

Occidental College Music Department
Senior Recital



Brandon Markson
&
Olivia Oosterhout
Music Composition

Sunday, April 11, 2021
4:00 PM
Online

PROGRAM

Vagary

Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Piano

Brandon Markson
Spring 2019

Mania

Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Piano

Olivia Oosterhout
Spring 2019

Mom

Film Score

Olivia Oosterhout
Spring 2019

Just The Two of Us

Voice, Alto Sax, Tenor Sax, Piano, Bass, Drums

Brandon Markson
Fall 2019

Missing You

Voice, Piano

Olivia Oosterhout
Fall 2019

Dódekóres

- I. Afternoon Fatigue
- II. Paperwork Stampede
- III. Longing For Home
- IV. The Completion Chorale
- V. Repetitive Rush Hour
- VI. Home At Last
- VIII. Cliffside Challenge

Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, French Horn, Bassoon

Brandon Markson
Spring 2020

Fugazi in F Minor

- I. Moderato

2 Violins, Viola, Cello, Piano

Olivia Oosterhout
Spring 2020

Impuissant

Piano Four Hands

Brandon Markson
Fall 2020

The Movement

Piano Four Hands

Olivia Oosterhout
Fall 2020

PROGRAM NOTES

Vagary (Markson)

noun

an unpredictable or erratic action, occurrence, course, or instance

This word perfectly represents what this piece has become. It starts off with a jazzy ragtime feel that focuses on a catchy clarinet melody. This eventually degrades its sense of tonality through a slow transition, moving into a section that feels absent of both time and any key center. Attention is focused on a lyrical cello solo. The other instruments encircle its presence out of sync, while still keeping the same time signature. The final section ramps up in tempo and employs a 12-tone matrix. This is where each note of the chromatic scale is used only once in a cycle and cannot be repeated until all 12-notes have been played. The Prime line of the matrix is based on the original melody from the ragtime section. Much of the serial (12-tone) section contains melodic fragments (or transposed versions of the melodic material) from the beginning. However, it can be difficult to hear because of how fast the notes are moving along. This evolution into an insanely fast 12-tone work is completely unexpected. This is why I chose the title “Vagary” for the piece.

Mania (Oosterhout)

In the tenth grade after a difficult year of battling mental illness, I was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder, which is a mental disorder characterized by periods of depression and periods of abnormally elevated mood, known as mania. In “Mania,” I portray through music how the manic side of the illness can feel for me. During mania, I am lively and energetic, yet also irritable and impulsive; the piece mirrors these feelings with its several running lines which counter other melodies, shifting and abnormal time signatures, and complex rhythms. Showing the disorganized spontaneity that my mind can have, it transitions into different sections somewhat impulsively, but continuously returns back to its main theme, giving a sense of familiarity, which represents my overall strife for balance in life.

MOM (Oosterhout)

“Mom” is a short film created by Will Lucas, a friend of mine from high school who majors in film at NYU. It was one of my first film scoring projects outside of Occidental. While I am still unsure of what the plot is actually about, the

eerie, Black Mirror inspired, score that I composed is fitting to the unusual environment, which the movie brings the audience into.

Just the Two of Us (Markson)

I wanted to focus on writing a composition in the jazz idiom. Upon learning we were writing for voice and piano, I chose to write a Crooner styled piece with added saxes, bass, and drum set. The song is in D Dorian. While the harmonic language focuses primarily on the minor feeling of that key, the music simultaneously emphasizes major chords (especially the IV chord), which brings out the brighter moments within the music. The melody has a sense of somber happiness at first with the lyrics portraying a positive outtake of two individuals and their life together. The middle section contains individual solos with backing chords based on the first section of the song. The last section modulates to Eb major, and features a variation of the opening melody. The end of the song has a somewhat stereotypical ending with the band and drums trading twos, which then leads to a big finish. The gimmick of the song to listen for is the two saxophones trading melodic gestures pertaining to the vocals; as the title notes, it is “just the two of us” playing sax. It resembles the playful, memorable moments of two individuals who find enjoyment and comfort in each other’s company.

Lyrics:

That gleam in your eyes
Worth more than a thousand words
Just like a picture
Our moment preserves
Just the two of us
Yes the two of us

Strolling the Erie
Our hands intertwined
The pulse of your heart
It clears up my mind

With you it’s clear
Though the skies can be grey
Through a path full of darkness
You light the way
Just the two of us
To the rhythm of love, let’s sway

Yes the two of us
Under a blanket of stars
There's a chill in the air
But I'm not cold - no I don't care
Cause this moment is all ours

With you it's clear
Like a sunny day
Through a path of uncertain
You light the way

Just the two of us
Just the two of us
Just the two of us
Our love will never fade away

Missing You (Oosterhout)

