

MOTIVE AND REFLECTION
Stephanie Berg

Dr. W. Thomas McKenney, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Motive and Reflection was originally commissioned by the Sinquefield Charitable Foundation as part of the Sinquefield Prize in composition, which I won in 2009. The resultant work was a one-movement piece for full orchestra. In 2011, I was fortunate to receive a commission from the Columbia Civic Orchestra, with funding from the Sinquefield Charitable Foundation. I took this opportunity to expand the original *Motive and Reflection* into a four-movement symphony that retains the original piece as the first movement.

Motive and Reflection represents the process of thought and the expansion of ideas, "motive" being the initial thought and one's reflections upon it. The first movement encapsulates these ideas in the frequent use of two main themes and their development. The three additional movements continue the theme of reflection. "Meditation" represents the mind's fixation on the idea; the movement has minimalist elements, but develops and blossoms with each iteration. "Distraction" is the only movement that does not contain the main themes from the first movement, and hence symbolizes time spent away from an idea. The lively rhythms and bitonal fifth-based harmonies burst into a lively dance before the gravity of the idea begins to set in and the movement is dragged to a close. The final movement is a deconstruction (degradation) of the first. The use of extended string techniques helps create a much darker air than before. Material from each of the previous movements is revisited, and the piece culminates in a fearsome climax, where the main themes are resurrected once more before the grandiose conclusion.