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Portfolio of compositions

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Portfolio of Compositions

by

Heather Stebbins

Honors Thesis

in

Department of Music
University of Richmond
Richmond, VA

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Advisor: Dr. Benjamin Broening
Introduction

In this paper, I will describe the development of my compositional skills in relation to the progression of my overall musicality. I will also illustrate how each piece I composed played a role prompting these developments and in my overall growth as a musician. Finally, I will describe how performance opportunities, festival involvement, and masterclass experiences also affected my compositional development.

The most significant developments relate to the process by which I conceived and composed my pieces. The compositional process in the beginning stage of my study is represented in the following model:

![Compositional Process Diagram]

The impetus stage refers to the derivation of the motivation for the particular piece. Conception, listening, and generating materials are all part of the “pre-compositional stage”, in which I consider my piece’s musical intention, listen to relevant works, and generate the basic musical materials.

When I first began studying, I relied on well-defined assignments to provide the impetus for composition. These early pieces involved little to no drafting or pre-compositional planning. Without these assignments, which framed and organized my musical imagination, the blank manuscript was both overwhelming and frustrating. Over time, however, I became increasingly self-directed and able to develop and refine my ideas, as I relied less on external motivations.
Listening became an integral part of the pre-compositional stage later on in my development. As I began to focus more deeply on style, orchestration, and aesthetic goals, I listened to relevant pieces that possessed some or all of the attributes I wanted to explore in my own music. My listening and score-reading abilities evolved from simple surface appreciation to a deeper, more intense understanding of the pieces in question. I learned how to positively engage with aspects of pieces in styles I would not normally listen to, focusing on the underlying organizing principles and unique orchestral elements. This gave me access to a much wider range of compositional styles and techniques than I had previously studied.

Generating material is the most critical aspect of the pre-compositional stage. My early studies involved examining two important ways of organizing pitch content: Schoenberg’s serial technique and Stravinsky’s closely-related rotational array. Serial technique involves ordering all twelve pitch classes of the Western tuning system; rather than using pitch content as an organizing feature, serial pieces are based on interval content and order.¹ Stravinsky’s rotational array likewise incorporates this notion of using an ordered pitch-class set as the fundamental structure of the melodic, harmonic, and organizational aspects of the piece in question, but uses a different method of deriving successive rows.²

1 In strict serialism, an initial ‘row’, or ordering of the twelve pitch classes, is subjected to transpositions, inversions, and retrogrades. The initial collection and 18 new row forms are then viewed as “…abstracted themesources, and therefore as entities that function most naturally on a local scale, producing actual melodic and harmonic successions and combinations: the note-to-note continuity of pieces—and only incidentally having larger organizing powers over broader spans of the pieces in which they are employed” (Wuorinen, 6)

2 Milton Babbitt describes this in his essay, Stravinsky’s Verticals and Schoenberg’s Diagonals: The set (or ‘series’ or ‘row’) is placed, seriated…from left to right representing to order numbers 0-11 inclusive…From just the two premises of such an imposed linear ordering and the intervallic determination of ‘chromatic’ distance between pitch classes, the total array can be constructed, for the first row…can be regarded as a succession of interval
I carefully studied how these procedures organize pitch material and how they influence, melodic and harmonic content and large-scale organization. I also studied relevant composers and pieces that employ these approaches in order to implement them in my own works. As my studies progressed, I began to explore the complexities of another method of generating and organizing pitch materials, set theory. Currently, I am adapting the generative techniques of both set theory and the earlier rotational arrays to develop my own harmonic language and musical syntax. I discuss the development of my harmonic in subsequent sections of considered works.

During the actual composition process, the assignments that prompted my early pieces provided a strict framework to guide my composing. These limitations proved to be vital for getting over the frustrations delivered by the limitless blank page. Even with the rigid framework, I would normally settle for the first material that fit the parameters of the assignment, which I would play directly into the music notation software Finale. I would then through-compose the remainder or the piece. Although the outcome was generally a successful work that adhered to the imposed guidelines, I knew that I could not translate this loose method to large-scale pieces. As I developed, I stopped relying on Finale and began composing at the piano. This forced me to improve my sonic imagination and provided a more tangible approach

measurements from the first element…and the remaining rows are derived by considering the successive pitch classes as successive origins of such measurement, to the ‘right’ and ‘left’. The successive rows are then subjected to transpositions, and transposition levels complementary to the p.c. number of the origin, the zero of the row in question. Thus…the successive columns of the array are the familiar inversions, at successive transposition levels defined by the initial set. The retrograde and retrograde inversion set forms are then derivable by apply the same sequence of operations to order numbers…”

3 Set theory involves analyzing a collection of pitch-classes for intervalic content and examining the relationships between the pitch-classes.
to the act of composing. I found this method much more rewarding than composing using computer software. I discuss details of how this affected my compositions in the sections below. Please see the sections on my pieces *Blood is the Color Red, Love is the Color Red* and *Still Intersections*.

