

# The 20/19 Project: Composer Workshops

By Anne Leilehua Lanzilotti

*This is the second installment of a series on The 20/19 Project,<sup>1</sup> an initiative that celebrates the centennial of three of the most performed viola sonatas in our repertoire: Ernest Bloch's Suite for Viola and Piano, Rebecca Clarke's Viola Sonata, and Paul Hindemith's Op. 11 No. 4. These three sonatas written in 1919 have become staples of the viola repertoire due to scholarship, recordings of the three works, and performances together due to their origin in the same year.*

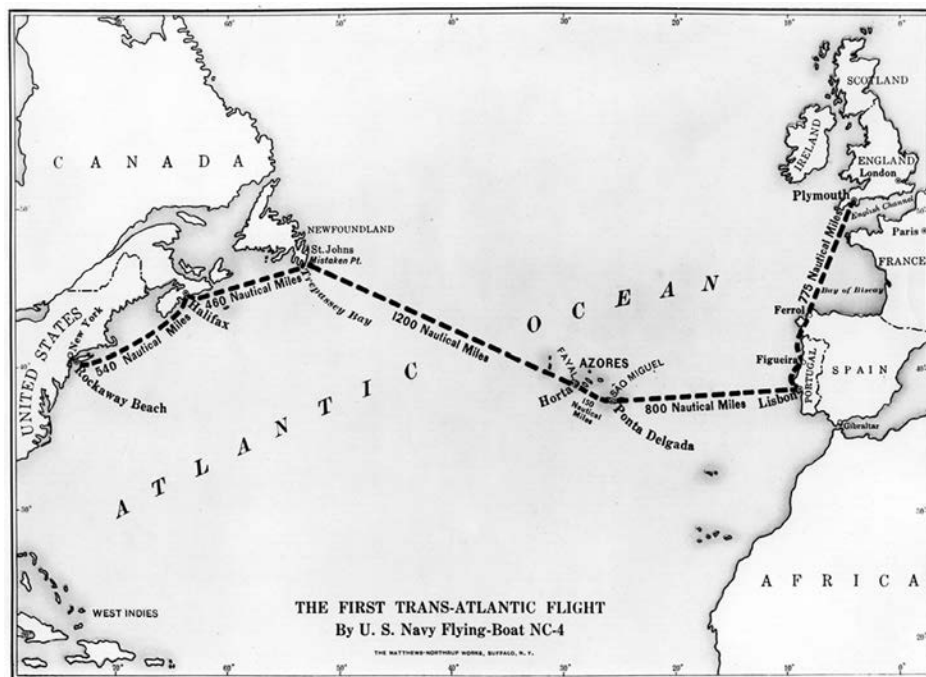
*The series shares the process of The 20/19 Project at various stages. In the first article, which appeared in JAVS volume 35, number 1, I described how I came to choose the three composers: Andrew Norman, Anna Thorvaldsdottir, and Scott Wollschleger. The article also gave some insight on considerations for commissioning in general, some nuts and bolts about finding/applying for funding, and the importance of having a clear idea about the impact of any project.*

*Without this long-term planning and resilience in applying for lots and lots (and lots) of grants, it is difficult to sustain the support for a project of this scale.*

*The next stage—covered in this article—involves the creation of the works themselves. Read on for a behind the scenes look at workshops with The 20/19 Project composers held at University of Northern Colorado, Oberlin Conservatory, and Thorvaldsdottir's studio in London.*

## Celebrating a Centennial: Technology

In 1919, the U.S. Navy made the first transatlantic flight which took five legs.<sup>2</sup> Although the telephone had been developed by Alexander Graham Bell forty years before, in 1919 it was still only possible to send voices one way across the Atlantic.<sup>3</sup>



*Map of the first transatlantic flight in 1919. Image credit: National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution (NASM A-38529) from <https://pioneersofflight.si.edu/content/route-ncs-across-atlantic>.*

A hundred years later, digital technology and advancements in travel have completely changed the way people are able to work together as well as how information is shared. These changes impacted The 20/19 Project both on a creative level (Thorvaldsdottir's piece includes an electronics part), and on a practical level: the composers were able to workshop the pieces with me by sending material back and forth digitally.

