The Rougarou Concerto and Initial Observations of the Flex Ensemble

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THE ROUGAROU CONCERTO AND INITIAL OBSERVATIONS OF THE FLEX ENSEMBLE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Music

by

Thomas Wilson
B.M., The University of Alabama, 2014
M.M., The University of Alabama, 2016
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Without a few choice encounters, Eduard Teregulov would not have asked me to write this concerto for him. His love for new music constantly inspires and his desire to form new collaborations has led to a blossoming friendship. He has played every work I wrote in the past five years that included cello, and I would not be where I am today without his constant assistance. My string writing has improved, but so has my musicianship thanks to our multiple collaborations.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the immediate impact of the coronavirus pandemic through a composer’s lens. It will examine the impact through a variety of means, considerably: interviews of those with first-hand experiences, analyses of prominent adaptable works, and self-analysis of how my own process adapted to meet the moment.

After discovering the Composers Repertoire Initiative and being commissioned to write a concerto by Eduard Teregulov, I wrote a cello concert. The central chapter features the Rougarou Concerto, a cello concerto with accompanying flex ensemble, written for Eduard Teregulov. The work was written over ten months through multiple rehearsals and collaboration sessions with Eduard. It cumulated in a video and audio recording where Eduard shot and edited the film while I mixed and mastered the audio.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

At the start of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, many composers faced a stark realization. Live performances of all types, large ensemble, chamber, vocal, and popular, were cancelled. A few composers allied themselves to pursue a path forward that followed local guidelines and provide music designed around the restrictions of a pandemic. The Creative Repertoire Initiative (CRI) was one such endeavor that came forth in March 2020. They sought to publish information freely on their website: creativerepertoire.com. CRI sought to provide information about composing adaptive music for all types of ensembles. My dissertation will examine in detail writing for flex ensemble, one of the types described by the initiative and the ensemble prescribed in my cello concerto. Before that, however, I will define the terms presented above and show that adaptive music is not entirely isolated to the pandemic. This dissertation will serve as a review of prominent works in the classical canon that demonstrate the possibilities of the new music written during the pandemic and designed to be performed during the pandemic.

Literature Review

The Creative Repertoire Initiative provides descriptions of four types of music that fall under the umbrella term “adaptable.” CRI standardized the usage of these terms to allow composers to not only compose in those mediums, but also to properly market and distribute their music. Facing the prospect of cancelled concerts, composers immediately lost a significant revenue stream consisting of score and parts sales/rentals, royalties, and invited residencies. The value of a standard set of terminology could begin to repair those revenue streams.
Adaptable music, as defined by CRI, is “an umbrella term…that includes various types of pieces that can be realized by ensembles faced with limited, fluctuating, or unpredictable personnel.” With this definition, CRI immediately confronts the challenges of programming music for concerts during the pandemic. By specifically framing their definition through the availability of personnel, CRI specifies that works must be programmable with a wide array of ensembles and ensemble members. Although works have previously been adaptable in some sense of the word, adaptable music within the context of the pandemic needs to have some programmatic ensemble implication within the work to be considered adaptable. Continuing their definition, CRI adds that the word adaptable “refers to both the music and the situation.” In doing so, they ask adaptable music to only be applied to music performable during the situation of the pandemic. This implies that only works able to be performed can be considered adaptable, whereas large ensembles are deemed unsafe and unfeasible.

The authors conclude their definition with four examples of adaptable music: flex pieces, full-flex pieces, modular/cellular pieces, and improvisatory pieces. None of these ensembles are necessarily exclusive from one another; certain works may overlap. But in general, the four categories remain unique.

They begin by defining flex pieces. From CRI’s website:

Flex pieces have instruments assigned to specific voice parts based on range/registration…. They are suitable for smaller bands where certain instruments are not represented; however, they do require a minimum of one musician to be available for each part in order to be fully realized. So, for instance, if there is no bass-range player in the room, then that bass part isn’t performed.

In essence, these works are designed to be played by the available personnel based on their range. These works can also specify the number of performers needed to fulfill the minimum
acceptable ensemble by the performer. If there were four parts in the above middle C register and
two in the below middle C, six instruments would be necessary to play these parts.

One beautiful aspect of the flex ensemble is that each performance may have different
instrumentation but also a different number of performers. Some performers, however, can
perform multiple parts on their instrument. Keyboards and harps can easily perform multiple
parts, so the exact player count may be smaller than the number of parts. Therefore, multiple
performers could perform a part as long as the minimum requirement is fulfilled.

In practice, composers have presented their works for flex ensemble in two ways. They
have provided either all parts at concert pitch or grouped instruments on the score by their range
and transposition next to a part number. As long as enough performers can perform all of the
parts, the flex ensemble can be realized. The first option provides the most flexibility but may
not be the best presentation for young music learners. The second option allows composers and
arrangers to tailor each part to the instrument. For instance, string instruments and wind
instruments could perform slurred notation based on the context. By tailoring each part to every
possible instrument, the composer or arranger can ensure that their vision for each part can be
performed.

Since the terminology has arisen, composers of band music have found the second option
preferable. In effect, they reduce their works to the minimum parts required, keeping the original
notation for each instrumentation. This is particularly effective for early learning pieces, those of
Grades 1-3 such as those available from the Beginner Band Adaptable Series from Murphy
Music. These works tend to have few individualistic parts in their conception, so their adaptation
to flex ensemble fulfills both the need for performance music as well as supplies the composer
with supplemental revenue.
Full-flex pieces are similar to flex pieces but with even more possibilities for performance. CRI defines full-flex works as:

Full-flex pieces offer maximum flexibility by which any voice is playable by any instrument, making a fully-realized performance possible with any combination of instruments. These pieces are useful in situations where, for example, only flutes are present for rehearsal on one day, trombones on another day, and a mix of instruments on still another day. The full-flex approach was created in direct response to the need for radically adaptable pieces in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As stated above, full-flex works are designed to be realized with any number of performers by any number of instruments. These works tend to contain parts, as with flex works, that span an entire piece. Each performer will play their part throughout a performance or rehearsal. This differs with cellular/modular works in that each performer has a designated part and are not involved in deciding the route of performance after selecting their part.

Cellular/modular works ask the performing ensemble to perform the work based on the motifs presented. From CRI:

Modular/cellular pieces are adaptable works written using motivic cells. Modular/cellular pieces may or may not contain elements of aleatory and/or improvisation, and may be played by ensembles of any size and makeup.

These works are highly programmable during the pandemic due to the ability of these pieces to contain variable levels of aleatory or improvisation. One of the most well-known cellular/modular works is Terry Riley’s *In C*. This strongly aleatoric work is two pages in length. The first page gives the title and performance instructions while the second page contains the motivic cells. Although not all cellular/modular works require this brevity, this work showed the power of an idea as many cellular/modular works have been written since.

The final type of adaptable music as defined by the CRI is improvisatory pieces. As this category is the broadest of the four, the authors conversely provided the shortest definition.
“Improvisatory pieces are adaptable works based primarily on improvisation.” This short definition allows for wide interpretation of works within the category as long as they also fit within the umbrella term “adaptive music.” In this way, the definition refers back to the original term of “adaptive music.” Specifically, the work must be able to adapt to a wide variety of personnel. This would also exclude works with improvisatory elements, such as an open-ended solo or an optional repeat. The improvisation must dominate the work and on another level be able to be performed with a wide variety of personage.

Historically, these four styles are not inherently new to 2020 and beyond. Flex ensemble works existed before the pandemic and were sold by major publishers. These works were written and designed primarily for school bands with a mix of instrumentation. But the history of adaptive must also include the lead sheet music by jazz composers. In fact, the history of jazz music shares many overlaps with adaptive music. Famous tunes were notated as guidelines for the performers. Chord charts add suggestive chords underneath, and often jazz works feature improvised solos. Jazz lead sheets implied a level of freedom in performance when it came to the score, much like the improvised works discussed above.

But adaptive music must also include figured bass notation and even the earliest notation of neumatic devices as historical ancestors. Figured bass assumed the performers would correctly perform the bass line written by numbers and also gave little preference to which bass instrument(s) performed the part. Certain neumatic chants required some level of interpretation until the Notre Dame school, although this notated music was usually not created for performance. And certainly, there are works by classical composers that were able to be realized with diverse instrumentation or with diverse possibilities in assemblage. Famously, Mozart’s
Musikalisches Würfelspiel or Musical Dice Game was one of many musical dice games that the entirety of the work was based on the assemblage of cells.

Establish Significance

The findings of this study will presently resonate within a society struggling to contain the spread of the coronavirus pandemic while also balancing the performance of unique genres of music. At the time of this writing, few studies of the effects of the coronavirus on the performance of music in the classical style exist outside of budgetary offices. And at the time of this writing, few individuals have received a vaccine. Composers and performers alike are looking at new ways of performing music as well as new music created during this time period to perform and observe. Likewise, this study will also serve as a first-hand account for future historians when they examine the various trappings of composers writing during a pandemic. My dissertation will gather and summarize first-hand response data to show a brief picture of how life changed during the pandemic for all musicians. The analyses will establish a current repertoire of works composed during the pandemic while examining the prior repertoire those works drew upon for inspiration.

These historical works lay precedent for and give inspiration to musicians during the pandemic. The reassurances of a pre-existing repertoire and the examination of that repertoire allowed for new music to survive during the pandemic. Composers embraced the new possibilities of old ideas to keep creating new music.
Methodology

Analysis

In one chapter of my dissertation, I plan on analyzing three major historical works in the repertoire and comparing them with modern trends. I will examine the cellular works of In C (1964) by Terry Riley and Stay On It (1973) by Julius Eastman and compare them with Passages (2020), an “ultra-flex” wind band or orchestra work by Alex Shapiro. These musical analyses will attempt to recontextualize these works in the context of performability during the pandemic. That is to say, how are these works unique compared to the repertoire and how do they specifically fit the moment of musical performance during a pandemic? And what aspects of game design, the overall design of a video game, can be applied to the rules used to create a successful performance of these works?

Interviews

I interviewed three different musicians about their response to adaptable music during the COVID-19 pandemic. These interviews, presented in another chapter, were direct and pertinent to the issues to be discussed. I hope these interviews broadened my perspective to see how others have approached adaptable music. Questions include:

1. What has been your experience with adaptable music before and after the outbreak of the pandemic?
2. Which adaptable pieces have left an impression on you and why?
3. What do you think is the future of adaptable music?

The answers to these questions will be summarized and discussed by each participant. I interviewed Alex Shapiro (composer), Robert Ambrose (conductor), and Eduard Teregulov.
(performer). Alex and Robert helped to create the Creative Repertoire Initiative and Eduard has performed adaptable works and felt the economic impact of the pandemic. I believe these interviews provide a wide variety of context about not only the music created during the pandemic, but also the need for standard definitions and guidelines.

