



SCI

Society of Composers, Inc.

... dedicated to the
promotion, composition,
performance, understanding
and dissemination of
new and contemporary
music ...

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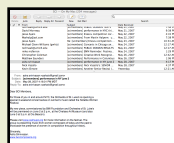


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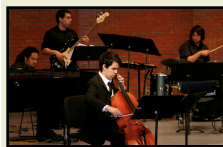
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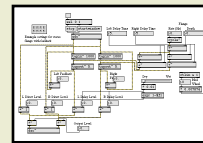


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Society of Composers, Inc.
SCI is an organization for composers. Our membership categories include full member, student member, retired member or life member.

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D O N A L D E R B : M E M O R I A L

Donald Erb: Memorial

By **Larry Barnes**
Transylvania University

It is with great sadness and pride that I write this memorial to my life-time mentor and friend Donald Erb. I first heard Don Erb's music at age 15, when I attended a recital by my piano teacher James Smolko at the Cleveland Institute of Music. The piece was *Correlations*, and the year was 1966. When this big guy in a uncomfortably tight suit went to the stage to shake Smolko's hand, smiling broadly, I asked my dad innocently who that was. When he responded "the composer," my mouth dropped. A living composer? He was the first I had ever seen. Two years later when Erb was composer-in-residence at my high school, I had already been offered a scholarship to Eastman. But he heard my early efforts and suggested CIM. From that time to his death, Don was an enormous influence on my career and on my life. And I know many of his students who received similarly fierce guidance and loyalty.

Erb's greatest musical contributions lie in his fascination with timbre as an equal partner to pitch and rhythm; in

his insistence that improvisation be subservient to his keen awareness of time; in his principle that any sound a musician makes can be musical; and in his use of dramatic gesture and underlying pulse to grab the listener and force him to join him in an irresistible momentum. His music moves forward with the propulsion of a distinctly American sensibility, and occasionally overcomes one in the manner of one of the movements from his *Symphony of Overtures*, "Rhinoceros."

Reviews of his music from around the planet refer to its emotional drive and intensity, distinct voice, and direct communication. One of the best descriptions I've seen comes from James H. North of *Fanfare* magazine, describing *Ritual Observances*:

"...Erb's best work [has a quality] which I can only describe as an inner life; one feels oneself to be in the presence of a living, breathing animal, sinuous and muscular, and of enormous vitality. It is a feeling one gets from *Le Sacre du printemps*, although Erb's music is totally different from Stravinsky's. This is awe-inspiring music, which stretches the boundaries of the listener's imagination. It is not for the faint of heart."

Not for the faint of heart, indeed. Erb's creations exploded the listener's expectations, releasing emotions in all directions, demanding reactions. There are few neutral observers to his art. I attended the Cleveland Orchestra premiere of *The Seventh Trumpet*, his most-performed orchestral work. Tapping with fingernails on precious expensive string instruments that had just rendered Mozart, to create the sound of locusts? Good god! The resulting cacophony of cheers, boos, applause, whistles, bravos and catcalls atomized the audience into chaotic ions of euphoria and disgust. There were no "safety zones," no camps—wild enthusiasm sat next to virile repulsion.

One could say the same for Erb himself. Highly opinionated, dynamic and uncharacteristically outgoing for a composer of his time, he was rarely on the sidelines and rarely passive about anything, from music to gardening to bourbon and soda. His presence in a room dominated all conversation, and rarely left opponents standing. He certainly had no problem telling me when my music wasn't up to standard and was equally candid when it was. His enthusiasm for good student work was

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ANACRISIS:
Meet the New Assistant Editor for the SCI Newsletter

note from the Editor: I'm pleased to have Benjamin Williams as the assistant editor of the newsletter. I'm sure that his contributions and service to SCI will be the production of the best newsletter for us going forward. We will be greatly appreciative for all his input. It is important to the **Member News & Activities** section of the newsletter. Submissions may be sent directly to him at benjamin@williamscomposer.com.

About the Newsletter

Editors: Anthony Cornicello
Benjamin Williams

Circulation: 1400

Access: available on the SCI website at
<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/data/publications/newsletter/current.pdf>

Frequency of Publication: bimonthly

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How to Submit Items to the Newsletter

Articles: The Newsletter welcomes submissions of articles to run in future issues. Articles, if accepted, may be edited for length and content. Please include a photo with all submissions if possible (photo may be of author).