In the summer of 2019, I spent a semester at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts, studying jazz theory and composition. There I learned about how to create incredibly intricate harmonies, chordal tensions, and arrangements with a jazz/contemporary viewpoint. It was my goal to combine my newly acquired knowledge from Berklee and my deeply ingrained education from Occidental, in order to develop my sound as a composer. At the end of my summer semester, I began composing "Missing You" to start doing it. It started off as a work I was writing for myself, as compositional practice, a cathartic outlet, and something to work on in my free time, not notated or written down anywhere. When I got back to Oxy, it became clear that I wanted to develop the song more, so I did. Playing with a "happy," major-key feel against more somber and sad lyrics, the piece expands upon this juxtaposition as it uses slightly dissonant-sounding harmonies that bring out an unprecedented beauty in the melody and words.

Lyrics:

Your jean jacket still smells like you
So I don't want to wear it, it's still in my room
And I'm, I'm missing you
And I'm always tired but I don't ever sleep
'Cause I'm reading all the letters that you sent to me
And I know, you miss me too

And I don't really mind if the rest of my days
Are spent thinking 'bout the times and mem'ries we've made
I know, I'm missing you
And I don't really care if all that I do
Is think about the times we said I love you
I know you miss me too
You miss me

Though it had to end
I'd still do it all over again
And if loving you was wrong
I'd still wish you weren't gone
One day you'll move on
And you know that it's true
But I'll still be here missing you

Your smile just stays in my mind
And how your hand just fit so perfectly in mine
I know, I'm missing you
And your heart is a wonderland
And I hate you had to go and I hate this had to end
I know you miss me too

And I don't ever want to get you out of my head
So I'm reading all the books you told me that you've read
And I'm missing you
And I don't really know what else to do
'Cause I don't really wanna get over you
I know you miss me too
You miss me

Although it had to end
I'd still do it all over again
And if loving you was wrong
I'd still wish you weren't gone
One day you'll move on
And you know that it's true
But I'll still be here missing you
Missing you

And when your jean jacket doesn't smell like you
And when you fit together with someone new
And when you don't miss me like you used to
I'll still be here missing you
I'll still be here missing you
Missing you
I'm missing you

Dódekóres (Markson)

This piece arose from a comparison between the circle of fifths and a clock face. The circle of fifths is a visual representation of the natural symmetry and geometric relationships that exist within Western music. The twelve different key signatures in the major mode represented by the circle of fifths are commonly overlaid on a clock to help students learn, with the key of C being positioned at 12:00. It occurred to me one day that I had never heard a piece that explored this overlay, so I took the initiative to base a piece on it. There are twelve movements in the piece. Each movement is approximately, if not exactly, 60 seconds long to represent the 60 minutes that make up each hour. Each movement's time and key signature also correspond to the time of the clock that it overlays. For example, movement 3 is in $\frac{3}{4}$ and has a key signature of three sharps. The piece follows a man at his desk job, starting at 1:00 PM, and follows him through the rest of his day until midnight when he is blissfully dreaming away. Because the piece has a cohesive theme, I took the melodic material from Movement III and included it in every other movement in some way. This keeps the piece flowing nicely despite jumping between different extremes of ideas, time signatures, and key signatures.

1:00 - Afternoon Fatigue

Time Signature: 1/?

Key Signature: 1 sharp

This movement represents the afternoon fatigue we all get halfway through our workday, when we are in a lull and don't want to get any work done. Technically speaking, I could have assigned a time signature of $\frac{1}{4}$ here, but I wanted to start the piece off with this feeling of laziness and drag. I left a time signature out as a way to keep the audience in a trance of not being able to detect any sense of drive and instructed the players to spend 50 seconds to arrive at the last note.

2:00 - Paperwork Stampede

Time Signature: 2/4

Key Signature: 2 sharps

Following the afternoon lull comes this fast paced movement, representing the stress of getting back into a workflow when the boss comes in and is unhappy with the pace of work. The movement has a march-like feel and plays around with multiple musical motifs that all intertwine and fight each other, like how a person might have multiple assignments on their mind that they have to do. The music is fast, energetic, and a bit frantic, while still keeping a cohesive idea.

3:00 - Longing For Home

Time Signature: 3/4

Key Signature: 2 sharps

Oh how we all think about getting home after work and taking it easy. This movement focuses on that feeling of wanting to get out of work. While the piece is in a major key, it still has a sad undertone. I make use of the flat 6 and 7 chords to bring a feeling of hope to the piece, but also make use of longer notes to relate sorrow. Some call and response also take place between the melody and the counter-melody lines.

4:00 - The Completion Chorale

Time Signature: 4/4

Key Signature: 4 sharps

This movement begins with a simple chorale using a motif from movement 2. It symbolizes his exhaustion as he runs out of energy at work. At a given point, he accidentally glances at the clock right before the end of his workday. This ruins the chorale and turns the rest of the movement into a large accelerando representing his anticipation of watching those last few seconds before getting out of work.

