Selected Musical Works from 2013 - 2016

Christian M. Newman
The University of New Mexico

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Bachelor of Music in Music Performance
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THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Music

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B. M., Music Performance, University of New Mexico, 2011

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ABSTRACT

This manuscript is a collection of musical compositions written by Christian Newman while a graduate student at the University of New Mexico. Each musical work fulfills at least one composition portfolio requirement as stated in the 2012 – 2013 Music Theory/Composition Student Handbook: the basic requirements include a piece with large orchestration, a piece featuring the voice, a piece featuring electronics, and a collaborative piece. Newman’s composition portfolio includes numerous works in addition to the requirements that illustrate the depth and consistency of his progress as a composer while a student in the program.

Table of Contents

Chapters:

I. *Prelude for Bass Trombone and Piano - “Kalki” (2013)* 2
   Synopsis 3
   Performance Notes 7
   Score 9

II. *A Piece on the Pianoforte (2013)* 17
   Synopsis 18
   Performance Notes 20
   Score 23

III. *Prelude for Low Frequency Trio - “Eurynomos” (2016)* 34
    Synopsis 35
    Performance Notes 39
    Score 40

IV. *“Shadow Piece” (2016)* 57
    Synopsis 58
    Text: “Shadow Piece“ by Yoko Ono (1964) 59

V. *“Hot Summer Nights”- Electronic Instrumental Works for Mixed Ensemble (2016)* 62
    Synopsis 63
VI. “Every Drop” for Soprano and Mixed Ensemble (2014) 65
   Synopsis 66
   Text: “Future Earths” by A. Baxter (2014) 69
   Performance Notes 70
   Score 71

VII. PRAEGRESSUS (2016) 83
   Synopsis 84
   Graphic Scores: I. Tractus 85
       II. Procursus 86
   PRAEGRESSUS I. Tractus for Wind Symphony: Score 88

Supplemental Materials


Christian M. Newman

Selected Musical Works from 2013 – 2016
I. Prelude for Bass Trombone and Piano

“Kalki”

(2013)
Synopsis

“Kalki” is named for the Hindu avatar of Vishnu, "Kalki,” or "Destroyer of Darkness”. According to Vedic tradition, he will appear riding his white horse, "Devadatta,” and holding a brilliant sword, will bring a cataclysmic end to our current age, the "Kali Yuga," or "Age of vice." The work uses smaller rhythmic cells typical for brass instruments in swing, rock, and music for concert band to relate a sense of response to this evocative text. Specifically the music is conceptually being forced and wrenched around under the influence of Kalki’s destruction. Although the structure includes a formal harmonic and melodic outline, "Kalki” is a piece predominately motivated by diverging and converging rhythmic relationships between the percussive piano and bass trombone figures.

The opening measures reveal several important thematic elements that guide the work through a two-part form. First the rhythmic figuration in the opening bars is composed of gestures of increasing duration, reflecting a larger scale proportion between phrase groups embedded within the structure.

Figure 1.1 - Expanding durations in opening figures and staggered rhythmic alignment

This expanding approach is utilized at the structural level in the composition of phrase
group lengths of similar proportion. This can be observed in the formal expository structure between measures 1 and 15 where the principle thematic content is introduced across 2 1/2 measures, the secondary content for 4 1/4 measures, and a development for 6 1/2 measures.

**Figure 1.2 – Parallels between surface rhythms, measures 1-3, and structural duration of phrase lengths**

The piano and trombone parts also reveal an immediate tendency towards surface-level rhythmic tension as the gestures, which at first attack in unison, begin to diverge and come apart from one another.

This is first evident in the opening gesture as the right hand of the piano is staggered so it arrives one sixteenth-note behind the trombone and bass register. The second gesture begins with both instruments again in lock-step before the piano interjects (late or early?) a second staggered figure on M.1, beat 4, leaving the trombone alone holding a tied note onto the first beat of M.2. A third statement finds the two instruments in rhythmic unison for a set of triplets before locking into a percussive rhythmic motive (A’) in M.3, beat 2.

