

Michael T Roberts

650 Vincente Ave. • Berkeley, CA 94707 • 415-260-2091 • mike@hotmike.com

Highlights from the Musical Life of Mike

Composition

Virtual Choirs | 2020

2020 was not the finest year for musicians (or anyone else). Thankfully some enterprising choirs made Covid lemonade by continuing to premiere new music in the virtual format. I was happy to contribute to that effort, penning [Zoom](#) for [International Orange Chorale](#) and [Leoht Eastan Com](#) for the Sunset High School choir in Portland, OR.

[Mass for Freedom](#) | 2019

Oakland Symphony Chorus and director Lynne Morrow commissioned Mike to compose a five-movement Mass for chorus and chamber orchestra, based on African-American spirituals that became anthems of protest.

[To Soar in Freedom and in Fullness of Power](#) | 2018

Accord Treble Choir in New York commissioned Mike to write a piece for their 'On Wings' program, and this short but powerful poem by Walt Whitman provided the perfect text.

[The Gift to Sing](#) and [Our Names](#) | 2018

Mike was commissioned to compose two works for the Albany (CA) High School vocal department, and enjoyed working closely with director Mary Stocker and AHS singers to bring the music to life. '[Our Names](#),' with text by AHS student Harpreet Kaur, was also professionally recorded by the AHS Chamber Singers.

[Hymns from a Meadow](#) | 2016—2018

Four Robert Frost poems set for unaccompanied SATB choir, these Druidic hymns celebrate the cycle of the seasons in a secluded meadow in northern New England. For a full year Mike inhabited this sacred ground (if only in his imagination), bowing before the summer sun ("Rose Pogonias"), watching the autumn leaves fall and decay ("In Hardwood Groves"), contemplating the cold winter sky ("Stars"), and exulting among the wildflowers ("A Prayer in Spring"). Premieres were given by [Choral Chameleon](#) ("Prayer"), [Full Circle Singers](#) ("Stars"), and [Pacific Edge Voices](#) ("Rose Pogonias" and "In Hardwood Groves"). "A Prayer in Spring" has also been performed by Mouthscape Chamber Singers (SF), the U. of Nebraska-Lincoln Chamber Singers, and Pacific Edge.

The Wonders of the Invisible World | 2012

[Pacific Edge Voices](#) commissioned Mike for their *Heaven and Hell* concert in

2012. He adapted a 1692 essay by Puritan preacher Cotton Mather, “The Wonders of the Invisible World”—a contemporary rumination on the Salem Witch Trials—and set it for a *cappella* mixed choir.

Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters | 2008—present
Mike’s first choral piece, *Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters*, has been programmed a number of times by [Pacific Edge Voices](#).

Jazz and Pop | 2008 and 2013
Mike’s songs and arrangements have also been featured at PEV’s *Jazz and Pop* show, including his own “Patchouli, Patchouli,” and the Bill Withers classic, “Ain’t No Sunshine When She’s Gone.”

Lotus Blooming in a Sea of Fire | 2000
Mike completed and premiered his first full-length opera/musical, *Lotus Blooming in a Sea of Fire*, at age twenty-two. The show drew the attention of [Harold Prince](#) (director and/or producer of *West Side Story*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Evita*, and many others) and the [New York Theater Workshop](#) (original producer of *Rent*).

Lotus at Blake | 2003
A revised version of the show was staged at [Blake School of the Arts](#) in Tampa, FL, under Mike’s musical direction and the stage direction of [Eric Davis](#). Alums of this production have gone on to stellar careers in theater companies around the country.

Eva Luna and Tooth and Nail at UC Berkeley | 2004 and 2005
The UC Berkeley theater program commissioned new music from Mike for two stage works: *The Stories of Eva Luna* (world premiere adaptation) and *Tooth and Nail* (American premiere). [Isabel Allende](#), author of *Eva Luna*, praised the music as “beautiful.”

Soundboard feature | 2011
Soundboard, the journal of the [Guitar Foundation of America](#), featured Mike and his music in both their Contemporary Music Series and Pedagogy Forum, reprinting two of his guitar compositions: the first movement of *Five Fever Dreams of Miguel de Cervantes*, and *Northumbria*, one of his *Neoflights for Beginning Guitarists*.

Competition Victories | 2007
As a graduate student at the [San Francisco Conservatory of Music](#), Mike took first prize in both the Art Song Competition (with “The Mad Farmer Revolution,” poem by Wendell Berry) as well as the KDFC Classical Ring Tone Competition (with “Jiggy Ringy Dingy,” a jig composed for ukulele).

Mary Magdalene Sails to Gaul | 2006
Mike was commissioned in 2006 by his high school alma mater, [Choate](#)

[Rosemary Hall](#), for *Mary Magdalene Sails to Gaul*, an instrumental epic for combined Orchestra and Jazz Ensemble.

BMI Musical Theatre Workshop | 2000—2001

Mike studied musical theater songwriting at the [BMI Musical Theatre Workshop](#) in New York City.

Guitar

The Stanford Hospital Music Program | 2014—2017

Mike backed up the regular staff in this phenomenal program, which brings professional guitarists and harpists directly into patients' rooms to provide healing, calming music.

Grand Theft Auto V | 2013

Mike can be heard [shredding electric guitar](#) in the blockbuster video game, *Grand Theft Auto V*.

