

You Can't Get There from Here

an experiment in collaborative composition

for clarinet, trombone, accordion, violin and cello

By:

Dr Drew Hammond, Sonia Allori, Dr John DeSimone, Dr Colin Broom, Francis Macdonald, Dr Oliver Searle

For:

Ensemble Thing, Tom Butler, Director

Introduction

You Can't Get There from Here was commissioned by the Sound Festival 2015 with funding from Creative Scotland. The idea, emerging initially from New Music Scotland's 2014 'Time Out' composer residency, was to experiment with a method of collaborating on music that was fully integrated but at the same time allowed for some emergence of individual voice. This resulted in a process whereby the six composers in the group each started a fragment of music, and each passed that fragment on to another member of the group, according to a predetermined schedule. Each composer then altered, added to, or took away from, the material that they were given, and then passed it to the next. This process continued until the transformed fragment arrived back at the composer it started with.

Ensemble Thing performed the entire six-part piece at the Sound Festival in Aberdeen on 22 October, 2015 <http://sound-scotland.co.uk/event/ensemble-thing-you-cant-get-there-from-here>, and the performance was followed by a conversation with the composers. BBC Radio Scotland also broadcast a feature about the project, including composer interviews, along with a recording of the live event. This was broadcast on Classics Unwrapped with Jamie MacDougall <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06np5y2>. Reviews for the live event may be found in the Scotsman, the Herald, and the Evening Times.

<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/music/music-review-sound-festival-aberdeen-1-3933223>

http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/13416137.Teenage_Fanclub_drummer_among_new_composers_in_leading_music_festival/

<http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/13376459.display/>

Each composer participated in equal parts of the process, editing 5 out of the 6 movements at one point or another. The document shown below shows the process by which my initial idea, passed on to Francis Macdonald, evolved until it returned to me to finish. The project has been illuminating with regard to the role of what is typically called "artistic voice" in composition. It has also highlighted the constructive nature of compositional process, and how that nature relates to what we call "works" in the end. For example, there is no reference in the beginning of *Storm Warning*, which is essentially a set of instructions and a harmonic progression, to the idea of weather, storms, warnings, etc. This notion, and it being conjoined by music, was only suggested when Dr Colin Broom discovered an old audio recording of a severe weather warning in my home state of Kentucky, which turned my thoughts to the frequent summer storm warnings of my childhood in the Bluegrass.

Contents

- I. Description of the process by Dr Colin Broom, with timeline
- II. Zip file of score pdfs, Finale files, and Sibelius files showing the stages of development in the six pieces
- III. Final compiled score of the movement, entitled *Storm Warning*, that began and ended with Dr Drew Hammond (me), and features alterations, additions and subtractions by Francis Macdonald, Dr Colin Broom, and Sonia Allori.