Member News + Photos: Please send all member news and activities with a photo. Submitted items may be edited.

Ideas/Suggestions: The Editors welcome any other ideas or suggestions.

Submit to the newsletter via email at:
newsletter@societyofcomposers.org



Upcoming SCI Events

2008 Student National Conference

October 10-11, 2008

Ball State University
Muncie, IN

Contact: Benjamin Williams
benjamin@williamscomposer.com
Submission deadline: past

2008 Region VIII Conference October 30-November 1, 2008

California State University, Stanislaus
Turlock, CA

Host: Deborah Kavasch
dkavasch@csustan.edu
Submission deadline: past

2009 Region VI Conference Spring 2009 (dates TBA)

The Bass School of Music at
Oklahoma City University
Oklahoma City, OK
Host: Edward Knight
eknight@okcu.edu

Submission deadline: Varies (See Call)

2009 National Conference

April 2-4, 2009

Sante Fe New Mexico
Host: Steven Paxton
spaxton@csf.edu

Submission deadline: Varies (See Call)

2010 Region VI Conference Spring 2010 (dates TBA)

Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS
Host: Craig Weston
cweston@ksu.edu
Submission deadline: TBA

See our website at

<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/>
for more details.



Internet & Email

www.societyofcomposers.org

The SCI website is an up-to-date source of information:

- Conference dates and submission guidelines
- Contact information and links to member webpages
- Student chapters and opportunities
- CDs and journals produced by SCI
- Details on SCI such as membership options, listings and contacts for officers, regional structure, by-laws, newsletter archives and more...

SCION

SCION is a listing of opportunities on our website exclusively for members. It is updated on a continual basis so that it may be checked at any time for the most current notices. In addition, members are emailed on the first Monday of each month to remind them to visit the site for new or recent postings. The large number of listings is easily managed by a table of contents with links to the individual notices. In-depth coverage; contest listings in full; all items listed until expiration; this is a valuable resource that you may print in its entirety or in part at any time.

John Bilotta, SCION Editor
scion@societyofcomposers.org

[scimembers]

scimembers is a member-driven e-mail mailing list that is intended to facilitate communication between members of the Society on topics of concern to composers of contemporary concert music. It conveys whatever notices or messages are sent by its members, including announcements of performances and professional opportunities, as well as discussions on a wide variety of topics. For more information, including how to join and participate in the listserv:

<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/data/publications/listserv/listserv.html>

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Anthony Cornicello

Message from The Editors

A lot is happening amongst the ranks of SCI members at this time. If you haven't taken the chance to

look at the "SCI Resources" on page 2 of each issue of the Newsletter, now is the time to read about two upcoming conferences in October. This section also always features information about how

to get even more connected with the activities of SCI.

One of the other important forms of communication for the organization is the [scimembers] list-serv (information also on page 2.) We

are pleased to feature a compiled discussion that took place in the past month regarding the place of computers in the composition practice (page 4).

The feature article this month is a must-read (page 1). Larry Barnes has written a wonderfully touching memorial to Donald Erb, who passed away early in the morning on Tuesday, Aug. 12, at his home in Cleveland Heights at age 81. It is always a difficult time when a great friend to so many is lost, and we are happy to be able to remember Don Erb through the writings of Barnes.

As always, we look forward to hearing from SCI members to contribute to the content of this publication. This is particularly true in regards to the SCITings on page 7. We appreciate all of the communications we receive and strive to continue to serve our readership as best we can!

*Anthony Cornicello
Benjamin Williams
Editors, SCI Newsletter*



Benjamin Williams

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Grand Valley State University

Computers and Composing

edited by Benjamin Williams
DMA, The Ohio State University

This discussion took place on the [scimembers] mailing list July 17–August 16, 2008.

The Problem

Wil Pertz

I guess its becoming a forgotten art that composers actually “imagine” music in their heads, and then just write it down.

They are talking about [using music notation software for the purpose of] meticulously generating sounds that resemble performers, not meticulously generated scores which is possible with any computer.

Sounds like we are not far from retiring orchestra players completely.

williampertz@earthlink.net

Responses

Pencil-and-Paper...

George Marie

Composers should sketch everything out with manuscript paper and put the piece into its raw form before inputting their work into a notation program. Working specifically in a notation program generates a false notion of pitch space, as well as an incorrect notion of overall sound.

george-marie@uiowa.edu

Herb Bielawa

In Aspen, in the 1950s, there was a composer who composed a half-hour, twelve-tone symphony away from a piano, and it was quite a good piece.

