Mike Svoboda

Mike Svoboda Photo © Michael Fritschi

Mike Svoboda is, in the best sense of the words, both a performer's composer and a composer's performer. The development of his very own, personal voice as a composer has been the product of an evolutionary process in which his phenomenal abilities and wide range of concert activities world-wide as a trombonist in the course of over 30 years have honed his senses and refined his musical, aesthetic and technical judgment as to what he himself would most like to create and precisely how he might go about it.

After completing his studies in composition in the United States with, most influentially, Ben Johnston (once referred to as "one of the best non-famous composers America has to offer"), during which time he also edited the archives of Johnston's mentor, Harry Partch and, consequently, received a thorough training in the art of just intonation, Svoboda came to Germany in 1982 with the help of a BMI Award to Young Composers. At this point he turned his attention from composition to perfecting his trombone playing (and learning to tap dance) to take on the role of Lucifer in Karlheinz Stockhausen's cycle of operas, LICHT (LIGHT). Mike's work for and with this brilliant, demanding and difficult master continued for over 12 years and proved to be a formidable apprenticeship indeed, not only as a trombonist, but as a composer, since he was intimately involved in all facets of the creative process. Stockhausen was, however, by far not the only significant composer with whom Svoboda had the opportunity to work over the years. Composers as varied as Peter Eötvös, Helmut Lachenmann, Wolfgang Rihm, Martin Smolka, David Lang, and Frank Zappa (to name only a few) wrote for and worked with Mike as a soloist — he has premiered over 400 works for trombone on major festivals around the world — and it is fair to say that this vast experience has contributed significantly to the education of Mike Svoboda, the composer.

During the later 90s, Mike Svoboda started composing again, mostly for himself, during a period after Stockhausen when he was very involved in the development of solo repertoire and, in a very real sense, looking for his own voice. With the new century, Mike embarked decisively on a compositional path which, in many cases, involved various permutations of the Mike Svoboda Ensemble: friends and colleagues with whom he had worked for many years, with whom he could work closely and intensively to refine his musical language and intentions. Many of these works are "music about music," drawing variously upon the works and lives of Richard Wagner, Robert/Clara Schumann-Johannes Brahms, Mozart/Rossini or Erik Satie. There are also works of this nature for himself as soloist with orchestra ("Love Hurts - Carmen Remix" from 2003 for trombone and orchestra on themes of Georges Bizet), or his recent use of motives from John Dowland in "Robin Hood" from 2012, from which the upcoming "Dowland Suite" for brass quintet is taken.

In 2005 Svoboda began a series of music theater collaborations with the German writer/director Manfred Weiss, three of which are ostensibly "children's theater" (though they are indeed well-suited for adults): "Erwin, der Naturtalent" (Erwin, the Natural Talent, 2005/2007), "Der unglaubliche Spotz" (The Incredible Spotz, 2007) and, most recently, "Robin Hood - zu gut, um wahr zu sein" (Robin Hood - Too Good to be True, 2012). While "Erwin" is written for 8 soloists, choir and chamber orchestra (originally with 14, later expanded to 35 musicians), both "Spotz" and "Robin Hood" are more compact and are accompanied by small ensembles without a conductor, much like the meta-music projects from a few years earlier, and the musicians are ingeniously integrated into the action on stage. These works all include a number of invented or "found" instruments and sparkle with a sense of fantasy and humor that delights audience members of all ages.

Increasingly, the trend in Mike Svoboda's music since about 2008 seems (with the exception of certain vocal works where an extra-musical element is offered by the texts) to be towards more abstract, purely musical compositions, often for orchestra and soloist(s), though his love of chamber music, solo compositions, references to other composers and his quirky humor remain. His setting of selected movements from Bach's 3rd and 5th cello suites with the eternally curious "accompaniments" by Robert Schumann (for trombone and piano or, as originally conceived, accordion) from 2012 are evidence enough of that.

The compositions "Konzertetüden für Posaune" and "Music for Piccolo solo," both from 2008, focus upon a single instrument, but are "pure" music, free from any external references or intentions. "More Pentatonic Irony" for 2 amateur (originally children's) choirs and orchestra from 2009 is highly entertaining, using a wide variety of vocal interjections (regulated by hand signals from the conductor) and vocalises with orchestra to create a very simply effective and joyous composition. "Inner Antiphony" (2009) is a double-concerto for two percussionists and orchestra in which a constant underlying pulse of 72/144 bpm serves as the basis and touchstone for diverse continuous variations and divergences on the part of the soloists and orchestra alike - a very concrete, dramatic and satisfying composition.