The end of measure 4 into 5 illustrates this rhythmic tendency towards expanding or, less often, contracting proportions as the piano leaves an open rest at the end M.4, stating a set of triplets a beat later in M.5, beat 1.
This figure is arguably late, given the information in the following compressed statement of this secondary A’ figure in M.5.

Here the entire statement in both instruments is shifted an entire quarter-note earlier, while the triplet figure in the piano seems to attack now an eight-note too soon. The following eighth-note chords at the beginning of M.7 are, conversely, staggered an eight-note too late. This relationship falls into a normalized alignment at the local level in M.44.
Long pedal points are a significant structural element, and offer a point of contrasting stability to the remainder of the volatile and shifting content. These are composed of repeating rhythmic figures of varying length against one another in both the trombone and piano parts. The three rhythms are essentially a compression of the concepts used to vary the material throughout the work, and here they seem to wrest control, creating a strangely stable passage in an otherwise evolving, and volatile piece.
Performance Notes:

This composition does not employ any special notation, and with the exception of some complex rhythmical relationships, it involves standard playing techniques for both instruments. Special attention should be given to those moments where the instruments become rhythmically or metrically misaligned so they can be performed with much confidence.

Particular attention to dynamics is essential as there are numerous passages that rely on this aspect to an equal degree as rhythmic, pitch and registral relationships. The long crescendos given for the pedal points in mm. 19-26 and again at 36-43 are especially important for introducing the independent rhythms as a source of tension that drives the music into the following section.

Passages marked as piano can be taken with a mute for the bass trombone, however, this is not as important for the desired timbre as the sense that the trombone line blends with the piano as much as possible. Forte passages suggest a strong melodic character from both instruments when given. Elsewhere, dynamic indications are frequently used to indicate the arrival of new sections, such as the mp given in M.7, which indicates the arrival of new thematic content. In certain circumstances, it may be necessary to perform more, or less extreme variations of the given dynamics, so that the contrast is evident given the size of the performance space, number of audience, reverberation of the room, etc.

The consideration of voicing and balance between the two instruments, as well as within the piano part alone is significant across the piece. The roles for both instruments are predominantly equally distributed throughout, and elements that belong in the background are marked with contrasting dynamics, or composed with distinct figuration. Particularly in the pedal point sections, the pianist should be mindful of the contrast between the p
sixteenth- note figures in the right hand, and the \textit{ff}' left-hand bass voice because this lower line forms a complex rhythm against the trombone as they are composed of varying length at the sixteenth- note level. It can be especially easy for the bass trombone to cover the piano part at these moments, so it may be necessary for the pianist to play out with a loud dynamic as much as possible, and use a clear attack where a single line sounds with the trombone for these passages.
Prelude for Bass Trombone and Piano
"Kalki"

Resolute, Aggressive \( \text{\#} = 96 \)

\( \text{© Christian M. Newman 2013} \)
Prelude for Bass Trombone and Piano "Kalki"
Prelude for Bass Trombone and Piano "Kalki"
Prelude for Bass Trombone and Piano "Kalki"
Prelude for Bass Trombone and Piano "Kalki"

26

Suddenly gentle

B. Trb.

Pno.

30
Prelude for Bass Trombone and Piano "Kalki"
Prelude for Bass Trombone and Piano "Kalki"
II. “A Piece on the Pianoforte”

(2013)
Synopsis

"A Piece on the Pianoforte" is a work in four sections in an improvisatory style utilizing both traditional playing from the keys, and playing on the open strings. Formally the piece is a sort of fantasy closing with a modified recapitulation of the opening material. The tone of the quasi-modal work is one of shifting, uncomfortable moodiness. Numerous crescendos, diminuendos, and shifting phrase lengths evoke a sense of unease. Slow changes in dynamic, or tempo for some phrases suggest an aspect of reservation and paranoia, while rapid accents and chattering cadenzas counter with a more assertive contrast in others. While several of these passages build into climactic flurries of chattering notes, these aggressive elements are most often contained within a subdued context, or by a sort of gravity towards a mindless three-note gesture. Abstractly rapid passages that struggle to break into motor rhythms are forced into a dark, repetitive gloom. Even the forceful sound of the open strings is compelled down into the keys, and towards the repetitive stillness.