A lot can be accomplished simply by developing the appropriate habit. I think it takes special concentration (and creativity) to work out a passage—or even whole movement—mentally, directly onto paper.

hbielawa@sfsu.edu

Eric J. Daino

I have found it useful to compose with serial techniques away from any instrument. If one sets out with a fixed methodology or certain “rules” that govern the pitched material in a piece, it frees up the mind to focus on organization and structure and other elements such as timbre.

edaino@UDel.Edu

Troy Lennerd

Stan Funicelli trained me to compose without an instrument and encouraged me to not check my work until I had at least composed for the day. At first it was hit and miss but now, I am about 95% accurate.

troylennerd@me.com

Pitches are Over-rated...

Knechtges, Eric T

The exact same pitches can take on a completely different character when variables like dynamic and timbre are varied. Think of a textbook I-IV-V-I progression in C major. Imagine that played fortissimo by a brass choir, and you might think, “Majestic, heroic, triumphant.” Now imagine it played pianissimo by a clarinet choir, and you might think, “Reverent, contemplative, peaceful.” And then, imagine it played by a string quartet, tremolo and *molto sul pont.*, and you might think, “Angry, ironic, sinister.”

eknechtges@indiana.edu

Paul SanGregory

I teach in Taiwan, where diligent work with fixed-do creates many ears with “perfect” pitch. I’ve taught many of these people composition and have noticed a sometimes disturbing habit: they get stuck on pitches. I tell them to transpose their motives, develop them, move them around and go places with them. But many of those students are reluctant to do that because they like the “sound” (color/timbre) of their motive on the original pitches. I tell them that if they want, they can come back to the original pitches later on, but *please* develop it first. It can be hard for them to do this (!).

Before standardized equal temperament it becomes clear that relationships between notes mean more than the notes themselves. When people approached musical pitches as something more flexible (less standard), I can’t help but think that their basic conceptions of music were different.

paul.sansan@msa.hinet.net

What about the Piano?

Chris Coleman

If you rely on piano playback for your scores, then you are going to have exclusively piano spacings for your scores, even if they are for brass quintet or orchestra. I am constantly talking with my composition students about this limitation.

The piano *cannot* play back at “any other tempo”; try articulating a repeated note as fast as a brass player.

The piano’s great for doing what the piano does. The computer’s great for doing what it does.

coleman@hkbu.edu.hk

Robert Raines

I’m a guitarist and a terrible piano player. When composing on the guitar, I tend to have a hard time breaking away from tried and true voicings and “licks” on that instrument. The piano is better for me as a writing aid because I am so limited in keyboard technique.

It was not so long ago that it was a great stigma to not have excellent keyboard chops—I’ve had more than one composition teacher look down their nose at me when they learned that I don’t play piano well. Happily, that seems to be changing. I certainly can see (or hear) much better now as I have practiced writing from in my head, so to speak.

info@rrcreative.com

Matthew H. Fields

Computers are tools. If you’re a musician, you need to find a tool which does what you need it to do, in a way that enables you to be productive.

I no longer care whether a composer works everything out in their head before they notate. What matters to me is that the resulting music fascinate me from beginning to end.

composer@matthewfields.net

Andrea Grody

I don’t really think there’s a “better” way to compose, or that any way works better for certain things. As a singer, I tend to sing my melodies to get a feel for them. I do most of my composing on *Sibelius*, setting the MIDI sounds to something completely unlike what I am writing for so that I can hear the harmonies but don’t accidentally compare the MIDI sounds to what I actually hear. As a pianist, I turn to the piano when I get really stuck, and it tends to open up some good possibilities, but I avoid it at times because I know how I play piano, and it too often brings me back to a style I want to reach beyond.

andrea@andragrody.com

The Composer’s Toolbox

Mark Phillips

Cultivate a wide variety of approaches to sketching and composing—as wide possible. Not all of them will find their way into your normal life-long routine, but some may, and the process of experimenting will help you develop a more flexible approach to composing. And that will go a long way towards keeping you open, fresh and continually growing as a composer. It’s also one of the best defenses against both writer’s block and burn-out. If you only know one way to compose, there is a much greater chance that you’ll run into a brick wall, or that you’ll begin to “repeat” yourself to the point that you find yourself essentially writing the same piece over and over again.

phillipm@ohio.edu

Andrew L. Neer

I have “alright” notation skills, but I don’t want to (by any means) put in that kind of time and effort for every

score... and parts. I still believe that the composer writes the music and the computer obeys the composer.