5:00 - Repetitive Rush Hour

Time Signature: 5/8

Key Signature: 5 sharps

I wanted to include an unconventional minimalist movement in my piece. This movement starts off using a slightly modified version of movement 3's moving

bass line to show the man happily leaving work, and it starts to build with happy fragments from all the instruments except the bassoon. The rhythmic repetition even gives this whimsical feeling of the man driving home. However, the bassoon enters with a loud, low note, throwing everything into chaos. He has hit big city rush hour traffic. To symbolize this, I spent a lot of time studying car horn patterns in heavy traffic situations and tried to translate their horn harmonics into accurate musical notes. The minimalist element comes in play here to represent these constant horn honking patterns of impatient drivers. I also made use of different effects players can use on their instruments to represent different parts of traffic (for example, flutter tongue on French horn to represent a motorcyclist rushing through the cracks of the cars and revving his engine). Toward the end of the piece, the honking ends as a parade of emergency vehicles come by (I also spent many hours studying firetruck and ambulance sounds). While this piece was very fun to write, I think the bigger takeaway is I now feel enlightened on the topic of the sonic nature of automobile horns.

6:00 - Home At Last

Time Signature: 6/8

Key Signature: 6 sharps

Ah, the man has made it home and is ready to relax. This movement takes those same ideas and themes from movement 3 and converts them from a duple feel to a compound feel (groupings of 2 eighth notes to groupings of 3 eighth notes). This way the material is almost identical, but the feeling and mood shifts significantly. This movement is also much faster to show how excited and happy the man is to finally be home. The music has a lot of bounce with a playful vibe.

8:00 - Cliffside Challenge

Time Signature: 8/8

Key Signature: 4 flats

What better way to enjoy an evening than booting up a video game? This movement represents an adventurous battle theme in the wild, such as on a windy cliffside. The 8/8 time signature naturally allows for syncopated rhythms to be exploited here, such as the driving eighth note line in the bass clarinet and bassoon. The main motive is used in reverse in this movement in both the

main melodic line and the harmonies. Combined with the F Aeolian mode as a foundation, this creates a sense of mystery, curiosity, and urgency with a splash of danger. There is a natural pull for the movement to be repeated at the end; this is to replicate how many tracks in video games are designed to loop while the player takes on a challenging fight against an enemy.

Fugazi in F Minor (Oosterhout)

In the fall of 2019, I began writing *Fugazi in F Minor*, inspired by Johann Sebastian Bach's "The Art of Fugue." I was drawn to the compositional intricacies found in fugues— interplaying melodic motifs, intervallic movement between voices, seamless modulation, diverse rhythmic activity, and intermittent melodic embellishments— and composed a piece, incorporating these techniques with my own modern, unique compositional style. Writing this piece inspired me to continue to expand my ability to use traditional Western European compositional devices in innovative and contrasting ways. Thus, I labelled my new work as *Moderato*, and embarked on my biggest project yet: A multi-movement, piano quintet piece where each movement embodies both techniques of the past and my own particular voice.

I. Moderato

Moderato in many ways exemplifies a "modern" version of a fugue. Like a fugue, the work is centered around two main themes with various intermingling ideas in multiple voices. However, it breaks away from typical fugue constraints, with abnormal rhythmic movement due to its complicated, shifting time signatures. Jumping back and forth between 6/8 and 5/8, the odd meter goes unnoticed in the ear. While the instrumentation and compositional approach emulate the past, because of my twists the audience recognizes this piece as distinct, modern, and new.

(Please note, this recital only includes the first movement from Fugazi in F Minor. The program notes for the subsequent two movements are provided here for context.)

II. Lento

The use of silence, time manipulation, and intricate rhythms drive this incredibly slow movement forward, bringing listeners on an emotionally

provocative journey of sound. The piece begins with a sustained note, or drone, on the second violin, which is a technique that has been used for centuries —heard in the opening of the finale of Franz Joseph Haydn’s Symphony No. 104, “London,” at the introduction of Gustav Mahler’s Symphony No. 1, or in all five of Chopin Mazurkas, Op. 7. My use of the drone throughout this piece puts listeners in a seemingly timeless world by entering and exiting at opaque moments. Both melodically and harmonically, the piece climatically builds and flows, implementing silence in significant places to give color and dramatize the picturesque narrative of *Lento*.

III. Vivace

The closing movement of *Fugazi in F Minor* consists of many different traditional Western European compositional techniques. The piece begins with a long introduction, written in the style of minimalism. The introduction slowly integrates the main theme of the piece before transforming into a section which implements harmonic devices such as modal interplay, counterpoint, harmonic extension, and rhythmic syncopation. Written in through-composed form, the piece evolves transitioning into new sections smoothly. The work culminates *Fugazi* perfectly with a shocking, distinctively “Olivia” ending.

