

The image features a black silhouette of the Brandenburg Gate, a neoclassical monument in Berlin, Germany. The gate is centered against a clear blue sky with a bright sun positioned directly behind the top of the structure, creating a lens flare effect. The sun is reflected in the water below the gate, which is also visible in the lower half of the image. The gate's iconic quadriga sculpture, depicting a chariot pulled by four horses, is silhouetted at the top. The gate's five arches are clearly defined. The overall composition is symmetrical and uses high contrast between the black silhouette and the bright blue sky.

The Six Brandenburg Fantasias

Lawrence Axelrod

ENSEMBLE NOUVELLE ÉPOQUE

ENSEMBLE NOUVELLE ÉPOQUE
conducted by the composer, Lawrence Axelrod

Fantasia No. 1 - for three violins, three violas,
three violoncellos and double bass [7:18]

1. mm=54 - mm=69 - (5:19)
2. Allegro ma non troppo (2:01)

Fantasia No. 2 - for solo flute, solo violin,
harpsichord and strings [10:35]
Mary Stolper, flute; Desiree Ruhstrat, violin;
Robert McConnell, harpsichord

3. I. Murmurando e misterioso (3:43)
4. II. mm = 52 (4:05)
5. III. Con forza (2:51)

Fantasia No. 3 - for three oboes, bassoon,
two French horns and strings [7:40]
6. Percussive and strident/Andante - (5:45)
7. Movendo con forza (1:50)

Fantasia No. 4 (in tempore belli) [6:06]
for two flutes, solo violin and strings
Janice MacDonald and Caroline Pittman, flutes;
Desiree Ruhstrat, violin
8. Andante moderato

Fantasia No. 5 - for two violas, two violas da gambas
(or violoncellos), violoncello and double bass
[13:02]

9. Furioso - (1:58)
10. Lento - (3:10)
11. Andante - (3:39)
12. Cadenzas - (2:51)
13. Tempo primo (1:26)

Fantasia No. 6 - for solo flute, solo oboe, solo
trumpet, solo violin and strings [11:31]
Mary Stolper, flute; Andrew Nogal, oboe; Kevin
Hartman, trumpet; Desiree Ruhstrat, violin
14. Con brio - (3:21)
15. mm = 60 - (2:51)
16. Passacaglia (mm = 76 - poco più mosso -
ancora più mosso - ancora più mosso) (5:20)

--56:11--



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In 2002 I decided to write a series of works that would be companion pieces to each of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg concerti. These would not be Baroque imitations, but simply take their inspiration from the great possibilities inherent in Bach's unique and interesting orchestration. I thought it would be a fun project, while also filling a gap in my compositional output for chamber orchestra. I made only two changes with the instrumentation: I omitted the violino piccolo from the companion to Bach's No. 1 (my No. 3) and I used the harpsichord only in the companion to Bach's No. 5 (my No. 2). While I don't expect these pieces to be played by period instrument ensembles (the French Horn parts are too chromatic for the valveless instruments at the very least), I felt that the violino piccolo was too much of an oddity to include. With the harpsichord, I couldn't think of it in a purely accompanying role, so I saved it for the piece where it could shine as a soloist.

Certain compositional techniques are shared in several of the pieces. Almost all contain aleatoric passages - given notes or motifs, whose arrangement and repetition are left to the discretion of the musician, making each live performance slightly different. Several use musical forms popularized in the Baroque era, such as the fugue and passacaglia. There are, however, no thematic or harmonic links among the Fantasias. I wrote the series in the order in which I prefer the original Bach pieces and numbered them accordingly.

— Lawrence Axelrod

[Fantasia No. 1 in one movement; for three violins, three violas, three violoncellos and double bass](#)

A soft floating opening constructed from the pitches at the beginning of Bach's third Brandenburg begins the work. This leads to an aleatoric cloud of sound, from which solo lines appear. A rhythmic agitated section contrasting the three violas and aleatoric accompaniment settles back into the opening soft atmosphere. Gently swirling figures accompany a richly harmonized melody in the Allegro non troppo, punctuated by big pizzicato chords.

[Fantasia No. 2 in three movements for solo flute, violin, harpsichord and strings](#)

This is the only one of the Fantasias with separate movements. A swirling figure shared by the three soloists begins the piece in a hushed and expectant manner. The tutti strings interrupt the mood with violent chords, given percussive texture with snap pizzicato. Soli and tutti alternate presenting pieces of melody and accompaniment. After many waves of crescendi, the flute begins a fugue, whose subject stitches together the melodic strands previously presented. The other soloists follow, only to be abruptly interrupted by the tutti strings with the same strong percussive chords that broke the opening mood. The tutti then "takes over" the fugue, despite the soli trying to hold them back. Finally, the soli interrupt the forward motion of the fugue, which unravels in lush harmony similar to the first measures. The fugue subject spread out over four octaves ends the movement in the same mysterious mood as opened the movement, with the soloists getting the final nose-thumbing gesture.

