

Bill Taylor, 7 New Hartford Road, Sandisfield, MA 01255. 707-272-1688. Website: touchtheearthmusic.com. Albums at billtaylor1.bandcamp.com. email edibleland@earthlink.net

Bill Taylor studied classical piano with his father, Arnold P. Taylor of Essex Connecticut from age 5 until age 18, continued briefly at Princeton University (where he earned a bachelor's degree in Astrophysical Sciences in 1980), and resumed in 1980 and 1981 with Harriet Shirvan in Boston. He credits Jerry Gray of Seattle with teaching him jazz theory. He studied composition at Cornish School in Seattle and with Ken Benshoof. He released 2 70+ minute albums of his original compositions in 2011 and 2018, performing them as piano solos and with other musicians: Paul McCandless (of Oregon and Paul Winter Consort and a Grammy winner), jazz flautist George Husaruk, bassist Yanahay Hooper, singer Jaye Alison Moscariello, and violinist Margie Rice (Concertmaster of Ukiah Symphony). In 2019, 5 of his short works were performed by the Ukiah Symphony and on March 17, 2023 his piece "Eire Alive" was performed by the Torrington Symphony. Some of his music was used by Jaye Alison Moscariello in a film "From the Ashes" about one community's response to a devastating 2017 wildfire. He accompanied ballet classes in the 1980's, played for church services from 2004 to 2022, with paid positions from 2012 to 2020 and in 2022 (which included being the pianist in the "Soul Purpose Band", performing secular spiritual as well as contemporary Christian music. He has also played in a number of house and other concerts with the musicians listed above in California and with others in Massachusetts. He attended the Mostly Modern Festival in June 2023 and 2024 in Saratoga Springs, where a chamber works were performed and an orchestral work read in 2023, and is a member of Boston New Music Institute. His piece "Until" was featured in a play "The Opening of a Door" by Phillip Benevento, performance in September 2024. He performed with woodwind players and a singer in October 6, 2024 at Sandisfield Arts Center.

Ode to Ludwig (©2018, 2023). Piano trio. I composed the violin-piano version in Costa Rica in 2018 from sketches written in the early 1980's. I had a few composition lessons with Ken Benshoof who thought my ideas weren't edgy enough and suggested writing first and second ideas, what A goes with this B, what B goes with this A, and so forth. As a young 20 something I didn't think much of his structured approach, rebelled and put the whole thing aside. I didn't revive it for my first CD in 2011 and in 2017 started to play around with it again. Finally when in Costa Rica to spend a month writing music I decided to finish it, and add some meter and key changes to make it more fun. Jaye said "I hear violin with this" so I wrote a part, and was fortunate to have Margie Rice play it in a recording in my "Nature's Dream" CD. I added a cello part for a 2019 performance and switched to oboe and bassoon for an Oct, 2024 concert and oboe and cello here.

Nature's Dream (©2012,2018, 2024) – A capella 4 part SATB. In 2011 I had a vivid dream in which Paul McCandless was playing soprano sax, I playing piano, and Jaye singing this song, but the words were not formed in the dream; they came later with first a multi verse version simplified with Jaye Alison Moscariello to the words here. We think this would make a great national, or international, anthem. This is a new 4 part a capella version which I was inspired to write after MMF 2024 where I had a lesson with composition faculty member Paul Moravec who writes vocal music. This piece is also on the Nature's Dream album with alto voice, flute, soprano sax, piano, and bass.

This is our planet, the one that we all share
Let us remember that all life breathes the air
Our world is sacred, its future in our trust
And it continues after bodies turn to dust
Shall we continue to think we own the beasts?
Or know the truth that all of us share the feast?
Grow for each other and for the creatures too
Plant life and fungi nourish the whole zoo
Lessons we've learned from species that have passed
Transform our ways or we may not last

Take time to learn what ancestors teach us
Honor the spirit residing in that which feeds us
Act for the future of seven generations
And together we can share in this dance of life
Act for the future of seven generations
Act for the welfare of seven generations

Of The Woods. ©1983. Piano trio. The piano part of this piece came out one month, a few measures each day. It felt channeled rather than written – more like birth than development of some initial idea. The northwestern US forests are a cathedral, and Paul McCandless's oboe takes flight within it on the 2011 recording. In 2024 I added a bassoon/cello part. The original piano part was written when I lived with Judith da Silva whose last name translates to the song title.