## Working with the Composers at Various Stages

Each of the composers has a very different way of working. While Thorvaldsdottir and Norman

---

are much more private during the writing process and prefer to give the performers the final product once it is completely finished, Wollschleger likes to workshop material many times and hear the performers during the process of refining the piece.

In May 2018, Thorvaldsdottir sent me a set of short excerpts to record that she could use to create the electronics part for the piece. I was able to use the recording studio at University of Northern Colorado to work with engineer Greg Heimbecker for free because I was a faculty member there. I spent several hours recording the material, at times verbally describing what I was doing so that when the composer listened back later, she would be able to know what technique I was using without being there.

The first read-through sessions that Wollschleger and I did were in his Brooklyn home in the summer of 2017. Playing through fragments of melodic material, we were able to try out different sounds together, and Wollschleger was also able to hear how my specific sound worked with the gestures he was creating. Since the two of us have worked together a lot, he knows that I enjoy finding interesting timbres and colors and can get an extreme range of sound with my bow, so a lot of the work was playing around with timbres over fixed harmonic material. Wollschleger's wife, Emily Bookwalter, is a violist and the Director of Development at Roulette Intermedium,

so he knows the instrument very well. Nonetheless, each performer is different, so these were more about finding the sounds that worked with my instrument and the things that I could do specifically as a player.

I had several more workshops together with Wollschleger<sup>4</sup>: one at University of Northern Colorado supported by an award from the Provost Fund for Faculty Scholarship and Professional Development where we also filmed technique videos with Four/Ten Media. Six months later in Brooklyn, another two-day workshop was added to read through the new edits Wollschleger had made. He recorded these sessions, and then gave us a score a few weeks later that we used to do a workshop performance at Oberlin. A "workshop performance" is a private reading given while a work is in progress. In this case, we rehearsed approximately 45 minutes of material and only shared about 30 minutes of that with the students at Oberlin as a seamless performance, along with the other works in progress. I sent the video recording to Wollschleger, and a few weeks later we met again in Brooklyn to go over the piece together.

In the summer of 2019, there was a final rehearsal period at Avaloch Farm Institute before the world premiere at Madison New Music Festival in August 2019. I'm grateful to Zach Green and Caitlin Mead for hosting the premieres and making the event run so smoothly. After the world premiere of Wollschleger's piece, *Lost Anthems*,



*Anne Lanzilotti (left) and Scott Wollschleger (right) discussing Wollschleger's piece, Lost Anthems. Still from The 2019 Project: Wollschleger Workshop (Trailer), <https://vimeo.com/304262980>.*

---

there was further editing that happened to clean up the score before the UK Premiere in November 2019. Wollschleger was able to come to the UK and work with pianist Zeynep Özsuca on the final version, catching last edits in the score. The final score of *Lost Anthems* by Scott Wollschleger is now available on PSNY (Schott New York) including excerpts of the UK premiere.<sup>5</sup>

For Andrew Norman's new work, I scheduled a workshop at Oberlin where Norman and I could work together and also coached some of the students on his chamber works. In addition, I gave a lecture on his string trio *The Companion Guide to Rome*. This workshop was more of a chance for us to interact with students and think about the project as an ongoing process that involves interaction with students and long-term collaboration. Oberlin professors Tim Weiss and Peter Slowik were especially helpful in organizing these coachings, lessons, and lectures, which allowed for us to have a full and exciting several days there. Beyond Oberlin's support for part of the fee and use of their spaces, the workshop was funded by private donations, including Larry and Arlene Dunn, as well as a donation from the Rebecca Clarke Society.

Right after the workshop in Oberlin, I traveled to London to meet up with Thorvaldsdottir and to visit potential sites for the UK premiere, as well as other outreach activities. The workshop with Thorvaldsdottir<sup>6</sup> took place at her studio. She generously hosted us for the

day, allowing us to use her workspace. This workshop was more for me to play specific sounds for Thorvaldsdottir that are in her newly commissioned work for The 20/19 Project, *Sola*. In addition to recording technique videos, we looked at the files for the electronics part and she described her process in creating it. We also filmed an extensive interview, which along her accompanying technique videos will be discussed in more detail in the next article.