Impuissant (Markson)

This piece represents the mental states that accompany life in the pandemic, particularly the common feeling of being trapped. The piece starts out with a low, rumbling feeling and a complex tonal soundscape using very dense chords. There is a clear divide here between the lower end of the piano (that dark, disgusting mental place we can all fall into) and the highest notes of the piano (our higher self who falls victim to these dark mental states). Eventually, the high voice is able to fight its way out, leading into the B section, which is much prettier with its clean harmonies and focus on the higher end of the piano. This represents those occasional days we can free ourselves from this dark headspace. After being in a positive state and organically developing, the music takes a turn for the worse and returns to that deep, dark area, representing a fall back into a depressed mental state. There is a lot of technical finger work that is required to execute the piece, from the fast, playful lines of the B section, to the endurance needed to continue the low tremolo in the A section.

The Movement (Oosterhout)

The Movement, written for two pianos, pays respect to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. There is a history deeply rooted in the United States of white people stealing and appropriating traditionally Black music. As a white composer, it is incredibly important that I give credit where credit is due to show appreciation for the Black artists, who have pioneered so much of the music we hear today. The piece's main theme uses the pentatonic scale, inspired by the tunings of many West African musical instruments including the kora and balafon. It is played mostly on black keys, showcasing the F# major pentatonic scale. The piece also incorporates metrically juxtaposing lines as an example of cross-beat or cross-rhythm, which is the principal element in many Sub-Saharan and West African music traditions. Philosophically, cross-beats can symbolize the challenging moments and emotional stress that People of Color face every day. Playing cross-beats while fully grounded in the main beats, prepares them for maintaining their life-purpose while unrelentingly dealing with daily microaggressions and institutionalized racism. The rhythms also represent the very fabric of life itself; they are an embodiment of the people, symbolizing interdependence in all human relationships. Additionally, the work contains many jazz compositional techniques, and many sections within the piece allude to famous Black composers such as Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Scott Joplin, and Florence Price. Jazz, originating from African American culture, is characterized by the use of seventh chords, harmonic extensions, polyrhythms, chromaticism, call and response, modal mixture, and improvisation. What makes this piece unique is that there are two scores: one written in a typical format, and the other shaped as a graphic score. The graphic portion spells "BLM" with the music, and provides text with information regarding the traditionally Black musical elements that I'm borrowing. The piece acknowledges and thanks many of the great Black composers and musicians, whose stories have been erased and later rewritten. I take inspiration from them, accredit their feats, and bring my own voice to the piece.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Olivia Oosterhout

This remarkable journey throughout my four years at Occidental College would not have been possible without the support of several people. Thank you, Mom, for helping me find music. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to pursue music, even when I didn't want to do it. And, thank you for telling me that I was good at it, even if I did not believe you. Thank you to the Occidental music department for expanding my musical vocabulary in an encouraging, non-judgemental space for me to grow and evolve as a musician and composer. Thank you, Shawn Costantino, for getting me involved in the music scene at Oxy. If it were not for the jazz band, I might have never considered majoring in music. Thank you, Professor Lorenz, for your help with my senior comprehensive paper. Thank you, Professor Girton, for your unconditional support as my adviser, theory teacher, and even now. Without you and the knowledge and wisdom you have shared with me, I would not be the composer and person that I am today. Finally, my biggest remark of gratitude belongs to Professor Schoenberg, who introduced me to the world of composition and convinced me to become a composer just by telling me, "You should do this. You are good."

Brandon Markson

I have many people to thank for where I am today. I'd like to thank my family and friends for their unconditional support throughout my entire college experience (and for helping me keep my sanity). Thank you to the Occidental music department for helping to shape who I have become as a composer and musician today (and for putting up with and reciprocating my humour and crazy ideas). Thanks to Professor Lorenz for assisting with my senior comprehensive essay and encouraging my passion for Mingus. Thank you to Shawn for pushing me as a saxophonist to improve my playing and be flexible in contemplating jazz improvisation, as well as allowing me to lead the saxophone section in the Jazz ensemble. Thanks to Professor Girton, for her assistance in theory and our weekly meetings last year to work on my senior comprehensive assignment. I thoroughly enjoyed our discussions about music and life. And, of course, my biggest thanks goes to Professor Schoenberg; for pushing me to always do more with my music and take my compositions to the next level, for assisting in all my advising necessities and supporting my crazy

scheduling to make this chemistry and music double major possible, for being someone to talk to through the toughest of times, for helping me decide where I want to go next in my life, and for giving me chance and opportunity to develop and learn under his guidance. I could not have made it to this point without him.