Personal Experience

The last major chapter will discuss my own method of constructing and working with flex ensemble as I write a cello concerto. I will discuss my background stemming from my work with video games. Without this experience, I do not believe I could have smoothly transitioned to the flex ensemble. I will briefly discuss my prior work with game music before turning to my specific origins and writing process for the concerto with accompanying self-analysis.
CHAPTER 2. INTERVIEWS

Introduction

When examining the roles and functions of musicians during the pandemic, I wanted to gather a few strong voices together from all aspects of music creation to hear how the pandemic has affected their daily life. I decided to interview a composer who has written music exclusively for the pandemic and post-pandemic performance environments, a conductor/director who has performed and commissioned works during the pandemic, and a performer who has continued to perform during the pandemic. The interviews were conducted nearly a year after the beginning of school and music venue closures. In the appendix, a full transcript for each of the three interviews is available.

Alex Shapiro

Composer Alex Shapiro has written many works for a wide variety of ensembles and at the onset of the pandemic was asked to create a crisis curriculum for the University of Washington band programs to finish their semester with quality musical experiences. She has also written works for flex ensemble since the beginning of the pandemic, with some selling and being performed quite often given the relative lack of performances. Presented below is her “Program Bio” from her website at the time of the interview:¹

Composer Alex Shapiro aligns note after note with the hope that at least a few of them will actually sound good next to each other. Her persistence at this activity, as well as non-fiction music writing, arts advocacy, public speaking, wildlife photography, and the shameless instigation of insufferable puns on Facebook, has led to a happy life. Ever-boastful of her terminal degree of a high school diploma (an impressive feat having failed 8th grade algebra), Alex lives in the middle of nowhere on a small rock between the coasts of Washington State and British Columbia, and draws from a broad musical palette

that giddily ignores genre. Her acoustic and electroacoustic works are published by her company Activist Music LLC, have won almost no awards, are performed and broadcast daily, have rarely been reviewed, and can be found on over thirty commercial releases from record labels around the world. No musician or audience member has yet to contact Alex to request their money back. Emphasis on, "yet."

In addition to lavish customer refund policies, Ms. Shapiro is noted for her seamless melding of live and recorded sounds, and for her innovative uses of multimedia in performance and music education. A widely published advocate on topics ranging from technology, copyright, diversity, music education, and the music business, and a likable person from whom you can learn details about python breeding, Alex is the Symphonic and Concert writer member of the Board of Directors of ASCAP, and serves on the Board of Directors of the ASCAP Foundation and The Aaron Copland Fund for Music. Alex's music as well as her other, sometimes unusual pursuits, can be experienced on her website, www.alexshapiro.org.

I sat down with Alex on February 25th, 2021, meeting over Zoom, and asked about her involvement with flex ensemble works and if she had written any pieces for them before. She said her initial involvement began with the pandemic and the formation of the Creative Repertoire Initiative. Having never written a work for adaptable ensemble, she wanted to alter a prior work from her catalog that could fit a new ensemble. She realized she could not change or alter a Grade 5+ work that uses specific tone colors and timbres. The first work she altered to make possible for adaptive ensemble was Tight Squeeze, a work she joked “three ferrets playing kazoos could play that thing and sound good” as there’s a “strong backing track” and it “doesn’t matter who shows up.” The presence of a consistent stereo electronic track allowed her to adapt this and other works quickly while maintaining the same essence of the work.

She then pivoted towards the creation of a new work for adaptable ensemble. Passages is a cell based piece, completely different than any work she has attempted before. She created the work by writing multiple musical lines of difficulty for each part, all designed to fit on a single page. Any performer could grab the part matching their instrument and select which line they are

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2 Passages is further analyzed in another chapter of this dissertation.
capable of performing. There is no conductor score, and the cells can be performed in any order based on the guidelines in the front matter. When discussing these guidelines, she said:

The most important game rule is I have designed everything to lock in perfectly, but anybody who is playing has to start at the first bar and go all the way through their four bar cell. They can’t just randomly start somewhere in the middle. I learned that the hard way! I thought I made it clear in the game rules but of course not everyone reads the instructions. There were some recordings coming back to me that were sort of train wrecks!

She learned from this process how to make these pieces work and what to convey to conductors and performers. She then began discussing two new works for Grade 4 (*Kitchen Sync*) and Grade 0.5 (*Count to Ten*) that are full scores, not cellular, for flex ensemble. Those three works encapsulated her experiences with the adaptable medium up to that point.

I asked Alex about her writing process specifically for these adaptable works and how it adjusted from her normal writing process. In *Passages*, she remarked that she verticalized every potential harmony in an attempt to create a pleasant sound. She called her process “stacking,” where each measure was aligned with every moment of the electronic backing. Each had to have a harmonic unity with the electronic track, or the measure was rewritten so it could align. This pleasant tonal writing style also contrasts with most of her musical output and writing style. She justifies this by saying that if performers were to rehearse with the tape track with multiple hearings, she also wanted the tape track to be uplifting. During the dark times, she wanted to bring a little positivity and brightness to the musical landscape.

I then pivoted to the loss of revenue for composers and how this impacted Alex in particular. She noted that performance revenue, a large part of composers income, immediately disappeared. She received hundreds of performance a year that are now gone. Her rates for visiting and discussing her music has stayed relatively the same or “maybe a little bit more.” She pivoted during the pandemic to do something she has been doing since the early 2010s:
“Skypehearsals.” In these visits, she visits remote ensembles and discusses the creation process and the work itself. These pivots, she argues, are necessary for any of the new technological facets that evolve. She pivoted towards these invited lectures and was able to provide a new syllabi for the University of Washington to transition them to an asynchronous class structure for their ensembles.

The ability to adapt and react to new developments is something Alex Shapiro considers critical to all composers. She described the move towards flex ensemble, the embrace of virtual rehearsals before the pandemic, and writing for lower grade groups as ways she has embraced the changing directions of the composing industry to find financial success and livelihood. Since she worked remotely before the pandemic, the challenges of the pandemic seemed especially apt for her experience and knowledge, and I enjoyed spending time hearing how she adapted to the pandemic.

Robert Ambrose

Conductor Robert J. Ambrose, current Director of Bands, Professor of Music, and Director of the School of Music Recruitment at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia, is a prominent conductor who helped in the creation of the Creative Repertoire Initiative. At the onset of the pandemic, Robert was approached by Frank Ticheli as they assembled a group to discover performable music during the pandemic. CRI would grow beyond this initial need and desire. Robert’s short bio at the time of the interview presented below:³

performances at the College Band Directors National Association Southern Division Conferences, the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, and the 2013 Presidential Inaugural Parade; and internationally-distributed recordings on the Summit and GIA labels.

Ambrose is in constant demand as a guest conductor throughout the world and has conducted on four continents. Recent engagements include performances in Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan as well as across the United States. Dr. Ambrose has a particularly strong relationship with the Finnish music community, having been engaged in that country over a dozen times as a guest conductor, teacher, master clinician, and lecturer. He has also served as a guest conductor on tour with The United States Army Field Band.

Ambrose is Founder and Music Director of the Atlanta Chamber Winds and the Washington D.C.-based National Chamber Winds, Co-Founder of Bent Frequency Contemporary Music Ensemble, and Founder and Principal Guest Conductor of the Metropolitan Atlanta Youth Wind Ensemble. Ambrose’s transcriptions and editions are published by Presser Music, C. Alan Publications, and Fennica Gehrman, and his arrangements appear on several state music lists. Ambrose studied at Boston College, Boston University, and Northwestern University, where he received the Doctor of Music degree in conducting. Ambrose is a Conn-Selmer Educational Clinician.

I started off my February 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2021 interview with Robert by asking what his experience with adaptable music was before and after the pandemic. While he was aware of the style and ensemble types, he had no experience before the pandemic creating music within this subgenre. He started the Creative Repertoire Initiative because they did not know if there was going to be any music available for band directors and conductors to perform during the pandemic (not explicitly to help composers). However, once the initiative began, they discovered that there was a huge audience who always needed this music. Robert realized there are many small bands, both in the states and throughout the world, who could take advantage of the music being written for adaptable ensembles. With so many voices missing, smaller programs were unable to recreate and replicate some of the larger band works that rely on a full band in order to properly represent and realize the piece. Small band programs outnumber the large ones, and the adjustments small bands make all the time correspond to exactly the same changes adaptive music presents. Students now will have music to play without excessive parts redone or adapted with each piece.
After the beginning of the pandemic, Robert also began the Beginning Band Adaptable Series for Grade 0.5 band. Works are full flex and available through Murphy Music Press. After seeing the desire and need by beginner bands for works with flexible instrumentation, they commissioned “about four composers a month” to write for this ensemble. In doing so, he seeks to amplify the voices of young composers, people who struggle at getting their names established. He sees this intrinsically connected to the goal of CRI, to provide aid and guide from well-known composers to composers across the spectrum.

Robert’s discussion helped broaden my concepts of CRI and realize how many ways it has impacted the creation of music from the top to the bottom during the pandemic. Without this initiative, or initiatives like it in the future, the world of classical music would simply cease to grow or expand. Additionally, having a group of composers, conductors, and performers work together to establish guidelines led to a plethora of music creation at a time when music creation seemed certain to cease.

Eduard Teregulov

Eduard Teregulov is a new music specialist, pursuing a DMA in Cello Performance at LSU at the time of writing. His professional performances were immediately cancelled during the beginning of the pandemic, so he found new avenues for work. His biography is included below:4

Russian-born cellist, Eduard Teregulov began his musical journey at the age of five, attending the cello class of professor Mark Afanasiev at the school for the musically gifted children in his hometown of Ufa. At the age of 14, he won his first competition in Russia. While receiving his bachelor's degree at his native Ufa, he won first and second prizes at the 22nd Young Musician International Competition ‘Città di Barletta 2012’ for chamber and solo performances with Schnittke’s Cello Sonata No. 1. In 2019 his

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chamber group through LSU took a second prize at the NOLA Chamber Fest and Competition in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Eduard completed his Masters of Music degree at the University of South Florida. There, he studied under Pr. Scott Kluksdahl's along with serving as his mentor’s Teaching Assistant. During his time at USF, he premiered several works for solo cello and chamber groups in collaboration with the Composition Department. Eduard participated in a number of concert series, festivals and seminars including the Tennessee Cello Workshop (Feb 2016), Music from Salem, NY (June 2017 and May 2019), USF Composition in Asia International Symposium and Festival (Jan 2018), Bach Bash concert series in Tampa (March 2017), USF International New Music Festival & Symposium (April 2018), Terroir New Music concert series in Tampa Bay (2017-2018), Really, Really New Music Marathons in Baton Rouge (2018-2019).