Through another award from UNCO, specifically for Research, Dissemination and Faculty Development, I was able to bring Four/Ten Media's Evan Chapman and Kevin Eikenberg to film the videos and interview. I am so grateful and lucky to have gotten this grant, otherwise it would not have been possible to work with the same videographers who filmed the workshop with Wollschleger. With two people in the room talking/working and two videographers filming, the energy of the people documenting is extremely important. Chapman and Eikenberg are not only professional, but also were amazing to work with because they were interested in what Thorvaldsdottir was saying, and were themselves engaged with what was happening in the room. I mention this because even though they do not appear on any of the footage, their presence was crucial in making the whole project work. It is so important to make sure that you are working with people who take you seriously and support your work wholeheartedly.



*Anne Lanzilotti (left) and Anna Thorvaldsdottir (right). Still image from SOLA: Interview with Anna Thorvaldsdottir, <https://vimeo.com/350657648>*

---

## Vision & Impact: Creating a Free Online Educational Resource

The idea for the technique videos and the resource that is now *Shaken Not Stuttered*<sup>7</sup> came out of conversations I had with Norman while I was writing my dissertation on his string trio *The Companion Guide to Rome*.<sup>8</sup> He lamented that while he loved working with big orchestras, it was not always possible to have one-on-one time with players to show them the specific sounds he wanted. We thought: what if there were videos in which Norman explained the techniques that felt as though he was in the room showing the musicians? That way, the musicians would be able to hear the sounds and watch the techniques from different angles, the way one would in a private lesson. We filmed the original set of videos with videographer Stephen Taylor in Norman's Brooklyn apartment. It happened to have a wall with gorgeous gold wallpaper, so we set up next to the windows in front of that wall to get natural light. Norman was also working on *Play* (a symphony in all but name<sup>9</sup>), so we also took the rest of the afternoon to film the techniques used in that piece and in his large chamber work *Try*.

My experience in the past several years observing how people use *Shaken Not Stuttered* showed me the positive impact these technique videos can have. I wanted to add this element to The 20/19 Project. The extended technique videos allow for the work to be seen beyond my immediate community. Because *Shaken Not Stuttered* is a free online resource, anyone from anywhere in the world can access those sounds and explore them more. I took the videos a step further, making review videos in which there is no talking—only notation and demonstration—so that they might be more useful for composers in other countries who don't speak English and might want to also use the videos with players. Composers such as Ken Ueno and Garth Knox also film their techniques for players to watch, and there are excellent sites like *Cello Map* that are more of a catalogue of sounds. The idea was always to make it feel as though the viewer were in the room with us. This allows for them to have a window into the creative process, and to understand the sounds themselves better.

The next phase brings us to performance and recording. The extended technique videos for Anna Thorvaldsdottir's *Sola* are now available online, and I'll be releasing a

recording on New Focus Recordings in December. In the final article, I'll describe more of the details of bringing the works to life through this performance and documentation phase.

*Anne Leilehua Lanzilotti is a composer-performer, scholar, and educator with a passion for contemporary music. For a complete bio, please visit: <http://annelanzilotti.com>*

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> <http://annelanzilotti.com/2019-project>
- <sup>2</sup> "The First Flight Across the Atlantic," *Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum*, <https://pioneersofflight.si.edu/content/first-flight-across-atlantic>
- <sup>3</sup> Cary O'Dell, "First Official Transatlantic Telephone Call (January 7, 1927)," *Library of Congress*, <http://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/documents/FIRST%20TRANSATLANTIC%20CALL.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> <https://vimeo.com/304262980>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://m.eamdc.com/psny/composers/scott-wollschleger/works/lost-anthems/> and embedded: [https://youtu.be/yZ\\_78zUPzjk](https://youtu.be/yZ_78zUPzjk)
- <sup>6</sup> <https://vimeo.com/337585358>
- <sup>7</sup> <http://www.shakennotstuttered.com/>
- <sup>8</sup> Anne V. L. Lanzilotti, "Andrew Norman's *The Companion Guide to Rome*: Influence of Architecture and Visual Art on Composition." DMA diss., Manhattan School of Music, 2016.
- <sup>9</sup> Anne Lanzilotti, " 'Cut to a Different World': Andrew Norman," *Music & Literature*, October 25, 2016: <https://www.musicandliterature.org/features/2016/10/25/cut-to-a-different-world-andrew-norman>