

Program Notes by the Composers:

Spring Fling is a light hearted piece, written in D major, with a frequent cadence using the Lydian mode. The piece aims to capture the energy and sense of renewal we all feel with the arrival of spring, and has been inspired by some of Prokofief's lighter pieces. The choice of brass and percussion is deliberate: I wanted to project energy, power and rhythm and thought these instruments could accomplish this goal.

22 Years

By Jason E. Ballmann

Paris, 2009

1 The Beginning and the End

The sun quietly arises,
amid the fog and oak.
Time is stoic, ancient;
weightless memories.
Here, beyond eternity,
all is forgotten.

Yet an elegy still remains;
still in the quaint wood,
the red cardinal weeps.

2 In the Middle

Into those woods I went
during the long summer,
When the sky would rumble
as rain calmly fell.

Over the pebbled streams,
through the overgrown trees,
youth seemed endless,
time still was nothing.

I came across the clearing,
a hay meadow so golden
and blossoming wild
under the dramatic sky.

The red barn in the distance,
the brushing of the grass...
I understood the fading of the sun.

3 Toward the End

The windmill speaks
to those who listen;
always standing,
turning, creaking.

It is so old,
seeing many days,
idle through nights,
I passed by often.

Now it has fallen,
just like the oak
underneath the fog,
about the red cardinal...

Laying, sleeping,
eternally dreaming
among forgotten leaves,
he lay so quietly,
like faded vibrancy.
Not even I was there.

I wish I were.

I wrote *22 Years* to express my grief over the death of my grandmother last March. The work is at times agonizing but also liting and playful, a juxtaposition of grief and good memories, if you will. Growing up in idyllic Texas, I noticed that religion was central to people's lives, especially that of my grandmother's, and that is why I chose her favorite hymn, "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less", as a recurring melodic idea in which fragments of it are derived into a motif on occasion. Especially important is to capture that country attitude of Americana, and the second movement is a portrayal of Copland's quartal harmony as laid out by a twelve-tone row built by fourths. This same twelve-tone technique was central to the development of the first movement and the interlude as well, but it is important to note that unlike some twelve-tone composers, I choose to have tone centers because I feel that the basic structure of music, composed of melody, rhythm, and harmony, should still be attended to as agreeably outlined in Messiaen's "The Technique of my Musical Language".

I discovered that text while studying composition with Alexander Raskatov in Paris last fall. What that text taught me was not the workings of masterful and total serialism but actually the importance of humanity in music. I agree with Peter Hill's biography of Messiaen that no, Messiaen was not a total serialist as he is sometimes incorrectly labeled as in music history and theory courses around the world. The element of spirituality, which is to me a human quality, is in all of his music. I attempt to sacrifice mathematics for such a case myself in this work, and especially in the sad and elegiac third movement which finalizes my own grief.

Marrakech Moments is a scherzo written in ABA form, in A major, using the distinctive sound of the mixolydian mode. This mode calls up memories of folk melodies for me, and that is why I chose the title of "Marrakech", because it is a small city in a far-away place [Morocco], with a culture still rooted in previous generations.

Desolation, an introspective piece for alto saxophone and piano, fits a somber moment, or the image of a dry and exhausted land.

Ninth Flashbacks is based on the musical interval of a ninth. Fast runs of dissonant simple ninth intervals end abruptly with ninth chords, the open windows to jazzy airs.

Fast and Slow Asleep : One afternoon I woke up with a melody in my head. I knew I had heard it in my dream, but wasn't able to identify it as another piece of music I was already familiar with. It was stuck in my head all day long and I couldn't keep myself from whistling it, humming it, singing it, you name it. Because it was so persistently presenting itself to me

on repeat, I ultimately decided to write the melody down and develop a few accompanying lines for it. What you will hear tonight is the culmination of my ideas regarding this music from a dream in the form of a saxophone quartet with marimba. The work involves all aspects of the saxophone that I as a saxophonist love the most, both in the ways they are used in relation to one another and how they are able to truly sing as individuals. The melody is first stated by a pair of saxophones and marimba and then travels down several roads, undergoing a few transformations before ending up exactly where it started, in its original form.

For tonight's performance, the first of the three movements that make up *Fast and Slow Asleep* will be played by itself in the hopes that its two comrades will join it onstage in the near future. I would like to thank my five awesome musicians for doing such amazing things with such little time. They are, as Tony might say, *grrrreat*. Should you run into them after the performance, give them all big high-fives. I think they would like it, and I know I would.

Program name cards by Kyle Hobratschk.

Thank you for your attendance and support of the student composers in the Division of Music in the Meadows School of the Arts. Please take the time to meet the composers after the recital and feel free to share your thoughts at a small reception in the Taubman Atrium.

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Program notes