The large-scale orchestration of the work alternates between the two playing approaches, with the first section utilizing mainly key-based playing. The second section introduces a quasi-melodic shape played in the middle register of the open strings accompanied by soft arpeggios on the keys. This evolves into a frantic solo performed entirely on the open strings in the third, and the work ends with a near-literal recapitulation of the opening material again from the keys.

In terms of compositional process, the sections alternate between stable, metrically clear statements, and free passages in rapid scalar, and arpeggiated, motions across registers. The introductory section from mm.1-10 illustrates this method as it juxtaposes a series of stacked chords with a small triplet gesture. At first inconsequential, this fragment grows in length, building into a climactic ascending figure at M.10. After dying away to a quiet repeated series of three tones at measure 11, the second section conversely climbs through a series of arpeggios and free melodic statements towards a point of repetition at
M.28. The following nocturne-esque section at M. 35 is metrically strict in slow eight notes, and the solo that evolves from this simple texture is, as then expected, a chattering and rapid burst of activity on open strings spanning the entire register. The recapitulation builds to stark, climatic \textit{ff} chord before final repetition of the nocturne arpeggios at M. 79 concludes the work.
Performance Notes:

The combination of key-based, and open-string playing in this piece involves minimal preparation since there are no special adjustments or prepared strings; the drumsticks can be set on the folded music stand on a small towel or other flat dampening device when not in use.

Regarding general interpretation, the most significant technical and musical aspect of this work is that the gestures should sound resonant, yet light and predominantly of a piano dynamic. Many of the passages are composed predominantly in the bass register, so without some attention to dynamics, it is easy to make the work sound dynamically flat. Faster passages can be a little bit rushed and even taken with a softer dynamic than indicated so as to augment the sense of flow. With respect to the notation, the rhythms in particular are given in a very square, and rudimentary form. The player will easily identify though, the context that allows the work to be more improvisational, and free in character.

The playing on the open strings should likewise flow smoothly and without undue accents. The notation for this technique is given with x note heads on a one-line staff.

Figure 1. Measure 51; example of contour notation for playing on the open strings
This is utilized to indicate only the contour, rather than any indication of specific notes on the narrowly spaced harp. These can be considered abstractly, and may involve only the lowest three-quarters of the strings.

Most grand pianos have a complex harp that must be navigated carefully so the player can avoid breaking a stick, or introducing a metallic sound outside the guidelines for the piece. From the image below, one can identify the numerous areas of exposed open strings that are usable inside a Steinway Model D Concert Grand. The dark lines illustrate the frame, and between them are the accessible strings.

**Figure 2. Frame design of Steinway Model D Concert Grand**

Although a modern grand piano is in many respects nearly indestructible, there are a few considerations for its safety worth mentioning. Firstly striking the open strings will not detune or damage them when played with a light to medium attack. It is definitely possible, however, to accidentally slide the stick between two strings in the lower register, and strike the soundboard below. Many grand piano models are engineered with
unique structural elements, and one should be mindful of the location of the main frame, and also the hammers, which can also be damaged if struck. The strings in the upper register bank are very short in the top registers, so one should be mindful not to strike those hammers or other frame parts when using this section. Overall, the main consideration is unity of timbre between the various registers, open strings, and phrase groups.
A Piece on the Pianoforte

Broad, dramatic \( \frac{4}{4} \) = ca. 95

expressive - with an agogic sense of meter and phrasing

percussive playing with drum stick on the lowest bank of strings

ff

hesitant

slower

accel.

p

pp

\( \frac{3}{4} \)

Pno.

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

Pno.

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

\( \frac{3}{4} \)

Pno.

nf

\( \frac{3}{8} \)

Pno.

mf

pf

\( \frac{3}{16} \)

Pno.

