

COMPOSER CONCERT PROGRAM NOTES

Bulow, Harry

Inventions for Alto Saxophone and Piano

Inventions for Alto Saxophone and Piano was completed in 2015 and consists of three basic sections: Allegro Moderato, Adagio Expressivo Ad Libitum and Allegro Moderato. The work is highly chromatic emphasizing the intervals of major and minor seconds, minor thirds, major sevenths and tritones. In large measure the work is a study on building expressive intense lines and coloristic harmonies by interconnecting and combining these intervals with each other. The first section is characterized by spatial notation that allows the performers to interact with each other without being rigorously tied to a particular meter or rhythmic orientation. This adds to its intensity and sense of freedom while still holding to clear defined points of arrival. The second section or invention is slow and features an increasingly intense contrapuntal line. The final movement is an aggressive Allegro Moderato starting off similarly to the first invention. The ostinato in the piano part has a jazz-like feel to it which is common among many of Bulow's other works. The composition ends on Bb which is where it began.

Dempster, Thomas

Ahalugisdi Unole (To Quiet The Wind)

Inspired by a painting by America Meredith, ahalugisdi unole – as a work of visual art – chronicles a small slice of imagined activity and movement within a patch of forest that may not last much longer. Taking inspiration from her Cherokee ancestry and the numerous folk tales that proliferate Cherokee heritage, Meredith's painting displays a singing bear – at once quirky and majestic – nearly blending in with an affected woodgrain background. On the right hand side of the painting is a clenched fist with a bent wrist, suggesting a violence directed at the sounds and sights of nature, in a manner befitting a Terry Gilliam illustration, though the bent wrist suggests the human interloper will not make it out of the kerfuffle unscathed. Mankind wants to quash the voices of nature

and silence it, if for nothing else, to end the inconvenience. Why else harm a singing bear?

The bassoon plays numerous roles in the work, accompanied by and in dialogue with a rich array of digital sounds, all extracted from the bassoon. The live performer shifts from embodying the mystery and quiet grandeur of nature, to the mechanizations and rhythms of human interference, to the open, marvelous choirs of nature at greenest flush. The electronic sounds span from representing birds, frogs, humans, and the wind.

Fuhrman Benjamin

...a Handful of Dust

Inspired by my re-reading of T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land, ...a handful of dust takes the famous line "I will show you fear in a handful of dust" literally and figuratively as a point of departure. Created using extremely short bursts of noise and pitches from an analog synthesizer, these sources are then processed into clouds of sonic material. These dry and dusty swarms of particles swirl and flow around the listener as both literal dust, and an examination of both the passage of time and fear of death, and the impending dissolution of a relationship due to trivial bickering envisaged in the poem. As the piece progresses these different roles come to the forefront, asking the listener to reinterpret the title in light of these different interpretations.

Gable, Christopher

Homesteading

This a capella choral piece was written for the [REDACTED] Concert Choir in 2014, and was premiered the following year. This calm, pastoral work uses as its text a poem by Joyce Sutphen, who teaches creative writing at Gustavus Adolphus College. I tried to deliberately use an "American" sound and style, to match with the images of prairie, pioneer, and plough. The listeners are temporarily transported to another time, away from violence, controversy, and stress;

towards goodness, wholeness, and allowing themselves to feel “stitched into place.”

Gross, Murray

Dark Forest

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita,
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
ché la diritta via era smarrita.

In the middle of our life’s journey,
I found myself in a dark forest,
For the main road was lost.

Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy* Canto I,
lines 1–3

Composed in the summer of 2017, *Dark Forest* uses the complex voice of the solo viola to explore a passage from *The Divine Comedy*. The opening line of Dante’s remarkable epic poem refers not just to his own journey, but speaks unmistakably of our own life (*nostra vita*) as well. Have we lost our way, only to find ourselves wandering in a dark forest? There are many possible interpretations, but we can at least take solace in the knowledge that Dante and Virgil learned much during their travels in the underworld, and eventually emerged unscathed. So perhaps we need not abandon all hope after all.

Kramer, Timothy

At Toi Atrem

In 2004 I composed a *Lux aeterna* for Scott Macpherson and the Trinity University choir. After hearing a performance in the Cologne Cathedral, I wished to make a larger cycle that addressed the subject of light from different religious perspectives. *Lux Caelestis* (Celestial Light) was the result of that process. The cycle begins with the creation of light (Genesis) and the words “Yehi-or” - let there be light. The first piece opens with a solo reflecting Jewish cantillation and the choir enters on the creation of light. The second piece in the cycle, *At toi Atrem*, which will be performed on this concert, comes from the Zoroastrian scriptures and is sung in Avestan. These excerpts are some of the oldest texts in the cycle (3800 years old) and some are hymns attributed to Zoroaster himself. The

piece sets different words for fire (*Atrem*, *Atarsh*, *Athro*) and uses the metrical lines of the hymns in rhythmic strophes. The other texts in the cycle come from Theravada Buddhism and the Pali canon (sung in Pali) and a setting of the Gayatri Mantra (sung in Sanskrit). The cycle closes with the *Lux aeterna*.

