

2023 Presser Music Award Proposal

Choosing Family

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The 2024 Thuringia Bach Festival will present my performance-art installation, *Choosing Family*, at the Bauhaus Museum in Weimar, Germany in April 2024. *Choosing Family* is an acoustic performance illusion in which I will give the first modern piano performance and recording of works by J.S. Bach's contemporaries, Böhm, Telemann, and Kuhnau on a Steinway Spirio piano. A 2023 Presser Music Award would make it possible to produce *Choosing Family*.

Realizing *Choosing Family* will further my career by creating demo materials for a debut Spirio recording under the Steinway and Sons label. It will runway a project-based collaboration in my creative partnership with Holoplot sound systems. As a work of performance art, *Choosing Family* will facilitate inclusivity. The project's resulting music video recordings and physical installation space will spotlight how diverse viewers, performers and music-lovers actively shape the sonic and social evolution of classical music traditions.

Choosing Family will stand for three days in the Exhibition Room A of the Bauhaus Museum Weimar. During this time, the Thuringia Bach Festival will present me in spontaneous and planned live, traditional recital performances of the sixth Biblical Sonata by J.S. Bach's professional predecessor at the St Thomas Church in Leipzig, J. Kuhnau, an Overture and Suite in E-flat by the godfather to J.S. Bach's son, G.P. Telemann, and the D Major Capriccio of the Bach family musical associate, G. Böhm, for the first time on modern piano. These pieces will complement the F# minor, D minor, and D Major J.S. Bach Toccatas. Altogether, the works' aesthetic family resemblance unifies the installation's musical body. Copied in the same musical heirlooms, the Möller Manuscript and the Andreas Bach Book, these works passed among the hands of J.S. Bach's biological family and belonged to J.S. Bach's musical family.

A 25-foot wide, floor-to-ceiling one-way mirror will separate a brightly-lit, mirrored stage area from a dark audience area. Asher Young, director of the New York-based production house *Challenge Your Imagination*, will use Exhibition Room A's existing lighting systems and Holoplot's virtual sound source technology to create an acoustic illusion. Holoplot speaker modules will project recorded sound from the live performances into the darkened audience area, from where viewers will view the silent piano moving in synchrony with the recording. Holoplot sound will be tethered with darkness so that as the lighting condition slowly reverses to illuminate the audience and darken the stage, the sound projection will likewise follow. Viewers in the darkened stage area will now observe the audience members without knowing whether they hear the performance. By giving audience members a chance to experience what a performer feels, the installation experience will preface and comment upon the live performances.

The installation's architecture will shepherd visitors to move into physical proximity with those who share their listening preferences. Visitors thus subconsciously choose their listening family. I will ask visitors to take first-person, cellphone video as they walk through the installation and encounter fellow listeners. Following the exhibition, the Emmy-award winning documentary producer Richard Chisholm will compile visitor-contributed video to create music videos that accompany the live recordings made in the *Choosing Family* installation. The resulting videos will be contemporary, autobiographical videos that document the performer's and listener's experiences transmitting these historical works in a novel contemporary setting.

A Presser Music Award will support *Choosing Family's* production costs including venue rental and piano cartage, fabrication of the one-way mirror separating stage and audience, Holoplot speaker module cartage, recording equipment for the live acoustic concert recording, hard drives for data storage, and the producer fee. Steinway and Sons Hamburg will provide the Steinway Spirio piano and Holoplot will provide eight speaker modules for the installation. Together, the Bauhaus Museum Weimar and the Thuringia Bach Festival will provide event management and publicity.

Choosing Family animates a concert space's function as a social place for music transmission. I want my viewer to feel a sense of calling, discover resolve, and embrace their fellow listeners as they walk through the installation. *Choosing Family* physicalizes the paradoxes and idiosyncrasies of being a concert performer and listener of classical music at a time

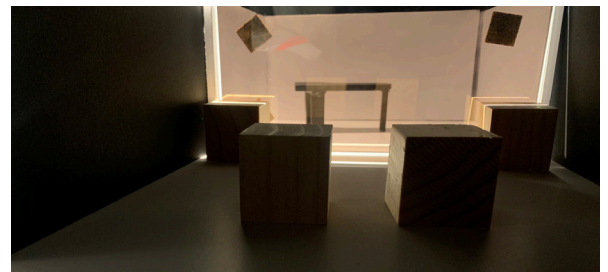


Fig. 1: Bird's-Eye View of Exhibition Room A, Bauhaus Museum Weimar. The piano is located in a mirrored room, separated from the audience room with seats indicated by wooden blocks. Fig 2: View of the lit stage area from the dark audience, through the one-way glass. In the dark audience hall, listeners can hear the recorded performance.