For over a decade Mr. Teregulov worked and participated in performances with a number of professional and volunteer orchestras and ensembles in Russia and the United States. Organizations including Young Professionals Symphony Orchestra of Republic of Bashkortostan - acted as principal (Russia), National Symphony Orchestra of Republic of Bashkortostan (Russia), Ufa State Theatre of Opera and Ballet Orchestra (Russia), Bashkiria Chamber Orchestra (Russia), Boston Civic Symphony Orchestra (USA), South Shore Symphony Orchestra (USA), Baton Rouge Civic Symphony Orchestra (USA) and others.

Even though Eduard was raised as a classical musician he is actively exploring other genres. In 2016 Eduard participated in the recording of the latest music album “Prisma” of Colombian American guitarist - Daniel Girón, who describes his music style as a new flamenco. In 2018 Eduard was working in the studio with a songwriter from California - Derek Bevins.

Currently, Eduard is working on several projects, including collaboration with a number of composers in United States. From Sept 2018 Mr. Teregulov is pursuing his doctoral degree at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, LA where he is holding a Teaching Assistant position and works with one of the largest outreach musical program in United States - Kids’ Orchestra.

As mentioned in the introduction, I collaborated with Eduard on this dissertation work as well as a piece for electronics and loop pedal: Duality (2020). Both were created during the pandemic. The information presented below comes from multiple conversations across our collaboration as well as a formal interview conducted on June 7th, 2021. At this moment in time, the United States was opening up, vaccination rates were high, and Eduard had performed with a live audience “three times over the past week.”
Eduard’s work with adaptable music primarily existed after the pandemic. He had played Terry Riley’s *In C*, but he described the *Rougarou Concerto* as his first “art music” for flexible ensemble. In reality though, his work with arranging and rearranging music for himself to play would also perpetuate itself during the pandemic. He accepted a weekly performance gig at a restaurant in New Orleans. After a month or so, he realized playing solo cello masked inside a restaurant limited the possibilities. He purchased the loop pedal so he could have “have the luxury and ability to play several notes at the same time.” In this sense, he creates adaptable music weekly. Adaptable solo works are underexplored in the area, but possibilities abound through looping.

As live concerts were cancelled, Eduard transitioned his group Tampa Homegrown to recording concerts during the pandemic. He would video and audio record all of the works, using multiple takes to create a polished product. He cites that he was able to learn video editing through the process, a skill he would not have learned so quickly without the pandemic. Through these recordings, he was “able to reach all the people who weren’t able to reach the live performance because of location.” His friends, family, and colleagues were able to view the performance from anywhere across the globe, expanding outreach.

But he admits that the performance environment is quite different when recording compared to a live setting. “Online performances are great, but they cannot compare to live performances.... It’s a completely different feeling because you cannot transfer something from the heart on the video. It has to be there.... Because when I play as a performer, I draw my energy from the audience. The way I perform is directly affected by the audience seated in front of me.” The lack of this personal interaction affects the performance, preparation, and relationship between the performer and the audience.
Eduard also sees adaptable music as an important facet for music making after the pandemic. “Because of how accessible it is, it’s much easier to put together performances with pieces like this rather than pay for an entire orchestra.” He then goes on to cite the Rougarou Concerto that requires the soloist and seven additional performers at minimum to create a realistic representation of the work. “I think it has a big future, especially in the 21st century” he says because of the cost. He cites performer fees and how it is easier to create and support chamber music financially. In regard to full flex and chamber flex works, Eduard believes these works have a future outside of the pandemic.

Conclusion

All three of the interviewees felt the economic and emotional impact of their livelihoods being upended, but all three responded in positive ways by finding new avenues for creation. I was personally motivated after each interview, hearing their perseverance and persistence to keep music making alive as much as possible when it was initially assumed to be finished for some time. And although all three looked forward to the end of the pandemic, all three learned valuable skills that will stay with them throughout the remainder of their careers.
CHAPTER 3. ANALYSES

Introduction

Although the pandemic spurred growth for the flex ensemble and adaptable works, rules for adaptable works existed with earlier cellular music. I will examine three works: In C (1964) by Terry Riley, Stay On It (1973) by Julius Eastman, and Passages (2020) by Alex Shapiro. All are cellular works with rules for performance that are written explicitly, inherent implied, or along a spectrum in-between. Because of my background in video game design, I will be examining the idea of game design in each of these works. Since games can be played in multiple ways, video game designers need to consider every possible fascination a player may have during a gameplay session. For every decision made by a designer, certain decisions or possibilities are outside of the scope of the possible work and therefore impossible for the player to create.

By analyzing the possibilities through performance by the rules for performance, I will be integrating game design into each composition. Although my work did not use cellular devices, it nevertheless contained specific rules and guidance for a successful performance. These rules are critical due to the inherent nature of a concerto where large forces are balanced by a solo instrument. I selected the 2020 Shapiro work because of its immediate performance and distribution success by a composer involved with CRI, as pandemic era adaptable works.

In C (1964) Terry Riley

When examining the score for Terry Riley’s In C, the page differential dedicated to traditional music notation compared to the directions for performance is noticeable. The

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traditional notated musical score is a single part, composed of fifty-three individual cells. These cells do not contain measure markings, bar lines, traditional beaming, or any metrical equivalence. The page features the treble clef. If this was all of the musical material, a director or performance group may not be able to entirely create a representative sample of the work.

Riley’s creation necessitates a text dedicated to directions for a successful performance. In many versions, these directions occupy more pages than the traditional notated score. In the version I will analyze, there are fourteen unique paragraphs. These paragraphs are divided in such a way to describe phenomenon applicable to a majority of musical parameters for the work. What is lacking from the traditional notated score, the notated directions accompany and accentuate. I will not discuss every rule, focusing instead on the general guidelines and restrictions from the 1964 publication. In addition, in the printing I will reference, there is a prominent gender framing that goes against the general rules.

All players play from the same score/part. Any number of any kind of instruments can play; in general the more players, the better it goes. Several keyboard instruments should be used as well as tuned percussion instruments like marimbas, vibraphones and xylophones. Vocalist(s) can use any vowel or consonant sound they like.

Riley begins by stating outright that all instruments are available to perform the work and encourages a large number of performers. He also recommends tuned keyboards as a suggestion and mentions that vocalists are allowed to perform on these vocables. He then says that “There are 53 repeating figures, played in sequence,” which is followed by “They are to be played consecutively with each performer determining the number of times he repeats each figure before going on to the next.” With the exception of the “male as norm” principle in full demonstration (where Riley assumes all performers identify with he/him pronouns), Riley explicitly links the fifty-three figures to the individual of the performer. Specifying that they must be played consecutively, the amount of repetition is left to the determinization of the
performer, with further undiscussed guidelines suggesting ways to repeat to create an interesting performance.

But not all players are to play this sequence, read from the same score/part, or determine repetition. Riley specifies:

The 1/8 note pulse is traditionally played by a beautiful girl on the top two octaves of a grand piano or a mallet instrument. She must play loud and keep strict tempo for the entire ensemble to follow. It is also possible to use improvised percussion in strict rhythm (drum set, cymbals, bells etc.), if it is carefully done and doesn’t overpower the ensemble. If needed or desired, the pulse may be traded off between players. The pulse is started before the ensemble enters and is maintained throughout the duration of the work. The pulse can be omitted when played by an ensemble that can stay together without it.

Gender dynamics are now apparent by the first sentence. Earlier, performers were assumed men, but now this new part, outside of the ensemble, is given a particular role outside of the normative of the ensemble. Evident is the “male gaze”, a concept where men consistently idealize and romanticize women, particularly prominent in this instance by the “beautiful girl” depiction. Recent editions have edited out these gender assignments, but it is quite pertinent that the only performer governed by this singular rule is also singled out with “she” pronouns, the adjective “beautiful,” and the adverb “traditionally.”

Nevertheless, the directions establish two roles in which performers can participate: the score/part figures or the pulse. Anything performed outside of these confines, gathering material from the score/part or the singular direction, are impermissible. Free improvisation or adaptive reworkings are not allowed. Riley does go on to add flexibility for the figures that can be offset from the pulse but still within tempo restrictions. He also describes how the work should end for both roles.

The gamification of Riley’s In C exists between the performers interacting with the fifty-three figures. Riley offers suggestions in the 1964 publication that alter with each subsequent
release. In general, the guiding principles are to express each figure multiple times and not rush too far ahead or fall too far behind the motion of the ensemble. The effect is a long forming drone with bursts of activity as the work progresses. The thought process of the entire ensemble will therefore determine the pacing and overall length of the work, with typical performances lasting at least thirty minutes. The audience can therefore hear the repeating pulse and slow development of ideas over a large span of time resulting in a state of being where local change becomes the focus.

*Stay On It* (1973) Julius Eastman

Julius Eastman’s work has been historically underrepresented. *Stay On It*, one of his most successful, received a publication only in 2020. It is publicly available on his album *Unjust Malaise*, released posthumously in 2005 and containing the only recording of Eastman’s work created during his lifetime. I ordered the 2021 publication released by Wise Musical Classical and will be using the descriptors within to describe the work. For the first months of 2021, I struggled to find any university housing a copy of the score, and I urge universities to order the catalog of Eastman’s work.

The instructions for performance, under this publication as “Performance Notes”, are shared publicly on the Wise Music Classical website. However, I could find no record of Eastman’s writing of these notes. It is likely they are recreated based on the performance practice from the recording and other performances during Eastman’s lifetime. Nevertheless, the construction of the work requires close examination and will provide insight into a new

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development of the cellular idea. The entirety of the notes are presented below for preservation, awareness, and analysis of the work.\(^4\)

Performance Notes

Instrumentation is open, although traditionally voice(s), piano, and mallet percussion have been a part of most performances.

The ‘chordal’ part (Main Theme) may be played by the piano and/or mallet percussion. Alternatively, players of single-line instruments may choose to play one of the lines in the Main Theme that falls in a register that is comfortable and will lend itself to balance within the ensemble.

Players may choose to play and repeat the layered cells at their own discretion.

It is possible to move between the chordal and layered elements, but the Themes must be repeated throughout each section by at least one player.

Each element (Theme, Cells) may be repeated ad lib. Cues to move to each next section may be visual, or a pre-determined musical cue.

The piece may begin with the poem [included in the performance scores]. Optionally, the players may choose to improvise using materials from the main body of the composition. This should begin quietly and sparsely, building intensity as the poem progresses, leading to the entrance of the Main Theme as the poem ends.