\( \frac{1}{4} \)
A Piece on the Pianoforte

(accel.) - - - - - - - - - - - - - - a tempo

with a full, deep tone

percussive playing with drum stick on the lowest bank of strings

uneven, chattering - like a skipping stone across water

expressivo - like distant bells
A Piece on the Pianoforte

accel. - - - - - - - - - - -

Frantic = ca. 132

pp swiftly and unmetered
A Piece on the Pianoforte
A Piece on the Pianoforte

Nocturno: slow, somber $\frac{\text{q}}{\text{b}} = \text{ca. 60}$

hesitant; finding the tempo

Play with drum stick on the open strings of banks II & III- ad libitum
A Piece on the Pianoforte

becoming more defined in tempo

hesitant- with a chattering quality
A Piece on the Pianoforte

Play with drum stick on the open strings of lowest register

rit. - - - - - - accel. - - - - - - -
begin a little slower

a tempo
Suddenly dry and brittle

accel. - - - - - - a tempo
A Piece on the Pianoforte

**rit.** accel.

*wild, frantic*  

at first hesitant, then becoming more controlled and in tempo

**a tempo**

in strict tempo

**rit.**

On the keys

*murky, ringing in pedal*
A Piece on the Pianoforte

Pno.

\[ \text{hesitants - begin slower} \]

Pno.

\[ \text{accel.} \]

Pno.
A Piece on the Pianoforte

accel. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - a tempo \(8^{\text{no.}}\) ------

Slowly, dying away \(d = \text{ca. 53}\)
let ring in pedal with previous chords

Let ring in pedal with previous chords

Pno. \(\text{\(53\text{no.}\)}\)

Pno. \(\text{\(53\text{no.}\)}\)

Pno. \(\text{\(53\text{no.}\)}\)

Pno. \(\text{\(53\text{no.}\)}\)

Pno. \(\text{\(53\text{no.}\)}\)

Pno. \(\text{\(53\text{no.}\)}\)

Pno. \(\text{\(53\text{no.}\)}\)

Pno. \(\text{\(53\text{no.}\)}\)

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Pno. \(\text{\(53\text{no.}\)}\)

Pno. \(\text{\(53\text{no.}\)}\)
III. Prelude for Low Frequency Trio

“Eurynomos”

(2016)
Synopsis

"Eurynomos" is a character piece named for the demonic creature in a 4th Century painting by Polygnotos at Delphi, Greece. A member of the Erinyes (the Furies), Eurynomos was said by "the Delphian guides to be one of the daimones of Hades, who eats off all the flesh of the corpses, leaving only their bones" (Pausanias ca.160 AD). This along with Plato's depiction of the flaming river, Pyriphlegethon, which flows into Tartarus- the deep abyss of divine punishment in Classical Greece- inspired a certain quality within the music. A multitude of grace notes churn and chatter throughout the work, punctuated by large leaps and long, gaudy trills. Like the "stream of fire" in Hades, my concept was that the lines should metaphorically burn off the page as the music is played. Passages frequently climax in swirling clouds of frantic ornaments, evocative of embers blown from the score in a gust of wind. Chattering ostinatos and trilling gestures evoke the ravenous hunger of Eurynomos as it feeds on the dead.

While many of the surface details are quasi-improvisational, the harmonic and rhythmic structure for the work is organized with more rational intention. An initial harmonic progression built from three four-note chords (a complete array of the twelve-tone aggregate) is utilized as a source for notes in the higher registers.

Figure 4.1 - Fundamental Harmonic Progression

![Figure 4.1 - Fundamental Harmonic Progression](image)

Figure 4.2 – Realization; Principle Harmonic Structure

![Figure 4.2 – Realization; Principle Harmonic Structure](image)
This same progression both in retrograde and symmetrical inversion is coupled with the original. The illustration below explains an abstract rhythmical alignment of these two components of the complete structural progression.