The electroacoustic works I have composed have followed a similar pattern. As in the acoustic realm, my initial electroacoustic pieces fell victim to a lack of direction. The vast amount of possibilities that this soundworld provides is just as overwhelming as the blank manuscript. My first electroacoustic compositions thus served as exercises in audio processing and the relevant software. I focused on specific software programs as a means to both limit my compositional palette and to learn the respective programs.

In the early stages of my compositional studies, I rarely revised my works. If I made changes, they would almost always be minor and at the suggestion of my professor. Now, I am more self-aware and reflective as a composer. The revision stage has become imperative and I am able to make critical decisions based on my own musical knowledge. During this process, I re-engage with the “pre-compositional” aspects of listening and generating material in order to produce a more effective piece.

The final stage of the compositional process has not changed dramatically, although I have become much more efficient in my score preparation. My knowledge of Finale and of conventions of musical notation has increased significantly. My rehearsals with performers have also become more efficient, as I have learned how to articulate my musical intentions and how I would like them achieved. The performance stage, on the other hand, is just as nerve-racking and
exciting now as it was when I first began composing. The compositional process in its current state is represented in the model below:

My ability to imagine gestures, orchestration, and structures also progressed throughout my compositional studies. When I began composing for acoustic instruments, I relied heavily on Finale and its MIDI approximations of real instruments. However, I found that this reliance limited my compositions in a negative way; rather than writing for specific instruments, I wrote music that made their MIDI counterparts sound best. This proved to be very problematic, as what sounds good in a MIDI realization is often neither idiosyncratic nor aesthetically pleasing on a real instrument. I gradually moved away from Finale and began composing at an acoustic piano, which forced me to imagine timbre and the relationships between the instruments.

My sonic imagination also developed in the realm of electroacoustic composition. When I initially began composing for that medium, I used pre-established sounds from websites and databanks rather than recording my own. When I began using audio processing software, I did not know how certain processes would affect the audio; instead, I intuitively chose audio and processes with the hope that I would produce an interesting sound. As I developed, however, I grew away from these techniques. I began recording my own sounds rather than relying on
databanks. I experimented with several recording techniques in order to find the most effective ways for producing the sounds I wanted. This skill also transferred to audio processing; as I became more familiar with the software and processes, I learned how to use them in ways that yielded the effects I desired. For a more detailed discussion, please see the section on my piece, *Rush me to Shadows*.

The development of my harmonic language ran parallel with the expansion of my listening skills and tastes. When I first began composing, I tended to prefer the modal and largely diatonic tonalities of the minimalists John Adams and Steve Reich. The harmonic language of my early pieces reflected these preferences. I tended to remain within a specific mode or loose diatonicism for large sections without progressing to other pitch areas. I almost always chose my pitch collections based on my ears’ intuition. Although I believe my intuitions generated effective pieces, I knew at the time that I wanted to expand the method of generating and the scope of my pitch collections. As my listening skills progressed, I began to hear subtle beauty in less modal and increasingly chromatic pitch collections. I listened to a broader range of styles, which helped liberate my ears and informed my compositional technique.

These developments in my compositional methods and approaches, sonic imagination, and harmonic languages have positively affected the pieces I compose and my abilities as a musician. My process is not yet fully developed and I look forward to experimenting with other methods and approaches. I will now examine how the evolution of my process has affected my compositions.
Works

_Blood is the Color Red, Love is the Color Red_ (2006)
2-Channel Sound with Video

After learning the foundations of digital audio processing and computer music in my first semester at the University, I continued to develop these skills in a smaller, more in-depth independent study course. I established my understanding of both the technical and aesthetic aspects of computer music and wrote several short pieces that reflect these advances. My collaboration with Isaiah Oliver and his video, _Blood is the Color Red, Love is the Color Red_, was especially enriching. The video itself is quite beautiful; it is an abstract exploration of color and negative space. I strove to sonically replicate the aesthetics of the video, mapping color to acoustic timbre while concentrating on the increasing intensity of the video.