Immediately apparent as a key feature is the addition of a theme. This chordal theme functions as a unifying force where cells are layered in addition to the theme. If the pulse from Riley’s *In C* was designed to unify the ensemble, Eastman’s theme functions in the same manner. The two-measure looping theme contains a circular motion around a F# mixolydian mode. The theme is in the common meter with syncopated rhythm avoiding beats 2 and 4. In the score, the theme contains the description “Joyful Q.N = 90” with an expectation that the theme is to be light and rhythmic.

The layered cells are improvisatory elements to be added and interpreted by the ensemble and performed over the theme. One cell in particular expands the ensemble further beyond Riley’s *In C* to include performers’ voices. The cell asks players to repeat with eighth notes on the three syllable phrase: “Stay on it.” The pattern breaks the quadruple subdivision, allowing for an across the beat syncopation. But another unique feature of *Stay On It* are the sections within the cellular structure. There are at least ten sections during a performance with an optional closing section. Each section contains its own layering cells and main theme variation. Performers move from section to section by a conductor cue or by signals within the ensemble.

A final note about these performance notes and practice: because this work went historically underrepresented and the composer passed away at a relatively young age, no performance practice continued of the work as opposed to Riley’s *In C*. There was no option to rewrite the performance notes to modern time. The work went unpublished, not allowing for revisions such as Riley’s elimination of the “beautiful woman.” Because of these issues, performers today must wrestle with the interpretation of the work. Most gather useful information from the recording, but recreation of a recording is rarely what a composer desires.

Due to the lack of a performance history and words from the composer, performers must carefully construct a performance. Therefore, the gamification exists beyond the construction of a performance but into the consideration of historical performance practice and desires of the composer. Especially in today’s age, blatant disregard for the recording and words of Eastman would lead to an undesirable performance. Likewise, my words here draw from the performance practice of the original recording and what semblances can be accurately reconstructed from the recording. Close balance of 1973 and forward Eastman must be met with present day
interpretation. Drawing the line between free improvisation and specified cells must be constructed and construed accurately.

The musical effect of these decisions creates another minimalist work where audiences will pay attention to each change. However, the addition of a musical theme was quite invigorating and intriguing. The theme is catchy, memorable, and easily identifiable when it returns or develops. In that sense, the emphasis for the audience might not be solely on the change but also on the return.

*Passages* (2020) Alex Shapiro⁵

*Passages* is a pandemic created work “For Wind Band or Orchestra” with “Ultra-flex instrumentation” as multiple transpositions of the performable parts are available. However, unlike the two works discussed above, Alex Shapiro’s work has a set duration aided by a “Pre-recorded Soundscape” or electronic tape part. With echoes of Riley’s pulse, the tape binds the ensemble together with a singular movement through time. However, unlike Riley’s pulse, the tape’s duration is finite, with the work’s total length being three minutes.

The “Performance Notes/Game Rules” depict Shapiro’s vision for the ideal performance. She specifies that each four-bar line is a separate cell and there are eleven cells per part. Performers are encouraged to start on any line, including the tacet line where there are simply four bars of rests in the 5/4 meter. Each four bar phrase then must be counted and synced properly or else all eleven lines will not be fulfilled. This is quite different from Riley’s cellular work but shares elements with Eastman’s Theme. Shapiro embraces the variety possible by each instrument by specifying “Players are encouraged to vary articulations, phrasing, and

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⁵ Alex Shapiro, *Passages*, Activist Music LLC (ASCAP): Hal Leonard, 2020, iii..
registration: play any note up or down an octave, and freely adjust for instrument range limitations.” In addition, Shapiro provides overall shaping guidelines, encouraging players to tacet and play softly early on and build momentum as the track progresses.

In addition to the cellular pitched part, Shapiro includes two parts that are completely optional. These are not cellular, but rather traditionally through-composed, designed to align exactly with the electronic recording. These fit on a single page as well and include the timings with the electronic track to help alignment. One is a pitched part, following the bass part of the electronics. She encourages crescendos and diminuendos to “create an undulating effect” as well as additional “rhythm and additional notes to bolster the feel of the 5/4 meter, but it’s crucial to remain on the same pitch.” Adding controlled aleatoric elements keeps this bass part in the same spirit of the other pitched materials. Conversely, the unpitched percussion line is quite metric, designed to support the electronic part wherever possible. Shapiro suggests that “suspended cymbal is especially well suited, using brushes and occasional quiet rolls in the first half of the piece, and brushes, soft mallets, and sticks for the latter half, to support the overall dynamic build from start to finish.” Although the rhythmic aleatory is reduced, Shapiro encourages performers on this part to explore timbre through stroke and instrument selection.

It’s worth mentioning at this point that each of the “pitched” cellular parts also includes a cellular line of unpitched percussion. Performers are explicitly encouraged to play a different instrument, but in my interview with Shapiro, she also mentioned that timbral effects such as knocking or air sounds on the original instrument were suggested and she embraces this idea.

However, one area for confusion is the moment each performer is to begin playing. For the two optional parts that are aligned with the tape track, they can begin alongside the tape. But the cellular parts should wait four bars before beginning. Each individual is playing the game,
but the ones with the cellular parts are also strategizing as to when they should enter and which cell they should play. Because the tape part is unmoving, careful control must be given by each member of the ensemble to stay in sync. Shapiro noted this by including instructions on when to begin on each part as well as abbreviated “GAME RULES” in the top left corner. Although parts contain improvisatory elements, strict counting and entrances must be maintained. Shapiro said in her interview with me that she was sent multiple recordings, some quite beautiful, but ultimately did not conform to her vision as performers entered outside of the four-bar structuring. These were interesting and fascinating to Shapiro but harmonically did not fit the vision she intended.

Creating a short cellular work with harmonic interest is quite difficult, but Shapiro’s use of the electronic track combined with the four bar structure of each cell is able to achieve fluid harmonic shape when performed according to the game rules. The short work, three minutes in length, does not lose harmonic interest over its duration. Looping ideas and concepts have persisted in all three works, but with the truncation of time, I believe the audience may leave the room not knowing this is a cellular work at all. The form may not be easily apparent to those without the score or notes. This aspect in particular I wanted to draw upon in my own writing.

Conclusion

Although I examined three cellular works, each with their own gamification, the Rougarou Concerto features no cellular construction. The game rules, however, instructed the performance practice of my own work. Creating these performance notes are far from academic, but vital to a proper construction of the work. From Riley, I realized that performance notes can

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6 “PLEASE READ THE GAME RULES!” is also included in each part.
be altered to be more conclusive but also received an instruction on how not to construct the notes. In the Eastman, I realized the thematic potential of unifying themes across a wide variety of timbres. If I use the cello as the glue to the work, it will bear semblance to the theme and motivic unity of Eastman’s Main Theme. Likewise, with the Shapiro, the electronic track presents another string of unity that I used to model the solo cello. Hiding the formal identity of the construction of the score was also quite appealing.

Keeping these motivic identities alive and audible throughout the whole of these cellular works is critical for the performers to stay unified in the presentation of the work. The next chapter features the document of the Rougarou Concerto opening with my own “game rules” to create a successful performance.
CHAPTER 4. ROUGAROU CONCERTO

Thomas L. Wilson

Rougarou Con certo

Cello, Flex Ensemble

2021
Score in C

Duration: 20'

Ensemble Requirements:
The piece can be performed with the soloist, one performer on Parts 1-6, and one percussionist on Percussion 1. The work can also be performed with the soloist, three performers on Parts 1-6, and multiple percussionists. Theoretically, a concert band, orchestra, wind ensemble, or marching band could successfully perform the work. A pianist and cellist can perform the work so long as the pianist performs the Percussion 1 cues. The Percussion 2/3 part can substitute for all six parts in addition to a percussionist on the Percussion 1 part.

Performance Notes:

Solo Cello
Movement 1 and 3 – The knocking on the back of the cello may be substituted for a similar knocking effect on the cello.
Movement 2 – The delicate octaves may be performed as a single note passage on the upper octave.

Piano
Movement 1 – Some parts require large stretches of tremolo oscillation. These should maintain intensity throughout the section.

Ensemble
It is recommended that the work is conducted. Regardless of the size of the performing ensemble, the soloist must be heard. Dynamics are written relative to the style of the section. If all parts have forte, not all should perform forte, but instead work together to create the forte sound.
The singular z on a stem indicates the note is to be performed with a flutter tongue or growl.

Program Notes:
The Rougarou Concerto features three movements designed to capture the mythos of the Rougarou. The Rougarou is a "half-man, half-dog. It stands upright on two legs, and is covered in hair. The Rougarou roams the bayou in search for misbehaving children to frighten." It was written in part for the composer's dissertation. The work contains three movements:

1. Rougarou
2. Little Town
3. Encounter

The work is dedicated to the premiere cellist, Eduard Teregulov, whose commission and countless hours of rehearsals and practice fueled its creation.

thomaslwilson.com
Rougarou Concerto
for Eduard Teregulov
1. Rougarou

Minimum 6 Parts + Percussion 1

Thomas L. Wilson

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30
2. Little Town
3. Encounter
Encounter
CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In July 2020, I was finishing the first draft of a new electroacoustic work for Eduard Teregulov, a local Baton Rouge cellist and collaborator, and his loop pedal titled *Duality*. Eduard and I realized the potential dangers of using a loop pedal for a live piece. Performance had to be perfect if it were to be looped for an extended period of time. I built this into the writing of that particular piece, allowing the performer to perform the loop multiple times until captured amicably.

We met at the local coffee shop, Highlands Coffee, to discuss the work and avenues for performance during the pandemic. Sitting in a socially distanced corner with masks, Eduard examined the work and provided feedback. But as we were leaving, Eduard asked me to write a cello concerto for him! That initial commission led to another thirty minutes of impromptu planning, some of which would fix itself into the final work. In that moment, I decided I wanted to write a concerto in a rather traditional style for a nontraditional (at least at the time of this writing) ensemble: the flex ensemble. There were two main reasons for this decision. I did not have a large ensemble work with the flexibility of the flex ensemble. And perhaps more importantly, I was completely uncertain at the time if a traditional large ensemble work would be able to be performed by any ensemble. In addition, much like *Duality*, a concerto requires perfect execution on the first performance. Attention to detail is critical for a virtuosic concerto, and after noting Eduard’s commitment to this, I happily accepted the commission.

As the summer of the pandemic lockdown progressed, I studied and examined an ensemble I was completely unfamiliar with, an ensemble on which I would write my dissertation document in addition to my work. I encountered the Composers Repertoire Initiative and the
works of those composers. With the resources they created and shared, I felt confident in my ability to create a successful work for the medium and a concerto that could outlive the moment. Fortunately, Eduard was receptive of the idea, and the Rougarou Concerto was born.