**Figure 4.3 – Complete Harmonic Design**

The form is primarily defined through orchestration, although there are several structural cadential points that reflect the motivic leaping gestures given in the introduction at a larger scale across the piece.
Figure 4.4 - Introductory motives provide structural accents across the piece

X motive in piano, m. 1

These aspects reflected across varying durations along with the quasi-diatonic voice leading lend a degree of what might be termed classical beauty to a grotesque inspiration and concept. Plato’s depiction of the underworld as a realm of reward or punishment led
Polygnotos to portray, and possibly even invent this specific creature both as a work of art, and as allegory for real-world observation. As such, this classical painting embodies a duality of character in conveying gruesome imagination, and a clear conceptualization of the nature of physical reality. In parallel with this two-faced character, "Eurynomos" is both organized by a clear structure and rhythmic development, and improvisatory in the use of grace notes in place of literal specification of durations. This creates a possibility for multiple forms of correct interpretation, but also more directly expresses the desired quality of the music through the appearance and character of the notation. Pausanias goes on to describe the creature's character and attitude in the painting. Perhaps most inspiring for this music is his explanation of Eurynomos's color, which was "between blue and black, like that of meat flies; he is showing his teeth and is seated, and under him is spread a vulture's skin".
Performance Notes:

While this piece is certainly grotesque in many ways, it is best to perform it with a clear sense for light and elegant instrumental tone. Overall the work should be performed with more regard for *piano* dynamic tendencies so that the double bass part may be heard as an equal to the piano and bass clarinet. Where there are tangled passages of numerous grace notes, the performers should strive to blend their sounds together into one swirling mass except as indicated by dynamic markings. Careful consideration of the balance is a main concern for this piece. The instruments are frequently composed in fore, middle, and background layers indicated mostly by dynamics, and these should be performed with that awareness, and a sense of dimensionality.

Except for those indicated with rhythmic barring, the grace notes may be performed as rapid straight notes, or as swift glissandos as each player sees fit. The double bass need not worry about the impossibility of the task, and should instead focus on conveying their character and contour while hopefully defining the given harmony.

Rhythmically the piece should convey a straight eighth-note pulse except where indicated by ritardando, or other tempo alteration indicators. Depending on the performance space, resonance of the instruments, and sensibilities of the players, it may be necessary to adjust the tempos given in the score, either faster or slower for certain passages. In this piece, there are many opportunities to fill empty space with trills, glissandos, etc. so there may be some degree of freedom to experiment with slower tempi. Its likely, however, that with multiple hearings of the piece, the performers may come to identify a clearer sense of the form through a faster tempo, and certain connections may become clearer between the parts when played at or above the given tempo.
Prelude for Low Frequency Trio
"Eurynomos"  

Intensive, grotesque and flexible ∼ 10

Bass Clarinet
Double Bass
Piano
B. Cl.
D.B.
Pno.

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"Eurynomos"

B. Cl.

D.B.

Pno.

angry chattering-thorny

Rit. - - - A Tempo

Rit. - - - A Tempo

delicate
"Eurynomen"

B. Cl.

D.B.

Pno.
"Euryronos"
"Eurynomos"

Slower, \( \text{plodding} \) \( \lambda \) = 66 ca.

B. Cl.

D.B.

Slower, \( \text{plodding} \) \( \lambda \) = 66 ca.

Pno.
"Eurymonas"
"Eurynomos"
"Eurynomos"

B. Cl.

D.B.

Pno.

---

B. Cl.

D.B.

Pno.

---

B. Cl.

D.B.

Pno.

---
"Eurynomos"
"Eurynomos"

B. Cl.

D.B.

Pno.

violent, shrill
"Eurynomos"

A Tempo

B. Cl.

D.B.

Pno.

A Tempo

B. Cl.

D.B.

Pno.
"Eurynomos"
"Eurynomes"
“Eurynomos”

B. Cl.

D.B.

Pno.

B. Cl.

D.B.

Pno.

55
"Eurynomos"

B. Cl.

D.B.

Pno.

56
IV. *Shadow Piece*

(2016)

In Collaboration with Gena Lawson
Synopsis

This performance art piece composed by Albuquerque artist and musician, Gena Lawson, was conceived for a festival honoring the work of Japanese multimedia artist, Yoko Ono.


