

# Eric Hessel, Composer

Senior Recital Series  
Recital Hall | 13 April 2013 | 7:30

## Program

### **Stratus** (September 2010)\*

*The ForeignOne Brass Quintet:*

*Tyler Richardson and Jon Kaplan – Trumpet, Eric Hessel – Horn, Kelly Wagner – Trombone,  
Marc Placencia – Tuba*

### **Reverie** (November 2012)

*Dedicated to Marissa LoNigro*

*Xuan Li – Piccolo, Eric Hessel – Piano*

### **Yearning** (March 2012)

*Eric Hessel – Piano*

### **Sonata for Horn and Piano** (2013)\*

I. Allegro moderato

*Eric Hessel – Horn, Klara Kukumi – Piano*

*~There will be a 10 minute intermission~*

### **Until the Quiet Darkness** (December 2012)\*

*Chaz Salazar – Flute, Mary Cook – Oboe, Erica Low – Clarinet, Eric Hessel – Horn,  
Gabe Berry – Bassoon*

### **Sonata for Flute and Piano** (December 2011)\*

*Dedicated to Marissa LoNigro*

I. Andante

II. Allegro furioso

III. Lento quasi rubato

IV. Largo – Moderato

*Chaz Salazar – Flute, Klara Kukumi – Piano*

\* Denotes premiere performance

**ASU** Herberger Institute  
FOR DESIGN AND THE ARTS  
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

## School of Music

## Program Notes

*The ideas and title for Stratus originated during the summer of 2010 not long after I first heard Henryk Górecki's beautiful Symphony No. 3. I was struck by the expansive, yet compelling opening of the first movement, in which an eight-voice modal canon gradually unfolds, starting with the basses and moving upwards through the string orchestra over a period of about 15 minutes. The effect is a beautiful and contemplative wash of sound of dynamic intensity despite its length. At the end of the 15 minutes, the canon has shrunk down to a single voice and a soprano enters to deliver the text of the first movement. Listening to Stratus, one might hear the similarities in the first section, yet on a much smaller scale. The four lowest instruments of the quintet immediately struggle to build a canon, but are eventually broken off by the first trumpet (my "soprano"). The first trumpet then leads all the instruments back to a renewal of the canon with a new theme placed on top of the contrapuntal texture. This theme returns in all sections of the piece and the canon is initiated once more immediately before the finale. "Stratus" refers to the dense, foggy quality of the canonic texture, as well as the idea of each instrument adding a new layer.*

*Both Reverie and Yearning began as improvisations at the piano in which I toyed with specific goals, and grew into pieces that have some of the most dramatic power of any of my work so far. In Reverie, my goal was to create a piece that sounded timeless or unmetered even though everything is measured by a steady beat. I wanted beautiful melodies and ambiguous harmonies to remove the listener from any regular perception of time, much like a reverie. The intriguing sound of the piccolo aids this environment, especially in its hollow and haunting low register. Reverie was first premiered in February of this year by Xuan Li and Drew Quiring. Yearning is characterized by an irregular ostinato motive in the bass and a gentle, floating melody above it. My goal with this piece was to make the irregular 5/8 sound completely natural and graceful as it moves up and down through harmonies reminiscent of Chopin or Schubert, yet with intriguingly more dissonant chords. Yearning was first premiered by Drew Nichols in April of 2012.*

*The first movement of my Horn Sonata is my most recent completed work, and when finished, the sonata will have two additional movements. Despite having played horn since middle school, this piece is my first true solo work for the instrument. The movement flows in and out of different modes, exploring primarily Phrygian, Dorian, and whole-tone sonorities, and chromatic harmonies that center around perfect fourths and fifths. Rhythm, however, is probably its driving force.*

*I returned to canons when writing Until the Quiet Darkness. At the beginning, I attempt to create a triple canon using the five voices of the Woodwind Quintet, whose contrasting colors help bring out the different lines. The flute and clarinet start the first canon, offset by only the space of an eighth note, and after a complete statement, the horn and bassoon join with the second canon, also offset by an eighth note. The oboe is the last to join with the third canon. The entrances of this one are offset by several beats, allowing the bassoon and flute eventually to leave their own canons to join the third. As the piece progresses I explore different combinations of the three melodies, sometimes modulating, inverting, and augmenting them, and adding voices. All of these allow me to create a piece still musically engaging for the listener.*

*The Flute Sonata and Reverie were inspired by Marissa LoNigro, and thus I have dedicated both pieces to her for her wonderful support and influence. Her insight on piccolo and flute was instrumental in the composition and revision of both, and in the choice of instrumentation for Reverie. The Sonata is my most expansive work to date, and its composition spanned the entire Fall 2011 semester and much of the summer before it, as well as continual revisions up until this performance. I had two main compositional goals in writing this piece. The first was a macro-form spanning all four movements. A frequent problem I have had in writing multi-movement works is deciding how to approach any other movement after completing one. This piece uses my solution, which came with new problems in maintaining interest and pacing that I had to address. The second is actually a modern technique which I adapted to create the neo-romantic sound. My use of it is very subtle and probably not audible to the average listener, but contributes greatly to the unification of the entire work. After its premiere I may be inclined to reveal more details of this second technique to anyone interested, but for now I shall let it remain an enigma.*