MICHAEL HORST

SENIOR COMPOSITION RECITAL

RECITAL SERIES
RECITAL HALL
SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 2014 • 2:30 P.M.

School of Music

Program

Summer Solstice:
Fire and Breeze (2011) — Michael Horst (b.1992)

Kristyn McLeod, Violin I
Emilio Vazquez, Violin II
Ali Friedman, Viola
Ruth Wegner, 'Cello
Michael Horst, Piano

Can't Stop for Too Long:
Or you'll remember how sad you are (2012) — Michael Horst (b.1992)

Tammy Holland, Clarinet
Michael Horst, Piano

Wild Ramification (2012) — Michael Horst (b.1992)

Michael Horst, Piano

Planetary Folklore (2013) — Michael Horst (b.1992)

Kristyn McLeod, Violin I
Emilio Vazquez, Violin II
Ali Friedman, Viola
Ruth Wegner, 'Cello

There will be a 10-minute intermission

Sonata for Reed Quintet (2013-14) — Michael Horst (b.1992)

I. Circus Entr'acte
II. Lament
III. Dances
IV. Distant Light
V. Combat

Bill Aikens, Oboe and Cor Anglais
Audrey Miller, Clarinet
Ryan Lemoine, Alto and Baritone Saxophone
Erica Low, Bass Clarinet
Brian McKee, Bassoon

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Summer Solstice: Fire and Breeze

While the oldest piece on the program, Summer Solstice has remained one of my favorite works, and I am very happy to have it finally premiered. It begins bombastically with the strings alone. When their passage is done, they repeat it; this time the piano joins them. From there the five players take off in a whirlwind of summer heat. This stage of the piece depicts a hot summer day in the desert where a group of people are preparing a bonfire.

Eventually the opening figure returns and moves to a soft transitional passage featuring high piano notes—the sun is setting. This moves into the bonfire being lit, and as the music begins to dance in the breeze, so do the people dance about the fire. After a few statements of this dance, the music begins featuring brief solos from the players as people step into the center of the circle to showcase a particularly intricate dance move.

Finally the opening figure returns one final time, and the soft transitional passage is expanded into its own section. The festivities have ended; everyone is preparing to go home. As the ensemble plays the last note, the last embers of the fire are blown out by a summer night's breeze.

Can't Stop for Too Long: Or you'll remember how sad you are.

Can't Stop is perhaps the most profound piece on the concert. Commissioned by Tammy Holland for her senior recital, it depicts a sentiment I believe many of us can relate to. In particular, at the time of its writing, both the composer and performer were having a rough time, and both of us had to keep going and ignore our problems as best we could. Therefore I wrote this piece to serve as a means of catharsis for us.

The piece portrays a single character, our protagonist, going through life with a fairly upbeat disposition as the music dances and spins through various snappy passages. This disposition is not entirely genuine, however, because our protagonist is hiding something very painful and trying desperately not to think about it. Eventually they stop for just a moment too long, and an introspective passage takes over. This is all too short lived, because the protagonist quickly looks away and the music takes off again.

From this point, the music begins oscillating between long, upbeat passages and short, gentle passages as our character continues to ignore their problems. Finally everything derails, and the clarinetist sharply exclaims a series of repeated notes and the pianist descends on a series of chords. The protagonist begins to stop for much longer periods of time now, and the rapid passages of trying to ignore their problems appear in only short bursts—a few final urges to blindly continue. Finally the outbursts cease, and the introspective passage returns. Now, fully stopped, they can meditate upon everything they have been trying to run away from. The piece becomes quieter and quieter, until it ends on one final bitter note: having acknowledged their problems, our protagonist is left with all the work required in facing those problems. This is only the first step, and what is to follow will surely be painful.

Wild Ramification

Wild Ramification was inspired by the children's math picture book *You Can Count on Monsters* by Richard Evan Schwartz. The piece is largely gestural and abstract, formed entirely from a long sequence of pitches. It is the only piece on the program to be mathematically inspired.

The sequence of pitches was formed by the prime factorization of the integers. First, a sequence of numbers was made by concatenating the ordered factorization of each number in turn: thus the sequence 2,3,4,5,6,7,8, … becomes 2,3,2,2,5,2,3,7,2,2,2, … resulting in a sequence of prime numbers. The first twelve prime numbers were each associated with one of the twelve pitches in the chromatic scale, and this formed the majority of the sequence of pitches. However, there are quite a few prime numbers, more than twelve, certainly. The next sixty-six primes were each associated with a unique unordered pair of pitch classes. (Note that $66 = {}_{12}C_2$, so every possible pair of pitch classes can be associated with a prime.) Whenever one of these large primes occurred in the sequence, the two small primes associated with the two notes in the pair would from that point forward switch their association, thereby preventing the piece from being harmonically static. In this way, these large primes can be thought of as the transpositions in the symmetric group on twelve elements, and the small primes as those twelve elements. The sequence ends with 400, the number directly before the seventy-ninth prime, which is the next prime after the large primes.

