

July 2009

Featured Work:

Mark DeSimone, *Concerto for the Young Adventurer*

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Concerto for the Young Adventurer is a four-movement work written for cello, vibraphone and piano. Its themes are youthful adventure and exploration. Although the work is not programmatic in the strict sense, each movement is titled to guide the listener through a possible interpretation of the music's meaning. Each instrument is featured in several places, and all three provide supporting material when not in the spotlight. As a whole, the work is symphonic in its structure. Each movement serves its purpose in the larger picture, while all can function independently from one another. Recurring ideas link the movements together thematically and unify the work.

"Prologue" introduces the ensemble, sets the tone of the piece, introduces the harmonic and rhythmic vocabulary, and foreshadows several thematic ideas that appear prominently in later movements. The form of the movement is similar to sonata allegro, although the development section explores beyond the primary and secondary themes. This could also be considered a ternary form.

The material in "*Crystal Cavern*" is derived from several thematic cells presented in the beginning expository section of the movement. This movement's form is ternary. It can be seen as a free-form exploration of the motives and themes introduced in the opening section, although its modified recapitulation provides a partial sense of closure.

"*Spiral Factory*" is a farcical scherzo. Its pitch material comes directly from the Fibonacci Sequence, which produces a repeating pattern of 24 pitches. In that set of pitches, every note in the 12-note chromatic scale is used, except for F sharp. As a result of this glaring omission, the composer purposefully uses F sharp as a pedal tone towards the end of the movement. The form of this movement is ternary as well. The opening and closing sections are angular declarations of the aforementioned sequence of pitches, and the middle section is based on the inverse of that sequence, although only 17 of the 24 pitches are used. In addition, the vibraphone uses the Fibonacci Sequence rhythmically – this usage will figure prominently in the final movement of the piece.



The musical notation shows two staves of music. The first staff starts at measure 115 and features a sequence of notes with rhythmic values indicated by numbers 1, 1, 2, 3, 5 above the notes. The second staff starts at measure 120 and features a sequence of notes with rhythmic values indicated by numbers 13, 8, 5, 3, 2, 1, 1 above the notes. The notation includes dynamic markings like *p* and *cresc. poco a poco*.

an example of overlapping rhythmic Representations of both increasing and decreasing Fibonacci sequence, Cello

(*cont. on pg 2*)

“Crackpot’s Creation” begins with a limited set of pitches and rhythmic cells and builds off of these for a while, before arriving at a rhythmic representation of the Fibonacci Sequence. Next, a macabre dance-like section in 5/8 time reinterprets the opening gestures. Contrasting this is a lyrical fugal section introduced by the cello that ultimately gives way to an amalgamation of several established thematic elements. The opening material is never recapitulated in its original form, although the repeated two note gesture is basic enough that it can be found in many places throughout the movement, and even elsewhere in the work.

- o Mark’s Thesis project, *Concerto for the Young Adventurer*, and other original compositions were performed at Marks graduate recital earlier this May along with a performance by Mark on Trombone with his Jazz group.

Announcements:

- Congratulations to Chin Ting (Patrick) Chan, Jason McChristian, and Mark DeSimone who all graduated from San Jose State University earlier this May. Patrick, Jason, and Mark all presented superb culmination recitals this past semester. Chin Ting (Patrick) will be pursuing his masters degree in composition at Bowling Green State University in Ohio with a teaching assistantship in music theory. Jason McChristian will be continuing his studies at San Jose State University with Dr. Pablo Furman as a graduate student.
- Jason Thorpe Buchanan will be attending the Brevard Summer Music Festival in North Carolina this June through August. Jason was one of only fifteen applicants chosen to participate in the composition department and in addition, will be receiving a merit scholarship. Daniel Foley will be participating as a classical guitarist in the CSU Summer Arts Program this July in central California and has been awarded a scholarship by CSU Summer Arts towards tuition.



The renowned Tad Wind Symphony at the world premier of Jason Thorpe Buchanan’s *A Zarzuela & Other Lost Works* in Tokyo World Stage in Japan earlier this June.

- Next fall, winter, and spring, Daniel Foley will be attending the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Trossingen, Germany as part of a study abroad program offered by the California State University Office of International Programs and the state of Baden-Württemberg. While at the Hochschule, Daniel will be studying classical guitar performance as well as the traditional canon of university and conservatory music subjects. During his stay in Germany, Daniel will be receiving a generous scholarship stipend from the Baden-Württemberg Stipendium as made possible by the Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg.