Since the Baroque era, the list of masterful virtuosi who composed chamber music, concert repertoire and concerti for orchestra and their respective

instruments is long, and among Svoboda's newer works to date, the trombone continues to play a dominant role. His three-movement "Music for Trombone and Orchestra" (2010) is a full-blown trombone concerto which, after a sonorous and driving rhythmic first movement, collapses into a somewhat looser and associative second movement humorously entitled "Malapropisms." After a trombone cadenza consisting only of breath sounds, the trombonist manages to incite the orchestra onwards in a dramatic proliferation that makes up the third movement "Cadences," an almost Beethovenesque striving to end the performance.

"Music for Trombone and Brass Ensemble" (2012) is a luscious concerto for trombone set in a pure brass environment. Dramatic, full of cantilene melodic expressivity, rich in harmonic development, often rhapsodic, this organic composition describes the voyage of a trombonist in the company of his kin.

In Svoboda's trio "Music for Trombone, Piano and Percussion" (2011), the trombone (extremely virtuosic), is still more significant than its colleagues but now embedded in a true chamber music setting in which all three musicians have their say. There are formal similarities to his trombone concerto in that the structure is ternary - initially forging forwards with a jazz feeling both rhythmically and harmonically, followed by a more timbre-oriented, free and "improvisatory" middle section leading into a dynamic, rhythmically jagged conclusion.

Svoboda's music has gone through a very rapid evolution in the past 15 years and has reached a point of maturity, a coming of age in which the rhythmic vitality, the masterful integration of eclectic sources to arrive at a personal style, the instinct for expressive virtuosity, dramatic development and the sensitive melding of color, line and harmony are all in place. Given that, the musical world can most certainly look forward to further developments and many exciting works from this dynamic and versatile composer!

_January 2014
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OPERAS

Erwin, das Naturtalent

Musiktheater für alle ab 6 Jahren
(Erwin, the Natural Talent)
2005/07   1 hr 40 min

Music theatre for everyone aged 6 and up

2S,M,A,T,Bar,B; actor; mixed chorus(with soloists);
2(I,II=picc).1.2(II=bcl).1(=dbn)-1.2(I='mutant-trumpet').1.1-perc(3)
-elec.git(='retuned-western.guitar')-strings(6.5.4.3.2); reduced orchestration:
1(=picc).0.1(=bcl).tsax.0-0.2(I='mutant-trumpet').1.0-perc(2)
-elec.git(='retuned-western.guitar')-strings(4.0.0.0.1)

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World Premiere: 19 Nov 2005
Staatsoper, Kammertheater, Stuttgart, Germany
Patrick Schimanski, director; Junge Oper der Staatsoper Stuttgart
Conductor: Mike Svoboda

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Die Katze, die ihre eigenen Wege ging

(The Cat that Walked by Himself)
2019   1 hr 8 min 30 sec

Opera for children

S,M,Bar,actor(female); vla.vlc.db

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World Premiere: 09 May 2021
FoyerBühne Musiktheater, Linz, Austria
Sabine Sterken, director; Landestheater Linz

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Robin Hood - zu gut, um wahr zu sein

für alle ab 8 nach Motiven von John Dowland (1563-1626)
(Robin Hood - too good to be true)
2012   55 min

for female singer and brass quintet

hn.2tpt.trbn.tuba

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World Premiere: 07 Sep 2013
KKL, Luzerner Saal, Luzern, Switzerland
Marcelo Cardoso Gama, director; Anne-May Krüger, mezzo-soprano / Sonus Brass
Ensemble

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Der unglaubliche Spotz

Kein Märchen, eine Oper für alle ab 6 Jahren
(The Incredible Spotz)
2007   1 hr

Not a fairy tale, an opera for everyone aged 6 and up

S,M,T,B/Bar; perc/kbd(1-2)-vln.vlc (all musicians playing various additional instruments)

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World Premiere: 02 Dec 2007
Theater, Freiburg, Germany
Julia Hübner, director;
Conductor: Michael Kiedaisch

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

SOLO INSTRUMENT(S) AND ORCHESTRA

Inner Antiphony

2009   13 min

Fanfare for orchestra and two percussionists

2(I,II=picc).2.2.2(II=dbn)-4.3.3.1-timp.perc(2)-strings(14.12.10.8.6)

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World Premiere: 13 Jan 2010
Stadthalle, Chemnitz, Germany
Frank Lange & André Schieferdecker, percussion; Robert-Schumann-Philharmonie
Conductor: Frank Beermann

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Love Hurts - Carmen Remix

2003/10/14   22 min

for trombone and orchestra, based on themes by Georges Bizet

2(I,II=picc).2.2.2-4.3.2.1-timp.perc(3)-strings(12.10.8.6.3)

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World Premiere: 26 Mar 2003
Listhalle, Reutlingen, Germany
Mike Svoboda, trombone; Württembergische Philharmonie Reutlingen
Conductor: Sebastian Tewinkel

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Love Hurts - Carmen Remix

based on themes by Georges Bizet
Version for solo trombone and concert band
2003/16   22 min

solo trbn;
2(I=picc).picc.2.3.Ebcl.acl.bcl.dbcl.2asax.tsax.barsax.bsax.2-4.2crt.3.3.Euph.1-timp.perc(3)-db(opt.)