Lewis, Ralph

Losing Constellations

As we experience tragedies at the cusp of our comprehension, there are moments where we feel like we are losing constellations.

Mertl, Gregory

Pears on a Sill (mvts 2&4)

Unlike most of my music, which is in one movement and relies on dramatic shape spinning out over many sections, each movement to *Pears on a Sill* is self-contained. Contrast occurs, but often within the context of a more limited palette. There is emphasis on recurrence – of opening ideas, distinct passages from other parts of a movement – in either unanticipated or open-ended ways. Each part of the set is a character piece and, as such, evokes a particular mood. To set a mood, most movements use rhythmic figures that recur throughout. Here the challenge is to create flow and a sense of a process despite rhythmic consistency. The last and most rhythmically concise movement is, in fact, the most expansive and a fitting conclusion to the set. While the titles of the individual movements are specific, the title as a whole hints at the idea of a collection of pieces set side by side. *Pears on a Sill* was written for pianist Solungga Liu and is dedicated to a dear teacher and enduring friend, Anne Modugno.

Park, Joo Won

Hallelujah

This piece is a praise on things and events that are beyond my comprehension and control. Effect of subtle sonic changes on my mind, body, and soul is an example of such things.

Reyman, Chris

Horizon

Horizon is a composition written for jazz and improvising musicians that can be performed by ensembles of any type. It was premiered in September 2015 in a trio format (saxophone, piano, and bass) and was performed and recorded again in April 2017 in a quintet format (trumpet, saxophone, piano, bass, and drums) for a forthcoming CD. The current version of this piece is for solo pianist. Inspired by the lineage of American jazz composers and pianists Thelonious Monk (1917-1982) and Andrew Hill (1931-2007), whose music moved away from the conventional jazz of their contemporaries toward a more progressive approach to jazz, Horizon makes use of two distinct elements working in counterpoint: a seven-note ostinato that hints at two harmonies simultaneously and a sixteenth-measure tonal melodic statement with a vague harmonic underpinning. These elements are overlaid in various ways throughout the piece and are connected and obscured through ample improvisation and re-composition, which results in indeterminate manipulations of the form, rhythm, and timing of composed elements. For the composer, the activities of composing and improvising are dialectically related, simultaneously leading each other to new territories just over the horizon.

Robbins, Scott

Silver Moon

Commissioned by the Dale Warland Singers, "Silver Moon" is an atmospheric setting of Tomas McColt's poem of the same name.

Saunders, Matthew

The Specious Present

The Specious Present is a term that describes that what we perceive as "now" is in fact already the past and we have no way of living in the a true present. The term was coined by E. Robert Kelly and elucidated by American philosopher William James in "The Principles of Psychology" as follows:

"All the notes of a bar of a song seem to the listener to be contained in the present...At the instant of the termination of such series, no part of the time measured by them seems to be a past. Time, then, considered relatively to human apprehension, consists of four parts, viz., the obvious past, the specious present, the real present, and the future. Omitting the specious present, it consists of three . . . nonentities — the past, which does not exist, the future, which does not exist, and their conterminous, the present; the faculty from which it proceeds lies to us in the fiction of the specious present."

All music would seem to exist in the specious present, then. Once played, it has no existence, and it does not exist before it is played. The act of performing or listening to music is, in part, the act of attending extremely closely to the immediate past, and in some cases, using memory to expand the specious present more fully into the past in order to draw connections between events that, once heard, disappear almost completely. But for our memory of music, there would be no music.

Sovkoplas, Adam

Once Upon a Unicorn

Once Upon a Unicorn is a musical dramatization of the poem Unicorn written by my great-aunt Helen King Marolf. The reading of the poem is coupled with music of a haunting and mysterious quality designed to compliment the programmatic nature of the poem. The composition was written with clarinetist Arianna Teighi and the premiere performance in Perugia, Italy in mind. This is why the piece can be performed on a Bb, A, or bass clarinet and the poem may be read in English or Italian as the performer chooses.

Walters, Andrew

Encroachment

In my piece Encroachment, I explore the boundaries between the natural world and the man-made world. Since I moved to the wilds of Pennsylvania and I am constantly confronted (yet delighted) with wildlife and natural beauty. Yet the presence of human beings is actually more apparent in these surroundings. For instance, there is the road

next door, the rock quarry down the street, 4-wheelers and motorcycles, and in the fall, lots of hunting. In *Encroachment*, natural sounds are mixed with man-made sounds. Especially important are the sounds of man-made boundaries (doors, roads, fences, buttons, etc.) that demarcate the different areas of the piece.

Weimer, Steven

Introspec 2

Introspec 2 is the second work in a series of self-reflective pieces. It is based on an octatonic pitch collection that is essentially the major scale with an added tone. This collection is used as the central harmonic palette that plays out within a loose ternary structure. Additionally, the piece was

composed for myself to perform and was designed to challenge my abilities as a pianist, which are amateur-level at best. To combat this shortfall, I used gestures that fit comfortably within my hand's reach and employed repetition of certain acrobatic gestures to minimize the learning curve.