I limited my source material to three high-quality sounds; a brief drone, the sound of a person stepping on glass, and a creaking ship. I also limited the software that I used to process these sounds, focusing on the program Soundhack\(^4\) and the software sampler Kontakt\(^5\). I created slowly-moving and monochromatic timbres which recreated the subtle changes of color in the video. To manipulate my sounds, I used Soundhack to convolve source material with itself. This process multiplies the harmonic spectra of the two sound-files, producing a new sound-file in which the common frequency components or the original files are reinforced. I then used Kontakt to pitch-shift and time-stretch the various processed sounds. Lastly, I used the

\(^4\) See the program’s website, [http://www.soundhack.com/](http://www.soundhack.com/) for more information

\(^5\) See the program’s website [http://www.native-instruments.com/index.php?id=kontakt3](http://www.native-instruments.com/index.php?id=kontakt3) for more information
sequencing function of Digital Performer to both organize my processed audio and synchronize them with the video. The end result was an aesthetically pleasing and cohesive work, which was programmed at both the 2006 Third Practice Electroacoustic festival and my senior capstone composition recital. The piece was well received at both events.

Confessions, Reactions (2006)
Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Piano, Percussion

After studying several methods of pitch generation and organization in my Introduction to Composition course, I chose to use Stravinsky’s rotational arrays to generate material for my sextet, Confessions, Reactions. The array also determined a major part of the large-scale organization of the piece; each of the four major sections explored the pitch classes of four rows of the array. Although the pitch material of each section was determined by the rows of the array, decisions I made concerning their within melody and harmony were entirely free. I chose to let my musical intuitions take control and through-composed the entire piece directly into the Finale notation software. By using the software to play back the MIDI representations of the parts, I did not need to imagine orchestrational elements; rather, I relied on the representations to inform my orchestrational decisions. Thus, I finished the piece quite quickly, although not without problems.

As Confessions, Reactions was one of my earliest pieces, I had not yet mastered the revision process. It wasn’t until the ensemble eighth blackbird read the piece and pointed out specific problems that I realized certain passages should be re-written. These problems were almost exclusively caused by my use of Finale; the MIDI representations’ computerized perfection made me naively unaware of the limitations of real instruments. For example, the
MIDI representation gave me the impression that octaves on the violin and cello during the third section would be louder than single notes; however, in reality the opposite is the case.

Even with the instrumental-writing flaws, *Confessions Reactions* was a strong and effective piece. The International Alliance for Women in Music Search for New Music 2007 chose the piece for the Ellen Taaffe Zwilich prize. I have since revisited the problematic sections of the work and made appropriate revisions.

*Child of the Grass* (2007)

SSATB choir and Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Piano, Percussion

In 2007 I received a summer research grant from the University to focus on the integration of text and sound in a new composition for choir and instrumental sextet. I began my pre-compositional planning searching for a meaningful and musically relevant text. I settled on an early and untitled poem by Ezra Pound.

Child of the grass
The years pass Above us
Shadows of air All these shall Love us
Winds for our fellows
The browns and the yellows
Of autumn our colors
Now at our life’s morn. Be we well sworn
Ne’er to grow older
Our spirits be bolder At meeting
Than e’er before All the old lore
Of the forests & woodways
Shall aid us: Keep we the bond & seal
Ne’er shall we feel
Aught of sorrow

Let light flow about thee
As a cloak of air

I worked with Dr. Louis Schwartz of the English department in order to better understand the poem. Several aspects of the poem struck me as interesting. Since Pound never intended to publish this work, the atypical capitalization and punctuation could have been due to a lack of revision. I also noticed that the lack of punctuation allowed the reader to inflect her own stresses and rhythms. I chose to interpret these peculiarities as suggestions for slightly irregular musical meter and phrasing. Also during the pre-compositional stage, I also studied relevant works of Arvo Pärt and Eric Whitacre, two contemporary choral composers whose harmonic language I enjoy, in order to inform my compositional decisions. Pärt’s pieces *Miserere* and *Te Deum* proved to be especially helpful, as they both explore combinations of mixed choir and instruments. I also examined how Stravinsky negotiated the integration of text and sound in his piece, *Symphony of Psalms*.