I still sit at a piano to keep myself sane, but I enjoy using the computer as a tool... and I still write the music. I swear I want to know who's computer writes the music for them.

neer1al@gmail.com

Mark Spraggins

Imagine having this great tool that allows you to actually hear your composition (not just imagine it in your head!) You can play it back in real time, half-speed, or any other tempo. It allows you to create recorded "mock-ups" of your music, and is a useful tool when creating a written score.

I'm talking about the piano of course...

markspraggins@earthlink.net

Knechtges, Eric T

Band composer James Barnes said it best... when someone asked him how he composes, he replied, "Any way I can." I don't think it does anyone any good to frown upon any modern tool that may be available for composers that may save time. Last time I checked, most engineers nowadays are using computers and calculators, not slide rules... it seems like modern engineers are doing great things without slide rules.

eknechtges@indiana.edu

What about the Greats?

Hermes Camacho

Just because Stravinsky or Brahms didn't use playback, doesn't mean it's wrong if we do. They used the piano to hear their music back, knowing full well that they would have to "translate" the sounds coming from the piano.

hermes.camacho@gmail.com

Daniel S. Wilson

In Hector Berlioz's memoirs, he writes:

"...when I think of the appalling quantity of platitudes for which the piano is daily responsible—flagrant platitudes which in most cases would never be written if their authors had only pen and paper to rely on and could not resort to their magic box—I can only offer up my gratitude to chance which taught me perforce to compose freely and in silence and thus saved me from the tyranny of keyboard habits, so dangerous to thought, and from the lure of conventional sonorities, to which all composers are to greater or lesser extent prone."

Probably the best justification for writing away from piano that I've heard. Berlioz never learned piano, so he never really had a choice in the mat-

ter. I think his music speaks for itself in how not using a piano can lead to unconventional sonorities and ideas.

stdddw16@shsu.edu

Paul SanGregory

Mozart's wife threw out a lot of his sketches and rough drafts, so it's actually quite possible that he (like most of us) didn't really store it all in his head before making a final copy either.

Mozart was a good piano player too. Why wouldn't he play though his ideas before writing them down?

paul.sansan@msa.hinet.net

John White

If Mozart and Beethoven did a lot of "draft-tweaking," and they did, then it's good enough for me. I think it was Leonardo da Vinci who said, "A work of art is never finished. The artist just decides to stop." I think it applies to music, as well!

jwhite48@earthlink.net

Jonathan Santore

I've known at least one composer who insisted that his entire work needed to be totally complete in his head, *a la* Mozart, before he wrote down a note. Many people agreed that his music would have benefited from several trips to a piano...

jsantore@mail.plymouth.edu

Amy Scurria

Studying Beethoven's sketches is a fascinating endeavor. Many of his ideas were actually quite simple and sometimes nearly un-imaginative. Beethoven's magic is in what he *did* with those ideas. It's actually quite exciting to see that his was not always a "flash" inspiration, but more geared towards intense commitment and really, really hard work (which he admitted to himself).

mail@amyscurria.com

Mark Phillips

I've been thinking a lot about Don Erb, whose death saddens many of us "of a certain age." Don used to encourage students who were struggling, or having problems, to stop worrying so much about trying to find the perfect notes and just start getting their ideas committed to paper in some manner, noting that it's often easier to edit a rough approximation into something worthwhile than it is to produce a perfectly polished passage in one sitting. "Notes don't really matter that much," I heard him say once, "You just have to find the right notes that don't matter."

phillipm@ohio.edu

Let's be Practical...

Joel Irwin

Not everything I compose will be played by live musicians. I work with sheet music software when my final product will be a live performance. It's

pretty much the same when I write something and I use a word processor or a spreadsheet.

If my product is going to be non-live—the 'customer' does not need or want to pay for a live version—then I compose in a sequencer and use high-quality instrument samples. Most of the population nowadays can't tell the difference.

yonah@aol.com

Kyle Beckham

I have no memory of eye strain or muscle/joint problems that I'm sure have plagued pen-and-paper composers over the years. Now with software like *Notion*, *Sibelius*, *Finale*, we have the tools not only to save us time and sanity, but we have instant feedback!