Lawson composed this work from the inspiration given in Ono's chapter titled Shadow Piece in the 1964 seminal collection, "Grapefruit: A Book of Instructions and Drawings". Lawson commissioned the electronic soundtrack for use in live performances, and as a backing score for this video documentation. The timbre and character of the music was created with the intention that both the live performance aspect and the sonic accompaniment would create a complete work encapsulating written composition, dance and shadow/light play. Thus the pitch relations tend to be far apart in extreme high and low registers, while the dynamics shift between pp and ff. These aspects are designed to complement and sonically represent the conceptual use of etching-style black images on the lit background in Lawson’s work.
The directions provided by Ono are to:

Put your shadows together until
They become one.

---

**Concept**

This visual design aspect of the piece involves fixed black silhouette images on a lit white screen representing shadows of the moon on a cloudy night, and blades of grass on the ground blowing in the wind. Hand shapes are affixed to the screen during the performance, and slowly climb to the rhythm of the musical development. As the musical texture increases towards a dense climax near the middle of the piece, the hand shadows begin to climb more furiously, changing shape and morphing into larger, abstract images. Lawson incorporates her own shadow to create dance movements and manipulate the light and shadows before the final section where the hand shapes that were once distinct, are destroyed and ripped down, leaving only her dancing shadow. The piece closes as the lights fade out, conceptually spreading the “shadow” over the entire space.

The movement of the shadows and the dancer (Lawson) are slightly improvised in nature, and are related to the musical rhythms, sounds and structure in an attempt to marry the
sonic and visual elements together. The piece is contained within a larger formal plan, yet the immediate choices are not predetermined. Lawson’s creation of shadows and light play is seen through a homemade silhouette screen constructed of a transparent white screen sewn to a frame, black butcher paper, flashlights, and her own body.

Collaborative Process

The score was composed in several collaborative stages, and includes improvised vocal and instrumental gestures, and composed aspects of structure. Formal aspects on a larger scale were determined by the design concept of the piece, but the surface details were composed both before the video recording and afterwards during post editing. Certain features were paired more closely with the visual performance, and other sounds were lengthened or shortened to better complement the visual flow. The source sounds utilized within it were composed or improvised by both artists during numerous brainstorming, and recording sessions all with the intention of creating sources of acoustic ‘light and shadow’.
Many of the longer tone-based sounds used in the ambient soundtrack are composed of samples of Lawson and our three-year-old daughter singing individual notes and other expressive musical shapes, i.e. glissandos, syllabic oohs and aahs, etc. Other sound materials were created with various instruments including guitars, a few synthesizers, and numerous bowed objects and musical instruments. These collected sounds were manipulated, and layered together into a soundtrack less music than a sort of sonic response or sound painting, offering a sort of secondary narrative for the piece. The completed sound work is thus joined together with the imagery and actions into a singular concept following the instructions from Ono, and in that sense the sound represents a shadow of the visual performance piece.
V. “Hot Summer Nights”- Electronic Instrumental

Works for Mixed Ensemble

(2015-16)
Synopsis

This collection of electronic soundscapes is inspired by restless summer evenings lived as a teenager in central New Mexico. The incessant heat, loud ravenous insects, thunderous rainstorms, and the crass character of adolescence are represented within the general mood and specific sounds. The music of subculture youth in the late 1990's and early 2000's is also somewhat evident in the naked quality of electronic manipulation, instrumentation, and several of the formal aspects. Surreal soundscapes from groups like Download, Sonic Youth and Throbbing Gristle color the background, or the intention of the work, and elements of noise are found throughout.