Not only did I have to determine the relationship between choir and text, but also I needed to make decisions concerning how the choir would interact with the instruments. The instruments could be either subordinate to the choir and act as accompaniment or as in Wagner’s operas, the instruments could take on an equal role. I chose to take elements from both options, highlighting the instrumental sextet in specific solo sections and using instrumental color to
support and augment the choir during sung sections. Once again, I went back to textual analysis to determine the intention and emotion behind the words in order to make my instrumental choices as effective as possible. For example, when the choir sings the phrase ‘Keep we well sworn’, I developed a repeating line in the instrumental parts to resemble the undying affect of the text. I also chose to use harmonics, high registers, and ethereal timbres in the instrumental writing while the choir sings the phrase ‘Let light flow about thee as a cloak of air’.

*Child of the Grass* also played an important role in the development of both my compositional process and my sonic imagination. During the initial stages of composition, I chose to compose at the piano rather than using the MIDI representation offered by Finale. Although I orchestrated the instrumental parts using Finale, the vast majority of the choir harmonies were composed at the piano. This new approach proved to be beneficial both musically and personally. Not only did it force me to imagine the timbre of the choir and negotiate questions of register and voicing, but also I felt more hands-on and in-touch with the practice of composition.

*Rush me to Shadows* (2007)

Solo Cello and 2-Channel Electronics

I composed my first piece for acoustic instrument and electronics during the summer of 2007. I chose to write for cello for a number of reasons; firstly, I wanted to compose a piece that I could perform myself. Secondly, I wanted to explore the extended performance techniques with the cello, as my prior experiences with the instrument lacked any pieces of that nature. Part of my inspiration came from listening to the pieces by Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho. Her pieces for solo cello and cello with electronics explore the very non-traditional soundworld that I
wanted to utilize in my new composition. More specifically, her use of harmonics, extended and non-traditional techniques and altered tunings motivated my own exploration of the techniques of the cello. Her works *Petals*, *Prés*, and *Sept Papillons* were especially helpful in guiding my composition.

I began the compositional process with neither a concrete idea for the piece nor a decisive starting point. Rather than relying on pre-recorded audio samples as I had in my previous electroacoustic works, I decided to create the entire electronic component using cello samples that I performed and recorded myself. I established a list of possible techniques and methods of producing interesting sounds before recording, most of which were developed from studying Saariaho’s works and working with the eighth blackbird cellist, Nick Photinos. I then began the recording process, experimenting with several different techniques and microphone placements in order to create interesting and high-quality samples. I then processed and sequenced these samples using Soundhack and Digital Performer, as I had with earlier electronic works, although with more sensitivity to the timbres of the cello.

The acoustic element of *Rush me to Shadows* came after the completion of the electronic component. I improvised while listening to the electronics, using many of the same extended techniques and musical gestures that I recorded to make my samples. After exploring different relationships between my instrument and the electronic components, as well as the limits of my own abilities, I settled on an effective acoustic part that felt wholly integrated with the electronics. The piece has been programmed at several festivals, including the 2007 Third Practice, the 2007 Florida Electronic Music Festival, and the University of North Carolina at
Greensboro New Music Concert 2008, as well as two other performances on campus. No two performances have been exactly the same, as the solo part is partially improvised.

*A Path Through the Gloaming* (2008)

Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Shared Glockenspiel

The impetus for *A Path Through the Gloaming* was entirely self-generated. After admiring the instrumental color of Martin Bresnick’s work for cello and glockenspiel, *Songs of the Mouse People*, I resolved to write a piece for string trio and glockenspiel. I chose a title early in the process and thus it played a large role in dictating the work’s musical direction. During the weekly drive to my cello lessons as a child, my grandfather and I would talk about the many different words for ‘evening.’ Our personal favorite was the word ‘gloaming.’ I explored the notion of using different words, or in this case musical material, to describe the same object or event. I examined the subtle differences between a number of the words for evening, and then translated this into sound. Therefore, I chose a loose theme and variation form for the piece to reflect the impetus.

