

RELATER LES ÉVÈNEMENTS

(JEAN-MICHEL LEBLANC'S M.MUS RECITAL PROGRAM NOTES)

Date du récital/Date of recital: *May 5th, 2024 (20h)*

Nom/Name: *Jean-Michel Leblanc*

Classe de/Class of: *John Edward Hollenbeck*

Personnel

Jean-Michel Leblanc - electric guitar

Olivier Guertin - drums

Eli Davidovici - double bass

Claire Devlin - tenor saxophone

Yannick Anctil - piano

Roman Munoz - electric guitar

Jeanne Laforest - voice

and as part of a vocal ensemble for the piece "Relater Les Évènements":

Sophianne Girard

Alice Éthier

Maia P Sydney

Marie-Jeanne Éthier

Zoé Jean-Deslauriers

All compositions and lyrics by Jean-Michel Leblanc unless otherwise indicated.

Repertoire

1. Aubade

The solo guitar victorious hymn that is **Aubade** serves as the perfect introduction to this concert. Using my guitar effects to their full potential, I emulate the textural and articulative qualities of bagpipes in the performance of this piece mixing celtic music and modern rock influences. Despite retaining a couple of main themes, this piece draws its origin from a spontaneous improvisation in a recording session and is still played a little bit differently every time. Its recognizability relies strongly on the very specific and evocative guitar tone being presented. Considering how sound is the first musical aspect that is perceived by an audience, starting the concert with this distinct sonic event lays ground to a captivating initial listening experience, opening up the ears for the denser musical information to come.

2. Jaguar

Kicking off the band sound with a blast, this energetic and complex musical composition puts on the foreground clear influences from psychedelic rock and progressive metal. Frequent dynamic interjections and unpredictable rhythmic fluctuations keep listeners on their toes while numerous improvisation sections allow all individual band members to showcase their personalities. Through this piece, I also firmly demonstrate my orchestration skills by blending two overdriven electric guitars and a piano together via dense harmonic and textural interactions, serving the audience thunderous polyphonies.

3. Ce Soir On Joue

This 20-second musical chaser, via its wild mix of embedded clichés interacting in conflicting key tonalities, is voluntarily evocative of absurdist comedy. Accompanying Jeanne Laforest's entrance, it is followed by a theatrical presentation of the musicians as players/competitors, relevant to the concept and tone of the following piece.

4. Game Piece no.1

Drawing inspiration from the rulesets of classic board games and the general idea of *Choose Your Own Adventure* books, I conceptualized this piece both as a highly-interactive ensemble warm up and an original way to interact with the audience. The performance of this piece starts before any note is played, as a handful of dice rolls (carried out on stage) determine the participating instrumentalists' starting positions and orders. Throughout the piece, the musicians proceed to gradually bump each other off the different positions (which correspond to different rhythmically-driven melodies) and often end up in short improvisational scenarios with various outcomes. The musical result is a slightly chaotic but very fun experience for the audience.

5. OP

This catchy composition, reminiscent of modern pop, acts as a much needed breather before proceeding with the conceptually heaviest piece on the setlist. Its groovy core and memorable melodic hooks judiciously support the presented lyrical content, which is inspired by my relationship with the music-making art form and its emotional intricacy, from ecstatic individual freedom to restraint towards expectations. The music paints this contrast with an ear-worm melody built on a familiar structure, punctuated by rhythmic surprises and dissonant harmonic passages.

6. Relater Les Évènements

The eponymous piece of this concert carries the heaviest conceptual weight out of all the artworks that I produced in my career as a composer. Slightly above 15 minutes in duration, its name conjures reflection about different, original ways to communicate musical events. This concept plays a crucial role in how the musical instructions are relayed to the performers, as there is an almost complete disregard of standard musical notation in the written score of the piece, but rather an abundance of textual instructions and corresponding timestamps (the entire piece is played with a timer), thus creating a performance environment that demands both high precision and sharp spontaneity from the instrumentalists for the musical effects to be successful. The realization of this piece proved to be both the most challenging and the most inventive artistic undertaking of my life, therefore I am particularly proud to present it to the audience. A 5-piece vocal ensemble will join the band for the performance of this work.

7. Distrain et Grave (*lyrics based on the poem of the same name by Albert Mérat*)

The writing process behind this composition started as a simple need to extract a melody that was stuck in my head and evolved into a methodical exploration of the textural possibilities of the electric guitar and voice duo. For my guitar part, I use a large plethora of advanced techniques and electronic effects to adequately complement the zig-zagging melody sung by Jeanne Laforest. Albert Mérat's poem, which I adapted for this piece, tells the story of a wandering poet searching for his loved one, stimulating both the adventurous and nostalgic nerves of my imagination. This emotional dichotomy is conveyed in this piece by a mix of angular and diatonic melodic fragments, as well as a constantly evolving textural development breathing within a repetitive structure.

8. Start Again

The dancey and vibrant **Start Again** finishes this concert beautifully. Written as an homage to the West-African heritage on which jazz music is built, this highly syncopated 12/8 variation on a blues form is a universal pleaser. Oppositely to most pieces on this setlist, this culminant composition offers a lot of rhythmic repetition, allowing the audience the necessary mental relief to conclude their listening experience focusing on their bodies rather than their brains. Later in the piece, a significant part of this concert's first number (**Aubade**) is played over the improvisation section, cleverly referring to the current piece's name and providing a sense of closure for the listener. **Start Again** concludes with a tutti with voices moving independently for the first time in the piece, bringing the band together for a last melodic surprise in rhythmic unison.