

Research on Contemporary Composition Conference
University of North Georgia Department of Music
Lecture/Presentation

Title

Commissioning, Composing, and Conducting Contemporary Pedagogical Orchestra Music

Presentation Members

Evan Harger, Cara Haxo, Martín Quiroga Jr.

Abstract

Over the past two years, the University of Oregon Campus Orchestra has commissioned and premiered four new works involving aleatoricism, graphic notation, atonality, and extended techniques. For many of the musicians in this ensemble, which is pedagogically based and open to students from all academic disciplines, these pieces were their first exposure to contemporary compositional techniques. It is essential to provide pedagogical ensembles with new works that both challenge and excite students about contemporary music. Numerous pedagogical advantages result from studying new work, including the focus on color and timbre, the experience of collaborating with a composer, and the expansion of the musicians' definition of music.

In this presentation, we draw from our personal experiences conducting and composing for the UO Campus Orchestra to demonstrate the importance of creating a body of musically engaging contemporary works for pedagogical ensembles, and of introducing such works to these ensembles. We will focus on the collaborative process between conductor, composer, and ensemble, and the challenges faced when approaching this type of ensemble. To do so, we explore two of the pieces commissioned and performed by the UO Campus Orchestra: Cara Haxo's *Out of stone* (2016), and Martín Quiroga's *A Quaint Snowfall* (2016). We provide suggestions for both conductors and composers who are interested in incorporating contemporary techniques in hopes of encouraging more pedagogical ensembles to commission contemporary compositions. While this presentation is geared towards composing for orchestra, the concepts can easily be applied to the band, choir, chamber, and solo medium as well.

Keywords

- Aleatoricism
- Extended techniques
- Notation (graphic/traditional)
- Modality
- Atonality
- Pedagogical strategies
- Teaching
- Collaboration
- Conducting
- Commissioning