Planning Stages

When I sat down to begin planning the overall shape of the concerto, I wanted to create a form similar to the traditional fast-slow-fast three movement concerto. I then started to plan the general timbres and ideas for each movement. The gestation of ideas came in reverse performance order; I settled on Movement III, then II, and finally I. Movement III would pull on my knowledge of Eduard’s background in metal music. He once was a singer in a metal band, so I knew I wanted to introduce metrical shifts, groove, and a fierce embrace of harsh timbre into this movement. I settled on the plucking pizzicato of the cello for this movement, reserving one of the more common techniques of stringed instruments until the final movement. In the second movement, I settled on a melodic theme in the cello’s singing and upper most registers. I wanted this idea to be nostalgic, a longing for another time, so I also decided to incorporate the thirty-two bar song form. These concepts left me wanting a contrast with the popular inspired movements, so when in time I sketched the first movement, I decided to embrace a contrasting movement. This movement would focus on the lower end of the cello’s register and have more freedom in tempi and individual timbre.

While I made these decisions, I referred to the backing ensemble. As this was my first piece for flex ensemble, I wanted to envision any possible pairing with the cello. Cello concertos are in some ways overrepresented in the classical repertoire, so I decided to listen to a cello concerto daily during these planning stages. In doing so, I instilled a sensitivity to the cello’s
registral capabilities among a large ensemble. When working with the flex ensemble, I knew I must be sensitive to these with any size ensemble and any performers on any part. Therefore, determining register and timbre of the cello was a high priority. As I will discuss, these early sensitivities led to decisions on the form, part pairings, and percussion writing of individual movements.

I settled on a theme for the concerto that would mirror the overall structure. I realized one idea floating from the sketches of the second and third movements was various interpretations of the [012] trichord in a tonal setting. Setting this idea in a post tonal setting seemed like an interesting contrast to open the concerto. This [012] was the first idea for linking the movements. The second would be a creature from Cajun folklore known as the Rougarou.

The Rougarou is “the infamous werewolf of the bayou. The creature is described as half-man, half-dog. It stands upright on two legs, and is covered in hair. It has the face of a canine with many sharp, frightening teeth. Its fingernails are grisly claws. The Rougarou roams the bayou in search for misbehaving children to frighten.” The creature is similar to the Loup-Garou, a character from Medieval France, that would be the blame for crimes in court from someone with “strange behavior.” The origin of the creatures traveled to Acadia region in Canada before the forced migration of Acadians to modern Louisiana. Over time, the Loup-Garou became Rougarou in Cajun French.1 Likewise, the origins of the Rougarou paired closely to the current events occurring during the writing of the concerto. As the United States went under quarantine to avoid the outside and the coronavirus, the metaphor of people staying inside to avoid the dangerous Rougarou did not go unnoticed.

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As the concerto would also serve as my final large work at Louisiana State University (in Baton Rouge, Louisiana), the Rougarou folklore seemed fitting as a setting. The movement titles were then established: 1. Rougarou, 2. Little Town, and 3. Encounter. Although not explicitly programmatic, the titling would serve for avenues of exploration and inspiration as I began the rigorous writing process. Each movement would end attaca, with the soloist transitioning alone to the new movement.

Finally, I also determined the pitch centers A for the first and last movement and D for the second movement. These lie on the “sharp” side of the cello and would allow for multiple natural harmonics and stronger positions for resonance in the highest register. The ensemble would consist of the soloist, six unique parts arranged for a wide variety of instruments, and percussion. The percussion parts would scale based on the size of the ensemble, so the more performers there are, the more percussionists are able to perform. This decision was mostly to keep the dynamic balance intact between the cellist and the ensemble.

1. Rougarou

I finished the first draft of the first movement in January 2021. I originally sketched the work in binary AB form, but while writing realized that the simplified ritornello form (ABACA) would be more appropriate. As the ritornello was featured prominently during the Baroque era, near the same time as the Rougarou folklore was being adapted, the form would fit the movement quite well. In addition, introducing the flex ensemble and its possible performers was of upmost importance. The ritornello form would allow the ensemble to play the theme together, creating a unified sound mass, to acclimate the listener to the ensemble. The B and C of the
ritornello would be prominent areas for the soloist while they would create a unified sound in the A section.

In practice, I see the opening as an introduction to the ritornello. The ensemble creates the ambience and timbre, as well as the pitch content, before the entrance of the cellist. Each part enters individually except parts 5 and 6, the bass parts, which create their own air of mystique with slow moving development. Parts 1-3 merge together right before the entrance of the cello, creating a unified timbre and a slight push towards the cello entrance. This odd ambiguity with little direction immediately creates unease that I believe the entrance of the cellist (the only performer yet to play) will give a response to by shifting the timbre. The themes of the movement are generated by the ensemble, and the soloist generates the thematic material in the other two movements.

In a traditional way, the cellist enters with a cadenza. However, this cadenza will not provide the themes for the movement. Instead, there is an internal dialogue between themselves and the cello. The cellist is asked to hit their palm on the back of the cello three times twice in this section, in a dramatic fashion. This is then mirrored with the entrance of the washboard, pairing the official entrance of modern Cajun culture with the entrance of the soloist. The dramatic motion of the soloist beating the back of their cello should be a moment of memory for the audience, a dramatic point that can be drawn upon in the final movement. This moment should, when performed seriously and with intent, draw on a dramatic cognoscente to the audience.

At rehearsal mark B, the ritornello begins. This time, parts 1-4 are unified in rhythm and pitch class content and will continue to be in the A sections of the ABACA form. I placed the upper registers in mostly unison to create a sense of unease as doublings on the small and large
level create large gaps of sound in pitch frequency. Instead of creating a large unified sound, I wanted the stratified elements of the ensemble to characterize the section.

Both the B and C sections of the remaining ritornello sections prominently feature the cello in a modified cadenza. The B section introduces the possibility of a collision between the two by the soloist, but they return back to the original cadenza idea. However, in both the beginning and ending of this section, the soloist introduces another memorable moment, playing the highest possible note they can with clear resonance. Since the cello resembles a voice, this highest possible note recalls a high pitched scream or screech. The C section features this screech again on its opening, before a meandering low range cello finally begins motion on the low end motifs before transferring energy back to the ensemble for the final section.

The ending of the final A section features the most virtuosic element for the soloist yet. As the ensemble repeats the final declaration of the theme, the cellist is spinning quickly in sixteenth note circles. The contour of the cello resembles in many ways the Bach cello suites while the pitch content follows the ensemble’s rhythm, motion, and harmony. The final measures provide a dramatic close to the first movement. The second movement begins promptly after, with the soloist setting the tempo and mood shift.

2. Little Town

I completed the first draft of the second movement in November 2020. This movement features both a rounded binary form and a thirty-two bar song form. In the ABA’ shape, the thirty-two bar song form, aaba, is found in both A sections although truncated in the final A’ to aba. In between the large sections of the rounded binary are short interludes with similar material. The first is a solo by the cellist and the second is a solo quartet with three members of
the ensemble joining the cellist. Overall, the A sections are D centric, the B section F# centric, and the interludes B centric.

The cello solely introduces the theme right at the onset, without any accompanying ensemble members. It features shifting tonal centers, double stops, and romanticized chromatic descents parallel to the [012] trichord from the first movement. The ensemble then reiterates the theme with harmonic reinforcement from the ensemble and the soloist. Then, the cello declares a triumphant contrasting b section, followed by the ensemble in a more militant repeat of a.

A lush theme is created through the cello in a new tonal area in the B section. While this theme is repeated only twice, first by the soloist then the ensemble, the resolution of the theme functions as the emotional climax of the second movement and perhaps the climax of the concerto. It features an elongated chromatic semitone descent, once again mirroring the [012] trichord, but this time in clear tonal closure.

After the ensuing interlude, the movement closes with a triumphant and truncated thirty-two bar song form and theme from earlier. The typical aaba form is shortened to aba, with a single utterance of the original a. The movement ends as it began with the cello performing a revised double stop utterance of the theme, now an octave higher. A quick burst of energy with quadruple stops, rapid bowing over multiple strings, is then dispelled for solitude and solidarity in the closing measures. Again, the third movement begins swiftly by the soloist.

3. Encounter

I passed on the first draft of the third movement to Eduard in December 2020. Of the three movements, this focused primarily on metrical shifts through an articulated rhythmical accentuation. When Eduard mentioned he was once a lead singer in a metal band, I strove to
include these hypermetrical shifts and rhythms through a pizzicato focused sound. This change in timbre highlights the energy and virtuosity of multiple quick pizzicato attacks.

The form of the work is a modified sonata form. The cellist creates a pizzicato introduction that forms the underlying motivic motion of the movement. Then, the cellist articulates a piercing theme, the primary theme of the exposition. Later, the cello introduces another pizzicato idea in a new key. This theme functions as the secondary theme. A brief development section occurs, with interspersed disruption by the soloist, followed by a false recapitulation. The primary theme returns, an octave higher, but slows to give way to the final cadenza. After the cadenza, the recapitulation is in reverse order; the secondary theme is then followed by the primary theme, both in the original key center.

The cadenza recaps moments from all three movements. The three hits of the back of the cello, the introduction to the song form theme of the second movement, and the pizzicatos all blend together to form the free tempi cadenza. Each of these moments function as an internal monologue by the soloist between the various characters they perceive within the concerto.

The concerto ends with the most virtuosic moment in the final statement of the primary theme. The entire ensemble is in constant motion, with the meter dropping an eighth note in various positions of the parts. Meanwhile, the cellist is playing rapid sixteenth notes dancing around the theme. Finally, the cello restates a closing idea before a brief activity burst ends the concerto.

Collaboration

After distributing the first draft of each movement to Eduard, he and I met frequently to discuss revisions. Given our multiple collaborations, this partnership was quite fruitful. I
generally take great strides to accommodate for performers, listening and revising according to their every word. They have years of practice at their craft, so it is sensical to me to listen when they speak. After our first collaboration with *Duality*, I realized how beneficial it was to partner with Eduard. He would revise the difficult bowing passages with the same rhythm and intensity, but variable pitches. Generally, these revisions were practical, altering pitches slightly to accommodate a triple or quadruple stop, or changing rhythm to accommodate for bowing. Eduard graciously provided bowing suggestions frequently and I gladly incorporated those adjustments in the score. Eduard also suggested a final tag for the first movement, a couple of measures of pizzazz, which ends the movement convincingly.

One aspect I noted after *Duality* was Eduard’s physical tendencies. He can perform the cello quite aggressively, so I used this aggression as a strength in the first and third movements. He also enjoys virtuosic and difficult passages, so the second movement and third movement contain multiple moments of virtuosity.