Fig. 3: View from dark stage into lit audience area. Fig. 4: View inside the mirrored, lit stage area. The moving piano keys will appear as Holoplot's virtual sound source.

distant from the music's composition. Earnestly meeting one's own senses reveals that the mainstream of music is not strengthened by blind reproduction and reception, but by intentional, faithful concatenated activity of mutual affirmation among individuals.

Pursuing inclusivity in classical music requires acknowledging every listener's and performer's hermeneutic individuality. One of the most powerful ways a performer may be accepted into the mainstream is through the systematic legitimization of her interpretive and aesthetic choices. Publishing visitors' videos of interactive engagement validates each listener's choices. My work seeks to facilitate opportunities for performers and listeners to actively participate in the dialogue forming the backbone of a work's reception history.

The Presser Music Award's support towards a successful production of *Choosing Family* would enhance my professional development by generating increased international visibility, opportunities for commercial collaboration, press coverage, access to avant-garde fine arts audiences and collaborators, and performance opportunities. *Choosing Family's* performances at the Thuringia Bach Festival will advance my career as a performing artist by capitalizing on my early successes in Germany as the first Asian and first American winner of the Leipzig International Bach Competition. The performance project at the 2024 Thuringia Bach Festival will provide demo Spirio recordings to Steinway and Sons that move me towards a debut Spirio album recording for international commercial distribution under the Steinway and Sons label. *Choosing Family* will provide project-based structure for a creative partnership with Holoplot Sound Systems. Finally, the extraordinary opportunity to produce *Choosing Family* will give me crucial production experience and knowledge to-

wards producing future interdisciplinary, multimedia performance projects that stretch the boundaries of classical music performance. Creating *Choosing Family* will broaden the range of artistic skills I use express the performer's condition.

Glenn Gould once wrote that "one's responsibility to a performance is not finished simply because one has given the performance." The legacy of *Choosing Family* will live on in documentary music videos of the first modern piano performances of works by Kuhnau, Telemann and Böhm, as well as in my interpretation of the J.S. Bach Toccatas. The video's documentary function and striking visuals will lodge *Choosing Family's* multi-purpose performance concept online. *Choosing Family* will introduce critical subjectivity into online representations of historical music, creating space for diverse identities to participate in classical music's hermeneutic traditions.

A successful presentation of *Choosing Family* at the Bauhaus Museum Weimar would pave the way for producing it at other institutions including the Juilliard School and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. In particular, it would be possible to reuse the one-way glass, recording equipment, hard drives, and the producer fee that the Presser Music Award supported towards *Choosing Family's* future presentations.

Choosing Family will give my playing a wholly individual, interdisciplinary, artful, and novel performance and recording platform. As a minority, female artist, I recognize the crucial necessity for every artist to have spaces and relationships in which her playing can be received as original, aesthetic enactment of her humanity. Cultivating these relationships and designing these spaces are ways in which *Choosing Family* leads by example.

Designed to be intuitive and impactful, *Choosing Family* is a novel, rigorous example of constructing social hermeneutics of the transmission of a historical musical work. Its first-person music videos, optimized for social media infrastructure such as TikTok and Instagram Reels, will allow me to reach diverse and interdisciplinary audiences in the avant-garde and virtual music communities. This pursuit is central to my long-term career goals as a classical musician, which include innovating how performance, recording and the concert experience relate to cutting-edge social perspectives.

Performing is one way by which I choose my family. *Choosing Family* is a living sculpture that embodies the psychological conditions of performance, giving listeners a physical place to share in one another's experiences and believe in one another. This is what music-makers and music-listeners do: we behave as family, and our music bears out our social identity.