Seattle Cascade/Shutters Corners ©1989, 2024. 12 chamber players

The rapid descending notes came first in a Seattle October 1982 rain shower interspersed with bright sun; I discovered/created that pattern on my piano looking out at the dramatic weather. In 1989 I was bicycling on a heavy Soviet folding bicycle up and down hills in the Catskills, and the setting sun and gentle downhill in Shutters Corners, NY made for a happy interlude where the tune in the second part of the piece came to me. I combined these 2 and linked them with other ideas into a solo piano piece recorded in 2011. At the CD Release concert I wrote an oboe part for Paul McCandless which we finally recorded in 2017. This year (2024) I added a bassoon or cello part to make a trio, and for my third album I orchestrated it for a chamber orchestra and removed the piano. A musician friend calls the opening discordant part “the bats!” It is a piece with lots of starts and stops, several repetitions of the rain shower motif, alternating with moods during a time (1989) of many changes in my life. I think it fits the many changes in our times as well.

Lucy Soundscape (©2024). Oboe and string quartet. I wrote a shorter version of this piece for soprano sax and quartet when I was ill with Lyme disease. NASA provided a 3 note motif and I submitted it to the “Lucy Soundscape” website along with many other composers. This year, with better health, I expanded it after sharing it with MMF composers and realizing I had crudely approximated the slowing and speeding up of the spacecraft and wanted to depict how the spacecraft goes along pretty quietly but perks up when all the instruments are focusing on the next asteroid (lots of pizz in the strings and fast oboe playing). Because it uses multiple gravitational slingshot flybys of Earth, the speed varies a lot, and because the mission is at least 12 years long, scaled it to 20 measures per year. Then with the 2028 to 2033 time period with only one asteroid pair to visit, I compressed that time even more to keep the patient listener's attention. The Trojan asteroids orbit in 2 clumps 60 degrees ahead of and behind Jupiter, so beyond the main asteroid belt.

Fugue (©2020). Woodwind and string septet. I came up with the theme and wrote a short jazzlike 4 voice fugue for fellow students at Cornish Institute in Seattle, around 1982. I misplaced the piece but remembered the theme. For a March 2020 concert I rewrote it for 7 instruments, but with COVID we never performed it. Jaye is inspired to create a video based in 1939 Vienna in which 7 couples dance and then disappear as so many did in the following years there.

Saratoga Salsa (©2023). Piano, trumpet, wood blocks. At MMF 2023 a French horn player said if I wrote a horn piece, she'd play it. I asked her the kind of music she likes and she said “salsa”. I finished it after MMF 2023 ended so we didn't get to play it. After performing it on Oct 6, 2024 in a shorter version and talking with Dave Eggar realized that trumpet would be better.

Ragged Out Rag (©2019). Solo piano. In Columbia I was at a 5-week composing retreat and had a moment of despondency about writing music – why bother? I laid down on the floor and the opening tune of this came to me and quickly the second part came out. A few weeks later I added the third part and per my usual style there is a recap.

Hiding From the Law (©2024, Bill Taylor): Clarinet, piano.

I had a dream in 2019 of being in a narrow building looking onto a narrow street under some kind of building or overpass, almost like a train station along a highway like along the New Haven line. There the slow opening theme and then the faster “running” theme came to me. There was someone in the building with me who was hiding from the police, and at first it seemed they did not know where he was, but then it turned out they did and came looking for him. I wrote down the dream and musical ideas on awakening. Over the years I added sections. To be unpredictable in the chase, sometimes a measure would be repeated, with or without a little twist. Sometimes twice, sometimes 3 times, to throw off those chasing, along with many key changes. Early on it seemed ragtime was perfect, and the darker sound of the clarinet seemed to match the possible criminality (I never knew if the person had committed a crime or was being framed). Slow sections indicate the ability to catch a breath but soon the chase is on again. It remains unresolved whether the person gets away, whether they are guilty of anything, and the dissonance increases toward the end to show that lack of resolution

Swedish Band Dream (©2019, 2023). Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, Bass. The opening theme to this came in a series of dreams with two musical ideas: first a piano player in a train station who I joined and jammed with, and a later one, now with a Swedish band playing in the street in Chinatown in some U.S. city where I had gotten lost (the same city where I had arrived in a train). I added fast sections as I heard them, also inspired by realizing that the opening theme seemed more disturbing/haunted than I’d expect a Swedish string band to be playing, and because I had missed most of what such a band would actually play as in the dream, I walked past it pretty quickly. A slow section leads to a fuguelike treatment and then back to some of the earlier themes. It is dedicated to Greta Thunberg, Swedish climate activist. There are 3 versions, for strings, woodwinds, or brass.