The title of the piece comes from a generalization of prime factorization appearing in algebraic number theory. The situation of wild ramification is metaphorized in the music. In algebraic number theory, one studies algebraic extensions of the rational numbers, called number fields. In these fields is a concept of algebraic integer, and the collection of all such integers in a number field is its ring of integers. Algebraic integers do not necessarily have unique factorization in their ring of integers, but certain collections of them, called ideals, do factor into a unique product of prime ideals. If one takes a prime ideal and uses it to generate an ideal in the ring of integers of some extension number field, the resulting ideal will factor into a product of prime ideals "upstairs." If not all the exponents of these prime ideals are 1, then the prime ideal

"downstairs" was ramified. If not all the exponents are relatively prime to the residue characteristic of the prime ideal downstairs, then the extension was wildly ramified.

To create a metaphor of wild ramification, certain phrases of music as considered "prime ideals" and then repeat several times in a row, representing its appearance in the factorization of some other ideal. These repetitions happen a different number of times, often a prime number of times, and this represents the exponent not being relatively prime to the residue characteristic. In this fashion, all the extensions are wildly ramified.

Planetary Folklore

Planetary Folklore was written for the Phoenix Art Museum project in 2013, and was performed at the museum in front of Victor Vasarely's painting *Folklore Planetaire*, an image of which will be projected during this performance. The painting is very modular in its construction, and is essentially tessellated colored squares with shapes in them. Planetary Folklore was composed with this kind of modularity in mind.

The piece consists primarily of several chunks of music repeated in different voices in different ways throughout. Among these modular figures, the music often consists of repeated eighth notes, which serve to push forward the harmony and usually feature a chromatic mediant, a chord progression with some of the voices moving by a half step from a major or minor chord to another chord of the same quality at the distance of a third away. Chains of three distinct chords can be made by chromatic mediants, and this gesture appears frequently in the piece. All these harmonic ideas are a metaphor for classical color theory, which states that all colors are formed from the three primary colors. This is in reference to the painting's modularity and its vivid use of color.

As the painting expands out to larger-sized squares in the corners, so does the piece eventually expand out to a slow middle section. When I look at the painting, eventually my eyes focus on the very center of the painting and all the colors start swirling around my peripherals in an intense meditation. The slow section depicts this meditation, with a melody from the faster section slowed down, floating ethereally over long augmented chords, chords built entirely from major thirds. The notes in an augmented chord are the roots of the three chords one can get from a chain of chromatic mediants, and this connection between the two main sections of the piece represents the overall cohesion of the painting. Finally, the faster section returns for one last flourish and quickly closes the piece.

Sonata for Reed Quintet

The Sonata for Reed Quintet comes in five parts, each of which has its own character and style. Though all are distinct, the five movements are connected by a common motivic idea: the first movement is filled with two descending half steps, the second a descending whole step followed by a descending half step, the third a minor third and a half step, the fourth a major third and a half step, and finally the fifth with a descending perfect fourth followed by a descending half step.

Circus Entr'acte, the first movement, is just that: raucous, dissonant, circus-like gestures abound, until the music begins alternating between its own character and highlighting distorted visions of the following movements' characters, like actors in a play being introduced after intermission. Playful and humorous, the funniest joke of all is at the end: the clarinet wails a supertonic trill concluding with a sequence of distorted authentic cadences.

Lament, the second movement, is delicate and tuneful. With a subtle melody driven by tempo fluctuations, its main purpose is to explore harmony—the right harmony at the right time.

Dances comprises of four parts: an introduction, a first dance, a second dance, and a coda, all of which are inspired by arabesque sonorities. The introduction begins slow and speeds up to a large cadence, at which point the first dance begins, played primarily by the cor anglais. This upbeat dance melts away into the second dance, which is more hypnotic and at times confused. Finally, a stately passage with a march-like rhythm leads us to the closing.

Distant Light is about longing, longing for a better future, longing for what is beyond our reach. Serene gestures are passed between the instruments, and biting dissonances creep up. Other parts of this movement are rather placid—almost glacial. When the

clarinet's opening plea returns, the light is nearly too distant to remember, and our desires are left forgotten.

Combat is a brazen movement. Structured mainly as a rondo, it grinds away with the bass sound augmented by the baritone saxophone. Though at times bouncy and even playful, the music always returns to the roar of the main theme. Finally with this, the last movement, the piece comes to a crashing end.

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Out of respect for the performers and those audience members around you, please turn all beepers, cell phones and watches to their silent mode. Thank you.