

*The Basketweave Elegies* is a nine-movement work for solo vibraphone by composer Peter Garland. It takes its title from two sources: firstly, it is partially written in homage to sculptor and visual artist Ruth Asawa, famed for intricate, hanging sculptures composed of small pieces of iron wire that she bent into place by hand. Secondly, it references the act of basket weaving, a activity that Garland himself practices. Garland self-professedly lives a “traditional” life rooted in simplicity and authenticity. He has made a career of eschewing the fashions of 20th century modernism in order to connect with musical roots that run deeper, towards something spiritually tectonic.

The work itself is a reflection on the traditional skills and activities (such as basket-weaving but extending to anything that may lack a transactional, economic motive) and how our culture attributes value to certain pursuits and not to others. Art no doubt falls into this classification, but so do many other things: gardening, cooking, writing letters by hand, etc. What Garland theorizes with this piece is that sometimes these things that seem so useless find their value in that uselessness. The practitioner finds and develops themselves in the flow of these activities that are ultimately autotelic – ends within themselves. The connection to Asawa is glaring: why mold harsh materials into place at risk of injury for the sake of something that will only to ostensibly serve as an object hanging in a gallery? Each of us has our own analogue to Asawa’s and Garland’s practices. *The Basketweave Elegies* reminds us to remember why simple, traditional acts are important, affirming, and, at their core, human.

