
Senior Projects Spring 2021

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

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Midnight In July

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Midnight In July

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by
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May 2021

The collection of songs that I created for my senior project were all written some time in the past year. It was only in the past two weeks that I came to realize that a unifying theme had emerged. It is not something obvious- nor did I intend for it to be- but there were enough hints throughout to lead me this realization. Originally, my plan for the project was to compose choral pieces meant for a children's choir to sing, which I would then teach to a group of children in the Bard area, who would perform it this semester. But with the pandemic on the rise in the Fall and early in the Spring, the idea became further and further from realistic. It was a month into the Spring semester that I became certain I would have to think of an alternative to having a concert, and so recording the pieces by myself became my new plan. And though it felt disappointing at first, I slowly discovered how much I enjoyed working on the entirety of the project completely alone. And just as slowly it began to occur to me how much this project is bound to solitude.

I wrote these pieces during a year in which we all had become physically isolated from one another, and to attend Bard during this year was at first an unnerving decision. I had no idea for most of the year what form that these pieces would take, if it would be a concert, or if I would have to change course. I experienced the range of joy and frustration writing little by little like needlework, alone in my tiny dorm room, not being able to envision the final form. I attended classes online, took walks, and spent a lot of time alone. It wasn't until I started recording that I really gained momentum.

I don't have much experience recording, engineering, or mixing music, and my plan to record felt extremely intimidating in all ways. A few days a week for about a month I would spend hours upon hours alone in Bard Hall, recording into a microphone and interface that was lent to

me by the school. The first day I went in there a friend showed me how to set up, and every day beyond that I would go in by myself, gradually developing an almost meditative routine in which I'd take my shoes off, pace around the room singing warm ups at the top of my lungs, open the trunk, and set up the equipment, each cord in each device, in sequence. In the very beginning I wished that I had someone there to assist me, since I was completely at sea, and quite lonely in such an old building as Bard Hall, at night. I wanted at first for someone's reassurance and support while I was there, but with each day that I went in there, and went through the motions of setting up and warming up, I gradually began to cherish my hours in there. Even when it was lonely, or when I was working in the early hours of the morning and was paranoid that a stranger would break in and harm me, it became a spiritual experience. It reminded me in a way of pregnancy and childbirth, (though I don't know about it firsthand) in the sense that I was giving everything to something, and that I was alone with it in a way that separate beings could never be.

Solitude is at the heart of this project- it is a vital part of my life. So many periods of time throughout my life I have chosen to be alone, even before the pandemic. It is altogether fitting then that I would spend the last year of my time as a student working on something so deeply solitary. And though I look forward to working again alongside others in the future, and singing in choirs, I will always think back to the hours that I spent in Bard Hall, singing all alone.