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Announcing ***Obsolete Music*** by the composer **Juri Seo**, an intricate, driving, and surprising set of 6 compositions that reimagine traditional classical music ideals with Seo's fascination with modernist musical developments. ***Obsolete Music*** is brilliantly executed by the energetic chamber sextet, **Latitude 49**, who is known for blending the finesse of a classical ensemble with the drive and precision of a finely tuned rock band. ***Obsolete Music*** is out on **June 13th, 2025**, via New Amsterdam Records.

Throughout the 6 tracks on ***Obsolete Music***, Seo juxtaposes traditional musical forms with her lush harmonic language, exciting rhythmic ideas, expanded timbral palette, and unorthodox musical structures. Seo imbues humor, warmth, and emotional depth into her pieces while reflecting on past and present, cycles, and the nature of obsolescence.

Obsolete Music is an exploration of form as a living, breathing being, and through these explorations, Seo takes us to the extremes of her musical imagination by pushing the boundaries of traditional forms. *"I think of form as something that's very alive. As a composer, you can control the form to some*

extent, but you always have to let it grow in its own unexpected ways. Sometimes you can try to break it completely, but even the way it breaks is not entirely within your control. . Through this process of finding reciprocity between your intentions and music, you can give new life to these archaic musical forms.”

Out now: *Ostinato*

to Latitude 49
Ostinato
for sextet
Duration: 5' 30"

Fast, ♩ = 114

Juri Seo

♩. = 172
5+4+3 (3 ♩ = ♩.)

Accompanying the album announcement, **Seo** releases the energetic and eruptive opening track, *Ostinato*, a piece based on the practice of building continuous cyclical variations of a repeating bass line known as the ground bass. Overtop of this popular Baroque device, Seo unleashes **Latitude 49** at full force. The driving, rumbling, and repetitive figures in the piano and drums create a sonic playground for melodies to grow in and out of the foreground while the relentless tempo modulations and allusions to jazz ultimately break the form.

[Listen to Ostinato](#)

About *Obsolete Music*

“It’s impossible to call anything obsolete, since when you say something is obsolete, you’re bringing it back to relevance,” says Seo. *“I’m always thinking about this kind of cyclicity, of things always coming back—I think this is a very modern phenomenon—since now we can access whatever, whenever we want. Now everything in human history is available to us, and I like*



being able to be inspired by all of those things, all at once..”

“I fell in love with music through counterpoint. For a lot of contemporary composers, this is a kind of exercise that they do in class, but for me, it’s how I started music, you know, playing Bach fugues,” explains Seo. “I came to think of

counterpoint as a musical device that enables the unlikely interaction between complexity and warmth. It’s difficult to play or compose a fugue—they’re very complex—but once you embody it, with your fingers and ears, it becomes a simple, playful, and warm experience. I’m always looking for that combination of warmth, of this simple, radiant feeling, and intricacy. That’s something I strive for no matter what styles I write.”

Evoking the spirit of medieval party music, *Rondeau* sets a harpsichord as the central focus of the piece against flowing winds, glistening strings, and sparsely placed bursts of energetic drums. The music itself oscillates between singable melodic structure and elongating moments of dissonance. Seo explains *“the piece is cast in the form of a medieval poetic structure called the rondeau simple, a repetitive ABAAABAB verse-refrain form. I was inspired by the drawings of party scenes from the medieval era, with their odd combination of lifeless eyes and cacophony.”*

The harpsichord keeps center stage during *Fantasia*, a piece that blurs the lines between composition and improvisation with a *“solo harpsichord unfolding in a formless, improvisatory style, marked by sudden, mercurial interruptions in otherwise serene texture.”* Seo’s sense of organic music is felt here as the longing and patient harpsichord solo is shaken out of its dreamy texture by an energetic fugue. Winds and strings take the foreground with their driving rhythms until Seo pulls the breaks and the excitement dissipates into a meditative state colored by droning woodwinds, pulsing vibraphones and yearning strings. The melodies from the fugue return in contrast to a deep drone.