Individual Articles and News:

Chin Ting (Patrick) Chan

As I look back on this previous semester (my last semester) in San José State University, I realize that it was a rather intense one. I did not compose much music, but I “composed” a huge recital with 1 hour and 30 minutes worth of music. I think that it consisted of all the “business” aspects of being a composer, which included: looking for performers, printing and sending them music, constantly annoying them by e-mailing twice a day, setting up rehearsal times which had to simultaneously match the schedules of up to five performers, remembering rehearsal times, being nice and not nice, keeping track on the progress of my pieces, printing posters, asking people to come (promoting), etc. These things all come down to a word, composing. Inevitably, they take much more time than actually writing notes. After this experience, I realize that as composers, we rarely have time to actually write music. My only advice for those of you who are doing a recital, is to make sure you start early or even start rehearsing a piece before it’s finished! We composers and performers never have enough time, and in reality, we get even less time than expected. I think we composers are so fortunate while we are all in college and can ask performers to do us “favors” and perform our works.

After being very busy with graduation and taking my mum, sister (they came from Hong Kong for two weeks) and girlfriend many places, I could finally find some time for myself. I have decided to compose, not with musical notes though, but with my camera. In August, I will start pursuing my master degree in composition at Bowling Green State University, where I will teach music theory.



Chin Ting Chan at the Spring 2009 San Jose State Graduation Commencement Ceremony with his sister and mother (left) and composition instructor, Dr. Brian Belet (right).



Jason Thorpe Buchanan (left) working with Takayoshi "Tad" Suzuki of the Tad Wind Symphony.

Jason Thorpe Buchanan

Two weeks ago, I had the opportunity to visit Japan and attend a performance of a work that I had written during my undergraduate degree. The performance in Tokyo by the critically acclaimed Tad Wind Symphony, a professional ensemble in its 16th season, will be released on volume seven of their live CD series later this year. I am very grateful for the good fortune of having my music performed by such an extraordinarily talented group of musicians; in particular, Maestro Takayoshi “Tad” Suzuki, who has greatly influenced me.

Looking back on my experience in Japan, observing the four-day rehearsal process was greatly beneficial in achieving a deeper knowledge of wind ensemble writing, particularly orchestration. Even at the first rehearsal I was shocked by their tone quality, balance, and power that shook the hall, not to mention the degree of musicality achieved. My time there drastically changed my view on composition, and I am glad to have met many world-class musicians, who I hope to continue collaboration with in the near future.

Throughout my travels this summer, I have found it difficult to maintain a high level of consistency in my output. In four days, I will leave for the Brevard Institute of Music and Festival, where I will study with Kevin Puts and Robert Aldridge. I have learned that the composition program is quite demanding; three new music concerts and an orchestral reading session -- with all works to be written, copied, and rehearsed while in residency for six-weeks. I am *(cont. on pg 2)*

looking forward to the challenge and intend to devote myself fully to composition for the entire duration.

My current project, *The Gods of Pegāna* (A Tone Poem for Nine Musicians) is based on a 1905 novel of the same title by Irish author Lord Dunsany. It is an alternative creation fantasy that proposes: “The maker of all small gods, who is MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, who made the gods and hath thereafter rested”, will “one day forget to rest, and destroy the gods whom he hath made...” The entire work will be directly proportional to the novel’s 32 chapters. My current preoccupation with symmetry and proportion has shone through in my sketches, with much of the harmonic, rhythmic and thematic materials being of a synthetic, symmetrical structure.

Jason McChristian

Though I often have little restraint discussing politics with friends and colleagues, I have worked hard to keep political views, at least directly, out of my compositions. However, my latest composition, *Trial and Testament*, was directly inspired by the exhilaration I felt soon after President Barack Obama’s inauguration speech earlier this year.

Begun only a few minutes after watching the momentous occasion on television, this work for orchestra captures both feelings of great burden and promise for the future. The first theme of this piece is recognized by an ascending augmented triad, while the second theme is marked by its initial neighbor-tone gesture and a distinct wave-shaped contour. Throughout the work these two themes are varied and developed in various textures and musical styles.

