



CLEVELAND INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

Junior Recital

Sunday, October 25, 2026

3pm, Mixon Hall

Owen Axelberd, composition

Costco Songs

Owen Axelberd
(b. 2006)

Entrance

Rotisserie Chicken and Free Samples

Churro Lament

Laundry Aisle

Food Court

Abigail Tidlow-Tranel, mezzo-soprano
Joyee Wang, piano

Digital Sawdust

Owen Axelberd

Owen Axelberd, mandolin
Wyatt Knutson, double bass

Sweet Crucible

Owen Axelberd

Alex Karstedt, Gabriel Neiman, Matthew Shoykhet, & Devin Spaulding, trombone
Ruben Shonik, percussion

The Perseverance of Job

Owen Axelberd

Upright

Losses; a Blessing

Sitting in Ash

Awestruck

Restoration

Timothy Pinkerton & John-Paul Hernandez, violin
Blake Armstrong, viola
Kai Bowen, cello

Owen Axelberd is a student of Keith Fitch.

*Special thanks to Keith Fitch for his compositional guidance and all performers
involved in making this recital possible. Glory be to God alone.*

Program Notes:

Costco Songs

Costco Songs, featuring text by Abigail Tidlow-Tranel, takes the listener on a wondrous journey through the titular wholesale retailer. The work begins with a brisk schubertian *lied* depicting the excitement and anticipation one feels when approaching the store. As we enter we are met with the tantalizing rotisserie chicken and free samples. These goods beckon us to the alluring rhythms of the tango. This is interrupted by a pang of sorrow. The memory of the beloved churro calls us to sing a dirge-like lament in its honor. (Though, let it be known that, as of writing these notes, it is back for a limited time.) Afterwards, we seek to escape our sorrows by surrounding ourselves with the blissful scents of the laundry aisle. We float along this fragrant river to a gently rocking barcarolle. Finally, brought back to the food court, we pay our due respects. We see the glorious price tag of the majestic all-beef hotdog and marvel at its affordability. It is here, with spirits uplifted, we end our journey.

Text:

1. Entrance

Membership cards wait between fingers with the promise of entry
Steel carts rattle toward the sliding doors
Then the great doors part to reveal the warehouse sign
COSTCO
And the day of bulk begins

2. Rotisserie Chicken and Free Samples

The warm perfume of roasted spice drifts
Where rotisserie chickens slowly turn
Golden skins glisten beneath bright lamps
Each bird revolving in patient circles
Shoppers eagerly gather nearby
Drawn by the promise of five-dollar glory
Around the corner, the sample tables bloom,
Crinkled paper cups like small invitations
Strangers gather together to enjoy the simple bite
A fellowship of wandering appetites.

3. Churro Lament

Sorrow wanders softly through the aisles,
Remembering the spiral once held warm
The Churro
The glistening jewel of the food court
With cinnamon sugar dust falling like snow
Hands sticky with sweetness
And a crunch that echoed happy bites
Now the board glows empty without its name
A place where joy once stood, now replaced by a cookie
We pass the counter with a sigh of memory
Morning a pastry lost to time

4. Laundry Aisle

The laundry aisle flows bright and blue
Rivers of detergent in mighty jugs
Caps promise freshness and impossible stains undone
Scents of meadow, rain, and morning linen
Dreams sealed in plastic gallons

5. Food Court

At last the journey bends towards the food court
There waits the monarch of Costco
A hotdog wrapped in silver paper
The bun warm the all beef hot-dog patient
Mustard streaks gold across its length
Ketchup follows in cheerful red
For a price that feels like a small miracle
We feast before returning to the world

Digital Sawdust

Digital Sawdust is a musical picture of our cultural air saturated by technological fallout. The separation between our “natural” lives and our digital lives has increasingly blurred over time. The work depicts this by presenting two musical strains: one inspired by EDM and internet culture, the other by bluegrass and the blues. At times these styles are contrasted, at others they are blended. As you listen, consider what these strains may be saying to each other, where might they be agreeing and disagreeing, and who dominates by the end.

Sweet Crucible

Sweet Crucible is about purification. As the piece progresses the quartet goes from playing similar, yet ununified lines. Additionally, the different mutes on each instrument create the impression of unrefined metal ready for its dross to be melted off. This melting comes as the percussion enters and leads the ensemble. The members of the quartet rotate through solos and duos imitating the rhythms of the percussionist. Ultimately, when the “melting” finishes, the quartet finally plays as a truly unified whole, both rhythmically and timbrally. This work speaks to the necessity of moments which melt us, and yet also refine us into maturity.

The Perseverance of Job

This quartet, while not strictly programmatic, is based on the biblical story of Job. The form of the piece follows that of the story. It starts with an expositional first movement, followed by an intense destructive second movement, a desolate and sorrowful third movement, an awe-inspiring forth movement, and finally, a celebratory fifth movement. Throughout the piece I reuse much of the melodic material from the first movements and simply change the context it finds itself in. Additionally many important lines were given to the viola, which I choose to loosely be representing Job.