

Other Minds presents Adam Tendler's Inheritances

inheritance

noun

something that is or may be inherited; property passing at the owner's death to the heir or those entitled to succeed; legacy.



**July 17th 2024
Brava Theater
San Francisco**



**Other Minds[®]
presents
Inheritances**

Adam Tandler, piano

**Wednesday, July 17,
2024 7:30 pm
Brava Theater,
San Francisco**

**The performance will be
followed by a panel discussion
with Adam Tandler and Pamela Z,
hosted by Joseph Bohigian.**

The leadership, staff, and patrons of **OTHER MINDS** wish to thank these generous supporters of our mission who are leaving a legacy gift to our endowment program.

THANK YOU

The logo is a circular gold seal with a black border. Inside the seal, the words "OTHER MINDS LEGACY CIRCLE" are written in a circular path. In the center of the seal, the letters "OM" are prominently displayed in a bold, gold font.

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WELCOME, FRIENDS, TO AN EVENING OF MUSICAL EXPLORATION AND INHERITANCE.

Tonight, we celebrate the legacies passed down through generations that continue to breathe new life into the creative spirit. Through the bewildering circumstances described further on in this program, Adam Tendler's *Inheritances* project invites us to reflect on an ever-fraught subject with new ears—to consider both the personal and cultural implications of death and money, and to create new connections between the past and future.

At Other Minds, we recognize the significance of inheritance not only in music but also in the broader scope of our work. Our commitment to fostering innovation and creativity in contemporary music is borne of the legacies we've inherited and driven by those we strive to create. To do so we must endure the vertigo of keeping one eye on the past and one on the horizon. It's an exhilarating experience to scan that continuum for musical moments that revivify our curiosity and intentions both in art and life. Tendler's *Inheritances* project seems to me to be one of those prime examples in which life becomes art and—who knows—maybe the opposite too.

As we immerse ourselves in the beauty and contemplation of these pieces, I invite you to consider the enduring impact legacy giving can make. Through generous foresight, like that belonging to the names you see on the opposite page, you too can become stewards of the artistic heritage we cherish, amplifiers of the unexpected, and champions of the visionary work to come.

Speaking of the future, we are delighted to announce that this evening marks the beginning of a remarkable season here at the Brava Theater. In the months ahead, Other Minds will return to this very stage for our annual Other Minds Festival of New Music, scheduled from September 25th to 28th. We eagerly anticipate another remarkable gathering of pioneering composers and performers from around the world, including the world premiere of an unbelievable new theater work by sound artist Trimpin called *The Cello Quartet*, commissioned by Other Minds with the generous support of the Hewlett Foundation.

Thank you all for your continued interest and support of Other Minds and the remarkable artists, both past and present, whose imagination continues to drive our appetite for discovery.

Now onward, **Blaine Todd, Associate Director**

On its surface, the concept of inheritance touches on two out of the three of the most emotionally fraught words in the English language: Death and Money—with an extra serving of awkwardness, grief, class, and privilege. Just past its surface, inheritance sparks more philosophical and abstract questions: What have I inherited? What have we collectively inherited? What will we leave behind? What are we to do with the sins and spoils of our predecessors, literally or figuratively? Who is responsible when the recipient has no choice in the matter?



It is easy to avoid thinking about these questions and beguiling to find someone confronting them head-on. But pianist Adam Tendler doesn't always process things like other people. It is this spirit of questioning and self-discovery that's at the heart of his latest project titled *Inheritances*, a truly collaborative commission that used Adam's own monetary and symbolic inheritance as a launching pad for 16 new works for piano, created by a broad spectrum of sound artists and composers.

Inheritances isn't the first time that Adam has taken on a wildly ambitious, conceptual, and personal project. Upon graduating from music school, he decided that he wanted to perform in all 50 states. "I'd gone to [music] conservatory

and I came out of it a ball of nerves. It almost made me more anxious as a performer,” he reflected over Zoom in April 2022, sitting in front of his piano, laptop propped where the sheet music normally goes. He knew that more school wasn’t the answer. His rationale was simple: all he needed was a simple “yes” — from a church, coffee shop, or hall. With the gradual accumulation of small yes’s, laser focus, and zero know-how, he made this seemingly unprecedented project happen, which he eventually turned into *88x50: A Memoir of Sexual Discovery, Modern Music and The United States of America*, a book chronicling his journeys.