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World premiere of version: 12 Oct 2016
Temppeliaukio church (The Rock Church), Helsinki, Finland
Mike Svoboda, trombone; The Guards Band
Conductor: Vytautas Lukocius

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Music for Trombone and Brass Ensemble

2012   18 min

trbn solo; hn.4tpt(I,II=picctpt,IV=flhn).4trbn(I=euph).tuba

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World Premiere: 01 Jan 2013
Stiftskirche, Öhringen, Germany
Tobias Schiessler, trombone; Hohenlohe Brass
Conductor: Michael Böttcher

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Music for Trombone and Orchestra

2010   25 min

3(II=picc).3.3(II=dbcl).3-4.2.picctpt.3.1-perc(3)-strings(10.8.6.6.4); soundtrack

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World Premiere: 13 Feb 2011
Stuttgart, Germany
Mike Svoboda, trombone; Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart des SWR
Conductor: Peter Rundel

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Triple Concerto

für Trompete, Posaune, Tuba und Orchester
2014   28 min

for trumpet, trombone, tuba and orchestra

2(II=picc).2.2.(II=bcl).2(II=db)-2.2.2.0-perc(2):glsp/vib/claves/kick dr/BD/flexatone(with clappers removed)/mouth siren/finger cyms/sand blocks-strings(min.10.8.6.5.4)

9790202534335   **Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba and Orchestra**

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World Premiere: 17 Apr 2015
Staatstheater, Großes Haus, Cottbus, Germany
Tom Poulson, trumpet / Sebastiaan Kemner, trombone / Rubén Durá de Lamo, tuba; Philharmonisches Orchester Cottbus
Conductor: Evan Christ

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Wittgenstein & Twombly

2017   20 min

Concerto for saxophone and orchestra

2(II=picc).1(=corA).1.bcl.0.dbn-2.1(=picc.tpt).2.1-perc(2):glsp/kick dr/tam-t/ride cym(lg)/splash cym/2crash cym/whip/ratchet/wdbl/claves/tub of gravel/pail of stones/BD-harp-strings(min.6.6.5.4.3)

World Premiere: 28 Jan 2018
Musical Theater, Basel, Switzerland
Marcus Weiss, saxophone; Basel Sinfonietta
Conductor: Baldur Brönnimann

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Wittgenstein & Twombly

Version for saxophone and concert band
2017/18   20 min

World premiere of version: 15 Jul 2018
Quintanar de la Orden, Toledo, Spain
Pedro Pablo Camara, saxophone; Concert Band des Festivals Internacional de Música La Mancha
Conductor: Sebastián Heras

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Erwin, das Naturtalent

Maestro Bastonellis Meisterwerk
2005/07   3 min 30 sec

for mezzo-soprano and chamber orchestra

1.0.1(=bcl).tsax.0-0.2.1.0-perc(2)-elec.git-strings(4.0.0.0.1)

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Once Around the World

Eine musikalische Weltreise mit 78 Umdrehungen
Orchestral version
2016/17   1 hr

A musical journey, for narrator, grammophone, animated film and musicians

2(II=alf).picc.2(II=corA).2(II=bcl).2(II=dbn)-4.2.3.1-perc(3)-harp-strings(min.8.7.6.5.2); amplification; film(animation: Matthias Daenschel)

World premiere of version: 21 Oct 2017
Philharmonie, Alfried Krupp Saal, Essen, Germany
Mike Svoboda, speaker; Jugendsinfonieorchester Bochum / Ensemble der Lucerne Festival Alumni
Conductor: Mike Svoboda

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

More Pentatonic Irony (Antiphony IV)

2009   8 min

for two amateur choirs and orchestra

2 two voice choirs (high & low); 3(II,III=picc).2.3(III=bcl).3(III=dbn)
-4.3(I=picctpt).3.1-perc(2)-strings(ca.12.10.8.6.5)