The second movement is introspective, allowing the soloists to shine lyrically above lush chords in the muted tutti strings. A 32nd-note figure provides rhythmic zest as the melodic material unfolds.

Whereas the first two movements concentrated on rich harmonies and counterpoint, the energetic and aggressive final movement is an exploration of unison. Constant 16th-note movement rushes between tutti and soloists, presenting virtuosic material and an ever-shifting palette of tonal colors and string effects, ending the movement decisively.

[Fantasia No. 3 in one movement; for three oboes, bassoon, two horns and strings](#)

A measure of loud, fast moving tone clusters begins this piece, followed by an unexpected measure of pianissimo in the strings. This alternation continues, but each time more musical material is added to the quiet section - soft aleatoric motion, then an oboe solo, bassoon solo and horn solo, each building upon the lyrical material of the solo line that precedes it. The aleatoric parts are slowly replaced by wispy string lines and sighing chords. A final outburst of a measure of tone clusters leads into a final faster propulsive section. This section is marked by syncopated rhythms and the opposition of oboes against horns and bassoon, and of the winds against the strings.

[Fantasia No. 4 in one movement; for two flutes, solo violin and strings \(in tempore belli\)](#)

This Fantasia is the only one in the series that is in a single unchanging tempo. It was written just before the beginning of the Iraq War, and reflects my sad and worried state of mind at that time. Ostinato eighth notes offset moving 16th-note figures and short melodies in the solo instruments and then the violas. A heartbeat rhythm begins first as underpinning and then gains more prominence, finally taking over and ending the piece in an uncertain and melancholy way.

[Fantasia No. 5 in five movements, played without pause; for two violas, two violas da gamba \(or violoncellos\), violoncello and double bass](#)

Trills and motoric 16th notes begin the first movement forcefully. The motoric rhythm continues softly under a richly harmonized melody in trios of the upper and lower strings. Elements of both sections develop and intertwine, continuing the energy to the end of the movement, even as it fades.

The second movement is a recitative-like melody that unfolds over a major second pedal point. The melody begins in the second Viola da Gamba, and adds each of the other instrumental voices one by one, increasing in intensity to the end.

The third movement is a passacaglia in 5/4 time whose subject comes from the running notes in the first measure of the piece. The unison melody which opposes the passacaglia theme carries mood on from the second movement.

The fourth movement is comprised of cadenzas for the first viola and the double bass. The musical material under and between the cadenzas exploits many extended techniques for the instruments - aleatoric passages, trill chord clusters, glissandi - which expand and intensify the mood. This intensity leads to a fortissimo unison quotation of the main theme of the second movement of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 6, the only such quotation in any of the Fantasias.

A short development of this quotation leads directly into the final section, a varied reprise of the opening movement, combining the original material with continued development of Bach's melody.

Fantasia No. 6 in three movements, played without pause; for solo flute, oboe, trumpet, violin and strings

A fanfare begins the first movement forcefully. This gesture is balanced by a quiet morse code-like motif, which leads to an explosion of coloratura from the trumpet and flute. An agitated melody and accompaniment traded off by violin and oboe leads back to the opening fanfare. An expansion of the “morse code” follows, this time with a lyrical melody in the violas and cellos below. These elements alternate and develop, continuing with force and excitement. Finally, ad libitum figures in the solo parts emerge from the tutti strings, dissipating the energy and leading to the second movement.

The second movement is a series of recitatives for trumpet, oboe and flute respectively. These simple lyrical lines contrast soft, sustained, rich chords and agitated ad libitum lines as accompaniment.

The final movement, a passacaglia, presents a four-measure theme (three measures of 4/4 and one of 6/4) in an unadorned calm trumpet line with quiet pizzicato underneath. The violin joins, ornamenting the trumpet. The theme shifts to the violin and the flute presents a different, arpeggio-like ornamentation. The oboe enters with its own lyrical ornamentation as the flute takes the passacaglia theme. A step-wise motion begins low in the double bass, rising to the top of the violins as the ornamentation in both solo and tutti string parts becomes more pervasive. The tempo quickens and the theme is spread through the tutti strings and across five octaves, with the solo violin re-introducing the “morse code motif” from the first movement in octaves. The tempo quickens again, the soloists in unison expanding the arpeggio ornamentation and the passacaglia theme in forceful down bows and then agitated tremolos in the strings. The final quickening of tempo introduces fast scales and abrupt chords, ending the movement with rich chords and a version of the morse code motif.

