

PERSONAL STATEMENT

Looking back on my creative work over the past five years as an assistant professor, I have participated in a wide variety of artistic environments. A majority of my musical compositions all seem to explore various elements of human gesture in some way. From the rushing of the "**Cascade: Dunning's Springs**" trio [Tab 35], to doomed lovers and celestial bodies in "**Juliet**" [Tab 31], the theme of motion presents itself as a common thread in my music.

I worked with motion in moving images with fixed video on "**luft am morgen**," [Tab 15] a composition for fixed media and video, which received its international premiere at the 2013 International New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival. "**Beyond the Skies**" [Tab 22], an acoustic composition for trumpet ensemble, was commissioned by the Wayne State University Trumpet Ensemble and set to video by the Geology Department at Wayne State for use in the planetarium theatre. The work received its international premiere at the 2013 International Trumpet Guild Conference in Grand Rapids, MI.

"**each morning her face replaces the darkness**" [Tab 43] is another work utilizing Max/MSP, video, and piano, and was selected for performance at the Society of Composers, Inc. Region V Festival, held at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, MI in March 2014. Previously, the composition premiered at the WMU/CMU/WSU Electronic Music Tour, a new joint festival featuring works by faculty and students from Western Michigan, Central Michigan, and Wayne State universities. This concert was the first collaborative effort between my colleagues at Western and Central to generate a greater sense of community between composition students studying in Michigan universities.

It was during a commission by the Wayne State University Bands that I began to feel a deeper sense of understanding and connection between my own compositions. I composed "**Dash: a Fanfare for Wind Symphony**" [Tab 2], which was premiered at the Max M. Fisher Music Hall at Orchestra Hall, Detroit MI. *Dash* was subsequently performed at the College Band Directors National Association regional conference at Central Michigan University.

While working on "Dash," I found myself using similar generative themes in a separate electronic music composition "**dash.em**" [Tab 5], which received its international premiere at the International Computer Music Conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia in September 2012. It had subsequent performances at the 2013 SEAMUS National Conference in St. Paul, MN, the Society of Composers Inc., Region V Conference in Dubuque, IA, and the 2013 Electronic Music Midwest Invitational Mini-Festival, as part of Western Michigan University's New Sounds Festival 2013 in Kalamazoo, MI.

The "*Dash*" compositions reinforced a trend of mine to work simultaneously on two compositions in highly contrasting genres that often share common generative material. My paper exploring these connections, "**Cross-Influential Composition: Examining Interactive Approaches**," [Tab 11] was accepted as part of a panel on "Interface" including Michael Rothkopf and Robert Byron, moderated by Bridget Baird and published in the Symposium conference proceedings, and focused on this compositional model of mine I explored initially through my doctoral dissertation at the University of North Texas.

In addition to my acoustic works, it is evident that my creative research has focused on exploring connections between physical gesture and sound, particularly in acoustic (live musicians) and electronic (computer music) music composition. These connections, or relationships, are achieved through an integration of interactive technology and interdisciplinary cognizance.

Not surprisingly, contemporary dance figures prominently in my creative output. In fact, much of my musical training has been accompanied by my own formal studies in dance. As a musician who has invested significant time studying modern dance technique, theory and history, I feel I have a unique and intimate perspective on musical (sound) and gestural (movement) relationships. Bridging artistic disciplines provides numerous opportunities to integrate kinesthetic sensibilities and motivation into music and strongly shapes my creative work as a whole. Rather than music serving an accompanimental role to pre-existing choreography, or having movement choreographed to a pre-existing musical score, I am most interested in exploring the immediacy of movement as a generative force in the creation of a musical composition.

In the past I have worked with dancers exploring various modes of interactivity between electronic music software, physical movement, and musicians. Impulses generated by dancers' bodies sending electronic signals to my computer-programming environment (force, pressure, speed, and acceleration). In turn, these data influence musical parameters of the composition (pitch, dynamics, and rhythm). One challenge I found was the reliance on wired sensors sewn into the dancers' costumes that sent data from embedded accelerometers and flex sensors over radio waves from an FM transmitter box, also worn on the body. This proved problematic at times when the movement required rolling, or was so violent that the sensor wiring became dislodged, and there was audience interference with radio signals. As a result, I continue to investigate other ways of transmitting dance movement within a musical context without the need for physical sensors placed on the body.

With support from the Wayne State University Research Grant and the WSU CFPCA Dean's Creative Research Grant, I studied new modes of interactive computer technology, particularly, wire-free systems. Spending time at the University of California at Berkeley's Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (CNMAT) studio, I examined new ways of incorporating interactive music programming that could be integrated in a dance environment.

Recent work using infrared depth-sensing video cameras shows great potential (and admittedly a host of additional challenges) in eliminating the need for wired sensors when working with a moving body. Microsoft's development of the *Kinect* in 2011 resulted in a highly popular gaming interface for the Xbox 360. Expanding upon current research on the creative potential of the *Kinect* for this project, I began taking advantage of multiple body detection possibilities by a single camera, as well as chaining multiple *Kinect* sensors for use in a dance space with multiple dancers travelling in and out of the camera's range.

