

AYO: Rhapsody for Band by Katahj Copley (2023)

Ways to greet others:

Salutations.

Greetings.

Hello.

Hi.

Hey.

Yo.

Ayo.

Throughout history, humans have found countless ways to greet people. Most of you have probably heard most of the terms above, excluding one: *Ayo*. Rooted from hip-hop and jazz culture, “Ayo” is a staple of the black community, but cannot be mistaken to be *just another word* – it is an embrace. It’s used to tell when something’s right or wrong – when something is awesome or simply too sweet for words. It’s used with your people – it is personal.

My *Ayo* uses rhythms and harmonies embedded from the Afro-Latin culture with inspirations from modern Hip-Hop groups. I take you on a journey of building, breaking, reformation, and celebration. We, the listeners, have the choice to choose what “Ayo” means to us personally, but we must first honor its beginnings. Thank you for wanting to be a part of my *Ayo*.

As a society, some say we have forgotten how to greet each other, so when you forget – here are eight reasons on why it is and always has been a necessity:

It is a basic function of communication.

It triggers positive conversations.

It can make friends out of two strangers.

It is a sign of respect and courtesy.

It exudes self-confidence.

It helps us connect to people on a more personal level.

It has the power to change how we feel about a person or place.

It has the power to change how we feel about ourselves.

V.O.C.: Helmsman of the Sea by Shruthi Rajasekar

Vallinayagam Olaganathan Chidambaram (V.O.C.) Pillai was a Tamilian freedom activist in the fight to liberate India from British occupation. A lawyer by training, V.O.C. (pronounced “Va Oo Si”) made many contributions to the civil disobedience movement and the cause of workers’ rights. Most notably, he broke up the British Empire’s monopoly on shipping in India by forming the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company, which undermined the Empire’s economic stranglehold on India. For daring to take on the mighty maritime empire, the British government punished V.O.C. severely, and the patriot did not live to see India realize independence, but we remember and celebrate his brave actions and indomitable spirit. One nickname for V.O.C. in Tamil is Kappalottiya Thamizhan, the Tamilian Helmsman. Thus, **V.O.C.: Helmsman of the Sea.**

Mother’s Lullaby: Impressions from Thai Folk Song – Khmer Sai Yok for Wind Band – Thai Traditional, Kevin Charoensri

As a child, my mother often sang many songs to me around the house. One of the songs that stuck to me, passed down aurally by one of her aunts, was named “**Khmer Sai Yok**”: a Thai Traditional song originally composed by His Royal Highness Prince Narisara Nuvadtivongse when King Chulalongkorn visited Saiyok Waterfall, Kanchanaburi Province in 1888.

Much of my childhood musical influence was based upon these melodies. As a child, I split time between both Thailand and America. However, at around six-years-old, the bulk of my time (about eight months per year) would be spent in the United States. At this young age, my mother’s singing became one of the remaining means of access I had to Thailand musically, whenever she sang lullabies and folk songs.

My mother and family are not musicians, and lovingly, my mother is not a professionally trained singer. However, she was never afraid to expressively phrase and dynamically explore all the melodies she could remember. These moments of musical joy, blissfully singing no matter what, were some of my fondest memories of her. I wanted to encapsulate this feeling in the ending of this piece, by asking the instrumentalists to sing.

As I started to arrange and compose the accompaniment to the melody, I wanted to bring both my Thai and American influences, while still authentically preserving the melody to the best of my ability using Western instruments. Through this work, I wanted to musically describe my upbringing as a Thai-American through one of the most cherished songs of my childhood.

~Kevin Charoensri

Stride by Kevin Day (2023)

Commissioned by the American Bandmasters Association, *Stride* is derived from the definition meaning to walk in a decisive way to cross and overcome obstacles that may come within our paths. *Stride* is also a reference to the marching band tradition and highlights my experience growing up as a Texas band kid marching on the field. This is an energetic work that features brass and drum grooves that could be felt within duple and triple meter, while contrasting to a beautiful lyrical section that showcases the woodwind section.

~Kevin Day

Sing of Tomorrow for Wind Ensemble by Nicole Piunno (2026)

Charles Spurgeon once said, “Is there nothing to sing about today? Then borrow a song from tomorrow; sing of what is yet to be. Is this world dreary? Then think of the next.”

Sing of Tomorrow is a reflection on that invitation to hope. The piece imagines a tomorrow bright enough to give strength for today. It invites us to sing beyond what is seen, toward what is yet to be.

Three Ring Circus! By Adrian B. Sims (2025)

Three Ring Circus! is an energetic circus march in three ($\frac{3}{4}$ time) that brings the thrilling world under the big top of life. I composed the material for the first four measures around a decade earlier as part of a different piece, and later revitalized this material as a traditional yet playful circus march. There are surprise musical interjections throughout and sudden dynamic shifts that mirror the wild unpredictability of the circus. The trio introduces a tuneful melody that brings each part of the circus together. As momentum continues to build, one final statement of the melody brings the show to an exciting finale.

~Adrian B. Sims