

Robert McClure

DESERT MINIATURES: INSECTS

For Three Bassoons

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Winner, 2015 Bassoon Chamber Music
Composition Competition

About the Composition

Desert Miniatures: Insects was commissioned by Trio Sonora: Robert BeDont, Travis Jones, and Martin VonKlompberg. The piece reflects on my time living in Tucson, AZ and all of the different types of insects that thrive in the Sonoran Desert. Each miniature selects a particular behavior or quality each insect possesses and explores it musically. Separate from the musical depiction of the insects was the central concept quasi-unison and the hyper-instrument. Instead of treating the three parts as individual important and mutually exclusive, the parts work together to form an imaginary instrument capable of polyphonic sound production. Through micro-polyphony and rhythmic irregularity, this hyper-instrument performs quasi-unison gestures that resemble columns of sound rather than melodic lines.

I. Many Hued Grasshopper

I encountered many of these grasshoppers while hiking in the late summer and early fall months. They are brightly colored with purple and red accents against green wings and powerful light-green legs. As I would walk through tall grasses in the mountains, the path would explode with many grasshoppers leaping all around me. These bursts as well as the grasshopper's signature buzzing sound are the focal point of the miniature.

II. Cactus Bee

These bees are solitary and live underground. They collect the nectar of cactus flowers. The bassoons combine to create a flurry of activity representing a particular bee going about her daily business of collecting nectar and returning to her subterranean nest.

III. Arizona Red Spotted Purple

These butterflies employ an ingenious evolutionary tactic for survival: mimicry. They look very similar to the Pipevine Swallowtail, a blueish-black butterfly that is noxious for birds to eat. Even more, the caterpillar of the Arizona Red Spotted Purple employs mimicry through resembling bird droppings or other objectionable material. Mimicry is the primary musical device employed in this miniature.

IV. Fire Ant

Anyone who has ever accidentally stepped on a Fire Ant hill knows how painful the stings are. This unfortunately happened to me on my first day as an Arizona resident. While each ant is an individual, the workers carry out simple and direct tasks. It was this quasi-unison behavior plus the martial and driving force of survival that informed the musical treatment of this miniature.

Performance Instructions

III. Arizona Red Spotted Purple: Minimal dynamics have been given intentionally. Each player should play the gestures musically according to their taste staying within the general limits of the given dynamics.

Open Time – play at relatively the same tempo but synchronization is not desired. Each play should rhythmic stay within a quarter of each other. The circled 1 symbol denotes the “leader” of each open time section. They should begin the section and cue/cutoff as necessary.

About the Composer

Robert McClure's music attempts to discover beauty in unconventional places using non-traditional means. Visual art, poetry, the natural world, neurological, and mathematical concepts are all elements that influence McClure's works. His work has been featured at festivals and conferences including the New York City Electronic Music Festival, the Mid-American Center for Contemporary Music (MACCM) New Music Festival, the Sonorities Festival of Contemporary Music, the Toronto International Electroacoustic Symposium, the North American Saxophone Alliance National Conference, the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States (SEAMUS), and the International Computer Music Conference (ICMC).

McClure's music has been commissioned by individuals, ensembles, and organizations including MACCM, IronWorks Percussion Duo, Trio Sonora, Liminal Space Contemporary Music Ensemble, the BGSU Student Percussion Association, and the Toledo Symphony Orchestra. His piece Integrated Elements No. 3 “Divide by Five” for African xylophone and fixed media was named the Winner of the 2013 Frame Dance Composition Competition. His audio/visual installation ...the paint while it's dripping received the prize of Best Digital Art at the celebrateArt 2012 Festival in Houston, TX. His dissertation work for large orchestra titled, *Warning Colors*, received the Paul and Christiane Cooper Prize in Composition (2014) from Rice University.

McClure's music is published by Bachovich Music Publications, Innovative Percussion, Media Press, Inc., Resolute Music Publications, TapSpace Publications, and Imagine Music. He has earned degrees from Bowling Green State University (B.M.), The University of Arizona (M.M.), and Rice University (D.M.A.) during which his primary mentors have been Daniel Asia, Shih-Hui Chen, Arthur Gottschalk, Richard Lavenda, and Kurt Stallmann. He holds the position of Assistant Professor of Composition at the School of Music at Soochow University in Suzhou, China.

