

ECLIPSE

Chamber Music by Mischa Zupko

Wendy Warner MischaZupko Sang Mee Lee



CEDILLE

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ECLIPSE

Chamber Music by Mischa Zupko

Sang Mee Lee, violin • Wendy Warner, cello • Mischa Zupko, piano

- 1 Rising for violin and piano (9:22)
- 2 Fallen for cello and piano (9:29)
- 3 From Twilight for solo violin (5:00)
- 4 Eclipse for violin and cello (3:58)
- 5 Nebula for solo cello (7:08)

Shades of Grey for violin and piano (21:49)

- 6 I. Shadow (5:22)
- 7 II. Waves (6:11)
- 8 III. Ice (1:50)
- 9 IV. Trigger (8:25)
- 10 Love Obsession for cello, piano, and six pre-recorded electronic cello tracks (10:20)

TT: (67:45)

All works published by Sarché Publishing: *Rising* (2009), *Fallen* (2010), *From Twilight* (2015), *Eclipse* (2014), *Nebula* (2015), *Shades of Grey* (2005), *Love Obsession* (2013)

ECLIPSE: CHAMBER MUSIC BY MISCHA ZUPKO

Program notes by Mischa Zupko

*Skoll is the name of the wolf
Who follows the shining priest
Into the desolate forest,
And the other is Hati, Hrôðvitnir's son,
Who chases the bright bride of the sky.*

(The Poetic Edda. Grímnismál, stanza 39)

In Viking mythology, the wolves Skoll and Hati chase the sun and moon. When either catches its elusive solar prey, there is an eclipse. The Vikings were not alone in their fascination with the heavens. The starlit sky has inspired some of humanity's greatest questions, fueling the inexorable search for the meaning of our existence and our relationship with all things existent. While in an earlier time that search led to the creation of myths, today it stretches the imagination to encompass the notion that natural universal laws govern all things.

One thing has not changed. When we peer into the sky, whether through the eyes of the ancients or the lens of a telescope, the sight is the same — light and dark. Our associations with these polar opposites is also the same — light symbolizes existence and dark speaks of absence. The word “eclipse” is derived from the ancient Greek noun *éklepsis*, which conjures abandonment; when turned into a verb it means “to cease to exist.” It is no wonder the Vikings attempted to scare off the wolves baying at the sky for fear that their very existence, totally reliant on light, was threatened. We now understand an eclipse to be, not an absence, but an alignment. Similarly, we also understand that darkness is not empty or void of meaning. Relatively recent discoveries of black holes and their event horizons suggest immeasurable, previously unimaginable possibilities in even the “emptiest” of spaces. It is this notion of polarity between light and dark, and their cosmic convergence that inspires this project.

Focusing on cosmic phenomena and the ubiquitous human search for meaning, the program is arranged as a balance of symmetries converging on the central selection and title track. The opening works, *Fallen* (Track 1) and *Rising* (Track 2) explore the intertwining and inescapable worlds of spiritual despair and ecstasy. The final tracks, *Shades of Grey* (Tracks 6–9) and *Love Obsession* (Track 10) pursue an obsessive and exhaustive search for meaning in the corporeal realm of human love; longing and tender in the first and more driven and frenetic in the second. *From Twilight* (Track 3) and *Nebula* (Track 5) frame the title track and share with it an infatuation with cosmology and its endless mysteries. *Eclipse* (Track 4), the centerpiece, is the convergence of these myriad points of light and dark and all the shades in between that color not only our atmosphere but also our existence.

It is with deep gratitude that I acknowledge those who have helped bring this project to light:

To my dear friends and colleagues Sang Mee Lee and Wendy Warner, who were critically important in all aspects of the curation of this work. Their partnership made this an incredible journey that embodies the life-giving union suggested by the theme of this project.

To Jim Ginsburg for his service in producing and promoting Chicago artists, and for his support of this project.

To Bill Maylone for his inspiring gifts as an engineer and his keen insight and patience in working with us to create sounds we could only imagine.

To my valued friends and colleagues Winston Choi, Nicholas Photinos, Minghuan Xu, Jeffrey Zeigler, and the late Oliver Colbentson, who were inspirational in the creation of *Fallen*, *Love Obsession*, *Shades of Grey*, and *Rising*.

To the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition for commissioning *Shades of Grey*.

To teachers and mentors who continue to inspire me, including my father Ramon Zupko, Eugene O'Brien, Don Freund, David Dzubay, Augusta Read Thomas, Bernard Rands, John Harbison, Claude Baker, and Frederick Fox.

To Mark George and Fiona Queen at the Music Institute of Chicago for so generously providing us with ample time to record in beautiful Nichols Hall. MIC has given so much to Ms. Lee, Ms. Warner, and myself over many years and we are both moved and honored to have had this opportunity to record together in this place.