The ensemble:

Ensemble Nouvelle Époque

The Ensemble Nouvelle Époque comprises some of the finest chamber and orchestral musicians in the Chicago area. including members of the Lyric Opera Orchestra and Grant Park Symphony. Many are faculty members of North Park University, DePaul University, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee and the Music Institute of Chicago. They not only perform traditional repertoire, but also have a passion for working with composers, preparing thoughtful and meticulous concert premieres and recordings.

Violin

Kathleen Brauer: 3,4
Jenny Capelli: 3,4
Teresa Fream: 1,2*,3*,4*,6*
Anne-Marie Hoffman: 1
David Katz: 2,3,4,6
Blaise Magniere: 2,6
Desiree Ruhstrat: 1*,2,6
Rika Seko: 3,4
Michael Shelton: 2,6
Maria Storm: 2,6
Paul Vanderwerf: 2,3,4,6
Marie Wang: 2,6

Paul Zafer: 3,4
* concert master
Viola
Patrick Brennan: 1
Claudia Lasareff-Mironoff: 1,2,3,4,5,6
Terri Van Valkinburgh: 1,2,3,4,5,6
Benton Wedge: 2,6
Violoncello
Mark Brandfonbrenner: 1,3,4,5
David Cunliffe: 1,2,6
Steven Houser: 1
Paula Kosower: 2,5,6
Elizabeth Start: 5
Peter Szczepanek: 1

Double Bass

John Floeter: 1
Jason Heath: 3,4
Douglas Johnson: 2,5,6

Flute

Janice MacDonald: 4
Caroline Pittman: 4
Mary Stolper: 2,6

Oboe

1. Anne Bach: 3
2. Lissa Stolz: 3
3. Machiko Schlaffer: 3
Andrew Nogal: 6

Bassoon

Lewis Kirk: 3

French Horns

1. Gregory Flint: 3
2. Neil Kimmel: 3

Trumpet

Kevin Hartman: 6
Harpsichord
Robert McConnell: 2

The soloists:

[Kevin Hartman](#) is Professor of Trumpet at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He performs frequently with the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and has played on numerous concerts, recordings and tours with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He has served as principal trumpet with the Wichita Symphony Orchestra, the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, the Chicago Sinfonietta and the Ravinia Festival Orchestra, assistant principal trumpet with the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, and has performed with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Hartman is a founding member of the Asbury Brass Quintet, winners of the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and the Coleman Chamber Music Competition, and is a core member of the Fulcrum point New Music Project.

Born in New York City, [Robert McConnell](#) began his musical training at the preparatory division of the Mannes College of Music in New York City where he studied piano, composition, and conducting. He received his Bachelor's degree from Northwestern University's Henry Bienen School of Music, where he studied composition with Augusta Read Thomas, Jay Alan Yim, and Aaron Cassidy, and participated in master classes with John Adams, Oliver Knussen, and Lee Hyla. As a keyboardist, Robert studied organ with Margaret Kemper, harpsichord with Stephen Alltop, and piano with Irina Edelman. Robert received his Master's degree in orchestral conducting from Northwestern, where he studied with Victor Yampolsky. In September 2011, he served as the Music Director of the International Beethoven Festival, a five-day exploration of the life and work of Ludwig van Beethoven that was reviewed by John von Rhein of the Chicago Tribune as Chicago's "best new undertaking in classical music in 2011." As a collaborator with the Beethoven Trio Project, Robert was involved in editing the scores of previously unheard piano trios by Beethoven. For the piano trio in D-major (Kinsky/Halm Anhang 3) dating from 1799, a work previously attributed to Mozart, he composed 33 measures of music missing from the original manuscripts, a completion critically acclaimed by both John von Rhein of and Viven Schweitzer of the New York Times.

Oboist [Andrew Nogal](#) performs regularly with Ensemble Dal Niente and is also a founding member of The City of Tomorrow, the wind quintet that was awarded the gold medal at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition 2011. He has performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Oregon Symphony and has appeared at the Lucerne, Ojai, and Astoria Festivals. Andrew studied at Northwestern University and currently teaches at Loyola University Chicago and the University of Chicago.

The violin artistry of [Desirée Ruhstrat](#) has captivated audiences throughout Europe and the Americas as soloist and chamber musician. Her solo appearances have been with the Berlin Radio Symphony, Radio Suisse Romande, Gottingen Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Oregon Symphony and Utah Symphony among others. As a chamber musician, Ms. Ruhstrat is part of the distinguished Lincoln Trio, which has a vast repertoire of contemporary and classic works and is in demand for performances at festivals around the country. As a champion of new music, Ms. Ruhstrat has worked with many composers including George Crumb, Jennifer Higdon, Shulamit Ran, Augusta Read Thomas, Chen Yi, Zhou Long and Laura Elise Schwendinger. She is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music. Her teachers have included Aaron Rosand, Joseph Gingold, Harold Wippler and Dorothy Delay. Her discography includes Stamitz Violin and Viola Duos for Centaur, the Ravel Duo for Violin and Cello for Albany, and multiple recordings with the Lincoln Trio on Cedille. She is currently on the Faculty at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University Bloomington.

