

Heart Soul and Stomp!

Barry Green collaborates with choreographer Alan Scofield and composer W.A. Mathieu in string orchestra commission.



In May of 2007, an exciting new three-movement work called **Heart Soul and Stomp** was written by world famous composer Allaudin Mathieu (*The Listening Book, Harmonic Experience*), based on improvisation concepts that I learned at David Darling's 2004 Art of Improvisation (AOI) workshop. '**Stomp**' received its premiere performances by four of San Francisco Bay areas finest high school string orchestras: Lowell High School, San Francisco School of the Arts, Campolindo High School, and Acalanes High School. The project was funded by the San Francisco Symphony Education Department under the direction of Ron Gallman. Alan Scofield, the Artistic Director, choreographer, and movement specialist of Young Imaginations, has collaborated with me on many previous education projects including the 2005 *Inspiration in Music* workshop with David Darling, Rhiannon, Mary Knysh, and Chungliang Al Huang, plus my annual Golden Gate Bass Camps.

Allaudin and I organized a three-movement work to get high school musicians to express music from 'inside to out,' engaging inhibited or hip high school string students to express emotions with their breath, bodies, and instruments.

Allaudin approached this commission as a way to reconcile what he calls the discrepancy between 'hot' and 'cool music'. He explains:

The way I see it, music is either HOT or COOL by which I mean it either comes directly from inside of us without benefit of notation (like jazz and other improvised music) or it originates externally--from Beethoven, for instance--and we internalize it through notation. The direct process from inside out is HOT...the intervention of notation COOLS the process of albeit providing opportunity for deep intellectual play as in, for instance, Bach.

I love both ways and have spent a life looking for recipes of compromise and accommodation. Heart Soul and Stomp, which was originally called Inside-Out, is an attempt to introduce reading musicians to both of these aspects at once with considerable demands at both extremes--direct internal emotional connection in the moment while reading difficult ensemble music from the page.

We composed a piece for shy, predominantly Asian students, uninhibited 'out of control' performing arts school students and cool, yuppie affluent East Bay students. Each school was given the same script of music that must be internalized and spontaneously created with reckless abandon. High school students would rarely play this way with conventional notes printed on the page. But when we wrote *acting frustrated, stomping, singing and hip hop* moves in the music, and with the help of enthusiastic conductors, choreographer specialist Alan Scofield, the presence of the composer W.A. Mathieu and my own relentless supervision at most of the rehearsals, the kids just had no choice!

The piece begins with string players making vocal sounds that express anxiety, relief, excitement, laughter, sarcasm, frenzy, and cooing like a baby, and then finding the same sounds on their string instruments. They were required to sing the same notes they were playing on their instruments. Remember the Music for People's mantra? 'Sing what you play, Play what you Sing'.

Acalanes High School Freshman violinist Helen Wang told me that when she first played the piece, she thought it was 'bizarre, insane and weird.' "*When we play Baroque or Classical music, we are taught not to have feelings but just play the right notes, dynamics and fingerings. The idea of making the music your own by expressing our own emotional feelings was really new to us. Most of us are not comfortable putting ourselves out there and sticking out in the group. However, when I was sitting in the back of the section, surrounded by friends, I was comfortable goofing off and not taking the music seriously so I had fun dancing to the hip-hop groove. Then when Mr. Green used dancing and playing as an example, we all started to really get involved we really liked it!*"

The **Heart** movement is all about feelings. Jerry Panone, the director from School of the Arts wrote: *The music was interesting and challenging, most of all, especially the extra-musical requirements of the piece, since the students had to leave the familiar comfort zone of simply playing their instruments. The requirements of breathing and vocalizing as well as imitating emotions and feelings on their instruments was especially helpful in connecting the students with the essence of phrasing and the emotional experience of playing the music behind the notes.*

W. A. Mathieu, Heart, Soul, & Stomp, Mvt. I Heart

B *high voices: sing and play lower part*

Vln. 1
EE - AH EE - AH

high voices: sing and play upper part

Vln. 2
EE - AH EE - AH

Vla.
p

Vc.
p

D. B.
p

The **Soul** movement contained lyrical writing with breathlessly beautiful harmonies. Allaudin described his inspiration for this movement: *For the Soul movement, I went back to my own teenage years and felt the longing and loneliness and ecstasy of those years. This is the movement I would have written at that time if I'd had the chops.*

The final movement **Stomp** was based on a hip-hop groove and included kids stomping on different beats while dancing in their seats. The kids really rocked it with 'Stomp'! He said: *The seeming paradox between hot and cool music was realized in rehearsing the Stomp movement. We were trying to teach the kids something they already knew internally but from the cognitive complexity of musical notation.*

W. A. Mathieu, Heart, Soul, & Stomp, Mvt. III Stomp

Vln. 1
25 26 27
on the string *div.* *simile*
STOMP STOMP STOMP

Vln. 2
STOMP STOMP STOMP

Vla.
STOMP STOMP STOMP

Vc.
STOMP STOMP STOMP

D. B.
STOMP STOMP STOMP

Alan Scofield got the students to overcome their inhibitions and playing their part while dancing the hip-hop groove by rocking their shoulders with reckless abandon!

The four performances were memorable concert experiences for both the audiences and the students. In every performance the crowd was on the edge of their chairs as the music making was truly spontaneous, theatrical, engaging, humorous, beautiful and exciting! I fervently believe the reason this was such a success (besides being a brilliantly crafted piece of music), was that the students had to be engaged with their voices, feelings, bodies, and energy.

I also believe we hear a lot of music with our eyes. When we see students staring at their music, fingers, and bows, and not engaging their bodies, it transmits boredom, doubt, and invites the mind to become critical and less engaged with the music. When we see movement, life, and spirit on stage, we merge with this energy and receive its spirit. Lowell High School orchestra director Michele Winter said: *I'm convinced that having made the connection between heart, soul, mind, body, and music in this piece, my students will be looking for similar connections in every piece they play.*

The life and spirit in music has always been present with our children as they play and dance with their bodies, sing spontaneously, and groove to the rhythms of the music. These are key elements that can be found in every piece of music we play in classical, folk, jazz, chamber, or large ensemble music. Our challenge as teachers is to find ways to trick our students into 'returning to their childlike playfulness' with Mozart, Brubeck and Metallica. We created this experience for these orchestra kids by writing in the singing, acting, moving, and rhythms as part of the music. Now they have had this experience, it is up to their teachers to remind the kids where these same elements are present in the music of other composers, such as Tchaikovsky. Music must come 'through' our bodies, heart and soul. It cannot communicate from the printed page to the brain and out the fingers WITHOUT being felt and internalized from 'inside to out.'

This piece (*Heart Soul and Stomp!*) is available from the composer W.A. Mathieu, who can be contacted through his website: coldmountainmusic.com or e-mail: info@coldmountainmusic.com

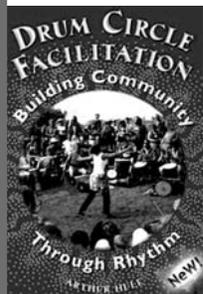
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