

Date du récital/Date of recital: May 2, 2018
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Classe de/Class of: Andre White

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“Incendiary” – Mike De Masi (b. 1987)

Originally conceived for a trio of Soprano and Tenor Saxophones plus bass, this piece builds on a motif that caught my ear and I tried to flesh out this simple idea in the different parts and throughout the piece itself. It's rather busy for the first section but then surprisingly takes a dramatic change for the bass solo which is in a state of free time with conducted backgrounds, the effect is contrasting and gives some relief to the otherwise busy portions of the composition. This is a piece inspired by the Fly trio, namely Mark Turner, Jeff Ballard and Larry Grenadier, though the influence may not be apparent.

“Song for D” – De Masi (b. 1987)

This piece is also inspired by the Fly trio. This is a piece that moves from a slow moving 3/4 into a fast paced 5/4. The 3/4 section is a slow moving modal type progression while the faster sections have more harmonic movement utilizing a minor. The first solo section occurs in a modulated key. There's a brief pause which brings us back to a recapitulation of the slow 3/4 movement in which the bass improvises before the theme is recapitulated. The 5/4 motif comes back briefly to bring the piece to a close. This piece is dedicated to my muse as I took extra care compositionally in the treatment of the material and in having a piece that unfolds in a natural way to reveal a multifaceted work.

“Juncture” – De Masi (b.1987)

Originally conceived for a 10 piece band, this reduction is a simple composition influenced by popular music song forms. It is a piece that unfolds slowly and has a solo on the basic form and then another solo section on a vamp utilizing chord structures built off the end of the form. The vamp eventually gives way for a drum solo over similar rhythmic motifs but with displacements, all of this leading to the finale of the composition. The title signifies the meaningful checkpoint my time at McGill has been in completing my master's degree. Also, the piece segues into the following piece through a free improvisation on the bass serving as a juncture of sorts between this piece and the following one.

“Elf Net Orphan” – De Masi (b. 1987)

This is a piece built around free improvisation with two basic thematic subjects played in a swinging feel while melodic material floats on top in a free state of time over top the swinging rhythm. A unifying structure of the piece is what I call the "band call" which signals the end of improvisation sections and back into the swinging time of the two thematic sections. The "band call" eventually turns into a non-stop loop to feature the drums before a final abrupt end. This piece is influenced by the time feel of Elvin Jones and the compositional and improvisatory style of Ornette Coleman.

“Fast for Peace” – De Masi (b. 1987)

Originally conceived as a solo piece for bass, this is a ballad 3/4 utilizing basic harmonic structures with a few choice surprises and unexpected modulations. It's a pop based composition brimming with an internal sense of contemplation and emotion. The title refers to the famous fasts or “hunger strikes” the historical figure Gandhi undertook in his life.

“Jolt” – De Masi (b.1987)

In this piece I experimented with writing linearly by melodic voices rather than vertically or by harmonic structures. The process was entirely driven by moving melodic lines and the harmony that I came to was only after conceiving of different moving voices, the chords only being codified after the fact in a sort of incidental fashion according to the melodies at hand. This piece was inspired by methods utilized by Remi Bolduc and Mark Turner. It is in a swinging time feel which gives way, by surprise, to a half time 6/8 feel.

“Twenty-One Stop Hit” – De Masi (b. 1987)

This piece consists of sections in differing meters but all containing 21 beats, the music comes together on a recurring 4/4 melody before moving onto the next section in an alternate meter. Each section is built in harmonic structures a minor third apart. Improvisation occurs on the differing meters while recapitulating the main theme in between improvisers. Because the multi meter sections all contain 21 beats, it is meant to be played frontward and backward at the same time, each direction coming to a conclusion on the form at the same time as the other. It is the most conceptual piece of the repertoire and is meant to bring contrast while being done in a familiar swinging time feel.

“Man with the T.Eli” – De Masi (b. 1987)

This piece was inspired by a beautiful moment that occurred in a free improvisation, the composer attempts to capture the spirit and emotion of a fleeting moment in dedication to a close friend who has gone far too soon. The composition here in fact is completely notated, however, and fleshed out. The result is a fully conceived piece with harmony reminiscent of the writing of Wayne Shorter.

“Lee’s Step” – De Masi (b. 1987)

This piece is a contrafact on John Coltrane's famous composition *Giant Steps*, in 5/4 time with rhythmic and metric modulations to 7/4 and back to 5/4. What makes this piece different harmonically from that which it is based is the reharmonisations of the second half in which the deceptive cadences to the relative minors of the normally major perfect cadences as the piece moves through the 3 tonic system. This simple reharmonisation makes a nice ascending bass movement by whole-tone. The melody is inspired by the melodies of Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh set over the moving 3 tonic harmonic system.