The Portable Nutcracker | 2012

Mike and Zac Selissen of [Duo Symphonious](#) arranged half of *The Nutcracker*—the full Nutcracker Suite plus several lesser-known scenes—for two guitars in their *Portable Nutcracker*, producing an acclaimed CD and performing the work many times in the bay area. Duo Symphonious regularly performed public concerts and private events for seven years, until Zac moved to New York City in 2014.

Honors for Duo Symphonious

Duo Symphonious received the Shenson Award from the [San Francisco Community Music Center](#) for *The Portable Nutcracker*, and received a Certificate of Honor from SF Mayor Gavin Newsom for their pro bono performances at some of the earliest same-sex weddings at SF City Hall.

Writing about Classical Guitar

Mike has written classical guitar program notes for [San Francisco Performances](#).

Stand Up Eight | 1996—2004

Mike played guitar and co-wrote numerous songs with the band Stand Up Eight. Their two CDs, *Dance With Gravity* and *Facing the Fall*, sold thousands of copies and won a number of Readers Poll awards in Jam Music Magazine.

Stand Up Eight played hundreds of shows in New England, New York, and Northern California. Many of them were in bars, and many took place before Mike was legally allowed to consume alcohol. Mike could often be found at the bar, pre-show, with a soda and a half-finished English paper.

Mike is currently collaborating with Stand Up Eight bandmates Andy May and Tony Jurado on new material.

In the Pits

Mike has played guitar in a number of pit orchestras. His credits include *Evita*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. He really likes Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Learning from the Best

Mike's classical guitar playing has been honed in recent years with coachings from [Peter and Zoltán Katona](#), and Meng Su and Yameng Wang of the [Beijing Duo](#). In earlier years he was coached by [David Tanenbaum](#), [Marc Teicholz](#), [Larry Ferrara](#), and [Richard Savino](#) of the [San Francisco Conservatory](#). He studied with [John Muratore](#) and [David Newsam](#) at [Dartmouth College](#), [Gary Ryan](#) at the [Royal College of Music](#) in London, [Norm Zocher](#) at [Berklee College of Music](#), and the great Ken Volpe in New Canaan, CT.

Teaching

Private Guitar Studio | 1995—present

Mike has taught hundreds of private students over the course of twenty years. Some have studied with him for over a decade, and some have gone on to further studies at the [Oakland School of the Arts](#), [Musicians Institute](#) in Los Angeles, and [Berklee College of Music](#) in Boston.

Ecole Bilingue de Berkeley | 2016—present

Mike regularly teaches music to the wonderful kindergarten classes of the East Bay's finest bilingual school. He teaches songs in both French and English, incorporating movement and introducing basic concepts of sound, vocal technique, and music theory. The children perform regularly at concerts for parents, grandparents and "special friends," and their fellow EB students.

Westlake Middle School | 2008—2014

Mike spent six years as Guitar Mentor at Westlake Middle School in Oakland, co-teaching the guitar class with Randy Porter. Mike coached and conducted the class to a First Place finish and Superior rating at the Music in the Parks school ensemble competition.

Mike's work as Guitar Mentor was supported by the Education arm of [San Francisco Performances](#). Mike performed with Westlake students at several SFP galas, and once delivered the keynote address at the event. He has been featured numerous times in SFP catalogs and promotional materials.

Artist-in-Residence at Blake School of the Arts | 2003

Mike was the artist-in-residence at [Blake School of the Arts](#) in Tampa, FL for their

production of his opera, *Lotus Blooming in a Sea of Fire*. He spent two months in daily coachings with students, many of whom have gone on to successful careers in music and theater and have often cited Mike as a source of inspiration.

Elementary Music Classes | 1996—present

Mike has enjoyed a number of experiences teaching music to elementary school classes. He has taught kindergarten and first-grade classes at [Ecole Bilingue de Berkeley](#), made appearances at numerous San Francisco schools through the SF Conservatory Outreach program, engaged in extended projects with several elementary classes in New Hampshire and Vermont via Dartmouth's START program (Student Teachers in the Arts), and taught music at Hay Days Camp (for 6-11 year olds) in Hanover, NH.

Education

San Francisco Conservatory of Music | 2006—2008

Mike earned his Master of Music degree in Composition from the [San Francisco Conservatory of Music](#). He graduated with a 4.0 cumulative GPA, top departmental prizes in Composition and Music History, and first place finishes in the Art Song and Ring Tone Competitions.

Dartmouth College | 1996—2000

Mike earned his B.A. in Music from [Dartmouth College](#). He graduated *summa cum laude* and *Phi Beta Kappa*, with High Honors for his Senior Fellowship project, the composition and performance of his opera *Lotus Blooming in a Sea of Fire*. He earned academic citations in Music, English Literature, Spanish Literature, and Interdisciplinary Studies.

Royal College of Music and Berklee College of Music | 1998 and 1996

Mike spent semesters studying music at the [Royal College of Music](#) in London, and [Berklee College of Music](#) in Boston.

Choate Rosemary Hall | 1993—1996

Mike went to high school at [Choate Rosemary Hall](#), a boarding school in Wallingford, CT. He was awarded the School Seal Prize, the top honor for a graduating senior; the Presidential Youth Service Award; Big Brother of the Year for his work with the local Big Brothers/Big Sisters program; and was chosen by his classmates for the Aurelian Honor Society award. He lettered in football and track, placed fifth in the 1995 New England Championships in the javelin throw, and was the 1996 Connecticut state champion in First Year Italian Poetry Recitation (*questo è proprio vero*). He also served on the Judicial Committee.