The sounds used in these pieces are from a multitude of live acoustic sources. There are almost no electronic instruments, and the list of source samples numbers in the dozens. The intention of these pieces is, in part, to create an impression of instrumental timbres through altered means. In many passages, drums are created from plucked viola strings, or rocks thrown into metal drain pipes, and bell sounds from guitar harmonics among many other examples. This is in part inspired by experience as a studio musician in the early 2000's, where I observed the method by which engineers would substitute carefully chosen samples of instrumental sounds for the original live playing. Such an approach is evident on many commercial pop recordings from the early 2000s where the original live sounds of drums and electric guitar are clearly audible in the background when heard at higher volume.
The first movement as one clear example, presents what seems to be a guitar, but the first source sound is composed of a plucked and bowed viola, and a two-string harp with two freely swinging hammers, originally crafted as a door bell. Later in the piece, an actual guitar is included in the foreground, but through careful manipulation of a percussive gestural sample, the instrument is nearly unrecognizable. Other sounds are presented in a more original form, including plucked and bowed guitar, orchestral string bowing, trap drum kit sounds, and chimes. The combined effect of these realistic and surreal sounds is meant to evoke both the sense of activity and energy in the summer night hours, and the sense of repose and stillness that so often accompanies them. The noise elements included throughout the set are contained within that paradigm, and are often presented in a more placid frame of reference throughout; most often, they are utilized for brief punctuations or concealed by more intuitively pleasant sounds.

Track List

I. 0-1'45"
II. 1'45"-3'30"
III. 3'30"-7'16"
IV. 7'16"-12'51"
V. 12'52"-14'18"
VI. 14'19"-16'45"
VI. “Every Drop” for Soprano and Mixed Ensemble

(2014)
Synopsis

"Every Drop" is a work inspired by the musical figuration in Falko Steinbach's piano etude, "Mirrorvisions", together with the poem, "Future Earths", by Andrew Baxter. With the permission of the author, the text was reordered, and certain stanzas altered to create a more surreal expression from the poem’s apocalyptic musings. Phrases and key words from the text were used as a basis for many of the musical qualities, and informed many compositional choices for reframing the source content. It is essentially a series of scenes, or fantasiasque sections in part reflecting traditional song elements, yet also a sense of improvisatory evolution.

The piano part is the essential genesis of the work, and in similar fashion to Steinbach's etude, begins with two overlapping circles in each hand. This background gesture expands and shifts throughout the ensemble as the piece evolves.

Figure 3.1 - Measure 1; pitch set rotations in piano part

The steady contrast of sixteenths against sextuplets appear as a sound carpet against the long melodic lines, and for brief moments throughout, these figures move into the foreground, appearing finally as melodic material in the soprano line at m.62.
These background textures shift throughout the ensemble, particularly in the introduction where they are given first in the piano, then the piano and winds, and finally emerging from the longer values of the string lines in M. 24 as straight sixteenth-note rotations. In this passage, these sixteenths are given in all three groups, which seems to grind against the climax suggested by the unison playing of the ensemble.

Figure 3.2 - Rotational figures in the foreground, soprano melody, m. 62

Figure 3.3 - Unison surface texture at m. 25
The composition of these shifting background textures is determined in part through a sense that they should move through every possible instrumental combination, and the orchestration of these rotations frequently shifts mid phrase in response to the text or other musical concerns.

The main body of the piece is arranged with the soprano line accompanied, or shadowed by various instruments in the ensemble. These gestures color her leaping lines with stepwise chromatic motion, and polyrhythmic variations.

Figure 3.4 - Unison soprano and Bb clarinet, m. 54

Certain musical characteristics for this piece are from impressions of the text. The circling figures in particular reflect an impression of “a million threads [as they] feed from memory, stack themselves in towers, and push out, spinning”. Other choices throughout are designed to convey the larger concepts within more singular statements, most significantly, the phrase, “late at night”. This nocturnal character is reflected in the length of the work, the general listless and intricate character of the many contrapuntal passages, and the emphasizing of the bass register, among others. Overall the work exists within a context of regular division of time at the eighth-note level, complemented by more diverse activity at the surface, and within the deeper harmonic progression; this compositional approach is evocative of the vision of “nails and barbs and splinters and little jagged parts that hide in the face of smooth surface”.

68
“Future Earths” (2014)

by

Andrew Baxter

(for Lauren Kostelnick)

Oceans empty, in a billion years as the sun swells and boils every drop into the clouds the seas will drain in

My inner ear sways till I’m upside down, tumbling to the ceiling; late at night, when our thoughts congeal and trap us, twisted.

