

# High Notes

News of the accomplishments of NFA members and the flute world



Molly Barth

Molly Barth has accepted the position of assistant professor of flute at the Blair School of Music, Vanderbilt University, and will begin her post in fall 2018. “I am tremendously honored to have this opportunity,” says Barth of the position, previously held by the late Philip Dikeman, “and I am eager to work with the students and faculty at Blair.”

Barth, a Grammy Award winner, previously taught at the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance, the University of Richmond, and the University of Chicago. She is a founding member of the new music sextet eighth blackbird, is a co-founder of Duo Damiana with guitarist Dieter Hennings, and is a core member of the newly formed chamber ensemble the Zohn Collective. Visit [mollybarth.com](http://mollybarth.com).



Lois Bliss Herbine

On November 7, 2017, Lois Bliss Herbine gave the world premiere of Howard Hersh’s *I Had to Go Down in the Mines to Climb Up to the Sky*, scored for solo piccolo with an accompaniment of 16 recorded piccolos. It was the finale to Herbine’s full piccolo recital held at the Festival of New American Music, Sacramento State University, in celebration of the festival’s 40-year anniversary. Other

works on the program that were composed for Herbine were Sonata by Joseph Hallman and *Philadelphia Portraits* by Cynthia Folio. The three other works on the program, Daniel Dorff’s *Sonatine de Giverny*, Vincent Persichetti’s *Parable*, and Michael Daugherty’s *The High and the Mighty*, were included in Herbine’s first solo CD, *Take Wing* (2004), featuring all-premiere recordings for the piccolo. Each of these three works has since become a staple of the piccolo repertoire. The concert, titled “Moving West,” was sponsored by Powell Flutes.

*I Had to Go Down in the Mines to Climb Up to the Sky* (2013) draws its inspiration from the coal miners and their heroic and often tragic history. “Using Lois Herbine’s personal family history as a starting point,” wrote Hersh, “I developed a work inspired by the universal experience of the immigrant community and the ghosts of the past upon which future generations were built. The dialogue that unfolds

between the individual and the ghost choir also gave me the opportunity of creating a polyphonic tapestry of overlaying voices, a form in which I am greatly interested.”

Herbine is the great-great granddaughter of a Welsh miner who perished in the legendary Ferndale coal mine explosion of 1867, and his widow Margaret, who emigrated to the United States with her small children and new husband to join the mining community in the anthracite fields of Pennsylvania. Herbine’s great-grandfather Isaac Lewis was a breaker boy at 12 years old, handpicking slate in the Frackville mines. The story passed down to her by her great-aunt Olive was that he became not only a coal miner but also a fine piccolo player, and her great-aunt would often voice how proud she was that Herbine was following in his footsteps. He died from cancer at age 32, the same age as that of his father when he died in the mining explosion in Wales.

Says Herbine, “It is particularly gratifying to have the opportunity to honor my family’s history and simultaneously advance the music of a composer whose work I greatly admire.”



Wissam Boustany

Wissam Boustany launched his new Pro Youth Philharmonia on its inaugural tour April 13–15 in England. The group is a training orchestra for emerging professional musicians aged 22 to 32. The repertoire included James MacMillan’s memorial to Isobel Gowdie, Sergei Prokofiev’s Violin Concerto No 2, and Béla Bartók’s *Concerto for Orchestra*. The tour included London, Oxford, and Stoke-on-Trent.

In addition to Boustany, mentors to Pro Youth Philharmonia in its first tour included Stephanie Gonley, leader of the English Chamber Orchestra; horn player Jonathan Williams; and flutist and pedagogue Anna Noakes.

Central to Pro Youth Philharmonia’s mission is Boustany’s “Method Called Love,” which guides the orchestra’s purpose and training focus and aims to teach children how to integrate love on their journey through life. The program includes educational outreach projects. The Art/Poetry Competitions use a winning painting as artwork for the orchestra’s concert posters and a winning poem to read in concerts. The Emerging Musician Program allows a very promising A-level instrumentalist to join Pro Youth Philharmonia for rehearsals and a concert.

Three times per year, tours comprising three concerts around the U.K. will be preceded by residencies in conjunction with various educational institutions, including coaching and mentoring with soloists and professionals from leading

*I Had to Go Down in the Mines to Climb Up to the Sky* was composed in service of the bravery and anguish of America's great immigrant experience. It was inspired by the history of my family, whose heroic lives as laborers facing daily struggles in the coal mining communities in both Wales and Pennsylvania laid the foundation for the opportunities that I and my children now enjoy. This living history connects two worlds for me- my love for the piccolo and reaching new audiences outside the orchestra and my love of ancestral research.

In the performance, the spectral voices of the 16-part piccolo choir emanate from the speakers while I as the soloist/protagonist onstage go musically from quiet resignation of daily toils to a struggle to remain alive and lead my family to a better life.

Recording engineer Drew Taurisano created and layered the sixteen accompanying piccolo tracks. Side by side, the eleven-minute solo and accompanying parts are the equivalent of three CDs worth of music and the largest musical project that I have taken on to date.

“When I play the piccolo I am a canary in a coalmine, sweetly singing one moment and impassioned with the urge to break free of bondage in the next. I am the diminutive bird who claws it's way out of the cage; the miner faced with peril trying to get out of the mine; the family hoping to escape the anguished echoes of the lost miners' voices.”

**LOIS BLISS HERBINE**

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To read more about Howard Hersh's work for 17 piccolos and Lois' recording project, please visit Lois Herbine's Website:

[www.piccolois.com/CoalmineCanary](http://www.piccolois.com/CoalmineCanary)

FluteView magazine, November 2107 edition:

[www.thefluteview.com/sections/issues/november-2017/](http://www.thefluteview.com/sections/issues/november-2017/)

Powell Flute Blog, July 16, 2015:

[www.teachflute.com/2015/07/i-had-to-go-down-in-mines-to-climb-up.  
Html](http://www.teachflute.com/2015/07/i-had-to-go-down-in-mines-to-climb-up.Html)

With special thanks to my flute/piccolo students for their support in this live performance (list current as of May, 2018):

- Sandra del Cid-Davies, Piccolo, The Florida Orchestra
- Renae Block, President, Flute Society of Greater Philadelphia; President-Elect, New Jersey Music Teachers Association
- Christine Hansen, Philadelphia Flute Quartet
- Amy I-Yun Tu, Powell Flute Artist