[Mary Stolper](#) is a frequent soloist and chamber music performer who has made guest appearances throughout the United States and Europe.

Ms. Stolper's performance credits also include the following organizations: Chicago Chamber Musicians, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Ravinia Recital Series, University of Chicago Contemporary Chamber Players, "Live from Studio One" WFMT radio broadcasts, American and Joffrey Ballet Orchestras, Da Camera Chamber series in Houston, Texas and the Old First Church Chamber Series in San Francisco. Her extensive skills of contemporary techniques and performing on a variety of flutes have been featured on numerous concerts with the MusicNOW series at Symphony Center under Maestros Boulez and Colnot.

Currently, Ms. Stolper is Principal Flute of the Grant Park Symphony, Music of the Baroque, Chicago Opera Theater and the new music ensemble Fulcrum Point. As an active studio musician she

has also played for hundreds of TV and radio commercials.

Dedicated to the performance of music composed by women, Ms. Stolper invited two Chicago Women Composers/Performers to perform with her at her Carnegie Hall recital debut. Several compositions have been written for her to show her outstanding versatility on the piccolo, flute, alto flute and bass flute. She produced and recorded the flute music of Shulamit Ran for the Erato/Warner Classics label. She has also recorded 3 more CD's with the Cedille Label in Chicago. Her American Concerto's cd, was recorded in Prague and while there she performed with the Czech National Symphony, in Dvorak Hall.

She was a founding member of the Chicago Flute Club, and held board positions on such outstanding organizations as: The Musicians Club of Women, The Illinois Arts Council, New Music Chicago, Chicago Chapter of the Grammy Music Awards.

Ms. Stolper earned her Masters Degree in flute performance from Northwestern University, where she studied under Mr. Walfrid Kujala. She has also received instruction from Geoffrey Gilbert, Jean Berkenstock and Edwin Putnik and Donald Peck. She also participated in performance/master classes with William Bennett and received coaching from Samuel Baron. She has been on the faculty at DePaul since 1986.



The composer:

[Lawrence Axelrod](#) is a composer, pianist and conductor, whose musical activities have taken him around the United States and Europe. As a composer, Mr. Axelrod has had works done by Palomar, Ensemble Dal Niente, Pinotage, The Lincoln Trio, The Duo Ahlert/Schwab, the Ensemble JungeMusik Berlin and The Verdi String Quartet in recent seasons. Most recently, his music was included in the Sound of Silent Film project on Gaudi, presented by Access Contemporary Music. Pos Metaphonos, a concerto for Bass Clarinet and orchestra was premiered by the Chicago Composers Orchestra with Lawrie Bloom of the Chicago Symphony as soloist in January of 2013. His solo piano work *Common Threads* was included in AIDS Quilt Songbook @20 concert in December of 2012 in the Great Hall at Cooper Union in New York City. Between 2005 and 2008 in the dual capacities of pianist and composer, he presented an all-Mazurka program many times in the United States, Europe and South Africa, playing both classic and newly-written compositions in that form. The Verdi String Quartet have been strong supporters of Mr. Axelrod's music, premiering his *Diary Pieces, Anges et Déesses* (with Ingeborg Danz, mezzo-soprano), and *String Quartet No. 1*, the last for the opening concert of the Vielsaitig Festival in Füssen, Germany in August, 2004.

His compositions have been performed on composers' festival concerts around the United States. He was invited to perform a piano recital as part of the Eighth International Festival of Electro-acoustic Music held in Havana, Cuba in March 2000, and returned there in March 2004 to give a

second recital. His work for orchestra and tape, *Cassandra Speaks*, was premiered by the San Jose Symphony (CA) in June of 1999 with music director Leonid Grin conducting. This work was previously recorded by the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Szymon Kawalla conducting. *Still Life with Sea and Whales*, a work for soprano, flute and two guitars has been released on the CRS label. A CD of solo and small chamber works was released in the Fall of 2003.

Mr. Axelrod has received grants from the Illinois Arts Council, Chorus America, Meet the Composer and Arts International for the performances of his works.

Mr. Axelrod was also a founder and past chairperson of the Chicago Composers' Consortium, as well as a member of CUBE. He has attended numerous composition residencies around the United States and in Europe. He has taught a highly successful opera appreciation class at Santa Fe each summer for more than ten years, which has become a springboard for leading cultural travel trips. His teaching experience also includes Music Theory at Columbia College (Chicago, IL), and classes for young people.

Lawrence Axelrod received his undergraduate degree from Amherst College and a Master of Music Degree in orchestral conducting from Northwestern University.

Credits

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