

## Wine, doodling, flutes, and jazz piano: Urban Troubadour's "Concert of Creativity"

by Jarrett Hoffman



"I'm really excited about the kinds of concerts that we're making happen," Urban Troubadour flutist and artistic director Jane Berkner told me during a recent conversation. "They're not only cultural events, they're also social events. I'm finding that our audiences are enjoying meeting each other over a glass of wine and cultural activity."

And for those whose creative juices get flowing after a little bit of vino — as some of us may have experienced, or at least witnessed, during a round of post-Thanksgiving Charades — this next Urban Troubadour concert on Saturday, December 1 at WhiteSpace Creative in Akron might be one to circle on the calendar.

Things start off at 5:00 pm with wine, small bites, and doodling. 6:00 brings the main event: a concert by Berkner (flute and piccolo), George Pope (flute and alto flute), and Eric Charnofsky (piano), who together will take on a wide-ranging program of works by eight composers of five nationalities. Then at 7:30, jazz pianist Theron Brown will play while audience members make something creative to take home. Tickets are available [online](#).

Here's a quick run-down of the program, beginning with British composer David Heath's flute duo *Return to Avalon*. That piece was inspired by a peaceful, progressive group of 13th-century Buddhists known as the Cathars, many of whom were murdered for their egalitarian beliefs. "It's a three-movement work with this beautiful theme: all of us being brothers and sisters equally loved by God," Berkner said.

Berkner discovered Slovenian Blaž Plucihar's *4 Little Movements* at the National Flute Association Convention last summer. "It's very lovely music — very listenable," she said. That will be followed by four of Bach's two-part inventions arranged for piccolo and alto flutes, 余韻 ("echo") by the ensemble's own Eric Charnofsky, in a version for alto flute rather than the original shakuhachi, Charles Delaney's *Nocturne*, and two movements from Daniel Dorff's *Sonatine de Giverny*.

For all the concert-sleepers out there — that's OK, everyone enjoys music in their own way — you might want to watch out for Tilmann Dehnhard's *Wake Up!!* for piccolo and alarm clock. And don't for a moment think that just any contraption on a night stand will work. "When I ordered the piece, it came with the alarm clock," Berkner said, laughing. "Dehnhard is a German jazz composer, and I guess when he heard his alarm clock going off, he was inspired to use the rhythm as a jumping-off point. It's a fun little piece." Astor Piazzolla's *Oblivion* and *Libertango* will close things out, transitioning to Theron Brown's post-concert jazz.

Followers of the flute scene in Northeast Ohio will know that Berkner and George Pope are what you might call two peas in a pod. According to Berkner, not only did they teach together at the University of Akron for 25 years, but when Pope was in the Akron Symphony, Berkner played in his section for over 20 years. "We've also done some touring in Europe together," Berkner said, "and we've worked on National Flute Association events. In fact, he was the program chair in 2000 when the Flute Association was here in Ohio, and I was his assistant program chair. We've been great friends forever, and we've done a lot of performing together."

Berkner has also played with Pope through the Chamber Music Society of Ohio, an organization she said readers may not have heard of. "It's one of the best kept classical music secrets in Akron. We play in a very small venue, and every time we put out tickets, people snap them up, so there's no need to do much advertising."



Charnofsky and Pope (*left*) share some connections as well. "Eric and George put out a CD together a couple of years ago. He's a very multifaceted person — a pianist, composer, teacher, and lecturer. And he has a radio show, [\*Not Your Grandmother's Classical Music\*](#)."

We closed our conversation talking about the venue, WhiteSpace Creative, a warehouse complex restored by

WhiteSpace president and CEO Keeven White. “He’s done a beautiful job,” Berkner said. “It was originally the Akron Soap Company, and I think it was a paint company too. He kept some of the architectural features — gears, different aspects of the belts, and an old water tank — and some original marketing of the Soap Company. It’s a huge building, and he’s going to give us a little tour as part of our visit there — I think people will appreciate learning about some of Akron’s history.”

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