Inheritances began in 2019 when Adam’s father died unexpectedly. By Adam’s own account, his relationship with his father at the time was complicated: “I wouldn’t say we were estranged, but we didn’t talk that much,” said Adam. “We talked maybe about two or three times a year, like on my birthday, or holidays...” Adam was pretty close with his dad as a kid, even after his parent’s divorce. But this closeness faded over time in a vague and blurry way that made the eventual experience of his fathers’ passing similarly obfuscated.

“With his absence, there was definitely a sense of confusion. It wasn’t like when some people die, what the survivors are left with is this hole, this gaping sort of loss and absence. I didn’t have that. I know that sounds really weird. What I lost was access. It was sort of like, oh, well, I guess a part of my life with this person is now over and all the things we shared... that book is closed,” said Adam. At the time he didn’t know anything about his father’s financial situation, but when he eventually heard that there was an inheritance, he had a feeling that it “was gonna be something bizarre.”

“It wasn’t a lot of money. And it was in cash,” explained Adam. “It was handed to me in a manila

envelope by my stepmom in a Denny's parking lot in Lebanon, New Hampshire, the same border crossing of Vermont and New Hampshire where I was transferred between parents as a kid." Initially, Adam didn't do anything with the money. "There seemed to be something sort of sad about letting this symbolic money go into something as stupid as like debt, or subway fares, or rent. It seemed weird for it to just disappear like all my other money disappears," he said.

It wasn't until a few months later at a concert that he had one of those simple, profound, frustratingly platitude-like thoughts that seem to only hit with such force in the depths of emotional strife: "*Music is Amazing!*" And what better way to celebrate the transformative and cathartic potential of music than by commissioning work with this symbolic cash?

So, without a venue, premiere date, record deal, or any other practical justification for the project, *Inheritances* came to be. Adam started to reach out to composers, asking them if they would write a piece on inheritance, paid from the inheritance he had just received. Incredibly, every single artist that Adam asked to participate in *Inheritances* said "yes," materializing, as Adam puts it, "the coolest f**king lineup I could have ever imagined. There's not a single person that I am not stoked about." Liquid Music signed on to premiere the work and Adam was able to secure matching funds to ask even more artists to participate.

Adam emphasized to all the artists involved that the commissioned works didn't have to be about him, his father, death, grief, or anything prescriptive. The pieces he eventually received are as diverse as the set of artists behind them. However, to Adam's surprise, there still does seem to be something tying the works together. "These pieces all have really stunning restraint," he said. "It's like they knew that they could actually do something very, very personal and be safe with me.

Grief expert J. William Worden suggests that there are no set stages to the grieving process and that we approach grieving through tasks that can happen in any order.

Those tasks are:

1. *To accept the reality of the loss*
2. *To process the pain of grief*
3. *To adjust to a world without the deceased*
4. *To find an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new life*

Unbeknownst to him, Adam's outreach to *Inheritances'* composers perfectly encapsulates the fourth and most important task of grieving—finding an enduring connection with the deceased while finding a way to move forward. As he wrote in his initial email to the artists, he was seeking “to plant that cash in the soil of something that may actually grow and—if you'll forgive me—live on.”

It is not at all that surprising that the collaborators, when asked to reflect on inheritance in a time with no shortage of grief, responded reflectively with such sincere authenticity. In his own unique way, Adam Tandler has invited us all to participate in the transmutation of his extremely personal experience of ambiguous loss into a beautifully communal ritual of enduring connection—providing us all an overdue opportunity to utilize the emotionally alchemic potential of music to process our immeasurable and nebulous griefs. Accepting, processing, adjusting, and finding hope...

Opposite:
Tekemessa & Eurysakes by Henry Fuseli, Yale Center for British Art.

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— **Patrick Marschke**



Inheritances

Remember, I Created You

Laurie Anderson

Adam: When we first started talking about the kind of piece she might create, I said to Laurie, “forget you’re writing a piece for a concert pianist. Write it as if you were going to play it.” Laurie read dozens of pages of testimony I wrote about my father’s and my complex relationship, and collected photographs as well. She then shaped the piece by feeding these materials into an A-I program she developed with the Australian Institute for Machine Learning in Adelaide, Australia. The works Laurie created for *Inheritances* (this one, as well as the poem *Sunglasses*) eerily define not only this whole program, but also my father’s and my shared history.