October 8-9 (©2018-19, Bill Taylor) –piano, 12 Chamber players. I was asked to write a short piano piece for a September 2018 fire survivors performance of monologues about the October 9, 2017 Redwood Complex fire. Our personal experience was unique in that the July 2017 Grade Fire blackened nearly all our land and actually allowed us to stay and put out ember fires rather than fleeing in the firestorm many experienced. Our stress was largely not knowing what happened to others. I performed it in September and October in Ukiah and Redwood Valley as a solo piano piece. I wanted something about the fires that affected our community to appear in a Ukiah Symphony concert on March 24, 2019, so when in Colombia writing music I added some parts. The strings add drama, and the oboe has duets with the piano; at the last minute I added in other winds and trumpet. I wrote words to help me organize the short episodes of music (each just a few measures except the last parts) and create more sections. The first bit I wrote was the fire theme, then the wind and the romantic evening, then the bouncy joyful theme, then the opening red flag warning measures, and lastly the bluesy and dissonant final parts where so many were trying to escape.

Here are those words that can act as titles for each short section: Red Flag Warning, Jaye came home from residency! hot wind, Happy reunion, hot wind, romantic evening, hot wind, warm embrace, sleep, smoke or just a hot night?, sleep, Yanahay texts “Potter Valley on Fire”, red on our ridge, Fire!, how again?, who to call? Everyone we know between here and Potter Valley, landing ember fires, propane tank booms. It turns out that 9 people died from the fire directly, numerous others badly injured, and still others from the trauma they experienced died in the ensuing months. But the community came together beautifully, created art from recovered objects, helped each other, and buried differences that no longer seemed important. This music was featured in Jaye Alison Moscariello’s documentary From The Ashes.

Regenerate, Heal, Cool: ©2023, Bill Taylor. Flute, Clarinet, Bassoon, Piano, Viola, Bass

I am passionate about solving the climate crisis by restoring natural cycles such as the water cycle. The way more “civilized” humans have farmed for millennia, with plowing that destroys soil life, creating hot surfaces of deserts, removing most plants that keep the water cycle going, and burning carbon in the soil, informs this piece. The second movement depicts the solution being practiced by so-called regenerative farmers, although the term is easily coopted by greenwashing interests. These methods were generally practiced by indigenous cultures but abandoned with a more

violent and competitive culture that seemed to accompany what we call civilization, leading to the fall of numerous such societies as their land was depleted of biological processes. Perhaps there is time to learn from past mistakes, as many farmers are now doing. This is especially important now as regenerative farming cools the climate by replacing bare soil with vegetation, restores the water cycle, and increases soil carbon.

The first movement “Sere” is in 2/4. It describes the growing season on a monoculture farm, starting with driving mechanical music for plowing and planting, a tranquil rain which becomes a downpour with erosion and ponding due to compacted dead soil (glissandi). As the land dries out, the bare soil heats with direct sun (dissonant chords and irregular rhythms). Between the flooding and heat, the crop does not survive so a rushed replanting followed by rain and fertilizer-induced rapid growth brings pests, weeds, and biocide spraying (somber music). Lots of descending glissandi and quieting presents the death of the soil life. A dirge conveys the frustration of paperwork, insurance claims, and crop failure. A dust storm seals the disaster, followed by a meager harvest and plowing it all under.

The second movement has a joyful tone throughout. This biodiversity, vibrant, abundant natural farming movement is in 13/8 which allows interesting intrameasure groupings with diverse rhythms and sounds. It opens with bird calls, a lively scene above ground with interwoven motifs from all instruments. A few successive tonality changes point to the rich biodiversity of this regenerative farm. A darker figure represents pests entering, but they are quickly handled by the intelligence of the ecosystem. Even more interweaving of themes and shifting rhythms draw attention to the below ground world that makes all this abundant life possible, and builds gently into a continuing dance with bird calls, underground and aboveground life (animal, fungal, and bacterial), and happy plants.

