

Public Abstract

First Name: João Marcos

Middle Name: Gomes

Last Name: Mascarenhas

Degree: MA

Degree Program: Music

Advisor's First Name: William Thomas

Advisor's Last Name: McKenney

Co-Advisor's First Name:

Co-Advisor's Last Name:

Graduation Term: Fall

Graduation Year: 2006

Title: The Three Americas

This is an instrumental piece in which I apply principles of modern fine art composition techniques in association with melodies, rhythms, and harmonies, originated from the popular music of the three Americas. The instrumentation for this piece is an ensemble composed of the following: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, French horn, 2 trumpets, trombone, tuba, and perhaps, 2 percussionists. The duration intended is about 10-15 minutes. In order to arrive at a clear compositional process, I decided to follow some basic steps. The first step will be study, reading, and listening to selected pieces of music. The selected compositions are: Petrouchka, Symphonies of Winds, and Octet for Wind Instruments (Stravinsky), Prelude, Fugue, and Riffs (Bernstein), Suite No 2 (Nordestina) for piano (Guerra Peixe) and Evanescence (Maria Schneider.)

Part of the study process was to analyze sections of the selected compositions to determine the scalar or harmonic function in these sections. The next step was to bring these elements to my original composition. For example, I investigated Petrouchka to learn how Stravinsky incorporates Russian folk elements into 20th Century Music. In addition, these selected compositions were studied for orchestral color and instrumentation, especially as it relates to my ensemble.

Parallel to the study of the scores, some books on music theory will be used as reference to help me understand the theoretical aspect of the music I was studying and to expand these concepts to the piece I want to create, such as: A Chromatic approach to Jazz Harmony and Melody by David Liebman, and Gil Evans & Miles Davis, Historical Collaborations – An Analysis of Gil Evans Selected Works by Steve Lajoie. Some recordings of Hermeto Pascoal (Brazil), Eberto Gismonti (Brazil), and Gonzalo Rubalcaba (Cuba) were studied as indigenous sources.

The main concept I employed during my writing process is music improvisation. I like to think that the act of improvisation is an act of composition in the moment, and the act of composition is a very slow improvisation, in which you take time to choose and to evaluate the effect that you want to produce. When someone creates music in real-time, there is no time to think about, or evaluate theoretical aspects of music; one must act by instinct. In some ways, I feel like I need to write to become a better improviser. Moreover, I strongly believe that, what really matters in an improvisation is its compositional character, its architecture (form), and its development process. The solos that the listener can retain more easily are frequently those that express a real awareness by the performer in the construction (form/development process) of the improvisation. If the composer is able to master the use of repetition with variational devices associated with the form and the development process, the composition becomes "successful." By successful I mean the composition contains "memorable" melodies; those that the audience (musician and non musician) keeps whistling when driving back home.

Inherent in my music is my Brazilian background, which I adapted to the fine arts way of making music. As stated above, the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic vocabulary of the intended piece originates from the popular music of the three Americas. For instance, from South America I used elements of baião, maracatú, afoxé, lundú, and samba. From the Central America, I used elements of guaguancó, Cuban són, rumba, and merengue.