Sure, mockups are only as good as the composer is willing to spend time and effort into making them, but even that capability on a basic level seems light-years beyond how we viewed notation 20 years ago. In a way, there's more pressure not just to be a capable communicator through written music, but to be a professional engraver as well since there really isn't an excuse otherwise.

angelrho@hotmail.com

For Educators...

Tadd Russo

While I agree that young composers should take the time at least once to sketch out a composition if not do the entire thing (parts and all) by hand, when you are a composer working in a world of deadlines, there just isn't always time to work on paper first.

tadd@taddrusso.com

David Long

Even though the teachers among us need to provide guidance and methodologies to our students, shouldn't we all eventually agree that the quality of the product will always trump the method by which the product is produced?

dlong@umw.edu

[scimembers]...

[scimembers] is a member-driven e-mail mailing list that is intended to facilitate communication between members of the Society on topics of concern to composers of contemporary concert music. It conveys whatever notices or messages are sent by its members, including announcements of performances and professional opportunities, as well as discussions on a wide variety of topics. For more information, including how to join and participate in the listserv:

<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/data/publications/listserv/listserv.html>

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immediate and unequivocal. At 19 I was, I believe, the youngest composer to that date to perform my music on the CIM Portfolio Series, due entirely to his leaping at my creation with unbridled enthusiasm. He told me on several occasions that there were sounds I had coaxed from the piano he was "going to steal." (If he did, it was a subtle theft.) And when he knew that I was slacking off, he was on my tail with equal enthusiasm until I shaped up.

Of the areas of the avant-garde Erb profoundly influenced, most would agree that it was his harnessing of the orchestra as his personal, primal tool; his continuous exploration of new ways for traditional instrumentalists to make music, with many worthy collaborators; and his pioneering of the combination of electronic and acoustic forces that stand out. All are parts of the same timbral exploration. I believe Erb sought out electronic sounds either when acoustic colors no longer provided the solution, or when he heard an inner dialogue between the two sound sources that completed one another. Written in 1965, *Reconnaissance* was one of the first chamber works for live synthesizer and acoustic instruments. It was premiered on *Music in Our Time* in New York with Robert Moog operating the synthesizer. This interest continued throughout Erb's life as he often paired live instruments (including orchestras) with electronics, mostly prerecorded but occasionally live. His 1973 orchestral work *Autummmusic* even includes a "cadenza" for the electronics, during which the orchestra is silent.

Erb was born in Youngstown, Ohio in 1927. Whenever I asked Don what his influences were, he said unapologetically, "the bars." From an industrial town in an industrial state, he acquired a guttural, raw and emotional blues vocabulary. Glissandi, mutes, wah-wahs, sharp interjections—all could be read as tributes to the blue-collar working man (his trademark blue-jean jacket and pants perhaps a symbol), and could be traced directly back to slave song. This is where I believe his true emotional roots lay. Tributes to jazz greats like Charlie Parker and Woody Herman were obvious homages, but Don loved "the aesthetics" of soul and funk without completely bowing to them. He loved dramatic paradox, as in *Klangfarbenfunk* of 1970, pitting a somewhat bewildered Detroit Symphony against a six-piece rock band; or by creating unequal forces in his ten concerti—some the first of their kind for their solo instrument.

But although jazz roots demand improvisation, at no point did Erb give up the process entirely. If you glance at an

Erb score, indeterminate freedom was combined with some stable force, often a tremolo or ostinato, and was carefully placed to create moments of chaos and climax in an otherwise elegant, purposeful structure. His goal seemed to be to create clear direction, with obvious drama and intensity, so that even uninformed audiences could "feel" what he felt, and know where they were in the compositional plan. It was as if he were speaking to us directly. We could agree or disagree, but we could not ignore him. And one can hear a perfect summation of his timbral and visceral mastery in the sparkling, transparent 1997 recordings by the New Zealand Symphony of his *Concerto for Orchestra*, *Evensong* and *Solstice*.

