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## Black Water by Jeremy Beck; Michelle Monroe, soprano and Robin Guy, piano, April 4, 2017 [program]

University of Northern Iowa

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**BLACK WATER**  
**BY JEREMY BECK**

**MICHELLE MONROE, SOPRANO**  
**ROBIN GUY, PIANO**

## PROGRAM NOTES BY JEREMY BECK, COMPOSER

In 1969, the dead body of a young woman, Mary Jo Kopechne, was discovered inside an overturned car in a channel on Chappaquiddick Island, Massachusetts. The car belonged to Senator Edward M. "Ted" Kennedy, who did not report the late-night incident to police authorities until the following morning. After the discovery, Kopechne's body was recovered from the submerged car and Kennedy gave a statement to police saying that during the previous night, she was his passenger when he took a wrong turn and accidentally drove his car off a bridge and into the water. After pleading guilty to a charge of leaving the scene of an accident after causing injury, Kennedy received a suspended sentence of two months. The national scandal that followed may have influenced Kennedy's decision not to campaign for President of the United States in 1972 and 1976.

*Black Water* by Joyce Carol Oates is a slightly-veiled fictional account of these events. With her permission, I completed this work in 1994, writing and shaping the libretto from her novella. This extended composition is dramatically effective as both a concert work and as a staged monodrama. Whether in a concert setting or in the theater, the soprano assumes multiple roles and states of mind (following the variety of levels created by Oates). The work is presented almost completely from the point of view of the drowning woman: in reality, in flashback, in dreams and in hallucinations.

Composed for Jean McDonald and Robin Guy when Beck was a member of the UNI faculty, these performers gave the concert premiere of *Black Water* on March 29, 1995 at UNI; it was later recorded by these artists for Beck's *pause and feel and hark* CD (Innova 2006).

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American composer **Jeremy Beck** "knows the importance of embracing the past while also going his own way. ... [In] Beck's forceful and expressive sound world ... the writing is concise in structure and generous in tonal language, savouring both the dramatic and the poetic." (Donald Rosenberg, *Gramophone*). Beck's music has been presented by New York City Opera, American Composers Orchestra, and the Nevsky String Quartet, among others. Beck taught music composition and theory at the University of Northern Iowa from 1992-98. [www.BeckMusic.org](http://www.BeckMusic.org)

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Michelle Monroe**, soprano, joined the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) voice faculty in the fall of 2016. She earned her Bachelor of Music Education from Northern State University and her Master of Music in Vocal Performance from UNI. As a student at UNI, Monroe won first place in the UNI Graduate Symposium two consecutive years. On her performance of Heggie's *Eve-Song*, one judge commented "She truly committed to the emotional arc of the piece, her intonation was clear and beautiful. She owned the piece and was truly engaging. She was easily the best performer of the evening." Her recent concert appearances include soprano soloist for Handel's *Messiah* and Haydn's *Theresienmesse* along with an upcoming performance as soprano soloist for Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*. Her young artist programs include the Johanna Meier Opera Theatre Institute, Music in Germany for Singers and Pianists, Midwest Institute of Opera, and this summer she will be performing Donna Elvira with the Blooming Voce Summer Opera Workshop.

**Robin Guy**, piano, is Professor of Piano/Collaborative Piano at the University of Northern Iowa where she has served since 1990 and chaired the Keyboard Division for 16 years. She can be heard on seven compact disc recordings produced by Vienna Modern Masters, Albany, Capstone, Innova, and Mark Records. Her recording *Love Rejoices* with tenor Daryl Taylor on songs of H. Leslie Adams was named a "top pick of the year" by *American Record Guide*. Her performance highlights include international festivals in South America, performances in Russia, concerti with the Detroit Symphony Chamber Orchestra among others, and *A Prairie Home Companion* with Garrison Keillor. She spent many summers performing and teaching piano at Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan. Her degrees are Bachelor of Music Education, *summa cum laude*, from Baldwin Wallace University Conservatory, Master of Music from Baylor University, and Doctor of Musical Arts from The University of Arizona.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

SPOTLIGHT SERIES: UNI SYMPHONIC BAND

TUESDAY, APRIL 4, 7:30 P.M.

GREAT HALL, GBPAC

GUEST PRESENTATION: ELSA AND WALTER VERDEHR

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 8 P.M.

DAVIS HALL, GBPAC

GUEST RECITAL: TOBY FURR, EUPHONIUM

THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 8 P.M.

DAVIS HALL, GBPAC

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In consideration of the performers and other members of the audience,  
please enter or leave a performance at the end of a composition.

Cameras and recording equipment are **not permitted**. Please turn off all  
electronic devices, and be sure that all emergency contact cell phones and  
pagers are set to silent or vibrate.

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