

TWO + TWO //

COMPOSITION NOTES AND COMPOSER BIOGRAPHIES

AWAKENING FIRE (2006)

Jason Stanford, Canada

"I wanted to write a piece that permits the musicians to explore the sonic landscape of their many instruments, music requiring a kind of timbral/sonic virtuosity. At the same time, I wanted to also include sections to showcase characteristics percussion is best known for: pulse-pounding, driving, and exciting rhythm. These multiple levels of musical virtuosity afford the musicians the opportunity to conjure the vast spectrum of expressive possibilities of sound, from the most transitory, delicate, fragile and ornate sonic nuances, to the most primal ground-shaking cacophony that threatens to shake the building down.

"In composing the digital audio portion of the piece, I wanted the audio to adorn the often fragile timbres and textures created by the quartet, rather than draw attention away from the acoustic instruments. So, I decided to only use sounds from recordings of the natural world, I began to pick and choose my sonic palate from a number of field recordings, and an obvious pattern began to emerge: the source material is derived from either: earth, wind, water and fire. The audio includes the sounds of babbling brooks, rolling steams and river rapids, the sounds of a person sloshing around in hip waders, small to very large waterfalls, low rumbling earthquakes, falling rocks in a landslide, cracking fires, rain, hail, thunder, lightning, and gale force winds whistling around the concert hall."

Originally from Kingston, Toronto-based composer Jason Stanford (b.1976) has composed works for all manner of forces, which have been performed in Canada and the USA. His catalogue comprises a wide variety of music for soloists and chamber ensembles of all sizes, including a great number of live electronic and electroacoustic music compositions. He has composed a number of large-scale compositions, including an opera scene, works for symphony orchestra, and even some music for animation and video games. Through his work he seeks to explore evocative, visceral, and at times highly disparate stylistic and musical/sound elements and to distill them into a unified and meaningful whole.

Jason holds both Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the University of Western Ontario, where his teachers included Peter Paul Koprowski, David Myska, and Omar Daniel. In 2007, Jason earned his Doctorate in Music Composition from the University of Toronto under the advisement of Christos Hatzis. His most recent commissions include a percussion quartet with surround audio for The TorQ Percussion Quartet and a piece for bassoon and electronics. At present, Jason is composing a number of new works for musicians and ensembles in the Toronto Area.

TAKNARA (2009)

Nebosja Jovan Zivkovic, Serbia/Germany

"At the beginning of 2009, I got a call from Spanish "TUOPALI DUO" from Tenerife, who asked me if I could compose two pieces: one for percussion duo and another for percussion quartet. A couple of months later, our conversation resulted in a commission of those two works by Auditorio de Tenerife.

"During the summer 09, I have started writing sketches, collecting various ideas, and thinking of possible concepts of the pieces, and already had some pages written down. I was very concerned about quartet especially, being informed that TAKNARA actually is a student ensemble, while I usually write for professional groups and orchestras. My concerns immediately disappeared after I have heard four young players from TAKNARA in September in Italy, where they have accompanied me in one of my pieces. Even more, their enthusiasm, their desire to professionally study and present every piece of music they work on, has enormously inspired me. So, my initial skepticism turned into euphoric enthusiasm, and desire to compose music that is really connected with that particular group. The name "TAKNARA" has been essential for the compositional process.

"After learning that this is considered to be an old Name for TENERIFE, I have studied all available online resources about Canary Islands, their geological history, volcanic eruptions that have led to building the islands, etc. Interesting "myths" (like one that Canarias are rests of Atlantis) were also inspiring for my composing process. And last but not least, the name itself "tak-na-ra" served as a rhythmic motif for the second part of the piece.

"The composition itself is about 11 minutes long and consists of two parts. I would like to see it as a percussive homage to the Canarias (first part) and particularly Tenerife (second part). The music has descriptive character, especially the first (slow) movement. After the thundering opener (sinking of the Atlantis into the sea) I keep the tranquillo and ocean-deep atmospheres, using contrast between low and deep marimba sound and ocean-drum on one side, and metal and glass instruments on the another side (deep ocean and reflection of the water in the moon nights?). Into this mixture, I have built-in sounds of Canarias (some folks rhythms, whistle language of Gomera) and also undersea volcano eruptions (most notable with the use of bass drum). After six symbolic flashing cymbal-sounds (representing genesis of six Canary Islands), the final movement is dedicated solely to the seventh and largest island TENERIFE. This movement is based on simple rhythmical motif of only three notes. I also decided to use voice in the piece, hoping to support the percussion instruments with the most intensive human instrument. It is my hope that it is possible to listen and understand this music without having to know the "story behind it"; only then the music speaks for itself."