Donald Erb earned his Bachelor's in trumpet performance from Kent State University, his Master's in music theory from The Cleveland Institute of Music and his Doctoral degree in composition from Indiana University. His teachers included Marcel Dick and Bernard Heiden. Erb taught composition for over forty years at such schools as Southern Methodist University, Indiana University, Melbourne University and the Cleveland Institute of Music. He held the title of Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music where, in 2000, his lasting contributions to the conservatory were celebrated with a concert in his honor and the creation of a scholarship in his name. Erb was in demand as a visiting lecturer and gave master classes and concerts at well over one hundred colleges, universities and conservatories in the United States. In addition to his work in the classroom, Erb served as Composer-in-Residence for the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and authored the major article on orchestration for the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Don Erb died in the early morning on Tuesday, Aug. 12, 2008 at his home in Cleveland Heights at age 81. His deep laugh, generosity, vitality and loving patronage will be greatly missed. Winton Marsalis says that one plays the blues to get rid of the blues. So listen to Erb's music when you get "the blues." But you've been warned—it's not for the faint of heart.



Donald Erb. Photo by Janet Century, courtesy of Theodore Presser, Co.

Larry Barnes
Donald Erb student 1969-1973
Professor of Music
Transylvania University
lbarnes@transy.edu

SCItings

Member News and Activities

Performances, Awards, Commissions, Honors, Publications and other Member Activities. For submission information, see page 8.

Randy Earles received a commission from the Idaho Department of Education for a new work for high school bands. The new work will be performed by various Idaho high school bands throughout the state in 2009.

In addition, his choral piece "*Sing the World Together*" was performed on July 19 as the grand finale for the Idaho International Choral Festival. The work was performed by combined choirs consisting of seven foreign choirs from Europe, Asia and South America, plus two choirs from the United States.



Wallace De Pue

From **Wallace De Pue**:

It is my pleasure to inform you that my composition, "*The Sensible Bird*," from my suite, *The Bird, Frog and Tree Club* (Symphony Orchestra and Chorus), won the Michigan Music Teachers Association commission to compose a 15-minute piece of the composer's choice. My new composition, *The Fiddler and the Dragon* (Violin, piano and actor), will be premiered on October 12 at 8:00 p.m. in the Crown Plaza Hotel Ballroom. Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The performers include Olga Meade, dazzling concert pianist; Zachary De Pue, concertmaster of the Indianapolis Symphony, and Wallace De Pue, composer (and actor in this premiere performance).

The program notes, below, will explain why *The Fiddler and the Dragon* was created:

The following goals are what I had in mind when I composed *The Fiddler and the Dragon*: 1) write a piece that would be effective as a musical composition, or as a "play" for violin, piano and two characters played by the same person, 2) amalgamate American fiddle music with Twenty-first Century techniques of harmony and counterpoint, and 3) make the audience think deeply about what they perceived to be the topic of the play, without telling them the answer.

All of my goals, except the last, were successful. One, out of 15 people who reviewed the composition, knew what it was about! Then, it occurred to me that all of my critics were highly educated people who seemed uninformed about our country's greatest problem, namely, drug abuse. My critics never heard of "chasing the dragon" (starting drug abuse), "light-orange candy" (the base of crack cocaine) and "sweet-smelling smoke" (marijuana). My composition is about what illegal drugs can do to people who fall into addiction. Dagon, the dragon, and son of Satan, is very much alive today. One way or another, he attacks every American family.

Anthony Cornicello's *Syncretic Resonances* was premiered at the ClarinetFest in Kansas City, MO on July 2, 2008. The work, for two clarinets and electronics was commissioned and performed by F. Gerard Errante and D. Gause.

On October 11, 2008, Cornicello will be conducting the premiere performance of *A Coney Island of the*

Mind, a setting of poems by Lawrence Ferlinghetti. The work is scored for tenor, chamber ensemble (saxophone/bass clarinet, electric guitar, accordion, bass, keyboard, drums/marimba/percussion) and live electronics. The work will be sung by David Belles, and the premiere will take place at Eastern Connecticut State University. Future performances are planned in Chicago and Padua, Italy.

John White's choral work *Credo Trifarium* has won first prize in the XXIV Contest for Choral Composition sponsored by the Town Council of Segorbe, Spain. The composer of the ten minute a capella choral work was awarded a prize of 2,400 Euros and *Credo Trifarium* will be published by Jaime Piles Publishing of Valencia. *Credo Trifarium* will be given its premiere performance at the XXVI Festival Coral de Segorbe in July of 2009.

White's opera-in-progress, *The Chess Place* has been scheduled for performance by the new opera company Bluegrass Opera. The premiere of the new three act opera will take place in the summer of 2009. The plot centers around the plight of homeless men in and around a place on a pedestrian mall in downtown Denver where homeless men gather to play chess. This is a real spot on the 16th Street Mall with permanent chess boards installed by the City. White has often played chess there, and the scenario is about a priest who ministers to the homeless while posing as a vagrant himself.