Bill Taylor, Touch the Earth Music, www.touchtheearthmusic.com ©2023 BMI

Mvt I 1-16: plowing, almost beating up the soil 17: planting with force 24: rain, 29: downpour
33: erosion, ponding on the compacted surface 38: heat, dry, searing sunlight baking the exposed soil
53: rushed desperate replanting 60: more rain 65: growing rapidly using chemical fertilizers
75: “Kill the buggy”, “Kill what bugs me NOW!” biocide spraying 80: Bad and beneficial and neutral life all dying
93: frustration, paperwork, financial worry 103: “We give crop insurance, When you grow commodities, You grow what we tell you to, We will take care of you, Hail fire flood and drought, Pay for every failure, Subsidize biocides, subsidize cheap food, Subsidize bad food, Chemicals and pharma”
115: hail, dust storm, meager harvest, plow it all under

Movement II. Alive. Note rhythmic groupings of 13/8 (biodiverse, biological, soil always covered, regenerative farming)

143: Calm, birds, sense of piece and aliveness, “Grow some cover crops, Bring diversity, Feed the soil life, Plants exude that food, Fungi weave the earth, Plants and microbes dance 161: different keys, “Animals with the plants indigenous wisdom is teaching us”

168: Pests and Predators, intelligent signaling, balance “Pests are going to eat our harvest, Predators will bring back balance, Microbes plants and signals call, Life abundantly for all” 180: The life below ground: bacteria-fungi-plant synergies 183: birds, grazing animals, the entire food web, are in focus so now it’s abundant life above and below ground 194: rain, now better absorbed by the soil sponge of life. The dance of life continues with abundant harvests

Normalizing Evil: movements 2 and 3 (©2024, Bill Taylor). Oboe, Bassoon, Percussion, Harp, Piano, Cello. I had a dream in which I heard the voice of Luxor (I know, that is a city in ancient Egypt; it was possibly Luthor, a villain in various versions of Superman and the Marvel universe). He said “You will do evil, and no longer think it is evil”. This gave me the idea for a piece in these times of fake news, AI, the rise of authoritarianism and fascism, the distraction of too much “information”. Our Polish friend Jacek used to comment in the early 2000’s that US news, like that in Poland under Soviet control, was propaganda. We have many pleasurable electronic escapes that many of us use – we all hear about it and do not always know that the “air we breathe” is not reality but what the eastern mystics call “mana”.

I was not sure how to express these ideas musically. In an attempt I have written 3 movements of Normalizing Evil under 3 ideas: "Anything Rows", "The Back and Forth", and "The Last Hundred Years: 1924-2024".

The first uses the 12-tone row idea, just over 4 minutes exploring the instruments playing rows, inversions, time reversals, tempo changes, some rows easier than others to listen to. Many considered serial music as evil, as discordant (it is often dissonant to an ear trained to earlier European forms, folk, or popular music), but a bath of it could begin to seem more normal, especially a century after its invention. It did not make the cut for this album

For the second, I created 3 discordant "evil" sounding motifs interspersed with "pleasing" passages. Each of these 6 are presented in exposition, but with each section getting a bit longer than the last as information and tolerance of discord ramps up, and they return in a sort of development/recapitulation, a back-and-forth dialog, hence the subtitle. It will be played for the first time in this recording session.

Neither of these seemed to match the dream fully so I continued to write. The third movement performed at MMF 2024 explores group adoption of evil ideas. It uses a few events and movements of the last 100 years. These are

1) Fascism of the 1920's-mid 1940's and its best-known proponent Adolph Hitler, but also the willingness of many to march right along. In particular, the music presents Hitler's speech rhythms (in his rile-them-up cadences, not his regular speaking voice);

2) Movements in the US since around the 1970's that has led to an admitted dictator coming to power in this country, using a few chant rhythms from his speeches (Tremendous; Very Bad, Lock Them Up).

The tubular bells introduce these rhythms, and 4 other instruments (oboe, bassoon, piano, and cello) and at times the harp, alternate between their own tunes, protest themes, and the martial rhythms of the sample dictators' speeches. There are 2 different protest songs (a Yiddish melody from Es Brent, by Mordechai Gebirtig, used as a protest during Hitler's persecution and extermination of Jews and other groups, and "We Shall Overcome" from the Civil Rights movement in the US, and reused in modern times). The snare drum alternating with the bells creates an underlying militancy. The harp's arpeggios and glissandi create a unifying frame for the whole movement, at times introducing the goings on and providing various moods. Later in the piece, the protest songs are played in the speech rhythms and a martial rhythm to signify the capture and mocking caricature of them by the oppressors (often with a sliver of freedom symbolized by the theme played in its original rhythm by bassoon or others). Tempo changes and more complex interweavings depict the increasing confusion with AI, the balkanized plethora of news sources, and photoshopped identities. The movement ends uncertainly, with the original tunes of oboe, bassoon, and cello. Perhaps a rediscovery of their original voices for one last gasp before expiring or going silent, with the future to be written after November 5, 2024 (and other dates in other parts of the world).