Rehearsals and Recording

The rehearsals and recording process took place over three evenings, April 28 to 30th, from 8 PM to 11 PM. The premiere featured Eduard Teregulov as the cello soloist, with Gabriela Goméz Estévez as conductor. The remainder of the ensemble was flutist Yuh-Jiun Melody Wan, violinist Hayoung Cho, clarinetist Jang Hyun Thomas Kim, violist Catherine Chen, bassoonist Annalea Milligan, double bassist John St Cyr, and percussionist Chase Gillett. Two nights were dedicated to rehearsals with the final evening to recording. All participants in the rehearsals and recording were vaccinated or COVID tested, wearing masks, and spaced six feet apart.
On Friday April 30th, myself and a few fellow Composition and EMDM students arrived at the New Tiger Band Hall at Louisiana State University. This was the final day of rehearsals when the recording would take place. Mixing and mastering took place over the following weeks by the composer. Eduard Teregulov graciously edited and assembled the video recordings.

Final Thoughts

I wrote the concerto for flex ensemble for one large reason: ease of performance. Although this was necessary for the pandemic, I believe the ensemble provides multiple avenues for performance. The soloist can find any number of performers to play the work and have a real representation of the work. Even a single pianist could play the work alongside the soloist and suit my vision! I firmly believe the work could be taken anywhere to any university ensemble and be performed.

I did not use cellular elements, choosing instead to use the cello as a glue for the work. To that end, the Rougarou theming could also manifest itself in multiple ways depending on how the soloist and ensemble interpret the work. Ultimately, I see the Rougarou Concerto as a final chapter on my doctoral studies at Louisiana State University. It is the culminating work during my time studying with Dr. Mara Gibson, and I hope the recording is heard by as many as possible during the pandemic as well as many live audiences after the pandemic.

As a final interview question, I asked Eduard, “If you have anything else, now is your chance. Speak now!” Eduard responded, “Well, I don’t know. We should write the second concerto.”

Stay tuned.
APPENDIX. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

The following interviews were edited lightly for grammar and content by request.

Robert Ambrose – February 22nd, 2021

THOMAS: Thank you so much again for agreeing to this short little interview. It’s really going to help me out.

ROBERT: Sure, happy to do it.

THOMAS: I'll jump right in so we don't waste any time. What was your experience with adaptable music before and after the pandemic began?

ROBERT: Before the pandemic, no experience. None. I’ve never been in a situation where I needed it. I was aware of music but never needed it for any of the groups I was conducting. Did you want to interview me because I was a part of the Creative Repertoire Initiative or just as a random person?

THOMAS: No. *laughs* I definitely have been writing and investigating the Creative Repertoire Initiative and your name came up. I’d love to hear from your perspective because a lot of the CRI people are composers and maybe you have a different perspective.

ROBERT: Sure, yeah, okay, perfect, good, all right! Obviously since the pandemic, you know Frank Ticheli and Alan McMurray and I started the Creative Repertoire Initiative, really just out of a desire to help band directors. We were just afraid that they weren't going to have any repertoire. We just didn't know. This was back in April of last year (2020). It was scary times! We had no idea what things were going to look like in the fall and really it was just a way to get through the fall initially. Of course, what we discovered once we put the group together and started writing and arranging things was that there was a huge segment of the population that had
always needed this kind of music. Maybe they were a little frustrated that it had taken a pandemic for people to pay attention to them on this. By no means were we the only ones to do it or we had an exclusive club. There had always been flex music for years and years but certainly it got a big shot in the arm once the pandemic hits. So now it's a big part of what I do. Everything with CRI, our goal was twofold. It wasn't only to help band directors but it was to help amplify the voices of other composers who wanted to do the same thing so we wanted to make sure that it didn't look like it was just the twelve of us were a club and we were doing this and you were either in or you were out. We formed the Facebook page to allow composers to post their music and we held a bunch of seminars/webinars so that they could present their pieces to band directors. It was really about helping the whole profession to have a voice, not just the 12 of us. Since then I personally have done a few arrangements. I think I’ve done four or five from my CRI colleagues and I just had my first published and distributed by Murphy Music and I’m working on a couple for a Finnish publisher, so it's become a big part of my arranging life. I’ve always been an arranger (well, not always), but certainly for the last five to six years I’ve been doing a lot of arranging. But lately, it's been slanting towards adaptable pieces at least for now. I should mention I do a lot of guest conducting overseas in Taiwan and Finland. Those are places I visit a lot and the Finns you know the whole country of Finland has a population of five million people. It's a huge country with a small population and every village has a band. They have bands with fifteen to twenty people in them all over the country and I talked to some of my publisher friends over there and said, “You know guys, you got to get on board here like this; your country needs this music more than anybody.” One publisher listened to me and they asked me to make a couple of arrangements for them and they're going to start pushing that as a way
for small bands to have other music to play. Hopefully it's going to have ramifications beyond just our borders here.

THOMAS: Yeah for sure! You mentioned this music being needed for other, you know, maybe non-stereotypical, not normative band situations. Can you describe that a little bit more? So, you gave one example in Finland but also here in the States or other places abroad with the need for adaptable and flex music. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

ROBERT: Sure! I actually wouldn't call it non-normative though. I think it's more the norm than what we think it is. For example, what I learned I’ve done a lot with CBDNA during the pandemic and became a little bit more involved in a leadership role in that organization, and what I’ve realized and found out is that the majority of CBDNA's membership (College Band Directors National Association) is small colleges. They make up the majority of the membership! I think in most states, there are more small band programs than medium and large size ones. That's what I’m referring to is programs that maybe have you know fifteen or twenty or thirty musicians and not a balanced instrumentation, they've not been able to do well. They've not been able to suitably do repertoire for full band because so many of the voices are missing. What we see now is lots of really great composers, the CRI folks are some of them, but there are many others as well reworking their bands for flexible instrumentation. That's giving people who felt that they didn't have the means to bring this music to their students the ability to do it, and really at the end of the day, that's really who we're talking about as the musicians not the directors. It’s not that “Oh, now the directors have music to play.” It's that their students now have music to play that results in a reasonable performance of the piece. There's not all kinds of rewriting having to be done or parts just missing completely. As a composer, you know that when you start writing this kind of music you give up a lot of control. I don't take lightly what my colleagues
and CRI have done by rewriting this music and essentially giving up the notion of color completely. I mean you really have no idea who's going to play these notes. Where anyone can play any part, you've truly given up almost everything. Except for notes, rhythms, articulation, and dynamics, you essentially give up everything else. You know a lot of directors need that kind of freedom because of the size of their program and I’m really encouraged that so many composers have been willing to jump on board with this to try to help.

THOMAS: For sure. I’ll jump in a little bit here. I’m also a video game composer, so I’m used to giving up tempi sometimes so you can have things change around or no duration for specifically how long something lasts. Now I’m writing a full flex piece that’s a cello concerto. That’s the only element stable, the cello, so everything else you know...

ROBERT: You know Omar Thomas? He said it’s like being asked to create a masterpiece with three crayons. Both laugh. It kind of is a great analogy.

THOMAS: I’ve worked with large ensembles before where you start with a couple grand staves and work up. Now you just start with a couple grand staves and that's pretty much it.

ROBERT: Wow, yeah. What a challenge. Good for you! Is that your dissertation?

THOMAS: Essentially. That'll be the creative part and then our interview is part of the written part as well. Awesome job with the Facebook group! When I saw that as a composer, that inspired me to move towards this for my writing for both parts of the dissertation. So, shifting a little bit now, which pieces that are flex or adaptable have left an impression on you and why?

ROBERT: Wow, that's a loaded question! I don't want to slant too much towards the CRI folks but full disclosure, that's the music that I probably know the best. So many people are writing so much, and it's hard to sort of keep up with it all. I’ll go with Alex Shapiro’s *Passages*. This is a cellular piece. It's a series of four bars. It's in five four time signature with four bar
cellular motives that you can play in any order. There's a beautiful backing track for it so it's
electro-acoustic, which Alex does so well so I’m quite fond of that piece. It's had a lot of
performances. Frank Ticheli's *In C Dorian* for a similar reason. It's a cellular piece that can be
played by any number of musicians and it's an homage obviously to Terry Riley’s *In C* with a
slightly different take and exceedingly more accessible for young musicians. I’m a big fan of
that. Let me think some more here... Michael Dougherty’s *Made for You and Me* is based on
“This Land is Your Land” by Woody Guthrie folks song. It’s not quite a full flex, it has its four
parts, but there are required instruments in them, and he's got the percussion in there as well, and
I’m quite fond of that. There have been so many and some really wonderful pieces… like
Danielle Fisher is the composer that comes to mind. She's actually more of an arranger. She's
written a whole bunch of flexible things for a small band, and she was doing this before the
pandemic. She has a series called “little band...BIG IMPACT” and also arranged “Ode to Joy”
for adaptable beginner band. Katahj Copley is a young composer from Georgia that I was
supporting before the pandemic and then I’ve gotten him involved in something I’m doing with
Murphy Music called “The Beginning Band Adaptable Series.” It's adaptable music for
beginning band, and he wrote a really neat piece for .5 band called *Street Noise* that’s a really
interesting piece. That's maybe an initiative that's we haven't really promoted much. The
Beginning Band Adaptable series was started by me and a beginning band director named Mary
Cogswell from South Dakota. I don't want to say commissioning because we're not offering any
money, but we're asking for composers to write pieces for beginning band at the 0.5 level that are
adaptable. We've had some really great composers! I mean Steve Danyew, Roger Zare, Tyler
Grant, and Alex Shapiro is going to write. Jen Jolly and all kinds of people have taken up the
charge here to write for beginning bands. The piece that I mentioned by Katahj is a beginning band piece for students with like less than six months of experience.

THOMAS: Incredible!

ROBERT: And it's a really neat piece, but let me give a little bit more thought to that too and if I think of some others, I’ll email them to you.

THOMAS: I totally appreciate that! Can you speak a little bit more on anything else that you see as the future of adaptive or flexible music?