Each variation of the opening theme explores the different relationships between the players and the varied colors of their respective instruments. I chose to have each player take a turn playing the glockenspiel, rather than having a percussionist play the part. This novel idea brought about questions of instrumental combinations, as only two string instruments could be playing at a given time. I forced myself to use my developing sonic imagination to make these orchestrational decisions, and chose to compose the piece entirely at the piano. I did not hear a realization of the piece until my senior composition recital. I re-wrote the viola part for clarinet so that the members of eighth blackbird could perform the work; the result was very effective.
I also had to negotiate questions of notation for *A Path through the Gloaming*. I desired a metrically free opening in which the instrumental lines could go in and out of synchronization with each other. Standard metrical notation proved to be undesirable, as the results were too dense and difficult to view; rather, I found that spatial notation provided the best alternative. Although the opening section is the only spatially notated section, the rhythmic and harmonic qualities of the subsequent metric sections are reminiscent of the opening.

**Spatial Notation**

**Metric Notation**

*Still Intersections* (2008)

Solo Vibraphone and 4-Channel Electronics

For the 2008 Third Practice Festival, I chose to compose a piece for solo vibraphone and electronics. My inspiration derived from a set of wind-chimes that my parents own. Their unique sound, combined with their sonic relationship to surrounding nature, created an aesthetically interesting soundworld that I wanted to emulate and interpret. Not only did I record samples of the wind-chimes in their natural environment, but also I applied the recording skills I learned when writing *Rush me to Shadows* and recorded my own vibraphone samples. Having these
recordings provided me with both a sound-bank and inspiration that helped inform the early stages of the composition.

Although I did not use any of the wind-chime samples in the final piece, I based many of the lines in the acoustic part off the chimes’ random melodies. In order to create a sense of free time, I again employed the spatial notation that I first used in *A Path Through the Gloaming*. The electronic element consists primarily of processed vibraphone samples. I took the samples I recorded and used the convolution techniques I had used in earlier pieces to process the sound. Unlike earlier pieces, though, I was able to predict and control the results of these processes. I also experimented with other methods of processing, such as pitch and time shifting and granular synthesis. I also employed a great deal of equalization to highlight specific frequencies, using a Fast Fourier Transform analysis to graphically represent the frequency components of the samples. I then used Digital Performer to sequence the samples based on a recording of the vibraphone part that I performed.

Example of FFT analysis during equalization

Rather than mixing the final electronic element in stereo, I chose to explore multi-channel sound. Although this process was intimidating at first, being able to control four discrete channels turned out to be beneficial for the overall sound of the piece and for my own
compositional development; I became sensitive to the location of sound, the frequency content, and the manner in which the two interact during the mixing process. I was able to control the sense of space during the composition process by create subtle movement of sound within the four channels. Moreover, I had the ability to control the sense of space during the performance, as I had volume control of each discrete channel and used this to diffuse the sound over time.

*Traces (2008-2009)*

Orchestra

When Maestro Alexander Kordzaia, Director of the University of Richmond Orchestra, approached me about writing a piece for the ensemble, I was both excited and intimidated by the scale of the work ahead. I wanted to compose a compelling work without making it too difficult for the orchestra to perform. I studied orchestral works by contemporary composers John Luther Adams, John Adams, and Kaija Saariaho. Adams’ *Harmonielehre*, Luther Adams’ *In the White Silence*, and Saaraiho’s *Du Cristal* were each invaluable pieces to study. As I listened and examined these scores, I simultaneously experimented with pitch-material at the piano. I also envisioned and mapped out the large-scale form of the piece during this pre-compositional stage, developing a four-part structure. During the composition process, however, I realized that this original four-part structure did not work as effectively as I had hoped. I therefore revised the draft and created a three-part form.

I began the actual composition aspect of *Traces* directly at the piano, which allowed me to imagine the orchestration and the relationships between the instruments. For the opening section, rather than melody-supported harmony, I strove to create a ‘sound mass’ that grew over time. I studied and employed a type of orchestration method, found frequently in the works of
John Adams. I layered collections of four-to five pitch classes in different orderings in each line of the wind part, creating a dense cluster of sound. This element, combined with an equally dense string drone, generated the sound mass I desired. Contrasting rhythmic percussion and harp parts gave movement and direction to the section.

I deconstructed the sound mass of the first section into a thinner, texture focused on solo instruments for the second section of the piece. By giving relatively complex lines to solo players, I was able to get around the problems of writing complicated material for a student orchestra. I studied scores of relevant composers to examine their methods of orchestration, which informed how I integrated the solo melodic lines. For example, John Luther Adams’ *In the White Silence* juxtaposes solo and section string melodies in unique and interesting ways, which I applied to my own solo string writing. The new thin texture of the second section thus provided welcome contrast to the dense opening. For the final section, I combined the notion of the sound mass with some of the melodic aspects of the second section. The result was a climactic and cohesive conclusion that was very effective in performance.