Forgiveness Machine

Missy Mazzoli

Adam: Missy and I corresponded privately quite a bit leading up to her sending over *Forgiveness Machine*, and I will keep those correspondences private. Before the world premiere in Minneapolis, I asked if she wanted to provide a program note, and she asked if she could pass, adding that she thought the piece “speaks for itself.” I think it does, too.

Outsider Song Scott Wollschleger

Outsider Song is a short and intense reflection on the soul-searching journeys we traverse by ourselves. These lonely voyages can seem paradoxical; they are often painful and profoundly healing, and the music of this work bridges desolation and soaring hope as I attempt to honor, in some spiritual sense, both Adam and his late father. This is a song for all who have, at any moment in their own life's journey, felt like an outsider.

You Were My Age Angélica Negrón

When my grandmother passed away last year, I traveled to Puerto Rico to help my mom clean her home in which my grandmother lived with her. As I was going through old documents, encyclopedias, old magazines, countless medical supplies, and stuffed animals, I also found old photographs of my mom. In that moment I had a sudden realization of something quite obvious but that I had never thought of before in my life, my mother was once my age. This piece seeks to embody the essence of my perception of my mother when she was my age through the lens of a single image captured a long time ago.

In The City of Shy Hunters John Glover

"Things start where you don't know and end up where you know. When you know is when you ask. How did this start?"

—Tom Spanbauer

Having known Adam as a dear friend, colleague, and collaborator for over a decade—his act of reaching out to commission works in response to his father's passing with his inheritance is so characteristically generous, emotionally raw, and blazing with the act of creation. My contribution to this space takes its title from Spanbauer's novel which seems to connect in ways I both understand and don't quite know.

What It Becomes

Mary Prescott

[from an email to Adam Tendler] Years ago, after my grandmother died, my father said to me, “When your parents die, that is when you really begin to understand them.” That sort of stuck with me ever since. So much of our identity is wrapped up in our relationships with our parents and their identities, I think. And I don’t want to wait until they have left to know them, and I don’t want to miss them or not know who they are now, in the present. There is so much longing to know oneself and one’s relationships, and then there is also the longing of missing our loved ones when they’ve left us, and the constant wish to have known them better. Yet, the dissonances of any two people are deafening...

Well, I really wanted to mention more about how things “become.” Or how we can’t anticipate what they will become... our relationships, the money from an inheritance, our experiences, our dreams, the border between two states, a few note fragments... So I thought of these things as I wrote this piece for you, and I thought about how you can turn the same thing over and over in your hand, and it looks different from this angle or that, and time changes it, even if it stays the same. And context changes it, how it looks and what it means. How grief passes through us, and we learn to live with it even as there is some guilt in carrying on. How the traits of our ancestors made marks on our parents, and now on us. What it becomes is the ineffable... what we have inherited.

An Open Book

Timo Andres

Adam Tendler once commented to me that he is “an open book.” I agreed, and immediately wrote down this thought in case I ever wrote a piece for him.

Inheritance

Ted Hearne

Adam: I'll be honest, I was nervous about receiving Ted's piece. His instrumental music can be rhythmically and harmonically complex, and fiendish to play. So I was pretty astonished to receive *Inheritance*, a piece that could be described as mostly silent, though in actuality it hangs just on the edge of inaudibility, with slow, soft, lilting phrase interjections that Ted described to me as "underwater." Between extended techniques, counterpoint that includes meticulous releases of different notes at different times, rhythms that are subtle but that Ted wishes to be played strictly in time, and a "bite-switch" that I use for page turns while both of my feet are occupied, Ted managed to compose a still-fiendish, but deeply personal, meditation on inheritance, and a masterclass in restraint.

