

Pete Robbins & Centric

Ensemble members: Pete Robbins, Sam Sadigursky, Ryan Blotnick, Eliot Cardinaux, Thomas Morgan, Dan Weiss

Title of the commissioned work: Assumpta Est Maria, Illumina Nos, Da Pacem Domine (adaptions of Gesualdo/Stravinsky)

Instrumentation: Alto saxophone, tenor saxophone/clarinet, electric guitar, electric piano, upright bass, drums

Composer's Statement:

In preparing to compose my adaptations of the music of Carlo Gesualdo, I found three pieces of his that were adapted by Igor Stravinsky. Stravinsky took *Assumpta Est Maria*, *Da Pacem Domine*, and *Illumina Nos* and elaborated on Gesualdo's arrangements: he expanded the pieces into six-voice settings and embellished the rhythmic and harmonic counterpoint throughout. As my compositional task, I chose to further elaborate upon Stravinsky's settings of these three pieces by Gesualdo. I strengthened each individual melody, so that it might stand on its own merits without accompaniment; I enhanced many of the harmonic voicings to increase the expressive content of the music; and I added different types of syncopation to many instances of the existing rhythmic counterpoint. I made these choices in light of what I deemed to be compositionally prudent from a modern musical perspective, and also in anticipation of the particular personalities and instrumentation of my band, Pete Robbins & Centric. In comparison with my original grant proposal, the idea of using Stravinsky's scores was a new element, but my proposed methods in adapting Gesualdo's music held true through my execution of the project.

Since I began composing music, in around 1998, my work has evolved quite a bit. I began by writing "head charts", which featured a unison melody harmonized by somewhat traditional jazz chord changes. Slowly, I began to be more adventurous with my melodic and harmonic choices, and began to abandon the common "head-solos-head" form that is so common in jazz music. Upon moving to New York and spearheading an ensemble of like-minded musicians, I began to further experiment with melody, harmony, and form; my composed sections increased in duration, and my improvised sections became shorter; melodies, counter-melodies, and counter-counter-melodies became more commonplace in my music; I began interspersing bass grooves with chord changes; my forms became more complex, but still retained an internal logic to which a listener could anchor him- or herself; and I drew more freely from my roots in rock music in dictating the feels of some of my pieces.

In terms of my overall musical aesthetic, it is my belief that jazz could benefit from an infusion of compositional complexity (melody, harmony, rhythmic, and form), rock-type textures and energy level, the tasteful and compositional use of free improvisation, and a desire to develop the genre in a way that will make it more emotionally and intellectually relevant to listeners, and therefore economically relevant in the marketplace.

Length of the work: 3 pieces, each approx. 7 minutes in length (we also play other original music, composed by Pete Robbins, during performances)

Recording: "Do The Hate Laugh Shimmy" (unreleased, 2007)

Stated Technical Requirements: P. A. system, bass amplifier, drum set, upright bass

Contact Information:

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