*Interpretations* (2009)
Solo Piano

I was inspired to write *Interpretations* by two silk-screen prints created by an art student, Soizic Ziegler, ‘09. The prints, titled ‘Reservoir’ and ‘Shift’, are both abstract yet have both have a well-defined meaning. I decided to compose two brief but related movements based on each of the prints. ‘Reservoir’ explores the notion of a reservoir being a generator for some other structure. A reservoir is a distinct object, but it also depends on this other structure in order to maintain its function. I interpreted this concept musically by exploring the dependence of
melodic and chordal movement on a specific harmonic pattern. ‘Shift’ examines the idea of a shift in perspective and once again, the dependence of two structures. In the print, an ornate figure is seen both independently and again when coupled with another structure. When seen alone, one’s perspective of the object is very narrow, while when coupled with the other object, one’s perspective broadens. I explored this notion musically by composing an ornate figure that can be heard both by itself and as dependent on a harmonic foundation.

To generate my pitch-material, I applied some of the principles of set theory that I had been concurrently studying. I performed transposition operations on the six pitch-class set of the brief chord progression that I composed for the basic harmonic pattern of ‘Reservoir’. I then analyzed both the original set and the newly derived sets for interval and pitch-class content, searching for patterns and relationships between the collections. After discovering several interesting sets and patterns, I began composing at the piano, using those collections as my pitch material. I used the sets both vertically and horizontally to create chord progressions and harmonies. The result was a fluid yet musically organized movement.

I employed the same techniques to compose the second movement, ‘Shift’. I explored the same original pitch-class collection from ‘Reservoir’, but derived new collections by examining the pitch-class complements of the original set. I used these new collections as the
pitch material for the second movement and again composed entirely at the piano. ‘Shift’ turned out to be a distinct movement while still being related to ‘Reservoir’ by complementary pitch and intervallic content. As a whole, Interpretations is the most musically mature piece in my portfolio. My use of set theory techniques to generate pitch material and organize form marks a tremendous departure from the method I used in my early pieces. Below are the pitch-class arrays for each movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Reservoir’</th>
<th>‘Shift’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial set-‘13467e’</td>
<td>Initial Row-13467e,complement-0259t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transpositions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12459t</td>
<td>1378te, complement 026797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1348te</td>
<td>1378te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12689e</td>
<td>02356t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15789e</td>
<td>024578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123578</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Experiences**

My involvement in masterclasses, participation in festivals, and other performance opportunities all played an important role in my compositional development. These real-world experiences allowed me to meet many different composers, learn about their own compositional ideas and strategies, and hear their works. I was also able to present my own pieces to a large and varied audience. Masterclasses offer the opportunity to learn about a particular composer’s methods and philosophy and to ask questions regarding these subjects. I have been fortunate to attend many masterclasses during my composition studies. The variety of the compositional styles has been great, with composers ranging from Osvaldo Golijov to Missy Mazzoli to Joseph Schwantner. Each offered insight into their day-to-day work as a composer, as well as more
business-oriented topics such as how to publish and market one’s own music. Some of the composers even offered to look at my own compositions, offering new suggestions and critiques.

I have also benefitted considerably from festival participation. Not only have I had a piece in the University’s Third Practice Electroacoustic Music Festival every year for the past three years, but also I have been involved in the behind-the-scenes work of the festival for the past four. These experiences allowed me to see how other electronic music composers approach the more technical aspects of composition. Moreover, I was able to see how these generally complex setups can go wrong, and how these issues were addressed.

I have also submitted and been accepted to two other juried festivals; I traveled to the 2007 Florida Electronic Music Festival and the 2008 University of North Carolina at Greensboro New Music Festival to present my piece, Rush me to Shadows. As a cellist, I performed the piece myself at both festivals, allowing me to exhibit not only my compositional skills but also my performance abilities. I received many compliments concerning both skills from composers and other audience members. Moreover, I had the opportunity to hear the works of these composers as well as other students.