Summits wilt, sheared by air like warm breath flows over ice each grain will dance in splendid chaos, building islands from aborted earth

A million threads kink to their root and swirl from my scalp. They feed from memory, stack themselves in towers, and push out, spinning.

Life stops, long from here but still too soon, the dying gasp of bloated stars expels our skin and rains in hell from everywhere above

They have edges, these people, they have nails and barbs and splinters and little jagged parts that hide in the face of smooth surface. I’ve been cut so much, so bruised, beaten, humiliated.

Slow crush, glaciers roll out troughs and creatures swim through desert rocks, recede and leave a tangled swamp.

There is a time when these jagged edges dull. and we’ve all died to see it.
Performance Notes:

The orchestration in this piece is very dense, and for that reason, consideration of the dynamic contrast is essential. Throughout the work, the instruments are arranged in two or three layers, and these are indicated mostly through dynamics along with choice of register, phrasing, etc. There are numerous passages wherein the parts are given varying dynamics at least two degrees apart; the example from m. 25 given above illustrates this method through the given \textit{ff} dynamics in the piano coupled with \textit{mf} dynamics for the strings.

Certain aspects of the notated rhythm and note durations are composed of varying rhythmical relationships that will convey a sense of rubato or shifting signature throughout the piece, so strict interpretation of the rhythm is recommended. The tempo for the work, however, can be taken a bit faster than indicated as the performers may see fit. Individual sections may also be approached with different tempi based on the interpretive instincts of the ensemble or considerations related to the size and resonance of the performance space. With that in mind, it is preferable that the main thematic blocks, mm. 1-30, and later at mm. 67-87, be performed with a sense of rhythmic drive towards the climax, and a steady clear sense of pulse.
Every Drop
For Soprano and Mixed Ensemble

Andrew Baxter

Christian M. Newman

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Performed with an annoying sort of character, as if struggling to move or awaken

Every Drop
Building momentum

Every Drop
Every Drop

[Music notation image]

With increasing gravity

---

Brighter

Simile (pedal)
Every Drop
Every Drop

Dramatic, sorrowful

Like a cold and threatening machine

Thorny and thorny

Bright, and still

Dramatically change character to

Eerily flat and unexpressive,

Thornily flat and unexpressive,

Thornily flat and unexpressive,

Steep and steep
Every Drop
Every Drop

Fl.

Br.Cl.

S

Vln.

Vc.

80
Every Drop

- Dramatic
- play each note like a little pearl!
- Accent these notes like little glass shards
- legatissimo
- marcato sempre
- Blistering, thorny
- thoughts
- light, delicate
VII. PRAEGRESSUS

(2016)
Synopsis

The title of this set, “Praegressus” is a Latin term for “evolution” or “progression”. This title reflects the manner in which they were composed, which involved creating a single shape at the top left, and then freely creating variations on the original form at different levels of time in an attempt to evoke a self-reflective continuity at each moment in the piece. The images are an amalgamation of several influences, including waveform images inside audio engineering programs, a style of pointillistic drawing I had developed during my teenage years as an art student, and a multitude of graphic notation scores studied during my years as a university student. Essentially these works are as much decorative images as graphic scores. As I created them, my initial intent was that a performer would envision a scroll bar as one finds in audio editing programs like Audacity moving over the score at a steady rate, while the graphic shapes indicate the notes, dynamics, phrasing and texture. It is clear that the indication of tones often implies chromatic clusters, and the performer can also take these indications to imply approximate pitches as well as a suggestion of dynamics through the thickness and shade of the lines. The score can be performed quite literally according to a defined rate of time, and pitch, or can be used as an abstract guide to a realization.

The realization for wind symphony of the first score, “Tractus”, illustrates one approach for interpretation of these scores.
I. Tractus

Christian M. Newman

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II. Procursus

© 2016 Christian M. Newman
II. Procursus
con energica, ma non troppo veloce $\sim$ 66
PRAEGRESSUS
PRAEGRESSUS