MINOTAUR for horn and surround sound

(2005, revised 2011)

"Minotaur" for horn and surround sound was created in a way similar to film production, with a series of recording sessions with Seattle-based horn player Josiah Boothby. Josiah and I visited several indoor and outdoor spaces throughout Washington state, including the eastern slopes of the Cascade Mountains and St. James Cathedral in Seattle. Josiah improvised short sequences of horn sounds, and I recorded them in surround with the use of Soundfield ambisonic microphones. We listened to the responses of these spaces and looked for the most acoustically interesting paths. Later I processed this original material and combined it into the final sequence of ambisonic soundscapes.

This maze of pre-recorded soundscapes, together with live horn performance, tells the story of a mythical creature, trapped in the Labyrinth of Crete. In mythology, the Minotaur haunts the Labyrinth, stalking all who dare enter. The walls within the Labyrinth twist and turn, while the Minotaur remains unseen. The only clues to its location are the sounds of its cry echoing from all around.

"Minotaur" gives the soloist an opportunity to fully demonstrate their virtuoso skills. It requires both imagination and courage to freely approach the pre-composed material, and to create a unique conversation between the pre-recorded soundscapes and the performance space.

The formative principle of this piece is heterophony combined with "directed" (guided) improvisation and the creative use of extended horn techniques. The written score is a selection of meeting points between the pre-recorded surround sound material and the live performance. The soloist is encouraged to wander off the musical material written in the score. The player should enrich it by freely utilizing right hand coloration, articulation changes, microtonal melismas and ornaments, while carefully listening to and interpreting the responses from the

performance space.

The electronic layer was realized in ambisonics by the composer at the Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media (DXARTS), University of Washington, Seattle. The live processing component has been recently incorporated into the performance, and includes live convolution-based reverb (based on impulse responses from natural spaces visited by the composer) and spatial transformations, utilizing the ATK software package, developed by Joseph Anderson, Juan Pampin and Joshua Parmenter (University of Washington, DXARTS). However, when the performance space has interesting acoustic features, it is advised that the piece should be performed without the live electronics component. In this case the horn player should explore the entire physical space, looking for acoustically interesting spots other than the stage. At times the player could become invisible, haunting the perimeter of the audience and even leaving the area enclosed by the speaker array. If the space does not allow this kind of exploration, the piece should be performed on stage, with live electronics, with stage lights down or dimmed.

For complete performance materials and several concert recordings, please visit Minotaur's website:

http://ewatrebacz.com/minotaur