These performance opportunities, along with my culminating senior capstone recital, exposed my music to a large and varied audience. Musicians and non-musicians alike offered reactions to these performances, which gave me new perspectives and a better understanding of how others respond to my music. These experiences, along with the developments in my compositional process, have shaped my compositional individuality and my overall musical accomplishments.
Sources


CD Track Listing

1. *Confessions, Reactions*
   Performed by eighth blackbird, April 2009
2. *Rush me to Shadows*
   Performed by Heather Stebbins, April 2008
3. *A Path Through the Gloaming*
   Performed by eighth blackbird, April 2009
4. *Still Intersections*
   Performed by Matthew Duvall, April 2009
5. *Traces*
   Performed by University of Richmond Orchestra, April 2009
6. *Interpretations: ‘Reservoir’*
7. *Interpretations: ‘Shift’*
   Performed by Elliot Case, April 2009

Data-CD

*Blood is the Color Red, Love is the Color Red* (2006)

Video: Isaiah Oliver
Appendix

Scores

3. Rush me to Shadows (2007)
6. Traces (2009)
7. Interpretations (2009)
   Reservoir
   Shift
SCORE IN C

FLUTE
CLARINET IN B-FLAT
VIBRAPHONE (HARD AND SOFT YARN MALLETS)
Percussion
   SNARE (ROUND WOOD TIP STICKS)
   BRAKE DRUM
   CROTALES (STRUCK AND ARCO)
PIANO
VIOLIN
CELLO

APPROXIMATELY 10 MINUTES
Confessions, Reactions

- **Flute**: Light and Ambient \( \text{dotted quaver} = 116 \)
- **Clarinet in B\#**: \( mp \)
- **Vibraphone**: \( mp \)
- **Percussion**: \( mf \)
- **Piano**: \( mp \)
- **Violin**: \( mp \)
- **Cello**: \( mp \)

(pedal simile)

Stebbins © 2006
Moderato \( \dot{\textbf{\}} \text{c. } 100 \)

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

Vib.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vlc.
Con Poco Moto M.M. \( \frac{\dot{J}}{\ddot{J}} = c. 104 \)

### Fl.

### B♭ Cl.

### Vib.

### Perc.

### Pno.

### Vln.

### Vlc.
Heavy, Directional \( q=120 \)
Child of the Grass

Heather Stebbins
2007-2008
Score in C

Mixed Choir
  Soprano I
  Soprano II
  Alto
  Tenor
  Bass

Flute
B-flat Clarinet
Percussion
  Crotales
  Vibraphone

Piano
Violin
Cello
Child of the grass
The years pass Above us
Shadows of air All these shall Love us
Winds for our fellows
The browns and the yellows
    Of autumn our colors
Now at our life's morn. Be we well sworn
Ne'er to grow older
Our spirits be bolder At meeting
Than e'er before All the old lore
Of the forests & woodways
Shall aid us: Keep we the bond & seal
Ne'er shall we feel
     Aught of sorrow

Let light flow about thee
     As  a cloak of air

[Child of the Grass]  Ezra Pound (1885-1972)
Child of the Grass

Heather Stebbins

- Flute
- Clarinet in Bb
- Percussion
- Piano
- Soprano 1
- Soprano 2
- Alto
- Tenor
- Bass
- Violin
- Cello

\( \text{Flute} \)
\( \text{Clarinet in Bb} \)
\( \text{Percussion} \)
\( \text{Piano} \)
\( \text{Soprano 1} \)
\( \text{Soprano 2} \)
\( \text{Alto} \)
\( \text{Tenor} \)
\( \text{Bass} \)
\( \text{Violin} \)
\( \text{Cello} \)

\( \text{Child of the Grass} \)
Fl.
Bb Cl.
Perc.
Pno.
S 1
S 2
A
T
B
Vln.
Vlc.
The browns and the yellows
Of Autumn our colors
Now at our life's morn.
Be we well sworn Ne'er to
Fl.
Bb Cl.
Perc.
Pno.
S 1
S 2
A
T
B
Vln.
Vlc.

\( q = 76 \)
Fl.

Bb Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

S 1

grow  old - er  Our spir - its be  bold - er  At meet - ing than e'er  be - fore

S 2

grow  old - er  Our spir - its be  bold - er  At meet - ing than e'er  be - fore

A

grow  old - er  Our spir - its be  bold - er  At meet - ing than e'er  be - fore

T

grow  old - er  Our spir - its be  bold - er  At meet - ing than e'er  be - fore

B

grow  old - er  Our spir - its be  bold - er  At meet - ing than e'er  be - fore

Vln.

Vlc.
Well sworn, keep well sworn, our spirits be bolder than e'er before.

At meeting than e'er than e'er before.
Fl.
Bb Cl.
Perc.