About the BCMCC

The Bassoon Chamber Music Composition Competition (BCMCC) is a non-profit organization with a mission to expand new music for the bassoon and to offer opportunities to composers. The competition, typically held every other year, increases the chamber repertoire available to bassoonists by encouraging composers to write new music that includes this instrument. The competition judges, comprised of professional musicians, provide feedback to each composer that enters. The BCMCC works with the winning composers to have the pieces published, premieres the winning works, and creates a recording with professional musicians

PURPOSE

1. To increase repertoire for the bassoon.
2. To help in the creation of new, cutting edge music.
3. To help in the distribution of these pieces to musicians and the public by creating opportunities for access such as live performance, the publishing of the works, and recordings

The inaugural competition was held in 2010 and was a resounding success. The feedback strongly indicated the need for another BCMCC, so a Board of Directors was formed, the BCMCC was incorporated, and has become a 501c(3) National Arts organization public charity. Competitions have been held in 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2015.

The BCMCC has two CDs released on the MSR Classics label:

1. *Bassoon and Friends*, winning works from the 2010 competition.
2. *Elements*, winning works from both 2012 and 2014 competitions.

THE 2015 BCMCC

Winning Compositions

- “4 miniature per 4 strumenti a fiato” for flute, clarinet, bassoon, and horn by Fabio Massimo Capogrosso-**
“Rondo” from *Music for Springtime* for woodwind quintet by Joseph Gregorio
“Desert Miniatures: Insects” for three bassoons by Robert McClure
“A Breath of Life” for oboe, bassoon, violin, viola, and bass by Chun-Wai Wong

Honorable Mention Compositions

- “Myths” for bassoon, vibraphone, and piano by Nikolai Brücher**
“Instilling Hope” for woodwind quintet by Jabez Co

THE 2015 BCMCC JUDGES PANEL

The BCMCC would not be possible without the support of the bassoon and composing communities.

Jenni Brandon - composer

Bill Jobert - Wright State University bassoon professor

Nathan Koch - Sam Houston State University bassoon professor

Damian Montano - bassoonist, composer

Carl Rath - Lawrence University bassoon professor

Eric Rutherford - Heidelberg University bassoon professor

Jamie Sampson - ADJ-ective New Music, composer, bassoonist, author

Christin Schillinger - Miami University bassoon professor

Chris Wait - bassoonist, composer

Christin Webb - Ceora Winds, bassoonist

Dan Welcher - composer, conductor, bassoonist

David Wells - California State/Sacramento State University bassoon professor

For more information, please visit www.bassooncomp.org

Desert Miniatures: Insects

I. Many Hued Grasshopper

Robert McClure

Moderate

Bassoon I
Bassoon II
Bassoon III

f *ff* *mf* *ff* *p*

f *ff* *mf* *ff* *p*

f long pauses, vary duration of each fermata *ff* *mf* *ff* *p*

10

f *ff* *mf* *p* *p* *pp* *p* *ff*

f *ff* *mf* *p* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* *p* *ff*

3-5 times during the duration of the trill, after a swell to *f* or in a *p* moment, insert this gesture into the texture, then seamlessly return to trill. As fast as possible. Succession of notes may be altered at will

drastic, non-linear dynamic shifts from *p* to *f* throughout
+ = timbre trill

p *f* *ff* *p* *pp* *mf* *p* *fp* *ff*

p *f* *ff* *p* *mf* *p* *fp* *ff*

p *f* *ff* *p* *mf* *p* *ff* *p* *ff*

drastic, non-linear dynamic shifts from *pp* to *f* throughout

+ as before

NOTE: The plus sign (+) above a trill signifies that a timbre trill is to be played.

III. Arizona Red Spotted Purple

♩ = 60

Open Time

♩ = 60

Open Time

Bassoon I

Bassoon II

Bassoon III

p *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

p *p* *p* *mp*

p *p* *p* *mp*

6

♩ = 60

Open Time

pp *mp* *mf*

pp *mp* *mf*

pp *mp* *mf*

10

♩ = 60

Open Time

f *ff* *mf*

ff *mf*

ff *mf*

IV. Fire Ant

Free (10") * see Cactus Bee instructions

Fast ♩ = 126

Bassoon I

Bassoon II

Bassoon III

5

8