ROBERT: Well, I get asked that question a lot and perhaps because I just don't know, I never know how to answer it. I think that it's here to stay because I think that people have always needed it and will continue to and not just a small segment of the population. I think a huge segment of the population needs this music, so I would imagine that it will continue to flourish. What I think we need to do is try to get as many really great composers as possible to write for the medium and to continue to find ways to amplify the voices of younger composers who have trouble getting their name out there. It’s a big market, and it's a flooded market. There's so many people writing and it's so hard to have a voice, so the future is in those of us who have a voice to allow others to have a voice as well. I mean when Frank and Alan and I started this we just called our friends. But it became clear very quickly, like you know I hope this doesn't sound arrogant, but it's a mighty group of people. The people that we called, and we said we've got to do good with this, we've got to do more than just write a bunch of pieces, we have to help other people. So, if there's a future, I think that's where it is and those with a voice helping those who have less of a voice to do this and aren't known. Get it out there to people!
THOMAS: Definitely a mighty group of people assembled, and it kind of at the beginning gave legitimacy to this idea, so thank you for using your voices effectively and promoting what you have and giving the resources to everybody just so freely. It was an incredible thing that you all did at the beginning of this.

ROBERT: It's our pleasure! You know it's like I said. It started for band directors, but it became clear very quickly that it was also going to be a way to help composers, so I think we've played a small part in helping to inspire some people, but it's a small part. There's lots of people out here doing a lot to help.

THOMAS: Exactly. Thank you so much Robert! I really appreciate it.

Alex Shapiro – February 25th, 2021

THOMAS WILSON: Thank you so much for agreeing to do this interview! I really appreciate it. Can you tell me a little bit about your background with adaptable music? Did this start with the pandemic for you or did you have some experience with it before?

ALEX SHAPIRO: Well, the tradition of adaptable or flexible music started for me with the pandemic, but for years, I’ve been kind of thinking outside the box and throwing wrenches into the works with different pieces and doing a lot of kind of unusual pieces that were, turns out, work fine with differing personnel. When we started CRI, the Creative Repertoire Initiative, a number of us had not done adaptable pieces before. But we all realized how important it was and it was funny because I launched into my own catalog and decided, “Okay, I’m going to turn some of my existing pieces into adaptable pieces before even starting a fresh one,” because that seemed at the time like it would be an easy idea and my brain just doesn't work that way. I found that it was really daunting when I looked at some of my pieces, the straight ahead ones not the
tone poems with lots of orchestral color. I mean you can't go near those and we all realized that early on at CRI. We were having those conversations about how some of the grade five pieces, the more complicated pieces, they won't adapt well because what makes them so beautiful is the color and you can't swap out the colors just randomly. Hit or miss, sometimes it would work, but a lot of the time it might not and it's not what the composer envisions. But with other pieces and they tend to be the easier pieces that are more monophonic, groove based, or, in my case, certainly some of those easier pieces that also have an accompaniment track because that's awesome for adaptable music and flex, especially in the pandemic when people are online and practicing at home. I’ve been doing that for many years and at first, I looked at a piece of mine called Tight Squeeze which I thought would be easy to adapt because frankly, as I like to joke, three ferrets playing kazooos could play that thing and it would sound good because it's just the nature of the piece. Both laugh There's a strong backing track and it really doesn't matter who shows up, but trying to put all these existing lines into different parts and different group areas just wasn't how my brain worked. Instead what I did was I went through my catalog and found, you know, four or five pieces like Tight Squeeze that right off anybody could just buy the regular set, have it, and whatever instruments showed up will still sound good. That has turned out to be the case with some of these pieces. My work was done! I didn't have to do new versions of those, just buy the regular version and you'll always have it for whoever is available to you. Then I did do a piece completely from scratch called Passages, which is a cell-based piece. Totally different kind of piece that I had never attempted before. But it was again how my brain naturally worked. “Well, if we're going to have all these variables and not know who's showing up and what instruments they're playing, how about just writing a whole bunch of lines at differing difficulty levels and creating the whole set of parts?” Anybody can grab any part on any instrument they
want to play and play this piece, and everything you need for the piece is basically on one page. It's one page of cell based material that you just select what order you want to play it in, and then there are two other optional pages of through composed baseline and percussion line. By doing that and no conductor score so that if they are doing it live with a conductor the conductor can just cue “cell five, cell six,” whatever! However, they want to do it. More often than not, people are doing it at home and recording it, so they don't need a conductor at all. They just have the track. It's an electro-acoustic piece. The chords change to make it interesting musically and that turned it into a big puzzle to solve because I had to make sure that all of my ten parts (there's also an eleventh which is a tacet because it's important for people to not play sometimes) lined up harmonically no matter what combination. I figured out, “Okay, here's the most important game rule. I've designed everything to lock in perfectly, but you have to start at the first bar and go all the way through their four bar cell.” They can't just randomly start somewhere in the middle because that'll mess everything up. I've learned that the hard way! I thought I made it clear in the game rules, but of course not everybody reads the instructions. There were some recordings that were coming back to me that were just, you know, kind of train wrecks! They sort of sounded good except for when they didn't and, you know, like those moments of harmonic craziness, and I'm thinking, “Wait a minute, I tested all this out.” Then I realized people weren't, you know, paying attention, so now I have bent over backwards to stress how important it is. Yes, you have free reign of whatever cell you want to play, but you do have to do it within these parameters and then it'll sound very nice. I think all of us certainly at CRI have been learning a lot this year about how to make these work and also what to convey to the players and the conductor if that's essential to make it seamless. Now I'm writing two micro pieces that are adaptable. One is more of a grade four and the other is a grade 0.5
THOMAS: Oh nice!

ALEX: Absolute beginner, which I’ve never done before either. I’ve laid both pieces; they’re almost done. They're very short. They're like one minute each; that was the gig! I’m having so much fun doing it and I’m taking a different approach. Those are not like Passages. They do have scores but very variable ones. One of them is more like something that you see Balmages or Frank do with part one and it's flute and oboe on a part and maybe clarinet. Part two is flute, oboe, clarinet, alto sax, maybe horn. Part three is the lower instruments: bassoon, trombone, tuba. That kind of thing is easy enough to do. I’ve laid that one out that way along with separate percussion lines. The other one that I’m doing has nothing to do with musical instruments at all for the most part. Both laugh It's called Kitchen Sync, and it's whatever people can find in their kitchens. I collaborated with the commissioning school to have them give me ideas, these are high school students, give me ideas of what they could play. I already had a long list and they doubled my list. It was awesome. And then I made these parts based on the materials. If you're playing wooden objects, here's the wooden menu, here's the plastic menu, here's the glass menu. The only rule is no knives or open flame! It's like the only rule. Then underneath that’s what I’ve done for pitch. Again, I’m not writing any parts; I’m writing the percussion stuff. But for the pitch, I’ve got a treble clef and a bass clef and I’ve decided, “Let's have at it!” Anybody who wants to play their instrument can play in and I say the lowest octave, lowest register of your instrument on whatever predetermined note you all agree on and it's going to be sort of a drone but it's going to be very undulating. I encourage them to pitch bend and modulate and do interesting things. If they want to throw in some fifths or fours or harmonies they can, but it has to just be predetermined. So, it's a pitch part and that way anybody can play any of the parts, all nine parts. There's like seven percussion parts and two drone parts, and
hopefully it'll sound interesting. It'll be a different piece every time so there's my personal experience with adaptable music.

THOMAS: Can you talk a little bit more about working with performers on those three pieces? And maybe some of the ways that you've adjusted your process since hearing from people?

ALEX: I think clarity is how I’ve adjusted my process. To realize that people can't read your mind and even when you think you're being clear, you're probably not being clear enough because not everybody reads. I include a recap of the most important things for them to realize themselves and to convey to the musicians. I also encourage them to give the musicians all the parts, the whole packet, because I want the musicians to be able to choose if they want to play their primary instrument or something else. They should have all the parts and all the transpositions available to them so they can grab anything they want and play because a lot of people play two instruments. Some people might play sax and flute or whatever or a percussion instrument. They should be able to have parts for all of that. The other thing that I’ve done in the clarity department is because many of my pieces and my electro- and my adaptable pieces are electro-acoustic, the volume of the track is really important in addition to syncing up with the track.

THOMAS: Right. We talked a little bit about the creation of Passages, and that's one of the pieces I hope to analyze. Can I borrow a perusal score?

ALEX: Of course you can! I’ll send you all these scores.

THOMAS: Thank you so much!

ALEX: I mean this is really fun. This is, by the way, the whole point of CRI is for composers to help composers and to share the information. I mean, believe me, Frank and Brian
were probably the two most experienced with this, and we all came to them for advice and they were sharing it. Of course, all of us put resources up on the resource page. For Passages, I felt if someone's going to have something looping in their ear over and over again, I want them… I want it to be pleasant like you're in a spa getting a massage or something. I just make it pretty and not something that's going to beat on them like some of my other things that I’m subjecting people to. That was my process in terms of thinking what kind of chords and tone am I going to set. I wrote the track first to get that as a ground because I knew it would have a track. Usually in more complicated EA (electro-acoustic) pieces, I’m writing the track and the instruments at the same time. But they're not loops, they're not repetitive things like Passages. It’s a tone poem that's going all kinds of places, and I’m sculpting both the electronic sounds and the instrument sounds at the same time. In this case, it was like, “Let's get the track locked down pretty much and then let me write lines and make sure that they all fit in with each other.” It's basically like writing all these different counterpoints. There's no one lead line. Everybody has a whole bunch of motives. There’s music winding its way in and out and weaving its way in and out, plus the tacet plus the through composed parts. I also decided, “Let's make some lines harder and some easier. And let's throw in an alto clef so that orchestras can play it and that people of varying abilities can skip over the lines that are either too easy or too hard for them.” Nothing’s really very hard but there's a couple of passages with sixteenths that might look a little daunting if you're a grade three player. Once I decided that, it all worked. Then I knew I was okay. It's a very tonal piece. One other thing I think about: normally, I’m the first person who wants to encourage people to improvise. I love doing that because they need these skill sets and there's not enough of that and I want to give them that opportunity. This, however, is not that time because the problem is if they start improvising, no doubt they're going to play some notes that are way
out of the sound set notes and it's going to end up sounding like crap because there's too much else going on. If they were just soloing or maybe one other instrument over the track, fine. But with all these people playing in all these different places, I realized very quickly because my first impulse was to have an improv line... and Brian Balmages does this in his matrix piece (A Little Matrix Music sic.), which you definitely should check that out. I realized with mine, because of the track there was just… because Brian uses a drone, so it's a lot more forgiving.

THOMAS: Right.

ALEX: You can do anything, but when you have chord changes, improv along with everything else that is inked in, it's going to be a disaster. You can just see that one coming, so I nixed the idea of improv and I actually make it clear for the through composed instruments like the bass line. The rhythms are really basic that just reflect the 5/4 pulse. But I say in a text box “Hey, you do any rhythms you want.” Groove with this however you feel it, but you must stay on the pitch that's in the box. Because there again, you're following the track, and if people get too creative, it's going to sound not good. It just won't work. You have to reign in some rules. As much as I am so all for the free-for-all, there's sometimes when you can't have that. I’ve learned that from experience over the years. That's the last thing I wanted to say about Passages, and I will definitely send this to you.