Donald Yu

From Donald Yu:

In 2008 spring, Yu was awarded the 2007-2008 Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fellowship for his outstanding postgraduate composition achievement.

Three Organ Pieces: Meditation, Mystical Aria, Toccata Fantastique were published by Zimbel Press in US.

- On April 27, 2008 Concert Overture "*Hong Kong Night Scene Sketch*" was premiered and conducted by Erik Kibelsbeck with the Onondaga Civic Symphony Orchestra at Atonement Lutheran Church in Syracuse, New York. It was commissioned by the Onondaga Civic Symphony Orchestra.

- On April 27, 2008 Symphonic Sketch "*Nocturne*" was premiered and conducted by Erik Kibelsbeck with the Onondaga Civic Symphony Orchestra at Atonement Lutheran Church in Syracuse, New York. It was commissioned by the Onondaga Civic Symphony Orchestra.

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- On June 17, 2008, Hamlet's Aria "*To be or not to be*" and *Imaginary Conversation* for violin and piano was performed by violinist Mr. Derek Ha and pianist Man-Ching Donald Yu during the Mr. Derek Ha Violin Concert at the Hong Kong City Hall's Concert Hall.

- On July 6, 2008, Hamlet's Aria "*To be or not to b*" was performed during the Hong Kong Medical Association Charitable Foundation Charity Concert for SMA at the Hong Kong City Hall's Concert Hall with violinist Ami Takahashi and pianist Man-Ching Donald Yu.

- On July 30, 2008, *Hallucination* for piano was performed by Man-Ching Yu during the "Postgraduate Composition Concert" at the Hong Kong Baptist University's Chapel.

- On July 30, 2008, *Four Poems by Wong King Kwok* was performed by Man-Ching Yu and soprano Miss Dola Wong during the "Postgraduate Composition Concert" at the Hong Kong Baptist University's Chapel.

- On July 30, 2008, *Five Poems by Ya Hsien* was performed by Man-Ching Yu and baritone Caleb Woo during the "Postgraduate Composition Concert" at the Hong Kong Baptist University's Chapel.

- On July 30, 2008, *Imaginary Conversation* for violin and piano was performed by Man-Ching Yu and violinist Emi Takahashi during the "Postgraduate Composition Concert" at the Hong Kong Baptist University's Chapel.

- On July 30, 2008, *Brilliant Variations and Fantasy on a Chinese Folk Tone* for violin and piano was commissioned for violinist Amy Takahashi and was performed by Man-Ching Yu and violinist Emi Takahashi during the "Postgraduate Composition Concert" at the Hong Kong Baptist University's Chapel.

- On July 30, 2008, *Mystical Aria* for organ was performed by organist Miss Grace Pau during the "Postgraduate Composition Concert" at the Hong Kong Baptist University's Chapel.

- On July 30, 2008, *Frankenstein II* for cello and piano was performed by Man-Ching Yu and cellist Max Cheung during the "Postgraduate Composition Concert" at the Hong Kong Baptist University's Chapel.

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TECH CORNER

Technology How-To

by **Anthony Cornicello**

Associate Professor, Eastern Connecticut State University

Recently, I was discussing my current work with a colleague, when I mentioned that I was very busy completing the Max/MSP patches for *A Coney Island of the Mind*. The response I received asked me what, exactly, was a Max/MSP Patch. It seemed like a good place for me to start my "Tech Corner" column.

First, a bit of etymology. The idea of 'patch' comes from the days of analog modular synthesizers, like the Moog. In order to get a sound out of it, the user needed to connect a number of modules together, using *patch cords*. Since this was the days long before presets, the user had to notate the signal (and control voltage) routing and settings on all the knobs. The resultant diagram was often called a patch. The terminology was carried over into synthesizer programming, and 'presets' are often called patches.

Now, to Max/MSP. First of all, what is this program? For many of us, it's one of the most significant pieces of musical software to emerge in the last 15+ years. Maybe I'm exaggerating, but it has become *the* standard for live electronic music. (Max was created by Miller Puckette in the late 1980s; MSP stands for Max Signal Processing which deals with the manipulation of audio signals. Max/MSP is distributed by Cycling 74.)