hushing

inti figgis-vizueta

Adam: inti's score for *hushing* could be seen visually as a map, a menu, even a buffet! I usually do really well when presented with the freedom to make creative choices within a composer's work, but I'll confess that for months I struggled. When inti described to me her actual process of composing the work, the visceral physicality of her interaction with the piano, it helped serve as an entry point. And then, somewhere along the line, after I'd tried a kitchen-sink approach of extended techniques that were variously fussy and unsuccessful—inti was patient and gracious and encouraging throughout—we began to experiment with the idea of integrating a visual element. I had always vowed, almost pridefully, that *Inheritances* would feature "no home videos, no me-at-my-birthday-party," and so on, and yet when I let that wall fall down and surrendered to the idea of making *hushing* deeply,

almost painfully personal, not only did the piece transform, but so did the whole program. In terms of the program structure, I think of *hushing* as a kind of gate into the second half of the program, and one of the most important, demanding, and personal pieces in my repertoire.

the plum tree I planted still there

Sarah Kirkland Snider

"I went to the house where I grew up, where my dreams still take place, the lawn totally overgrown, the plum tree I planted still there and the blueberry bushes he once planted, once so bountiful that strangers would visit with empty containers to pick them, still separating our property from the next house..." Among the many insights and observations that moved me in Adam's beautiful essay about his father was this vivid image, which lingered in my mind. After losing my own father, I too went to the house in which I grew up, approaching it through the woods that abutted our backyard so that I could catch a glimpse of the Sycamore trees I climbed and played in while my father did yardwork in his cutoff jeans. There is something both surreal and grounding about visiting natural landscapes from our past. Trees and plants often keep growing even after we abandon them, after our loved ones depart, after we depart. This piece is a short meditation on the singular ache they can inspire.

Area of Refuge

Christopher Cerrone

"As in a dream, there is no release until we wake up, and not because the dream has ended." —Morton Feldman, note to *The Viola in My Life*

Living for the past month in a hotel in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, I kept happening upon signs for an 'area of refuge'—which is a legally mandated location where people can gather in times of emergency. Repeatedly seeing these signs transported me back to a small corner waiting area in the hospital where I recently

spent the days waiting upon my father during the last days of his life. The space seemed to symbolize a kind of limbo, a place of waiting, pain, but also refuge. The emotions in my piece reflect this state—suspended, emotionally unclear, and without resolution.

False Memories

Marcos Balter

As for a few thoughts about the piece, you'll see that the musical idiom I've chosen to explore is not my "usual," per se. The concept of 'inheritance' made me think of how we build ourselves from what we believe our past has given to us, even though we often tend to involuntarily modify or even create past memories in order to cope with trauma. What remains, then, is neither purely concrete nor abstract, but something in between that looks and sounds like the past but is in reality very much a portrait of our present selves while looking back at what we imagine our past was like. *False Memories* sounds like my childhood, but it isn't. It sounds like a tune I've heard before, but it isn't. It sounds like music from another time and place, but it isn't. It's my fictionalization of my young self, my re-telling of things to the best of my abilities while also understanding that this recounting is flawed and not necessarily factual because I need it to be so. And yet, these memories exist, regardless of their genesis or factuality, and they are obviously a part of who I am.

Thank You So Much

Pamela Z

I wanted to make something using samples of Adam's speaking voice for this commission. But I was very late in getting started on the piece—past the deadline even—so there wasn't time to arrange for an interview with him—not to mention making certain to capture a high-quality recording of his voice. So I had to improvise I scoured the Internet for recordings of Adam giving interviews, talks, or introducing works he was about to play. I found and sampled a variety of things—most of which didn't have him close-miked, so there was a lot of reverberant room sound, and I just had to figure out a way to work with that.

Knowing that Adam has come to be known as quite the Cage interpreter, I felt that he probably “inherited” at least as much from him as he did from his father. I had some fun with intermingling and blurring the lines between those relationships.

I like to think that my piece amplifies and lovingly toys with some of the inherent ambiguities surrounding the appointed topic.

We don't need to tend this garden.

They're wildflowers.

Darian Donovan Thomas

Adam: The score to Darian's piece is quite different from the piece that we've developed over the past couple of years. Darian designed the work as a kind of public therapy session, in which I'd answer questions of his devising onstage, unscripted and in real time, while also following his musical cues. I *would* like to actually do this version at some point, and would be quite intrigued by seeing someone *else* do it, too. The current version we've created ensures that some version of a similar story is told with each performance of the piece. Darian's score is a mix of typed and handwritten instructions, and notation both engraved and in his hand, all surrounded by a collage of my family photos.

