



Ten years ago, I came back to my singing voice. This was a real shift from my previous jazz piano playing/composing, and epic, loud, multifaceted percussion theatre pieces. My first songs I wrote for myself. I started noticing specifics in my voice, how various notes, motifs, etc. sounded. I set some poems that I liked, and tried the piano styles I knew. But soon I found myself overwhelmed.

Luckily, I met Paul around this time. We enjoyed each other's music, and I began to ask Paul questions about his process, about how to get unstuck. He shared how he studied scores, and pointed me to Schubert lieder. I was taken with the perfection of Schubert's musical universe — in such a small space, he mapped out a whole world. I wanted to write like that.

A breakthrough came when I was visiting a friend “upnorth,” and I noticed the police report in a small town newspaper. It didn't have the usual urban terror. It was a little bit off kilter — funny, but with a quiet pathos. I knew that I had to set it. I submitted **Northwoods Police Report** for tenor, piano, and string bass to a call for scores. It was turned down, and I am eternally grateful that it was, because I found Kim Sueoka instead.

Kim immediately saw the earnestness, the bizarre humor in the texts, and sang with a clarity I had never heard before. Soon I was setting **Questions** by my fly fishing friend, poet John Minczeski. Paul started calling these pieces “jazz lieder,” as they combined classical lyricism with modern jazz harmonies.

I read Paul's haiku **First Autumn Night**, and in my mind's ear heard Kim's voice singing it, with no piano. I was struck by how this song worked, its clarity and purity, how the harmony was completely implied by the melody. I returned to writing poetry myself...and “jazz haiku” was born.

These songs are so short and self-contained, turning them into an album posed a real problem. We interspersed them with some new piano pieces, and Paul's accordion mashups of my songs. After much careful ordering and reordering, a shape revealed itself. We held our breath, listened...and it worked!

I hope this music helps you connect with the larger-than-human world, a place of wonder. I see music and nature inextricably intertwined — I cannot live without either. Many of these songs are set in trout streams. Trout can only survive in wild places with cold, unpolluted water. These places have great, unique and irreplaceable beauty — like the voice of Kim Sueoka.

For the past six years, we have been working together, polishing these ideas. I have never worked this hard on such small pieces of music...and yet I still like to listen to them!

Some things I want you to know: The words to **Northwoods Police Report** are actual police reports from a small town in Minnesota. (Not saying which one!) **Rattlesnake Song #1** is taken from the final paragraph of a newspaper article written by my father. **Thoughts at 4 AM** was written for Paul, a prodigious night owl, on his 25th birthday. **When in Pieces** is a found poem. It hangs on a wall in a little house by the Willow River, embroidered and anonymous. As soon as I read it, I heard Kim's voice singing it.

Kim and Paul have been the most amazing collaborators, who understand the inner geography of my works. They have been able to take my ideas and create a viable musical landscape, no, a vibrant ecosystem.

I cannot thank them enough. I cannot thank you enough! After you listen, I hope you go outside for a while. — Todd Harper

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Immediately upon listening to Todd Harper's music, declarations of genre as such become trite. Most important to my perspective is being able to be and remain present to the elements of this vast interiority brought about so sublimely by all participating.

This brilliant assembly of music pieces gets me off and romping in the land of William Blake's **Auguries of Innocence**. The ever-evocative renderings provide a kind of springboard for lyrical celebration of childhood imagination brought into the immediacy of the moment: "Where does the white go after the snow melts?" — Carei Thomas

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Since 1978, **Todd Harper** has been a performer/composer in the Twin Cities area. Harper studied with Carei Thomas, Bill Banfield, and Alan Bryan. He forms many jazz groups with strange names. To confuse us further, Todd writes for rural community theatre, percussion ensemble, jazz orchestra, jazz opera, and things. He has long ears and a pointy snout.

Kim Sueoka sings with The Rose Ensemble, and has appeared as a soloist with folks like the Royal Hawaiian Band. She studied voice with Joseph Hopkins and Lawrence Weller. She received a MN State Arts Board grant in 2005, and was a finalist for the McKnight Performing Musicians Fellowship in 2007. Originally from Koloa, Hawaii, Kim lives in St. Paul. She enjoys running and nature photography, and dreams of being a carpenter.

Paul Cantrell is a composer and pianist, born in Colorado and living in Minnesota. He strives to bring poetry to the contemporary and adventure to the traditional. He studied music with Donald Betts and Carleton Macy at Macalester. His web site, In the Hands, is one of the internet's most popular sources of free piano recordings. By day, he maintains a secret identity as a wily computer programmer. He is afrugivorous.

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Todd Harper:	composition, piano (7, 16, 20, 28), lyrics (6, 16, 18, 20, 23-25, 28)
Kim Sueoka:	voice, co-composition (28)
Paul Cantrell:	piano, accordion, co-composition (5, 27-29), lyrics (22), recording and editing
John Minczeski:	lyrics (1-4)
Herbert Harper:	lyrics (13)
K. Hauk:	lyrics (15)
Anonymous:	lyrics (8-II, 17, 19, 30)
Mike Olson at Intuitive:	mixing and mastering
Cork Leg Nelson:	design, illustration, and screen printing

Thanks to Joel Rod, Nick Weininger, Dave and Carol Cantrell, Carol Mitchell, Chris Mayer, Lucie & Michel Piché, Geneviève Piché, Rachel Aavang, Coconut and Next Step Energy, Gary and Lucia Copland, Nor Hall, Theresa Westcott, John and Carrie Morrison, and all the others whose financial backing made this project possible.

Special thanks from Todd to Lynn, Libby, Victor, all of my people, Andy Rapoport, the SGI, and Daisaku Ikeda. **Special thanks from Kim** to Ernest and Jan Sueoka, Stacey Sueoka, Paulette Thompson, Kevin Leong, Kathy and Allan Lee, Abbie Betinis, Mike and Sandy Takaezu, Kay Studer and David Roos, Wendy Alan, Mark and Jennifer Dietrich, Joseph Hopkins, Larry Weller, Koi Moon, Ann Fujimoto DiStefano, Nina Saraos, Renee Indehar, Uncle KK Kahaunaele, and Arnold Meister. **Special thanks from Paul** to Paige, my amazing family, Matthew Smith, Mike Olson, Shirley Kysilko, Ken Hannah, Dave Mao, the Twin Cities composer community, and of course Don Betts.

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