On making composed music feel improvised, Seo says: *“I think it’s mostly about sudden changes, veering into a less logical territory. So even with the fugue in the middle, it’s like ‘why is that even happening?’ It was supposed to be a quiet piece, but then there’s something that just kind of doesn’t make much sense. It just breaks.”*

Calling back to the fugue texture embedded into *Fantasia*, Seo’s *Fugue* plays with a meta-stylistic dissonance between 18th-century harmony and jazz harmony. Voices chase each other across multiple sets of instruments. *“Writing a fugue seems like a mathematical process, but at the end of the*

day, I am looking for something that comes across quite playful, despite its complexity. Counterpoint is like magic because it's intricate and spontaneous at once."

The droning and spiritual *Cantus Firmus* is a setting of "O rubor sanguinis" by Hildegard von Bingen. "It is built on the popular Medieval-Renaissance formal device of the same name—counterpoint unfolding along with a greatly elongated melody. Quarter tones feature prominently, initially as cadential embellishments and later as the harmonic foundation, taking the contrapuntal universe to a microscopic scale." *Cantus Firmus* slowly shows its shades of microtonality until a rising melody in the strings dovetails into a quarter tone heavy organ cadenza with shimmering drones blending out of organ pads, high winds, and strings holding long tones in their extreme ranges.

Seo's humor can be heard after the cadenza. "When the music locks back in, there's still something that's 'a little bit off.' There are quarter tones everywhere, obnoxiously out of tune with the surrounding music, and I think that's what makes it a bit comical. It seems like it's a serious piece, but it's quite hilarious in the disastrous way it ends."

Obsolete Music closes with *Canon*, a piece centering percussion in the crucial role of binding the rowdy mixture of echoed phrases. It recalls the lighthearted spirit of dance music from Rondeau. Pastoral melodies in the winds and strings are set against a mixture of wood and metallic percussion elements. The energy rises and falls as Seo crafts a series of "voices in imitation, progressing through various intervals in the manner of the Goldberg Variations."

Track Listing

1. Ostinato
2. Rondeau
3. Fantasia
4. Fugue
5. Cantus Firmus
6. Canon

Credits

Recording Engineer: Andrés Villalta

Recorded in Taplin Auditorium (Princeton, NJ) on October 12-13, 2019.

Produced and Edited by Juri Seo

Mixed and Mastered by Bill Maylone

Cover Design by Gayoung Yoon

All Tracks Composed by Juri Seo

Ostinato, Rondeau, and Fantasia are commissioned by the Barlow Endowment. Contrapuntal Forms is commissioned by the Fromm Foundation at Harvard University.

All Tracks Performed by Latitude 49

About Juri Seo



Juri Seo, a professor of Music at Princeton University, is a Korean-American composer and pianist. Her compositions merge many of the fascinating discoveries from the past century—in particular the expanded timbral palette and unorthodox structure—with functional tonality, counterpoint, and classical form. She is a Guggenheim fellow and a recipient of a Koussevitzky Commission from the Library of Congress. Her previous portrait albums include *Mostly Piano*, *Respiri*, and *Toy Store*.

www.juriseomusic.com

*Note on pronunciation: Juri Seo is pronounced [Jew-ri Suh].

About Latitude 49



Blending the finesse of a classical ensemble with the drive and precision of a finely tuned rock band, Latitude 49 has been energizing audiences with today's most exciting music since 2012. The ensemble has released four full-length albums: *Curious Minds*, *Wax and Wire*, *The Bagatelles Project*, and *Don't Say A Word*. Each summer, Latitude 49 hosts the Sound Atlas Festival, a genre-bending week of music, art, and cultural exchange in Calgary, Alberta that brings artists from across North America into a shared space of artistic exploration.

www.latitude49music.com

About New Amsterdam

New Amsterdam is a Brooklyn-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit artist's service organization dedicated to supporting new music by composers and performers whose work transcends traditional and outdated genre distinctions. The label's artists have won numerous awards and accolades, including two Grammy Awards, seventeen Grammy nominations, and a Pulitzer Prize. New Amsterdam has also curated and presented more than 500 live concerts of groundbreaking new music. In recent years, the label embarked on a partnership with Nonesuch Records, seeing the release of approximately three albums per year to support contemporary American composers in realizing ambitious creative projects.