

CSU, Stanislaus
College of the Arts presents:

An Electronica Concert Experience

with
The CSU Stanislaus Scratch Band
Stuart Sims, conductor
Dustin Soiseth, guest conductor
and
Mason Bates / Masonic
Composer / DJ

PROGRAM

******Electronica interludes by Masonic & Marsbassman******

Time's Gravity (2001) Tanner Menard (b. 1978)
~for percussion quartet and amplified piano~

New York Counterpoint (1985) Steve Reich (b. 1936)
~for amplified clarinet and tape~
Andrew Crotto, clarinets

Glassworks (1981) Philip Glass (b. 1937)
I. Floe
II. Closing

Music for Pieces of Wood (1973) Steve Reich

“Elegy No. 2” Mark-Anthony Turnage (b. 1960)
from *Two Elegies Framing a Shout* (1994)
~for soprano saxophone and piano~
Daniel Baudino, saxophone **John Hillebrandt, piano**

Omnivorous Furniture (2004) Mason Bates (b. 1977)
~for sinfonietta and electronica~
Mason Bates, electronica

NOTES

The United States in the early 21st century is a culture of wildly diverse influences, and unprecedented newness and possibility brought to us by technology. This is perhaps most evident in the realm of artistic expression, as practicing artists are faced with a rapidly changing landscape and the proposition of integrating the very old with the very new. In music, exploring the frontier between divergent traditions can often be difficult, but if one is to craft a tradition that embraces the reality of our culture as it exists—all aspects of it—the challenge is well worth embracing.

Tonight's concert is one answer, an attempt at integrating some of these different influences into a single, continuous musical experience. Whether audiences are ready for such experiences or not, composers and artists are creating them, and this concert features an artist at the forefront of such efforts. Each piece on tonight's program is by a composer still living, and represents fundamentally important musical influences—most prominently American minimalism and electronica—that each of us will recognize as sounds heard in even our most mundane daily experiences. The individual works are connected by improvised electronica, so that the concert is a seamless experience.

Time's Gravity (2001)

Time's Gravity is a work much about the bodily experience of music as well as the fusion of seemingly irreconcilably different musical origins. Solidly in the American experimentalist tradition—a musical tradition fathered by Charles Ives—*time's gravity* is radical in using a subversive form of popular music as its source material: electronic dance music. Composed in the same year that raves were first criminalized in the United States (in New Orleans), the structure of the work is founded on the idea of metric displacement, a technique common in DJ electronic music mixes in which the relationship between upbeats and downbeats is blurred, subverting the listener's perception of which is which. The title has double meaning, as the work dedicated to the memory of Celia Hogan, the mother of a close friend of the composer's. In that sense "time's gravity" refers to the temporal, temporary nature of life.

New York Counterpoint (1985)

(from the composer) *New York Counterpoint* was composed during the summer of 1985. The duration is about 11 minutes. The piece is a continuation of the ideas found in *Vermont Counterpoint* (1982), where as soloist plays against a pre-recorded tape of him or her self. In *New York Counterpoint* the soloist pre-records ten clarinet and bass clarinet parts and then plays a final 11th part live against the tape. The compositional procedures include several that occur in my earlier music. The opening pulses ultimately come from the opening of *Music for 18 Musicians* (1976). The use of interlocking repeated melodic

patterns played by multiples of the same instrument can be found in my earliest works, *Piano Phase* (for 2 pianos or 2 marimbas) and *Violin Phase* (for 4 violins) both from 1967. In the nature of the patterns, their combination harmonically, and in the faster rate of change, the piece reflects my recent works, particularly *Sextet* (1985). *New York Counterpoint* is in three movements: fast, slow, fast, played one after the other without pause. The change of tempo is abrupt and in the simple relation of 1:2. The piece is in the meter $3/2 = 6/4 (=12/8)$. As is often the case when I write in this meter, there is an ambiguity between whether one hears measures of 3 groups of 4 eighth notes, or 4 groups of 3 eighth notes. In the last movement of *New York Counterpoint* the bass clarinets function to accent first one and then the other of these possibilities while the upper clarinets essentially do not change. The effect, by change of accent, is to vary the perception of that which in fact is not changing.

***Glassworks* (1981)**

(from the composer) *Glassworks* was my debut record on CBS. This music was written for the recording studio, though a number of the pieces soon found their way into the Ensemble repertory. A six-"movement" work, *Glassworks* was intended to introduce my music to a more general audience than had been familiar with it up to then.

In *Glassworks* Glass exchanges his usual hybrid ensemble of electronic keyboards and acoustic instruments for an all-acoustic ensemble, lending his gently undulating patterns a sense of warmth.

***Music for Pieces of Wood* (1973)**

(from the composer) *Music for Pieces of Wood* grows out of the same roots as *Clapping Music*: a desire to make music with the simplest possible instruments. The claves, or cylindrical pieces of hard wood, used here were selected for their particular pitches (A, B, C-sharp, D-sharp, and D-sharp an octave above), and for their resonant timbre. This piece is one of the loudest I have ever composed, but uses no amplification whatsoever. The rhythmic structure is based entirely on the process of rhythmic "build-ups" or the substitution of beats for rests, and is in three sections of decreasing pattern length: $6/4, 4/4, 3/4$.

"Elegy No. 2" from *Two Elegies Framing a Shout* (1994)

British composer Mark-Anthony Turnage draws from a number of diverse influences in his music, most prominently American blues and jazz. "Elegy No. 2" is the third of three movements in this larger work, and shows Turnage's beautiful crafting of blues elements into a haunting, lyrical study.

***Omnivorous Furniture* (2004)**

(from the composer) *Omnivorous Furniture* exists at the junction between a world of morphing electronic beats—generally described as *electronica*—and the rich and varied textures of a chamber orchestra.

While these two musical spaces usually exist on opposite ends of the universe, my activities in both have convinced me of some pregnant possibilities. The thumping *electronica* beats of an underground club—which are other-worldly sounds to some listeners of acoustic, two-hundred year-old instruments—can provide an interesting stasis that an orchestra’s myriad textures can explore. Some might even proclaim the orchestra the finest synthesizer ever made. This can create thrilling possibilities when paired with the rhythmic contagion of *electronica*.

The work is organized around several “omnivorous moments,” when material previously perceived as background—the wallpaper or “furniture” surrounding the foreground material—ultimately consumes the entire texture. The fleeting pentatonic tune that opens the work, for example, is chased by a variety of staccato, pointillistic gestures that point the listener’s attention away from any sustained notes. But these sustained notes in the orchestra begin to fuse together rapidly in the moments preceding the first climax, creating a sonic wall that shatters the beats that have dominated the first quarter of the piece.

The orchestral interlude that then ensues is a feature that reappears with greater significance. Indeed, the form of the work is quite simple: progressively longer orchestral interludes interrupt progressively shorter beat sections. Superimposed over this is the gradual elongation of the opening motive, from its bouncy and capricious first moments to its long, lyrical flowering in the work’s core. This melody, having reached its expressive peak during the orchestra’s longest escape from the *electronica* beats, then begins to dissolve. Pulled lower and lower by sliding pitch, it collapses into the work’s final ambient space in a kind of chemical meltdown of pitch and texture. Flowering imperceptibly from this surreal ambient landscape, a reincarnation of the work’s opening material swiftly brings us to the end.