Eiris, Sones

Nico Muhly

Eiris, Sones is a sort of memory-piece, for which I wrote a simple chorale, and set a piece of text from the book of Proverbs (in the Wycliffe translation, from 1382). The pianist is required to play the chorale and the tune at the same time, only imagining the words:

A good man schal leeuve aftir him eiris, sones, and the sones of sones; and the catel of a synnere is kept to a iust man.

Our worries about “Death Taxes” and obsession with

primogeniture and family continuity goes back as far as God's covenant with Abraham; No matter how secular a world we inhabit, there remains something fundamentally mystical about the idea of inheritance from fathers to sons. In Genesis, God says, "Biholde thou heuene, and noubre thou sterres, if thou maist. And the Lord seide to Abram, So thi seed schal be."

Morning Piece Devonté Hynes

Adam: *Morning Piece* appeared in my inbox during a commute home one night. The score was accompanied by a 'demo' of Dev himself playing the piece. That demo was my first real experience of *Morning Piece*, and I'll never forget listening to it on that B46 bus in Brooklyn knowing that this work had to close this program. *Morning Piece* unfolds in three sections, the beginning of each marked by distinctive pulsing chords, which indeed appear differently each time. These chords eventually close the piece and fade—though I often use the word "collapse"—into silence.

Inheritances concert, with footage of a young Adam on screen by Jan Gates.





Adam Tendler is an internationally recognized interpreter of living, modern, and classical composers. He is a recipient of the Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists, the Yvar Mikhashoff Prize, “currently the hottest pianist on the American contemporary classical scene” (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*), a “remarkable and insightful musician” (*Los Angeles Times*), and “relentlessly adventurous pianist” (*Washington Post*) “joyfully rocking out at his keyboard” (*New York Times*).

A pioneer of DIY culture in concert music who has commissioned works by Christian Wolff and Devonté Hynes alike, in his early twenties Tendler performed in all fifty United States as part of a grassroots recital tour he called America 88x50, which became the subject of his memoir, *88x50*, a Kirkus Indie Book of the Month and Lambda Literary Award nominee. He has gone on to become one of classical and contemporary music's most recognized artists with recent engagements including appearing as soloist with the London Symphony Orchestra and LA Philharmonic, and on the mainstages of the Barbican, Carnegie Hall, and BAM. He has been presented by the NY Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and a host of other leading series and platforms including 92nd Street Y, The Broad, Guggenheim, Liquid Music, The Kitchen, le Poisson Rouge, National Sawdust, Knockdown Center, Issue Project Room, Maverick Concerts, Roulette, Death of Classical, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Philadelphia Museum of Art, and NYC Pride. An expert in the music of John Cage, Tendler has worked closely with the John Cage Trust, Merce Cunningham Trust, and Cage's publisher, Edition Peters.

He has also extensively performed the music of Julius Eastman and is featured on Wild Up's latest, Grammy-nominated album of the composer's works and Sō Percussion's recording of *Stay On It*. Tendler recently released an album of Liszt's *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* on the Steinway Label, *Robert Palmer: Piano Music* on New World Records, and published his second book, *tidepools*. He recently premiered 16 works commissioned using the complete inheritance left to him by his father, including works by Laurie Anderson, Nico Muhly, and Missy Mazzoli as part of a project called *Inheritances*, a *New York Times* Critic Pick described as “not only a display of contemporary compositional force, but also a true show...emotionally involving...with a sense of true dramatic stakes.” The *Inheritances* album will appear on the New Amsterdam label. Adam Tendler is a Yamaha Artist and serves on the piano faculty of New York University. He is currently the Green-Wood Cemetery Artist in Residence.

Other Minds

Founded in San Francisco in 1992, Other Minds® is a leading organization for new and experimental music in all its forms, devoted to championing the most original, eccentric, and underrepresented creative voices in contemporary music. From festival concerts, film screenings, radio broadcasts, and the commissioning of new works, to producing and releasing CDs, preserving thousands of interviews and concerts and distributing them free on the Internet, Other Minds has become one of the world's major conservators of new music's ecology.



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