One of the difficulties I encountered in this piece was balancing the ending in relation to the scale of the rest of the piece. Proportion is an important element of musical form and I find that in many of my pieces the musical ideas should begin to wrap-up around a third into the composition. Initially, I thought this piece would end at eleven minutes, but after taking a few days away from it and focusing on other compositions, I found that

the closing section still needed another minute to sum up the material. I resisted creating new material as this would only compound the problem at hand. Using the most basic yet recognizable elements of each theme, the augmented triad and neighbor-tone gesture, I found ways of creating a sense of urgency and intensity. I eventually combined these elements in the final pages of the work and, with the augmented triad, create a sense of overwhelming uncertainty and cautious optimism.



The San Jose State University Orchestra, under the baton of Dr. Janet Averet, and audience eagerly await the world premiere of Jason McChristian’s *Vis Machina* in San Jose State’s concert hall.

Daniel Foley

Now that summer is here and the stressors and pressures of the semester have passed, I’ve had a bit more time to relax and to think. In the heat of continually encroaching deadlines and high demand coming from all directions, it can be very easy to get in the habit of putting your head down and pushing, battling and struggling through your work all without thinking. Sure there might be the recurring thought of, “ok what’s next on the to do list?”, or “is A flat really the note I want in the cello in the fourth beat of the second bar?”, or “practice, you must practice!”, but some of the more important thoughts like “what’s really the best use of my time right now?”, and “should I really be obsessing so much about that one A flat in the cello at the expense of the big picture?”, or “how can I utilize body and technique in a way that will actually help me get the most out of my practicing?” seem to get thrown out the window in our mad rush to get things done. I find it a further

irony that these important considerations and thoughts often get thrown aside at precisely the moment when they are most needed; in the episodes where our resources of time are in the highest demand.

The arrival of summer has also afforded me time to begin study of the Alexander Technique. The Alexander Technique is closely associated with the best, most efficient, and tension free use of the body, but what I've found in the few weeks since I began my study, is that the Alexander Technique also provides a powerful tool to maximize the efficiency of the mind and the way in which we go about living our lives. To me, the essence of the technique is the development of the

ability to bring our own actions out of the grip of deeply established patterns and gain conscious control over our thoughts and movements, freeing ourselves from the slavery of often unconscious habits.

I'm very intrigued by what I've experienced thus far with the technique and believe it has great potential for helping me become a less tense, more efficient, and happier composer, guitarist, and person. If you're interested in the Alexander Technique, I'd highly encourage you to look into it; there are plenty of easily accessible resources and most importantly qualified teachers thought the US; and, if you're a student, I'd recommend starting now, before the semester starts creeping back up on us and time starts slipping away.

Upcoming performances:

- *I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed (for horn, soprano & piano)*, by Jason Thorpe Buchanan
Brevard Music Festival, New Songs Concert, Straus Auditorium, Brevard, NC - July 12, 7:30pm
- *The Gods of Pegāna (A Tone Poem for Nine Musicians)*, by Jason Thorpe Buchanan
Brevard Music Festival, ITCH Ensemble, Straus Auditorium, Brevard, NC - July 16, 7:30
- *Music for Four Saxophones*, by Jason Thorpe Buchanan
Brevard Music Festival, Straus Auditorium, Brevard, NC - August 6, 4:00 PM

Recently Completed & Upcoming Works:

Jason Thorpe Buchanan

The Gods of Pegāna, Part I of IV
(A Tone Poem For Nine Musicians)

Three Studies for Solo Piano

Daniel Foley

Movements 1 & 2 from *Saxophone Quartet no. 1*

an excerpt
from Daniel
Foley's most
recent
project,
Saxophone
Quartet no. 1

Thank you for viewing our newsletter and showing your interest and support of Melos Music. The upcoming months promise to be exciting and demanding for many of us here at Melos as we prepare to enter new environments and face new challenges. For those of us who have just graduated or are moving away, another leg of our journey is complete and it's time for us to continue along a new path. Yes, we all have maps and plans for where we are going and how we would like to get there, but in all honesty, we need to remember that there are many unforeseen obstacles and also many unforeseen beautiful things lying ahead and that over time our direction or destination may change. As we all continue changing and growing as composers, musicians, and people, we hope you'll stop by the site, take a look at our newsletter, or write us an e-mail every once in a while to see where our paths are taking us.

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Best of wishes,
Daniel Foley, Newsletter Editor
Melos Music