

MUCP 1180 and 1190: An Indirect Lesson

I still remember my 1180 and 1190 classes like they were yesterday. There were the journals, and consequently the many hours spent in my favorite listening booth in the audio library, which was guarded with serious territorial pride against the other freshman composers. There were the techniques to be used in our projects, some of which would make their way into our later compositions, and others of which a few of us would scoff at (1190's "fur music" always came up in conversation among my composer peers). And, of course, there were the projects themselves, which were just as informative about the processes and our own preferences as the journals. While the obvious goals of the course were to take us rookie composers through the last hundred or so years of classical music (both in theory and in practice), there was an indirect lesson in the courses that I acquired.

At some point in 1180/1190, you have to look at a piece you've been working on and say, "it's finished (for now)", whether proudly or begrudgingly. Since there is a bit of a perfectionist in every composer, this can be a very difficult thing to exclaim. For me, the phrase certainly was uttered begrudgingly at first, but because the classes required us to finish a miniature piece every three or four weeks, there was plenty of practice in dealing with deadlines and, in turn, learning how to develop a time frame for my projects. While I speak from little more experience than a freshman composition student, I do know that deadlines only become more merciless from here on out, and I've experienced first-hand how damaging a missed deadline can be.

There seem to always be one or two students that go through these classes with extreme skepticism. I'm not saying that everyone should like *everything* they hear, or that every technique or scholarly opinion to cross a student's path in 1180 and 1190 should be taken as truth; these things are sometimes more subjective than axiomatic. Nonetheless, there are important truths to be learned from 1180/1190. As a composer, you will have hard deadlines, and will have to learn how to develop and implement a time frame. It won't matter how amazing a product is if it simply isn't delivered on time. - Ryan Pivovar

"Music can contribute to community, which is my biggest thing", states Nogueras. *An Absence of Color* holds true to Nogueras' words. "This is purely an artistic outlet for me and for anyone else." The UNT Composition program is rife with multi-instrumentalists who, like Nogueras and Walker, seek an outlet to perform, particularly outside of the College of Music. While they have already begun pushing boundaries for themselves and for Denton's music scene, *An Absence of Color's* vision is still much bigger than their present set suggests. Walker is in the process of arranging the group's material for a variety of settings and instruments, particularly from the classical choirs the group hopes to have more access to in the future. Nogueras encourages music students, particularly Composition students, to join his project, and to fulfill his vision of the "pocket orchestra". *An Absence of Color* can be seen performing regularly around Denton and the DFW area, and their music can be heard at <http://aaoc.bandcamp.com/>. Nogueras is welcoming collaborators to contact him at tonoproductions@gmail.com.

Denton's "Pocket Orchestra"



Photo by Andi Harmon

In the last ten years, there has been an increasing trend in popular music to expand its traditional instrumentation, breaking away from the old mainstays of guitar, bass, drums, and vocals into new timbral territory, with folk instruments, classical instruments, synthesizers, and laptops. Such an expanded palette is an easy shift for composition students. UNT graduate Antonio Nogueras and Composition undergraduate Christopher Walker perfectly exemplify making that shift in a popular music idiom.

"I have this mild obsession with collecting instruments", explains Walker, as he takes me around his apartment and shows me his eclectic collection, including an electric organ, a small battery of percussion, and a double bass that Walker managed to acquire from a Texarkana college for well under what it's worth. Nogueras, frontman of *An Absence of Color*, has been in charge of what he deems a "pocket orchestra", wherein members may come and go as they please, and instrumentation plays an important role in the music making.

On attending an intimate performance of their set, I was witness to an unusual menagerie of instruments, a highlight being melodica and bassoon sparring off in improvisatory solos, as well as occasional back-up vocals from unseen voices in the adjacent room. The performance did not just include the three dedicated multi-instrumentalists on stage (including Walker and Nogueras), but the audience was certainly allowed to participate in some fashion.



President's Forward

Welcome to a new year at UNT and another exciting year of new music concerts and events. The Composers Forum is very excited to be working on some great programs and initiatives aimed at supporting the performance and professional development of UNT composers, and their music.

Looking forward, we will continue some great events from last year, as well as offering some new opportunities to our North Texas composers. Social events, interdepartmental collaborations and external performance opportunities are just some of the projects lined up for the 2011-12 academic year. If you are interested in being involved with the Composers Forum and any, or all, of our initiatives, please be in touch.



Finally, a big thank you and congratulations to Joshua Harris, former president of the Composers Forum, and last year's Board for their hard work and dedication. The 2010-11 Composer Exchange, Collevoxus and Spectrum events were hugely successful. Loads of gratitude, also, to our wonderful faculty; their support makes it all possible. Here's to a great year ahead!

- MARK OLIVEIRO
President, Composers Forum

Mark is a graduate student pursuing his Ph.D in Music Composition within the College of Music. He is a native of Sydney, Australia with an equal interest in Acoustic and Electroacoustic Music.

happening now". Dr. Moore will also be inviting guest lecturers to join in the conversation via video chat app Skype, an idea that was partly influenced by Moore's own interview for the position, which was conducted using the video chat software.

