Microtonal Composition for String Instruments

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Report on University Grant Program Small Grant
2016 – 2017
Microtonal Composition for String Instruments
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September 5, 2017

This report summarizes the results of my creative research funded by a 2016 small grant from the University Grant Program. This funding was essential in supporting the investigation of new microtonal concepts in my artistic work, as well as the development, production, and presentation of two new compositions for string instruments.

This project involved developing two new compositions that explored microtonal tuning systems for string instruments. I created the compositions over the course of summer 2016, during which I participated in: June in Buffalo (University at Buffalo, The Robert and Carol Morris Center for 21st Century Music); Blue Moss Ensemble residency and tour (ArtSpring Centre); and nu:nord (University of Huddersfield). I composed a new work for solo violin in consultation with Mira Benjamin (Canada/UK), a performance specialist in microtonal string technique. I also completed a new composition for string quartet that was performed by the Arditti Quartet (USA), specialists in contemporary music performance practice. This project allowed for close collaboration with the performers, while also having the opportunity to consult with other new music specialists in attendance at these events, and finally the opportunity to present my creative scholarship in several new locales.

I am pleased to report that I completed the two new compositions, and successfully presented them: June 6-13, 2016 at June in Buffalo, Buffalo NY USA; June 22, 2016 at ArtSpring Centre, Salt Spring Island BC Canada; June 24, 2016 at David Pay’s Studio, Vancouver BC Canada; June 25, 2016 at Open Space Gallery, Victoria BC Canada; August 2-5, 2016 at nu:nord, hosted at the University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield UK; and finally August 7, 2016 at Union Chapel, London UK. The result of this project is an in depth knowledge of microtonal tuning systems that supported the creation of two new compositions; and my work representing the University of Montana at several important artistic and academic events in the USA, Canada, and England.

With this grant I was able to fund my travel within the USA, and to Canada and England, and also pay conference and workshop fees associated with the events that I attended. I would like to thank the University of Montana Office of Research and Creative Scholarship and the University Grant Program for their support in furthering my creative research.