To JoAnn Post, my friend and colleague, a writer *par excellence* and one of the kindest people I know, for providing editorial support for the liner notes.

And lastly, I offer very special thanks to my parents Vonette and Ramon Zupko, and to my wife Minkyoo and son Leo, my sun and moon, my everything.

Rising (Track 1) reflects on the event of Jesus' Ascension from earth to the right hand of God. (Luke 24.50–53) The work opens with a rising violin motive, an upward-turning arabesque that creates the aural illusion of a spiraling ascent. As the work reaches for its conclusion, the violin makes its final ascent into the ether, while the piano continues a reverie suggestive of the faithful who long for Jesus's return, firmly planted on the earth but yearning for the heavens.

Rising was commissioned for the 50th Anniversary of Lutheran Church of the Ascension, Northfield, IL. It is dedicated to the late violinist Oliver Colbentson, esteemed colleague and friend of the congregation.

Fallen (Track 2) is a narrative of despair, based on the poem "Sucidio" by Federico Garcia Lorca. The poet describes the decisive moment when a youth steps off a high ledge, ending a brief yet promising life. This poignant, heart-breaking scene is pursued in two-line stanzas, each a distinct and calculated step

toward an inevitable ending. The extreme angularity of the prose and its bleak imagery inspires this musical imagining of that desperate moment.

Fallen opens with a hard-edged motive, played simultaneously by piano and cello. In subsequent iterations, the motif alternates between the two in rapid succession, each reacting to the other with a cool decisiveness that only hints at the underlying sorrow. Suddenly, the motive is transformed into a “twitchy” lyrical statement that reaches into the cello’s uppermost range before descending in a slow-motion, breath-catching free fall. Now, from the netherworld of the cello’s range, the music accelerates, rising and returning to real time as it races toward its ultimate and inevitable end.

Fallen was written for cellist Nicholas Photinos and pianist Yasuko Oura.

From Twilight (Track 3) is a meditation on the mystery of the cosmos as night descends. The first notes emulate points of light blinking open in the

sky, appearing sparsely but with increasing frequency until a shower of light breaks overhead. Atop this subtly brightening skyscape are three prominent musical gestures — a distant harmonic, a short-breathed lyrical idea that comes to dominate, and a short explosion of fast notes. Each of these gestures conjures a specific image and feeling evocative of the passing night. The listener is left to marvel at sublime creative order, always tempted to chaos by the seemingly random surprises that light our lives.

From Twilight was written for Sang Mee Lee.

Eclipse (Track 4) is the embodiment of serenity, using as a focal point subtle, overlapping figures between the violin and cello. As the heavenly bodies coalesce, the points of overlap between the two voices increase, until the luminous process resolves into simultaneous song. The moment is all too fleeting though as the voices soon diverge and journey separately once again. This musical form was

inspired by the image of two heavenly bodies slowly engulfing one another in a shadowed sum greater than their parts. *Eclipse* puts voice to that long-anticipated union that shines with a strange and profound new light.

Eclipse was written for Sang Mee Lee and Wendy Warner.

Nebula (Track 5) hypnotizes as its opening seductive phrase, voiced by solo cello, emerges from and engages the void of silent space, suggesting an almost infinite arc of which we catch only glimpses. All subsequent phrasings pursue this model, growing in length even as the spaces between them gradually diminish. Meanwhile, the music undulates, absorbing an increasing number of artifacts that both propel the music and refract it in a kaleidoscopic way. Just as the swirling clouds of the nebula cool and ultimately implode in an igniting of new life, the music aches with that inevitable, endless gathering of intensity and its explosive release. A display of relentless virtuosity and vigor, *Nebula* both drives and is driven by that cosmic creation of new life.

Nebula was written for Wendy Warner.

Shades of Grey (Tracks 6–9) was conceived as a creative meeting of matched minds. Written for husband and wife Winston Choi and Minghuan Xu of Duo Diorama, the work was first imagined as Choi and Xu prepared to marry. A work that treated violin and piano as equal partners seemed *apropos*.

In any relationship, “equal” is a relative term, an ideal defined and redefined as the ambiguous roles, the shades of grey between partners emerge. Each instrument plays an undeniable, utterly unique role without which the music could not exist. They are two individuals inextricably wed as a shadow to its object, or as currents below the surface create subtle changes in the waves above.

Written into the work are inherent intricacies that can only be managed by a true duo. Since the interdependence of parts occurs at such an intense level, one must be entirely in sync with the other.

Shades of Grey is admirably dedicated to Duo Diorama. It was commissioned by the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition at Brigham Young University.