THOMAS: Excellent. Thank you so much!

Eduard Teregulov – June 6th, 2021

THOMAS WILSON: Welcome in Eduard! Thank you so much for doing this. I want to keep this quick just for your sake. I want to keep this quick just for your sake and my sake but also since I sent you the questions...
EDUARD TEREGULOV: Well, actually I was trying to think about the questions and one of the questions is what was my experience with pieces for flexible ensemble right? This was the first flexible or adaptable pieces I played: *In C* by Terry Riley.

THOMAS: I remember we talked about when I was trying to decide if I was going to go in a cell direction and decided not to because that would be pretty odd for a concerto. Tell me about like what happened when the pandemic set in then because that's I think what's the most interesting for you. What sort of changes did you have to make from your normal gig schedule?

EDUARD: Well, first of all of the performances, what was supposed to happen live, were cancelled, right? We had several performances scheduled in Tampa with my Tampa Homegrown group, and we had no idea what's going to happen because we still had two or three more months ahead before the first concert. But as the time was approaching, a month before, we're trying to see if they're going to open or anything for the live performances. And that was never happening! So, what we had to do, and what I had to do, we had to change all of our performances into virtual events. With Tampa Homegrown, I drove to Tampa, and me and my colleagues, we recorded all the pieces, but we didn't have a live audience, right? And then we pre-recorded a whole, entire event and then we used that material to have some substitution for those live performances.

THOMAS: With those, did you see any sort of unexpected benefits from recording those? Can you tell me a little bit about when the concert came, your experience with that?

EDUARD: It was a little bit challenging because that was the first time we did something completely online. But I think it was beneficial in several ways. So, first of all we all had to learn how to do it, so I think that's beneficial. We all had to learn the recording process and editing, so that was helpful. And I think it's kind of an investment into the future for each of us, but also, we
were able to reach all those people who probably would not have come to the live performance just because of their location. I had a lot of friends from all over, from all over the United States and around the world, watching those performances. The outreach was way further than we would have had with the live performance.

THOMAS: That was wonderful. I love that you were able to open up to everybody. But I know you missed the audience there, and I’m sure that affects how you perform though, right? Can you tell me a little bit about how you prepared differently than you would have if it was it live?

EDUARD: Maybe not at the beginning, but also during the past year, well at some point I want to say it was a little bit easier in the preparation. Because we were recording, we didn't have to play everything on the spot. We were able to record it several times and see what came out better. But also, I find that challenging. Online performances are great, but it cannot compare to the live performance. Actually, right now, I’m at the festival I’m playing at. We had three live concerts already in the past week, and it's a completely different feeling because you cannot transfer something from the heart on the video. It has to be there. It's a specific atmosphere created because when I play as a performer, I draw my energy from the audience. It's the way I perform that is directly affected by the audience sitting in front of me.

THOMAS: Totally! I went to a live concert today too, and it's just a different experience when they can read the room and, you know, interacting with the room. And just like the little things that you miss that you don't see. When we video record people, unless those people are actors and know how to connect across the screen, performers aren't. That's not normally something in your training. Tell me a little bit more about the video recording that you've gotten into. Did you do all of the Tampa Homegrown videos, or did you do almost all of them?
EDUARD: Well, I did all of them! I’m the founding director and another colleague of mine, Michael Standard, was helping with audio recording specifically because he is a composer and percussionist. But we only have like one piece with percussion. We had another person who was helping us with audio engineering, Paul Lewis, one of the composers. For the cameras and editing, after we finish the recording, that was all on me.

THOMAS: Wow, wonderful, that's great! I want to pivot now a little bit. Tell me a little bit about this loop pedal that you purchased during the pandemic and you said, “I need this for gigs so I can play solo and I can record myself.” What sort of things were you doing with that as that was not something that you had before the pandemic?

EDUARD: Yeah, that's true. During the pandemic, I landed the gig when I would play in the restaurant. I am always interested in expanding the cello as an instrument because traditionally the string instruments, they usually perform in ensemble or in larger smaller groups. At least if you go for any cello recital, you'll be hearing cello with the pianist. That's the minimum, and maybe there are some large ensembles. And unlike pianists, we don't have the ability to play several notes at the same time on the same level of efficiency. So, during the pandemic, I purchased the Boss RC 300 loop station that allowed me to kind of experiment and play with myself. I was doing some arrangements of myself with different pieces: pop songs, rock songs, and any other piece of music. What I find if the music has few lines going on, I can play around that, and I can create something more complex than just the solo cello piece.

THOMAS: I think that's wonderful, and I think that's a really cool avenue. You having an actual pedal because your hands are a little occupied, right? Just a couple words, I won't push you too much on this, a couple words about Duality. So that was the piece I wrote with you for cello and this same loop pedal. Do you have any thoughts about how your experiences were
different? What was similar and what was different from between those experiences when you were gigging at the restaurant with the loop pedal versus playing this other piece with loop pedal?

EDUARD: First of all, I think it's more challenging than any of the pop pieces I was trying to play on the spot. But also, I think it's more of art music, and it's all written out and every detail is really important. Did I ask you directly to write a piece for the loop pedal?

THOMAS: I think you told me you purchased it, and I said “Okay, I’m writing for it!” So, I think that maybe was your mistake there.

EDUARD: *laughs* No, totally not a mistake! I like this piece and it came out pretty well, I think. With the loop pedal, you know, with great power, comes great responsibility. With the ability to play more voices, you have to be more accurate time wise. That's really important because if you go off a little bit, the whole structure is getting ruined.

THOMAS: Totally, and I think that's an interesting parallel between what you just said. There's this loop where you have to pay close attention to all parameters and then the recording that you did during the pandemic. When you're recording, you said you did multiple takes and when you're recording with the loop pedal, you need the same sort of attention to detail because it's going to get caught and it's going to be heard. Is the recording studio something you're very comfortable with, or is it something that the pandemic kind of forced your hand or the pandemic suggested you go down this road?

EDUARD: I mean, I had some experience with the recording studios but not tons of it. I think I had more experience in the past year and a half than I had for my entire life! When you record, you can do it over and over again. There is no excuse for some accidental mistakes, so you're trying to do the best you can. For a performance, what’s more important is the atmosphere
they create and even if things happen, you still have to keep going because it's a live performance. So that's the difference between the live performances and the recordings.

THOMAS: That idea of atmosphere, I definitely thought about that a lot when we were recording this next piece. So, with the concerto, I remember giving you a draft in November. Then December and January, we had drafts out there with a revision process, and then we just finished recording all of it. Right now, we're in the final mixing and mastering of the video and audio. Tell me about this project that has been going on since last July. What are your thoughts/experiences and anything you want me to put down? This is your chance!

EDUARD: It was tons of fun and it's a great work! I’m really happy that we finished this project. I felt that I was a part of the composition process. I really felt that you were taking my revisions and actually a few things I changed, I didn't tell you until we got to record it, so...

THOMAS: I caught those too! Laughs

EDUARD: Laughs They were all good changes. But I really felt that we had a collaboration, so that was really awesome. Actually, that's what I like about working with living composers because you're not playing something that was established yet. You actually have a collaboration, and you can always ask the composer what exactly they meant. Also, you can do suggestions, and sometimes in the collaborative process, there are more interesting things coming out rather than when the composer writes alone. I’m pretty sure most of the pieces (like ninety-nine percent of the pieces that were written) always had a musician somewhere around to ask.

THOMAS: Absolutely! Tell me about the piece itself. Since there's three movements, you can go through them each one by one, or if there's an overall idea or thoughts as the
performer... You told me that you almost memorized it, so you're very intimate with the concerto at this point.

EDUARD: Especially during the recording because we spent some time recording. By the end of the recording, I think I memorized the whole thing laughs, or at least I could play any portion of it. I think the piece came out well, and I like the kind of nontraditional approach because you always are saying that the music shouldn't be in the concert halls and it shouldn’t be fancy, it should be more related to the people and more related to the audience that outside of the concert halls. And I like the idea that you took for this concerto, the Rougarou, that local legend. So that was very interesting, the little werewolf... I specifically remember how I was asking you, “Hey, let's make this a little bit more complicated” and then when we were listening to the recording I thought “Dang it. I shouldn’t have asked for that.” Laughs But now, it’s just something that needs to be polished, so I think it's going to sound better every time we play it or record it again.

THOMAS: For sure, and one thing I thought about too is that most flex pieces, most adaptable works are not designed to be complex; they're designed to be performable. But then. making it a concerto meant I could give you a really difficult part because the glue is the soloist. Who's going to be driving this whole piece? If you think about Terry Riley’s In C, it is the repetitious tempo that keeps everyone together. Instead of that, it's you.

EDUARD: I like first of all you took that energy that I kind of have, this aggressive energy in my playing, and I think you embraced that in the first and the third movement specifically. I really felt myself, like I was in my element. I dig the beginning of the third movement when we experimented with different pizzicato patterns and that was really cool. Beautiful second movement I think so. I’m waiting for you to get me a piano score so I can play
(that movement) with the pianist. That second movement I’m definitely going to play on some recitals individually.

THOMAS: I think it could totally be a standalone piece. If you'd like you can speak about the future of adaptive music...

EDUARD: Well, I actually sure do have some thoughts! I think it's great and I think because of how accessible it is. It's much easier to put together performances with pieces like this than to pay for an entire orchestra, so I think there is a lot of future behind those pieces for the flexible ensembles and for more chamber works. For example, to put this piece (*Rougarou Concerto*) on the program, it would include at least seven others and then a conductor. It’s not so many people and it's not that much money even if you're going to pay every single person to do it. Ideally, we want to pay for everyone.

THOMAS: Absolutely.

EDUARD: Yeah, so I think it has a big future especially in this 21st century.

THOMAS: I’m grateful to work with you, someone who is embracing the new sort of opportunities. When I was growing up, in my band program, every piece was adaptable! If you were missing a saxophone part, there were cues. It’s not like this music hasn't existed, it's just been highlighted in different places. I totally agree it's the future and it's something that should have existed and been more prominent before now, but I think it's definitely something that's going to be around post pandemic as well. Thank you for your thoughts!

EDUARD: Yeah definitely, you're welcome.

THOMAS: Yeah! If you have anything else, now is your chance. Speak now!

EDUARD: Well I don't know. We should write the second concerto. *Both laugh*
Bibliography


VITA

Thomas Wilson spent his formative years in Birmingham, Alabama. He taught himself how to read and perform music by playing video game arrangements on a second-hand piano. He then turned to crafting his own arrangements and compositions. He received his Masters and Bachelors of Music in Music Composition from the University of Alabama.