Program Notes

Amare, Op. 31 by Stephanie Ann Boyd
Commissioned by Alan Theisen, this work for alto saxophone and piano was premiered in 2016. Stephanie Ann Boyd describes herself as an American Melodist, and includes the following poem in the score.

“Lines To Be Put Into Latin”

The lightest touch
if it is gently giv-

en can yield as much
affection as a deep

embrace, soft as a
glance, swift as a

drop of rain, light
as a leaf, I give

you these again.

- James Laughlin

Sonata by John Mayrose
In many ways this Sonata is one of the most traditional pieces I have composed: it is written for a soloist and piano (a typical classical ensemble for which I have never composed), it is in three movements (I usually write single movement pieces), and it visits traditional forms including sonata form. The pitch material in the two outer movements is derived from what the music theorist Allen Forte called all-interval tetrachords; a collection of four pitches, that when combined contain all of the possible intervals in the 12-note scale. The middle movement, Faux Patterns, is a transcription of my eponymous composition for solo piano. Sonata was composed for saxophonist Drew Whiting and pianist Kirstin Ihde.
**Down the Rabbit Hole by Spencer Arias**

*Down the Rabbit Hole* was commissioned by Drew Whiting. I first interacted with Drew via social media, probably because he had a rainbow border around his profile picture, which told me, this is a safe person to know. I first heard him play at the 2020 NASA Biennial conference, where he played some of the noisiest and thrilling music I got to hear at that event. While getting to know Drew, I learned about his love of contemporary and avant-garde music, particularly graphic scores and improvisatory traditions. Improvisation is something I have been exploring musically for a few years now, and so to find a performer who was on board 100% with no convincing was a thrill. The concept that stuck with me was when he said the phrase “my musical rabbit hole,” as well as interval sets that define different patterns. *Down the Rabbit Hole* is about transforming a limited amount of musical material through simple path-based choice operations. By the time the performer has traverse down the jagged triangular spiral, they should have explored a musical space that challenges your perspective of what my limited provided gesture means. They should have explored the uncommon path and challenge their musical likes and dislikes. Still, ultimately they should enjoy the fun of going on an adventure in an almost somewhat nonsensical parody of what a composed piece is expected to be.

**Vespers in Venice & Tapsalteerie from Four Piano Solos by Cecilia McDowall**

The idea of *Vespers in Venice* (1997) came from Turner’s visionary landscape *Approach to Venice*, in which there is a wonderful range of colours and shades. On the right of this extraordinary painting is the pale gold of fading day and on the left, the beginnings of nightfall. You can just see the thin outline of Venice, with St. Mark’s Cathedral and the Campanile on the horizon. The opening fanfare of Monteverdi’s *Vespers* (written from the glowing acoustic of St. Mark’s) and the fall-off bells of Venice can be heard in the blurred texture of the piano writing.

*Tapsalteerie* (1999) pays tribute to James Scott Skinner, a remarkable Scottish fiddler who worked in the Aberdeenshire area around 1900. Known as the “King of Strathspey”, Skinner wrote over six hundred pieces, including some particularly virtuosic ones. Skinner’s *Cradle Song* is, however, simple and was written in response to watching a mother nurse her feverish child back to life. In *Tapsalteerie*, Skinner’s *Cradle Song* threads through the slow, dream-like opening and appears later as feverish fiddle playing. Taken from the sick child’s perspective, Skinner’s poignant tune has been turned topsy-turvy or, as the Scots say, “tapsalteerie.” This work was commissioned by the Strathdee Music Club.
**Wild Velvet by Evan Williams**

*Wild Velvet* is a concerto for baritone saxophone and chamber ensemble or piano. Its name reflects the smooth and "velvety" tone of the saxophone, especially the baritone sax, but also its potential for wild and powerful sounds.

The work is divided into three continuous parts, reflecting the traditional concerto form - a bombastic opening characterized by repeated gestures, a passacaglia, and a return to the opening thematic material.

The work also incorporates the Fibonacci sequence, through the use of so-called “attack sets,” rhythmic durations, and pitch material. This mathematical sequence is known to be present in art, architecture, and even occurs naturally in plant life. Like the sequence, the fun, “groovy,” and sometimes, chaotic elements of the concerto are often governed by a strict order.

*Wild Velvet* was commissioned by a consortium led by Andy Hall. Mr. Hall is joined by Joseph Murphy, Erik Hagström, Don-Paul Kahl, Jesse Dochnahl, Karalyn Aprill, Matthew Kobberstad, Bradley Schilit, and Keith Petersen.

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