The odd thing about Max/MSP is that it isn't really a program as much as a graphic programming language. When you start up Word, PowerPoint, iTunes, or any other program, you're faced with only a few options. The program is designed to do basic tasks: play back music, create a spreadsheet, and so on. Sure, each specific programs adds its own flair to the task, but you can't make it step outside of a given range of commands. You can't use iTunes to write a letter, for instance.

With a programming language, you actually can create your own functions which can perform specific tasks. So, if you use C++ or Lisp, you can write a simple program to create a 12-tone matrix from a row, or create graphics from a set of numbers. When this functions are combined, you eventually reach the level of sophistication we expect from a program.

When you first encounter Max/MSP, you'll notice that there is a huge number of existing *objects*. These are little subprograms that perform a specific task. For instance, there's an object called *delay* that does just what it says - delays a command for X amount of time. There's an audio equivalent object, called *delay~*, which delays only audio signals. Some of the objects are quite

complicated. The manual and reference pages are hundreds of pages each. I honestly can't say that I've used all of them! And, there are countless numbers of objects created by the Max community - often shared, I should add, rather than sold.

So, what to do with all these objects? The user has to connect the objects, in a graphic environment, to create an audible sound. In an odd way, it's not much different than creating a patch on a modular synthesizer—hence the generic term "Max Patch". Unlike the patches on a Moog synthesizer, the Max/MSP patches can do a wide variety of things, from a single event in a composition to, well, the entire piece. Let me give you an example.

For many interactive pieces, I create objects to perform specific functions, such as add reverberation, filter a sound, or even play a pre-recorded sound. Each of these objects may consist of a dozen or more objects embedded within the main object. For instance, the object to play back a recorded sound might have, at the very least an object to load in the sound, an object to actually play the sound, and another object to send it to the speakers. Of course, we need to tell it when to play (and, most importantly, when to stop!), so that's another object. However, when we look at the object I created, all of that stuff is 'under the hood', and we may see only a switch to make it start and stop playing.

Each of these objects are loaded into higher and higher level object or patch. A higher-level patch may look very simple - only a few visible controllers, but, in fact, can be very powerful and complex. A single patch may take a signal, alter it significantly and route it to one of 4 speakers—all based on commands sent from a MIDI keyboard, or even a glove controller.

For any given piece, I may have 30-75 cue points - spots where the patch is changed in some way. Sometimes, the signal processing changes slightly—"at cue 14, increase feedback on reverb". It's going to change the sound, but not as drastically as other cues. "At cue 21, turn on the Ring Modulator"—now, that's going to seriously alter the sound.

So, basically, a Max/MSP patch is a set of commands that tell the program what to do. On certain levels, it's quite simple, the equivalent of adding two numbers together (and that happens in Max). On other levels, it's a sleight of hand, a trompe-l'œil, a soundscape in itself. Sometimes, the Max patch is a mere atom in a larger structure, and sometimes it is the structure, as entire compositions can be built from a single, large Max patch.

This is a subject to which I'll be returning over the next few columns. Interactive music has essentially replaced tape music in the concert hall, and Max is the de-facto standard language of the genre. Besides, it's an incredibly exciting area of musical activity!

S C I R E S O U R C E S (C O N T I N U E D)

iSCI: The Composers Perspective *The Internet Journal of the Society of Composers, Inc.*

SCI has launched a new on-line journal for the publication of music scholarship by composers and for composers, edited by Jason Bahr and Craig Weston. We hope to present the composer's unique point of view through an exciting mix of theory and analysis, "shop talk," pedagogy, and practice. This list is not inclusive: this is the place for colloquy on everything that matters to composers. Contributors are encouraged to exploit the multi-media possibilities of on-line publication.

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Call for Submissions (no deadline):

Please send submissions electronically to Craig Weston at cweston@ksu.edu. Also include an abstract of no more than 300 words describing your work. Abstracts should be submitted as an .rtf or .pdf file attached to an email. Works maybe submitted as traditional papers, multi-media presentation, podcasts or other formats. Past presentations from SCI Conferences are eligible. Inquiries are welcome—please address them to both editors.

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P I X E L P E R F E C T : M E M B E R P H O T O S

Pixel Perfect Photos of SCI Members

Photo By Gerald Warfield

The SCI web team that met this summer at Lewis University to design and implement the new SCI web site (coming soon!) Pictured left to right are: Mike McFerron, Gerald Warfield, David Drexler, Tony Reimer, and Matt McCabe. If you want to use the first picture, please rearrange the names, and I am not in that one.