Love Obsession (Track 10) imagines the relentless pursuit of an object of desire, expressing inescapable primal passions and their slow shaping of the human heart. That drive is represented by that musical singularity, the eight-note arpeggio, which is itself an obsession. Unrelenting in its evolution, the expression is fiercely aggressive though subtly subject to a steady, rhythmic process that ultimately resolves in a smoldering, quiet passion. This transformation, jarring in its abrupt juxtaposition, is merely a recasting of that same eight-note ideal, the musical image of love's tendency to change and its possibility of ever deeper intimacy.

Love Obsession was commissioned by and written for cellist Jeffrey Zeigler. The six electronic tracks were originally recorded by cellists David Cunliffe, Nicholas Photinos and Wendy Warner.

Wendy Warner performs all of the tracks on this recording.

Love Obsession is passionately dedicated to Minkyoo, the love of my life.

SANG MEE LEE

Hailed as a “rising star” by the Korean Broadcasting System and “first among equals” by the *Boston Globe*, Sang Mee Lee has warmed the hearts of audiences around the world since she began performing in her native Chicago at the age of three. Winner of top prizes at the Tibor Varga International Violin Competition, Leopold Mozart International Violin Competition, Irving M. Klein International String Auditions, Seventeen Magazine/General Motors Concerto Competition, William C. Byrd Competition, and the Julius Stulberg Auditions, Sang Mee has since been heard in concert halls around the world including the Berlin Philharmonie, Alice Tully Hall, and Chicago’s Symphony Center. She has performed extensively in the United States as well as Europe and Asia, both in recital and as soloist debuting in New York, Chicago, Stuttgart, Baden-Baden, Berlin, and Seoul, South Korea. She has also performed in Sion, Switzerland; Augsburg, Germany; and Evian, France. Sang Mee

has been guest soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, and Korean Broadcasting Symphony among others, collaborating with such luminaries as Erich Leinsdorf, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, and Mstislav Rostropovich. She has appeared on Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, the Phil Donahue Show, and the Anneliese Roethenberger Show in Germany. In 2009, Sang Mee was named one of the fifty most influential persons of Korean descent by *Newsweek Korea*.

A frequent chamber musician, Sang Mee has performed with Chicago’s Fifth House Ensemble and International Chamber Artists. She has also collaborated with musicians from the New York and Berlin Philharmonics, and the National, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Los Angeles Chamber, Seattle, and Chicago Symphonies. Sang Mee also performs frequently at the Music Institute of Chicago and has collaborated with members of new music ensembles ICE, Fulcrum Point,

Anaphora, and Eighth Blackbird. A fervent champion of new music, Sang Mee has worked with composers Jennifer Higdon, Augusta Read Thomas, Howard Sandroff, and Zhou Long. Festival appearances include performances at the Aspen Music, Blossom, Hot Springs, Ravinia, and Highlands Chamber Music Festivals. She has also participated in the Chamber Music Series at Tannery Pond and the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Series. Sang Mee can be heard on Cedille Records' world premiere recording of previously unknown works for piano trio by Beethoven with pianist George Lepauw and cellist Wendy Warner.

A graduate of The Juilliard School, Sang Mee earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Violin Performance. Her teachers and mentors include Dorothy DeLay, Masao Kawasaki, Hyo Kang, Kyung-Wha Chung, Felix Galimir, Samuel Sanders, Roland and Almita Vamos, Robert Lipsett, Josef Gingold, Victor Aitay, and Betty Haag. Since 2000,

she has been on the violin, chamber music, and Academy faculty of the Music Institute of Chicago, where she also serves as Chair of the String Department. From 2005–2007 she was on the chamber music faculty at Northwestern University. Sang Mee is an Honorary Member of the International Music Fraternity of Delta Omicron and plays on a rare 1739 Carlo Bergonzi violin on generous loan from the Stradivari Society of Chicago.

WENDY WARNER

Hailed by *Strings* magazine for her "youthful, surging playing, natural stage presence and almost frightening technique," Wendy Warner is one of the world's leading cellists. Warner first garnered international attention in 1990 winning the top prize at the Fourth International Rostropovich Competition in Paris. She made her New York debut with the National Symphony Orchestra in October 1990 playing Shostakovich's First

Cello Concerto conducted by Mstislav Rostropovich. She then embarked on European tour with the Bamberg Symphony and Maestro Rostropovich, making debuts in Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Köln, Düsseldorf, and Berlin. Audiences have since watched the Chicago native perform on prestigious stages all over the world including New York's Carnegie Hall, Symphony Hall in Boston, Walt Disney Hall in Los Angeles, Paris's Salle Pleyel, Frankfurt's Alter Oper, and Berlin's Philharmonie. She has also toured Prague, Milan, Paris, and other European cities with Camerata Chicago and conductor Drostan Hall. Warner has collaborated with leading conductors including Vladimir Spivakov, Christoph Eschenbach, Andre Previn, Jesús López-Cobos, Joel Smirnoff, Carlos Miguel Prieto, Charles Dutoit, Eiji Oue, Neeme Järvi, and Michael Tilson Thomas. American engagements have included appearances with the Chicago, Boston, Detroit, New World, Dallas, and San Francisco Symphonies and the Minnesota,

