

Ben Kono Group
Saturday, April 29, 2017
Corley Auditorium, MSSU, Joplin

All compositions by Ben Kono

Rice

Glacier*

Smoky Madtom Hoedown*

General Sherman Meets the President*

Simon and the Monk*

River of Fire*

—intermission—

Tennis

Passenger*

Tipping Point*

Renewal*

The Crossing

*From the suite *“Don’t Blink”*, commissioned by 2013 Chamber Music America New Jazz Works Commissioning and Ensemble Development Grant, generously funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

“Don’t Blink” has its origins in environmentalism. In 2011 my daughter Samantha had the typical budding curiosity of a four-year-old and asked about a photograph I had taken in Glacier National Park during one of my childhood trips across the country. Her questions prompted ones of my own, and as I dug deeper I was appalled to discover that the spectacular icy monoliths I had believed to be permanent features of this breathtaking place might be gone before she had the chance to visit them herself. I turned to music as a platform to confront this foreboding reality and composed a short vignette entitled *‘Glacier’*. Over the next several years I compiled simple melodies, some inspired or even composed by Samantha, but it wasn’t until I received a grant from Chamber Music America that I began to compose an over-arching suite for my band as part of my own growing stress, and subsequent call to action, against man’s seemingly endless assault on the environment. It seemed fitting to incorporate some of Samantha’s material, as the seeds of this project were essentially sown by her probing questions.

The work outlines moments of clarity that our relationship with the environment is a complex one. *'Smoky Madtom Hoedown'*, and *'Passenger'* are pieces motivated by species extinctions directly attributed to humans, and *'Glacier'*, *'River of Fire'* and *'Tipping Point'* are depictions of the stress we put on our fragile environment. Balancing this somber reality, I wrote *'Simon and the Monk'*, *'General Sherman Meets the President'* and *'Renewal'* to acknowledge the tremendous altruism contributed by activist groups and concerned citizens. In listening to the music, I hope you will be inspired to learn more about the backstory of each composition by visiting online at dontblinkmusic.org.

"Don't Blink" posits that for many of us, including myself, our environmental footprint remains largely unseen until it's effects touch us in real, emotional and unforeseen ways. As we approach our tipping point, it is crucial we take the moral high ground in tending to our earth's needs. If music can help reveal a path to environmental enlightenment, I hope you will share this work in a responsible way with someone who may not quite see the value of green yet.

—Ben Kono, 2017