

Jonathan Russell (b. 1979) creates music by turns tender and fierce, playful and profound, raw and refined, propulsive and still. In his work, he seeks to embody and express the full range of human experience in a way that speaks directly to people's hearts, minds, and bodies.

While he composes for all sorts of instruments, the extraordinary sound and spirit of the bass clarinet in particular is a driving force behind much of his work. His numerous compositions for bass clarinet(s) include solo works, sonatas, concertos, duets, trios, quartets, chamber works, and large bass clarinet ensembles. He was a longtime member of the Edmund Welles bass clarinet quartet, which channeled the ecstatic power of heavy metal through the deep acoustical resonances of four bass clarinets. He is a member, with Jeff Anderle, of the Sqwonk bass clarinet duo, which for the past 15 years has devoted itself to creating a new repertoire of expressive, vital, joyous music for two bass clarinets. He is also the founder and leader of Improbable Beasts, a professional 15-member bass clarinet ensemble in the Boston area. This group represents the culmination of Jonathan's bass clarinet journey, allowing him to fully realize the richly-textured, harmonious, ferocious music of his dreams.

Jonathan also has a significant body of work for "bass clarinet-adjacent" instruments such as Bb clarinets, saxophones, and other wind instruments. He loves the deeply human, physical quality of breath-produced sound, the wide spectrum of colors winds can produce, and the vast range of musical genres they can tap into, from Mahlerian bombast to jazz, klezmer, Balkan, Dixieland, funk, Latin, and beyond. His many wind-based compositions include works for solo saxophone, clarinet duet and trio, clarinet choir, saxophone choir, reed quintet, wind/brass octet, wind band, and clarinet and saxophone concertos. His wind works have been commissioned and performed by ensembles such as the Eastman Saxophone Project, Eastman Wind Ensemble, Imani Winds, Splinter Reeds, Nomad Session, Égide Duo, and Paradise Winds. His recent "Groovetudes" for saxophone and piano was commissioned by the International Saxophone Academy as a competition piece for their Young Artist competition. Jonathan also writes for more conventional ensembles: orchestras, string quartets, choirs, mixed chamber ensembles, solo piano, etc., and these works have been performed by groups such as the San Francisco Symphony, Roomful of Teeth, So Percussion, and JACK quartet, among many others.

Arranging music of the past for implausible combinations of modern instruments is another one of Jonathan's favorite activities. Imani Winds commissioned his woodwind quintet arrangements of *The Rite of Spring* and *Scheherazade*, which the ensemble has performed dozens of times throughout the United States and internationally. Other examples include Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor* and *Dear Theodosia* from *Hamilton* for two bass clarinets; *The Rite of Spring* for electric guitar, percussion, and two bass clarinets; and Ligeti's harpsichord work *Hungarian Rock* for reed quintet.

Many of Jonathan's projects have involved collaborations with or responses to other artists. He is fascinated by the similarities and vast differences between music and these other art forms, and by the challenges of "translating" from one to the other. He has served as music director for five evening-length dance productions with San-Francisco-based choreographers Janice Garrett and Charles Moulton (Garrett + Moulton Productions), working closely with them to select, edit, arrange, and compose music for the productions, and then to organize, play in, and lead an ensemble of live musicians. In 2017, he wrote a work for the ZOFO piano duo to accompany a work of street art by Stormie Mills that he discovered while living in east London (and which has since been painted over). In 2019, he composed a piece to accompany a work by woodcarver David Esterly. That same year he composed music for the Rochester-based ensemble fivebyfive to accompany Judith Schaechter's stunning stained glass work *The Battle of Carnival and Lent*. He recently wrote his first film score for the silent film *Demons Before Breakfast*, which premiered at the 2020 "Sound of Silent Film Festival" in Chicago.

As a performer, Jonathan appears frequently as a bass clarinet soloist, and as a classical and klezmer clarinetist. He is also a sought-after guest clinician in composition, clarinet/bass clarinet, and creative/unusual musical career paths. His unique approach emphasizes staying present and open (both literally and metaphorically) and engaging students' sense of creative possibility and playfulness. He has

appeared in this capacity throughout the United States, as well as in Mexico, Germany, and New Zealand. In 2021, he was one of ten bass clarinetists from around the world selected to produce a series of instructional videos and give a masterclass for the online Digital Bass Clarinet Academy.

A card-carrying music theory nerd, Jonathan's doctoral dissertation is a 400+ page harmonic analysis of the entire *Rite of Spring*. He holds degrees from Harvard University (B.A.), San Francisco Conservatory of Music (M.M.), and Princeton University (Ph.D.), and has taught at Harvard, San Francisco Conservatory, and MIT. His primary composition teachers have included Paul Lansky, Dmitri Tymoczko, Dan Trueman, Barbara White, Steve Mackey, Dan Becker, Elinor Armer, Eric Sawyer, John Stewart, and Eric Ewazen. His clarinet teachers have included Janet Greene, Alan Kay, and Jo-Ann Sternberg.

When not making music, Jonathan loves exploring cities, hiking, reading, playing word games, and improv comedy (both watching it and feebly attempting to do it himself). He lives in Cambridge, MA, with his wife and 5-year-old son.