Nebojsa Jovan Zivkovic is one of the worlds most performed composers for Percussion music. At the present time, he has nearly three hundreds performances of his compositions every year in almost fifty countries world wide. His groundbreaking compositions for marimba and percussion have set new performing standards, and his captivating and energetic performances have influenced generations of marimbists. Many of Zivkovic's compositions (including *Ilijas*, *Ultimatum 1*, *Trio per uno*) have become standards in contemporary percussion repertoire world-wide. His orchestral works are performed by orchestras world wide such as the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington, BBC Concert Orchestra, London, Orchestra di Santa Cecilia, Rome and The Nothern Sinfonia in Newcastle, UK, Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra. He is frequently commissioned by many soloists, orchestras and institutions, including two commissions from the German Ministry of Culture (Rheinland-Pfalz and Baden-Württemberg). The new millennium started successfully with two premiere performances of chamber music pieces in London's Wigmore Hall: *Born to beAT Wild* for trumpet and percussion and *Quasi una sonata* for piano and percussion, composed for Hakan Hardenberger, Evelyn Glennie and Emanuel Ax. Beside his concert works, he has composed many compositions for younger players. Especially pieces from his "FUNNY MALLETS SERIES" have become some of the world's most successful works for mallets instruments.

IN THE FIRE OF CONFLICT (2008)

Christos Hatzis, Canada

“Although my own spiritual focus is on the incoming Aquarian eon, expected to be an eon of peace and spiritual enlightenment, I am also aware of the fact that we are still in the closing years of the Piscean age, the age of enantiodromia or conflict; that things will get worse before they get better...much worse; that there will come a time soon when our faith in God will be the only life-vest that will protect us from drowning spiritually in the vast sea of hopelessness that surrounds us. This is the story I wanted to tell through this work, but I wanted to say it not from the vantage point of spiritual certainty, but from the impenetrable darkness of someone struggling to stay afloat amidst this sea of hopelessness. As I was trying to determine how to enter this state of mind, I remembered a visitor to my MySpace site a few months earlier, a American Christian rap group called Poetik Disciples.

“I was always fascinated by the prosodic rhythmic discourse of hip-hop music, but not by its implicit endorsement of misogyny and violence that one so often encounters in the in hip-hop lyrics. Poetik Disciples used the same musical techniques to essentially create devotional songs and that was quite inspirational to me. I contacted the leader of the group, Steve Henry, who it turned out had experienced personally the “bottom of the well” through gang violence and loss, and asked him if he could help me with this project. A few days later he sent me some rap tracks that he created for this particular project and I knew then that my work would be very much emanating from his specific material which has been incorporated into the audio playback component of the work (two versions of the playback exist: traditional stereo and 5 channel SurroundSound). In the Fire of Conflict is the first work in which I have used rap music but I am sure it will not be the last. It is in two movements following one another without interruption and the live instruments weave constantly around the rap lyrics sometimes drawing their melodic contours from the prosodic contours of the spoken text.”

With two recent Juno awards and a SOCAN Award to his credit and a slew of recent commissions by internationally recognized touring artists such as pop baritone George Dalaras, violinist Hilary Hahn, percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie, soprano Suzie Leblanc, flutist Susan Hoepfner, the Pacifica Quartet and Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra among others, Christos Hatzis is widely recognized as “one of the most important composers writing today” (CBC) and “a contemporary Canadian Master” (the New Yorker.) An unusually large number of performances and CD recordings of his music for Naxos, EMI, Analekta, Sony, CBC and other major and independent labels as well wide internet distribution of his audio playlist (over one million hits since 2008) have garnered a loyal international following for his music. Hatzis' best known composition, the multimedia music theatre work Constantinople, is currently signed by IMG and touring internationally, having been presented in venues like the Royal Opera House in London and the International Festival of Arts and Ideas in the USA. He is currently working on Redemption, a cycle of orchestral and mixed media chamber works that are meant to be performed as a group during the course of a single day. Hatzis' music is influenced by early Christian spirituality, Pythagorean and Hermetic ideas, his own Byzantine music heritage, world cultures and religions, and various classical, jazz and pop music idioms from the past and present. He is a believer in borderless culture and the uninhibited flow of cultural information. A professor of composition at the University of Toronto, Hatzis writes extensively on these and other related subjects and is on the finishing stages of writing a memoir called Awakening Through Music. All of Hatzis' music is available through Promethean Editions.

THIRD CONSTRUCTION (1941)

John Cage, United States of America

Third Construction is dedicated to Xenia, who was married to Cage at the time and a performer in the ensemble for its premier. One of the more intriguing aspects about this piece is how it revolves around the number 24. There are 24 large sections throughout the work. Within each of these 24 larger sections are 24 measures. In each part, the phrase structure follows different a proportion series for each player based on the same numbers. For example as player one's structure is 2+8+2+4+5+3, player two is 5+3+2+8+2+4, and so on. It is also unusual for its lack of "roll" strokes in any of the parts; none of the members of Cage's ensemble were trained percussionists, and thus weren't able to play a traditional drum roll. *Third Construction* is noted as one of the last pieces to use time/structure as a compositional basis before Cage moved to elements of chance and indeterminacy.

John Cage (1912-1992), as an artist and composer, earned a reputation for pushing the envelope of traditional music. He was especially interested in the fuzzy boundary between music and noise, and often incorporated "found" objects and sounds into his compositions. This approach to art music was well suited for percussion ensemble exploration in a time period where writing for percussion as a feature instrument in a solo or chamber setting was still uncommon. While he was not the first composer to write for percussion ensemble, his works for this genre are among the oldest major works for percussion and have therefore played a important role in the development of percussion ensemble repertoire and performance as we know it today.