In his own writing, Moore is interested in unusual juxtapositions, or the superimposition of two or more contradictory ideas over one another. "In my own music, I like [the content] to contradict itself. I find creating structures that should or could be balanced and then making them completely unbalanced can be kind of interesting. Contradiction that creates synergy is really important to me". (cont'd on next page)

Dr. Christopher Moore joins Faculty



Dr. Christopher Trebue Moore will be joining the Composition faculty for the 2011-2012 school year, and with him comes a wealth of knowledge as well as great familiarity with both the American scene and contemporary music cultures abroad. Even in polite conversation wherein Moore shares his musical experiences stretching from San Francisco to

Berlin, each account and its tangential conversations rife with knowledge, one can see Moore's strengths will shine brightly at UNT.

Dr. Moore and his wife, composer Marisol Jimenez, are certainly well-traveled, and have been busy running a festival in Guadalajara, Mexico since 2010. The festival, known as Festival ARTSON, is a contemporary music festival, and is the first of its kind in Guadalajara. This semi-annual event is host to a variety of events catering to composers and performers, with each installment receiving greater public attention and drawing increasingly larger audiences. "This [last] time around, we had five concerts... every concert was completely packed", states Moore. While he and his wife continue the festival (plans are already under way for Festival ARTSON IV in late December of this year), Moore is also considering the possibility of organizing a similar event in our local DFW neighborhood. "I would love to do something outside of the school that was somehow related to the area and the scene, but not necessarily part of the curriculum."

This semester, Moore will be teaching the graduate composition seminar and a graduate class entitled Topics in Electroacoustic Music: "Composition and Aesthetics of Music for Instruments and Electronics", examining lesser known contemporary composers and works. "I try to focus on work that's more obscure and less well-known in the academic world", says Moore. "If you want to be a part of the culture that's happening now, you have to look at what's

Excerpt from *Dementia Praecox* (2011), p. 20 by Christopher Trebue Moore

Christopher Moore (cont'd)

Moore's music consistently reinforces his statement; he gives a detailed description of a piece wherein he applies the use of multiphonics to string instruments by using large rubber bands to dampen the strings, creating unpredictable and broken sounds that are akin to multiphonics heard on a woodwind instrument. "Multiphonics are no big deal, but hearing them on a string instrument is totally new." In this way, Moore can recycle ideas by employing them in contradictory situations or in ways that they wouldn't normally be heard.

In addition to the two aforementioned courses, Dr. Moore will be teaching private lessons to both graduates and undergraduates. He is currently working on a series of pieces for soloist and prerecorded versions of the same soloist, among other ongoing projects. Dr. Moore may be contacted at moore.christopher@unt.edu.

Lisa Bost-Sandberg's Flute of the Future

The Boehm system (created by Theobald Boehm in the first half of the 19th century) has been the main structural blueprint for the modern flute. However, flute and composition graduate student Lisa Bost-Sandberg's newest acquisition moves far beyond this blueprint. "It is a standard Boehm flute," states Bost, holding the new flute in her hands. There is no mistaking the instrument is a flute, but one cannot help but notice the amount of serious augmentation it has undergone. Bost begins listing all of the augmentations: "This wouldn't normally be here... this wouldn't normally be here...," pointing at added levers, arms, and, almost unbelievably so, keys on top of other keys. It's easy to imagine the engineers of this flute as a set of mad scientists who were handed a standard flute and an unlimited supply of scrap metal and welding material. Nonetheless, Bost unquestioningly praises their ingenuity.

Creating the flute required an extensive partnership between some of the world's leading flute makers. The Brannen-Cooper flute (produced by the company Brannen Brothers), the name of which indicates the team of Bickford Brannen and the late Albert Cooper, has for many years carried a world-wide reputation of excellence. Dutch flute maker Eva Kingma, who is the owner of the patent to the aforementioned "key-on-key" system and first applied it on alto and bass flutes, collaborated with Brannen in the mid-1990s – Kingma as design visionary and Brannen as the lead engineer who applied the design to the C flute. This, plus added design collaborations between pioneer musician Robert Dick and Brannen beyond the standard Kingma system, resulted in the creation of the flute Bost holds. These flutes are known as Brannen-Cooper Kingma System flutes, and roughly a dozen are being ordered per year.

What role, then, do these augmentations play? "We are at a time now, and looking ahead, in which the flute is not just a monodic instrument...we are playing multiphonics really quite often," explains Bost. "We are also working more extensively in terms of microtones". The augmentations that come with the Brannen-Cooper Kingma System allow for many more multiphonic possibilities and for the use of microtones to be much less cumbersome. With all the additions to the flute, there would seemingly be some limitations in performing, particularly in handling standard repertoire with the same agility and finesse that can be accomplished on a typical flute. However, "I see no cons to playing this flute every single day", says Bost, even stating that the flute gives more fingering options in musical situations spanning both contemporary and standard repertoire.

Composition students would be smart to request Bost as a performer for their pieces or as a mentor in flute writing. As the modified flute is not yet mainstream, Bost may very well be the only person the UNT Composition department has for quite some time that owns such a flute. "As far as I know, I'm the only one in Dallas, possibly the only one in Texas [to own the flute]", states Bost. Working with such a flute (and such a skilled performer to command it, at that), would be highly advantageous; Kingma System flutes may very well be the flutes of the future. More information about Lisa Bost-Sandberg, including her email address, may be found at www.lisabost.com.