World Premiere: 04 Jul 2008
Staatstheater, Kassel, Germany
Schüler und Studenten der Region Kassel / Orchester des Staststheater Kassel
Conductor: Marco Comin

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Apples, Bees, and Ordnance

for alto saxophone, violoncello and accordion
2017　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　19 min

World Premiere:　02 Dec 2017
Unternehmen Mitte, Basel, Switzerland
TRIO SÆITENWIND: Jonas Tschanz, sax; Olivia Steimel, acc; Karolina Öhman, vlc

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Dowland Suite

for brass quintet, based on motives by John Dowland
2012/14　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　16 min

hn.2tpt(I=piccc.tpt).trbn.tuba(or btrbn)

9790202534038　**2 Trumpets, Horn, Trombone, Tuba**

World Premiere:　10 Jun 2014
Basel, Switzerland
Ensemble Schwerpunkt

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

echo yes no

2019　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　25 min

for two harps and live electronics

World Premiere:　21 Sep 2019
Antoniuskirche, Basel, Switzerland
Aecstaly: Estelle Costanzo & Alice Belugou, harps / Andreas Eduardo Frank, audio design

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Growth I

Violin concerto
2020　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　14 min

for violin, baritone saxophone, accordion and percussion

World Premiere:　23 Apr 2021
Gare du Nord, Basel, Switzerland
Alicja Pilarczyk (vln), Pablo González Balaguer (sax), Nejc Grm (accordion), Guillem Serrano (perc)

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Growth II

Snare drum concerto
2020　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　11 min

for violin, baritone saxonphone, accordion and percussion

World Premiere:　23 Apr 2021
Gare du Nord, Basel, Switzerland
Alicja Pilarczyk (vln), Pablo González Balaguer (sax), Nejc Grm (accordion), Guillem Serrano (perc)

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Homo Ludens

Version for violin, viola, trombone and clarinet, cello, percussion
2019　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　15 min

for two teams of three to five musicians

perc:drum-set/slide whistle; vln, trbn(w mutes) and cl also play referee's whistle; vla and vlc also play ratchet

World Premiere:　20 Mar 2019
Centre Le Phénix, Fribourg, Switzerland
Camerata Variable

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Music for Trombone and Brass Ensemble

2012　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　18 min

trbn solo; hn.4tpt(I,II=picctpt,IV=flhn).4trbn(I=euph).tuba

World Premiere:　01 Jan 2013
Stiftskirche, Öhringen, Germany
Tobias Schiessler, trombone; Hohenlohe Brass
Conductor: Michael Böttcher

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Music for Trombone, Piano and Percussion

2011　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　14 min
9790202534014　**(Score & parts)**
9790202534045　**(Full score)**

World Premiere:　28 Jun 2011
Ravensburg, Germany
Frederic Belli, trombone / Johannes Fischer, percussion / Nicholas Rimmer, piano

Open Circle

2018   20 min

for brass quintet
2tpt(II=picc.tpt).hn.trbn.tuba(or btrbn)

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World Premiere: 07 Oct 2018
Konserthus, Grünewald Hall, Stockholm, Sweden
Stockholm Chamber Brass

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Prelude - Sarabande - Bourrée I & II

from the Suites Nos.3 & 5 (BWV 1009 & 1011) for solo cello

Johann Sebastian Bach, arranged by Mike Svoboda

arr.2013   11 min

arranged by Mike Svoboda, based on an accompaniment by Robert
Schumann, for trombone and piano (or accordion)
9790202534021   **Trombone, Piano**

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World Premiere: 18 Apr 2013
Philharmonie, Köln, Germany
Mike Svoboda, trombone / Stefan Hussong, accordion

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Die Bücher der Zeiten

2010/14   53 min

for three female voices, trombone and percussion
9790202534007   **(Playing Score)**

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World Premiere: 20 Sep 2014
Maastricht, Netherlands
Svea Schildknecht, Clara Meloni, Anne-May Krüger, voices; Mike Svoboda, trombone /
Michael Kiedaisch, percussion

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

EUNOIA

2014   15 min

for female voice, trombone, cello, piano and percussion
9790202533987 **Female Voice (vocalise), Trombone, Cello, Piano, Percussion**
9790202534052 **Female Voice (vocalise), Trombone, Cello, Piano, Percussion**

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World Premiere: 06 May 2014
Gare du Nord, Basel, Switzerland
Eunoia Quintett

Die Katze, die ihre eigenen Wege ging

(The Cat that Walked by Himself)
2019   1 hr 8 min 30 sec

Opera for children
S,M,Bar,actor(female); vla.vlc.db

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World Premiere: 09 May 2021
FoyerBühne Musiktheater, Linz, Austria
Sabine Sterken, director; Landestheater Linz