St. Paul Chamber, and Philadelphia Orchestras. Internationally, she has performed with the London, Montreal, Berlin, Iceland, and NHK Symphonies; the St. Petersburg, Hong Kong, and Japan Philharmonics; L'Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse; Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional in Peru; L'Orchestre de Paris; and Camerata Academica Novi Sad in Serbia.

A passionate chamber musician, Warner has collaborated with the Vermeer and Fine Arts Quartets, Chicago Chamber Musicians, Jupiter Chamber Players, and esteemed violinist Gidon Kremer. She also collaborated with Vadim Gluzman at Chicago's North Shore Chamber Music Festival in its inaugural and subsequent seasons. The Warner/Nuzova Duo, with pianist Irina Nuzova, performed the complete Beethoven Cello Sonatas at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston and Phillips Collection in Washington D.C. and appeared by special invitation at the U.S. Supreme Court. As a member of the Beethoven Project Trio with violinist

Sang Mee Lee and pianist George Lepauw, Warner gave the world premiere of a previously unknown Beethoven Trio in Chicago's Murphy Auditorium in 2009, repeating the program in Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall the following year. Warner's recital work includes performances in Chicago, Boston, and Washington D.C. and internationally in Milan and Tokyo, plus frequent appearances on Chicago classical radio station WFMT. Festival highlights include performances at the 2016 Piatigorsky International Cello Festival, El Paso Pro-Musica, the Grand Teton Music Festival, and Penderecki's Beethoven Easter Festival in Krakow.

Warner's musical career began at age six in Chicago under the tutelage of Nell Novak. She then studied with Mstislav Rostropovich at the Curtis Institute of Music. Wendy Warner's discography includes several recordings for Cedille: *Haydn & Myslivecek Cello Concertos*, *Russian Music for Cello & Piano*, *Popper & Piatigorsky, Beethoven Project Trio*, and *Double Play: 20th century violin*

and cello duos with Rachel Barton Pine. She also recorded Hindemith's chamber works on Bridge Records and Barber's Cello Concerto on Naxos. A recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, Warner teaches at the Schwob School of Music at Columbus State University in Georgia where she holds the Leah D. Hamer Distinguished Faculty Chair.

For more information, wendywarnercello.com

MISCHA ZUPKO

Celebrated for compositions that are emotionally charged and viscerally engaging, Chicago composer Mischa Zupko excites both musicians and audiences. Working collaboratively with other great musical minds, his body of work is intensely virtuosic and bracing in its vision and scope. In the words of *New York Times* critic Anthony Tommasini, Zupko's Five Etudes for Piano were "Liszt-like in their florid generosity" and the *Los Angeles Times* has hailed his compositions as "engaging." The press has praised his orchestral works citing "orchestration

[that is] nothing less than stunning” and a “considerable command of instrumentation and orchestral color.” Zupko was also featured in a *Chicago Reader* cover story for his significant compositional activity in the Chicago musical scene.

Zupko’s works have been championed, commissioned, and premiered by leading United States orchestras and chamber groups including the Minnesota Orchestra, Pacific Symphony, New York Youth Symphony, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, Fulcrum Point New Music Project, American Modern Ensemble, Camerata Chicago, St. Olaf Band, Eighth Blackbird, Corigliano Quartet, and Lincoln Trio. He has worked with members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and members of the Kronos, Vermeer, and Pacifica Quartets. Significant commissions have come from the Fromm Foundation, Barlow Endowment, and Gilmore International Keyboard Festival. Performances of Zupko’s works have been featured at Carnegie Hall,

Weill Hall, Merkin Hall, and Ravinia. In 2010–2011 he was selected as Composer-in-Residence for the Fulcrum Point New Music Project.

Mr. Zupko’s numerous awards include first place in the Pacific Symphony Orchestra’s American Composers Competition, three ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composers Awards including the first prize Kaplan Award, the First Music award from the New York Youth Symphony, the Jacob Druckman prize from the Aspen Music Festival, and finalist in the Rome Prize Competition. Recordings of his works are available on Cedille Records, Crystal Records, Innova, American Modern Recordings, and ENF. Mr. Zupko is on the faculty at the DePaul University School of Music and the Music Institute of Chicago and resides in Chicago with his wife, Minkyoo and son, Leo.

For more information, mischazupko.com



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