

# MARK LACKEY

## Scholarship Narrative

My creative work as a composer explores a range of divergent styles, rejecting evaluations that are based simply upon categories of “art” versus “vernacular” music. I compose for voices and for the traditional acoustic instruments of the orchestra, for rock instruments, and for electronics, either singly or in various combinations ranging from duos and small chamber groups to wind ensemble and full orchestra. My work in academia also includes lecture-recitals from the perspective of music theory, with a recent mission to bring to light the music of lesser-known composer Sophie Maria Westenholz. The common thread is to reach audiences and increase their awareness of various music that they might not know or seek out.

I endeavor to compose music that touches a wider audience by deploying intentionally accessible materials in my music, at times even bringing together varied styles into one work. In recent years the effort toward greater accessibility has taken shape in pieces including *Reef*, *On the Mirror Stage*, and *TOGETHER*. In *Reef* for orchestra (and also in *Reef* for wind ensemble) there is a strongly thematic surface and a subtle poly-stylistic element, with its lyrical melodies echoing impressionism and its driving asymmetrical rhythms inspired by progressive rock. *Reef* has been performed and well-received by the national theatre orchestra of Brazil, by the Alabama All-State Festival Orchestra, and by the Idaho Falls Symphony. *On the Mirror Stage* for two marimbas represents a different approach to reaching a broader audience through collaboration with the Samford University Dance Studio. The most involved expression of my effort toward making composed music more widely accessible is the new work *TOGETHER*, slated for two performances during the 2023-2024 season. *TOGETHER* blends various styles as a metaphor and an opportunity for reaching across differences and bringing people together, as it features students of a community music school and members of a local gospel choir alongside Samford University faculty artists.

In the music theory area my recent work centers on the Piano Sonata in F Minor by the eighteenth-century composer and *Kapellmeisterin* Sophie Maria Westenholz. The impetus is still a matter of reaching people with music they might not otherwise encounter. While in my composing that means reaching people who might overlook one style or another, in my presenting the music of Westenholz it more often involves reaching music lovers with music by a gifted composer who might have been overlooked. My theoretical analysis of the Sonata in F Minor reveals an extraordinary attention to design. For example, the 190-measure sonata-form first movement features an expansive 80-measure development that explores eight different keys, while the finale presents a form that can at the same time be understood as rondo and as binary. Moreover, a motive that provides unity across all three of the work's movements hinges on a descent from D-flat to E-natural, foretelling the ultimate tonal plan of the work which concludes with sections in D-flat major and E major before ultimately restoring the F minor tonic key. In lecture recitals I give examples to present these details such that nonspecialists can appreciate the beauty of Westenholz's work.

Whether in composing new music or presenting analysis of the work of others, I engage in active scholarship, keeping the name Samford University in front of colleagues on a local, national, and international stage. My scholarship, in turn, affords me opportunities to grow as a practicing musician, scholar, and educator as I bring new insights back into the classroom.