piano, trombone, tenor saxophone, trumpet, and voice, draws its influences from pop, funk, and jazz. Eli's lyrics and music are optimistic, uplifting, and enjoyable for all listeners.

Eli specifically wants his music to be fun—easy to sing or dance along—so although it may not be possible to sing and dance today in Buckley, hopefully the music puts a smile on your face. Please feel free to express enjoyment out loud if you feel moved to do so.

About the Composer

Eli Quastler has been making original music since he was three years old, banging around on the electric keyboard in his family's Bay Area home. A few years later, he picked up the very same guitar that his mother played when she was a child, and let his parents show him a few basic chord shapes. He moved on to learning, by ear and through the internet, the Grateful Dead songs that his dad would play around the house. One thing led to another, and by the time he was thirteen, he was begging his parents to send him to a summer camp at the Berkeley Jazz School.

Eli's interest in jazz blossomed in high school, where he played all four years in the jazz band and in the jazz combo. He enjoyed playing as much music as he possibly could in high school: everything from pit bands for musicals, to student pop bands competing in spirit-week-battle-of-the-bands competitions, to hanging around after school playing through standards in the Real Book just for fun with his friends. In his senior year of high school, he worked on an independent study in jazz composition, and had his first experience with composing and arranging with music notation software, learning what the process is like to take a musical idea, move it to the page, and then to the stage.

At Amherst College, Eli has been studying composition, playing in multiple bands and jazz combos. He also sings in, and arranges for the Amherst College acapella group The DQ. He has composed music for a couple of original musicals during his time at Amherst, allowing him to meet and make connections with amazing collaborators. His experience and network of musicians all come together to produce this senior thesis.

Notes on the tunes

Introduction serves as a statement of who we are and what we are here to do.

Michael is another introduction, just for the instrumental portion of the band. Emma rests her voice while we introduce our excellent players.

Be Careful What You Wish For was the last song that I wrote for the thesis project. It's about appreciating the people in your life, and never taking them for granted.

Home is about moving on through various relationships and stages of relationships, delivered through the metaphor of searching for a place that feels like home.

Rollerblade is the other instrumental-only song in the set. It is meant to be funky, fun, exciting, and unexpected. Perhaps it feels like gliding around corners and discovering new territory at every turn.

2009 Sedona is about my friend's old car, which has a lot of issues, to say the least. But I've spent so many hours driving all over creation in that thing, and I have countless fond memories in it; I had to pay my respects and give it a bit of an ode.

Simply Who Speaks First is a song about the games we play when we like someone but we aren't sure if they like us. It's about how I am tired of these games, and we might as well just be straightforward.

Optimism is the song that is most directly about the quarantine. Do not succumb to dread! The antidote is optimism.

New Kid In Town is about what it's like to be good at something, but not the best. It's okay to do something because you love it (and maybe you're even relatively good), even if you know you'll never be the best in the world...or even your town.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Professor Eric Sawyer and Professor Katherine Pukinskis, my thesis advisors, for helping me more than I could have imagined would be possible with everything from developing my musical ideas to creating legible instrument parts.

Thank you to all my friends and family who let me play Muscores MIDI playlist for them over the course of the last year or so. And thank you for saying, "oh nice, that's really cool," even though you were just hearing a poor rendition of computerized instruments faking its way through a half-baked idea.

Thank you to Emma, Quentin, Adrian, Dean, Masahiro, and Gabriel for sacrificing your own time, energy, skill, and creativity to help make my dream come true.

Thank you to my recording engineer, Andrew Zucchino, and my videographer, Josh Baum, for helping me preserve this memory and giving me something to cherish for the rest of my life.

Thank you to the Amherst College Music Department, especially Ted Keyes and Alisa Pearson, for the constant support, guidance, and resources to make this possible.

Thank you for taking some time out of your Saturday evening to support me and to check out some new music!

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Amherst College Music Department Upcoming Events

November 2021

- 12 Amherst College Jazz Ensemble Homecoming Concert
Buckley Recital Hall. 8 PM
- 13 Amherst College Choral Society Homecoming Concert
Buckley Recital Hall. 6 PM
- 13 Amherst Symphony Orchestra (ASO) Homecoming Concert
Buckley Recital Hall. 8:30 PM
- 15 Senior Thesis: Seohyun Hong '22, Flute.
Buckley Recital Hall. 4 PM