

Program Notes

In most of my compositional work, there is a programmatic element that fuels ideas throughout the compositional process. During the compositional process of this piece I struggled to come up with anything remotely programmatic to help the process develop (Ironically, Stravinsky did not have this problem while composing for this ensemble). After much thought, I decided to abandon the idea of a programmatic element, and through most of the compositional process, the title was simply *Opus for Mixed Chamber Ensemble*.

With this major element lacking, I decided to start with a relatively simple melodic motive. This motive was a descending line consisting of b-flat, a, f, e-flat, and g-flat (ascending). I then composed a chord progression based on this motive which makes up the opening passacaglia theme in the beginning of the piece. After these two elements were explored, the motive began to take a life of its own.

Just from this motive and the progression derived from it, the piece went in several wild directions. One can hear different style influences from pointillism, to a quasi Middle Eastern melody, to an off-kilter blues melody. These sections were often interrupted by cadenzas and extended technical passages.

All of these different passages derived themselves from this one five-note motive. All the while I felt this motive dragging me through these different ideas as if it had a mind of its own. Thus, the programmatic element was born! The motive seemed to have a directive on how the piece was going to be composed that seemed almost out of my control. It only seemed appropriate to title the piece *The Motive's Directive*. The title was translated into French as a tribute to Stravinsky and his brilliant use of this ensemble's instrumentation in his *L'histoire du Soldat (The Soldier's Tale)*.

A

Cl. *mf*

Bsn. *p*

Tpt. straight mute *p*

Tbn. con sord. *p*

Perc. *pp* *p* *mp*

Vln. *p* *mf*

Db. *p*

w/yarn *l.v.* *w/small beater*