

2021 John Donald Robb Composers' Symposium - Monday, May 3, 7:30 PM

Grace Weaver – *Arrival*

Arrival takes a simple theme and presents gradual changes over time, until the theme is spread across the trio. This piece draws on the minimalist idea of direct repetition of a theme and making slight changes over time. Just as we adjust to one theme, something else changes if only slightly. By the end of the piece those small changes have had a large consequence. Slowly all the players are absorbed into an evolution of the theme. *Arrival* uses timbre to disguise or highlight the specific role each instrument plays in this texture.

Doug Falk - *FIGHT!*

(The eponymous hero is always ... ready ... to ...)

Action movies tropes have a strong presence in this short piece for flute/piccolo and clarinet/bass clarinet.

1. Catches them off guard and escapes

"You say this has been another typical day for you, huh?" "Uh! No! It's been better than most."

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989)

2. Runs toward danger and engages with the enemy

"If it bleeds, we can kill it" Predator (1987)

3. Lines up the fatal shot, but spares the villain

"He's a joke. He's a motherfuckin' joke." Bad Boys (1995)

4. Justice is served

"And he shall smite the wicked and plunge them into a fiery pit." The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1996)

Joshua Aguiar - *Vesperpool*

Vesperpool is a work for solo guitar in which the performer plays their instrument across their knees in the style of a dobro or steel guitar. A movable bridge in the form of a mechanical pencil is used to change timbre, shape the lines, and even change "key" at around the halfway point. The image I tried to invoke when composing this piece was that of a large reflective lake, teeming with fish. The fish are so active that the reflections on the surface of the water are always rippling and chaotic to any who watch.

Jonathan Spiller - *Trio*

Doug Falk - *Hilde und Sabine (Zartbitter)*

This piece began from a desire to write bittersweet music - a combination of uplifting and sadness. The German term *Zartbitter*, which serves as my subtitle, literally translates to tender/bitter. This is apropos for two reasons: my wife is of German heritage (she speaks German fluently and she and our daughters have EU citizenship) and it ties thematically with the program of the piece. A melody that achieves a balance of tenderness and bitterness is very rare.

To provide a structure to the piece, I decided to use my two daughters as an additional impetus. Their characters are very different: Hilde is intense and focused. She can be stubborn, but she has perseverance and is precocious. Her younger sister, Sabine, is loving and relaxed. She can be manipulative, but she acts most frequently from a loving place. Listen for the interplay of their characters with the sharp percussive sounds alternating with traditional harp technique.

Sourena Sefati - *Duo*

The duo is based on my inspiration of the birth and life of a bird using some extended techniques, atonal elements, and some of the Eastern rhythmic patterns.

Christopher Orphal - *Siaynoq*

“Siaynoq means giving honor to one who speaks with sincerity. It signifies the remembrance of things which are spoken with sincerity... Siaynoq also contains the idea of light as that which reveals reality. You continue to shine light on what you see... Siaynoq also stands for fermentation because reality – or the belief that you know a reality, which is the same thing – always sets up a ferment in the universe.”

– from Frank Herbert’s *God Emperor of Dune*

Gabriel Gonzales - *Axaxaxas mlö*

Axaxaxas mlö was composed over the course of two and a half months while staying at my childhood home shortly after my wife gave birth to our son. I rented a bass and spent a few weeks recording and altering sounds from the instrument, and these comprise the entire fixed media aspect of the piece. The form and production techniques were informed exclusively by experimental pop and hip-hop. The name of the piece is one Jorge Luis Borges used to convey various meanings in his book of short stories, *Ficciones*.