Pno.

S 1
S 2

A

T

B

Vln.
Vlc.

All the old lore
All the old lore
All the old lore
All the old lore

All the old lore

of the forests and wood

of the forests and wood
\[ q = 64 \]

\[ \text{Fl.} \]

\[ \text{Bb Cl.} \]

\[ \text{Perc.} \]

\[ \text{S 1} \]

\[ \text{S 2} \]

\[ \text{A} \]

\[ \text{T} \]

\[ \text{B} \]

\[ \text{Vln.} \]

\[ \text{Vlc.} \]
Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the bond and seal
Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the bond and seal
Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the bond and seal
Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the bond and seal
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Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the bond and seal
Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the bond and seal
Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the Keep we the bond and seal
Fl.

Bb Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

S 1

S 2

Ne'er shall we feel Aught of sorrow

A

Ne'er shall we feel Aught of sorrow

T

B

Vln.

Vlc.
Let light flow a bout thee. As a cloak of air a bout thee.

Let light flow a bout thee.

As a cloak of air. As a cloak of air.

As a cloak.
rush me to shadows

cello and electroacoustic sounds

Heather Stebbins
2007
Performance notes

Notated durations are relative and should be played as such.

Triangle indicates variation of bow pressure as well as sul pont.

Movement from col legno tratto to bow hair. Placement words on arrow indicate relative place of change.

Pitches and rhythm are relative. Play furiously.

Whole step trill with varying speed.

Vary between playing normal note and touching node

Left hand pizzicato

Snap pizzicato
rush me to shadows
for cello and electroacoustic sounds

heather stebbins

cello

freely

col legno tratto

c.l. half hair

c.l. full hair

electronic sounds

0°

12°

25°

vlc.

full hair

35°

above fingerboard

electronics

55°

 Rush me to Shadows

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rush me to shadows
improvised solo
following notated gestures and based on previous pitches

rush me to shadows

42

47

seagull effect

5'10"

5'50"

"5'57"

6'11"

51

furiously

6'35"

6'45"

54

6'45"

57

fff

fff

fff

fff

fff
a path through the gloaming

for b-flat clarinet, violin, cello, and shared glockenspiel

Heather Stebbins
2008
Notes

Set-up
The performers should be arranged in a wide semi-circle with the cello seated in the middle while the clarinet and violin should stand on either side. The glockenspiel should be close enough to the cello so that the cellist does not need to move to play the instrument.

Performance Notes
The non-metric notation does not need to line up precisely, but rather feel very free. The glockenspiel part is to be played by specific instruments as notated by the specific abbreviation in the glockenspiel part. Players should hold fermatas at the end of each lettered section until each performer is ready to play the appropriate instrument before beginning the next lettered section.
a path through the gloaming

for b-flat clarinet, violin, cello and shared glockenspiel

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\[ f \]
still intersections

vibraphone and electroacoustic sounds

Heather Stebbins
2008
Duration: 8 minutes

Performance notes

The performer should have clearly readable time counter on a table near the music stand. The motor should be turned on and set to zero.

- Closed note-heads should be approached gently, with at most a medium attack.
- Open note-heads should also be approached gently, but with a softer attack. These notes should be played with the intention to sustain, as if pulling the sound from the instrument.

→ The arrows indicate a gradual increase in motor speed from zero to maximum speed. The motor should be gently returned to zero after reaching maximum speed.
still intersections

for vibraphone and electroacoustic sound

Heather Stebbins
2008

Distant

vibraphone

4"
8"
12"
16"

pp

20"
24"
28"
32"

pp

36"
40"
44"
48"

pppp

52"
56"
1'00
1'04

pp

1'08
1'12
1'16
1'20

pp

1'24
1'28
1'32
1'36

pp

1'40
1'44
1'48
1'52

pp

1'56
2'00
2'04
2'08

pp

still intersections for vibraphone and electroacoustic sound

Heather Stebbins
2008
remain still until electronics fade away
traces

for orchestra

Heather Stebbins
2009
Instrumentation

2 Flutes
2 B-flat Clarinets
1 Oboe
1 English Horn
1 Bassoon
2 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in B-flat
3 Trombones
1 Tuba

Percussion (2 players):
  Glockenspiel (sounds 2 octaves higher than written)
  Vibraphone
  Suspended Cymbal
  Bass Drum

Harp

Strings

duration: ca. 9 minutes
Dedicated to John, Tammy, Greg, and Ben