I developed a relationship with two dance companies in particular to explore the *Kinect*. I found the movement vocabulary of New York-based ChrisMastersDance company in New York, having previously composed "*Between Sleep and Awake*" [Tab 20] for the company's performance at Dixon Place. The dancers are extremely expressive, and the movement vocabulary is rich in ways that I felt effectively communicated with an interactive electronic music environment. I have found meaningful connections between musical concepts explored my compositions and these colleagues.

Beyond Evergreen [Tab 38] written for ChrisMastersDance, centered on the novel *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie. The novel's rich thematic material served as a musical and choreographic springboard. To be clear, we were not retelling the narrative of *Peter Pan*, rather we were setting up a dance and

music environment that abstractly explores themes in the novel. For instance, one prevalent theme is that of suspended liminality. Liminality, as developed by van Gennep in "The Rites of Passage" (1960), refers to in-between situations and "conditions characterized by the dislocation of established structures, the reversal of hierarchies, and uncertainty regarding the continuity of tradition and future outcomes." I found musical resonance with this particular theme with regard to melodic and harmonic organization prevalent in my recent electronic and acoustic compositions. Further congruence between these structures and Masters' choreography intensified my need for this collaboration on a much larger scale in order to fully understand, appreciate, and tease out these connections.

"*Evergreen*" was performed at the Iron Factory in Philadelphia, PA and in New York at Judson Memorial Church. I performed the electronics live with the dancers at Judson, which historically has been the birthplace of postmodern dance and an historic venue for collaboration between dancers, writers, filmmakers, and composers, harking back to the 1960s (John Cage, Meredith Monk, Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, Lucinda Childs). Funds from the Wayne State President's Research Enhancement Grant I received supported the New York performance as well as the subsequent Detroit premiere at the Music Box at the Max M. Fisher Music Center.

My other work with Take Root Dance has resulted in a number of new music compositions and I have enjoyed working in the summer months to create evening length concerts that are presented throughout each academic year in various forms. I am able to workshop some compositions this way and have them emerge from inspirations taken directly from movement generation. My work with Take Root has taken us to a variety of non-traditional spaces, particularly art galleries, from Detroit, to Chicago, to Seoul, Korea and Berlin, Germany. "*Transit*," [Tab 26] "*Ink*," [Tab 79] (of which a review from the Chicago Tribune is attached [Tab 87]) and "*Everything Left of Shattered*" [Tab 100] are a few examples of our collaborative work. "*Twitch*" [Tab 61], a composition for multi-channel fixed audio, was initially composed as part of my work for Take Root Dance and funded by a University Research Grant for a performance at the Red Bull House of Art in Eastern Market, Detroit. The subsequent multi-channel (124 speaker Cube installation) version of "*Twitch*" received its premiere at the annual SEAMUS National Conference at Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, VA in March 2015.

As I continue to work on issues related to the intersection of music and dance, my article "**Dance, Technology and the Web Culture of Students**" [Tab 1] was published in the *Journal of Dance Education* 12(1): 21-24 in March 2012 and explores various ways in which I've used music technology programs to assist dance students in their understanding of music. As of April 2016 it is currently the fifth most read and downloaded article in the *Journal of Dance Education*, according to the publisher Taylor & Francis.

This past year I brought my work with the Kinect out of the dance studio and into the saxophone studio, writing a new work for Kinect and alto saxophone, "**Scatter**" [Tab 108]. Microsoft recently updated their Kinect cameras to a new HD version, and this composition has been aimed at translating old patches and identifying new kinds of skeletal data (such as fist open/closed recognition) now available to create and shape this new composition.

In addition to these dance pursuits, I maintain an active performance record with more traditional works. "*Lati*" [Tab 105], a composition for electronic fixed media, received its premiere (juried) for the annual SEAMUS National Conference at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, GA, and will be presented at the 2016 New York City Electronic Music Festival.

One new and unexpected opportunity has taken shape in a commission from a local middle school. The Brownstown Township Middle School Band recently approached me about creating a new electroacoustic work for their band. As part of the commission I have had a lot of fun visiting their school and working closely with the fifth and sixth graders. We've discussed electronic music while I equip them with handheld audio recorders so they can actively participate in the pre-composition process of this new work by capturing real-world sounds we will include in the electronic track. Our resultant work, "**Rush**" [Tab 111] will premiered this summer in June 2016. Our efforts have been supported by a grant from the City of Detroit and the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA), as well as donations made to the school specifically for this work.

As I look forward in my creative research, I want to continue further explorations of motion and music. In particular I am interested in fully assimilating the visual side of Max/MSP/Jitter and its integrative potential with my current Kinect camera studies. I hope to add to a community of artists who develop an immersive coupling of the technology by providing visual cues to the audience in ways that are rich, meaningful, and add to the sense of creative exploration pursued by the music.