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Once Around the World

Eine musikalische Weltreise mit 78 Umdrehungen
Ensemble version
2016/17   1 hr

A musical journey, for narrator, grammophone, animated film and musicians
1(=picc).1(=corA).1(=bcl).1(=dbn)-1.1(=slide tpt in Bb).1.0-perc(2)-2vln.vla.vlc.db;
amplification; film(animation: Matthias Daenschel)

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World Premiere: 09 Apr 2017
Neubad (11am), Luzern, Switzerland
Mike Svoboda, narrator; Ensemble der Lucerne Festival Alumni
Conductor: Mike Svoboda

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Piangerò la sorte mia

2018   9 min

for mezzo-soprano (or soprano) and ensemble
afl.cl(=bcl)-perc(1):1timp w 2 rin & ice bell cym/vib-pft-vln.vlc

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World Premiere: 28 Jan 2019
Gare du Nord, Basel, Switzerland
Anne-May Krüger, mezzo-soprano; Ensemble neuverBand
Conductor: Mike Svoboda

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Voulez ouyr les Cris de Paris

2018   9 min

for four male voices and four saxophones

World Premiere: 27 Oct 2018
Zinzendorfhaus, Basel, Switzerland
thélème & XASAX

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

INSTRUMENTAL

Cartesian Rainbow

2017   11 min

Study No.5b for percussion solo
9790202535721   **Percussion**

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World Premiere: 18 Jan 2018
Gare du Nord, Basel, Switzerland
Louisa Marxen, percussion;

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Concert Etudes

Book I: Etudes Nos.1-5
2008   20 min

for solo trombone
9790202533994   **Trombone**

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World premiere incomplete: 03 Oct 2010
Remise, Bludenz, Austria
Mayumi Shimizu, trombone;

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Music for Piccolo

2008/15   11 min

for solo piccolo flute
9790202534328   **Flute**

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Music for Trombone, Piano and Percussion

2011   14 min

9790202534014   **(Score & parts)**
9790202534045   **(Full score)**

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World Premiere: 28 Jun 2011
Ravensburg, Germany
Frederic Belli, trombone / Johannes Fischer, percussion / Nicholas Rimmer, piano

Prelude - Sarabande - Bourrée I & II

from the Suites Nos.3 & 5 (BWV 1009 & 1011) for solo cello
Johann Sebastian Bach, arranged by Mike Svoboda
arr.2013   11 min

arranged by Mike Svoboda, based on an accompaniment by Robert
Schumann, for trombone and piano (or accordion)
9790202534021   **Trombone, Piano**

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World Premiere: 18 Apr 2013
Philharmonie, Köln, Germany
Mike Svoboda, trombone / Stefan Hussong, accordion

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

VOCAL

Da steht geschrieben

2010   12 min

for mezzo-soprano and harp
9790202534250   **(Playing Score)**

World Premiere: 17 Mar 2011
Nürtingen, Germany
Anne-May Krüger, mezzo-soprano; Beate Anton, harp

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Luminous Flux

2014   14 min

for 8 voices and percussion
SSAATTBB-perc:metal or ceramic plate/elec.gtr/vib/sand paper

World Premiere: 22 May 2014
Gare du Nord, Basel, Switzerland
SoloVoices & Thélème / Dominik Dolega, percussion

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Coro de Spiriti

2017   6 min

for SATB chorus and tuned logs

World Premiere: 18 Aug 2018
KKL, Luzerner Saal, Luzern, Switzerland
Basler Madrigalisten / contrapunkt chor / Schlagzeugtrio Klick
Conductor: Firtz Hauser

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Love Hurts - Carmen Remix

based on themes by Georges Bizet

Version for solo trombone and concert band
2003/16   22 min

solo trbn;
2(I=picc).picc.2.3.Ebcl.acl.bcl.dbcl.2asax.tsax.barsax.bsax.2-4.2crt.3.3.Euph.1-timp.per
c(3)-db(opt.)

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World premiere of version: 12 Oct 2016
Temppeliaukio church (The Rock Church), Helsinki, Finland
Mike Svoboda, trombone; The Guards Band
Conductor: Vytautas Lukocius

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world

Wittgenstein & Twombly

Version for saxophone and concert band
2017/18   20 min

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World premiere of version: 15 Jul 2018
Quintanar de la Orden, Toledo, Spain

Pedro Pablo Camara, saxophone; Concert Band des Festivals Internacional de Música
La Mancha
Conductor: Sebastián Heras

Availability: This work is available from Boosey & Hawkes for the world