

4-1-2011

Marshall University Music Department Presents Ceci n'est pas Zack Merritt

Zack Merritt
Marshall University

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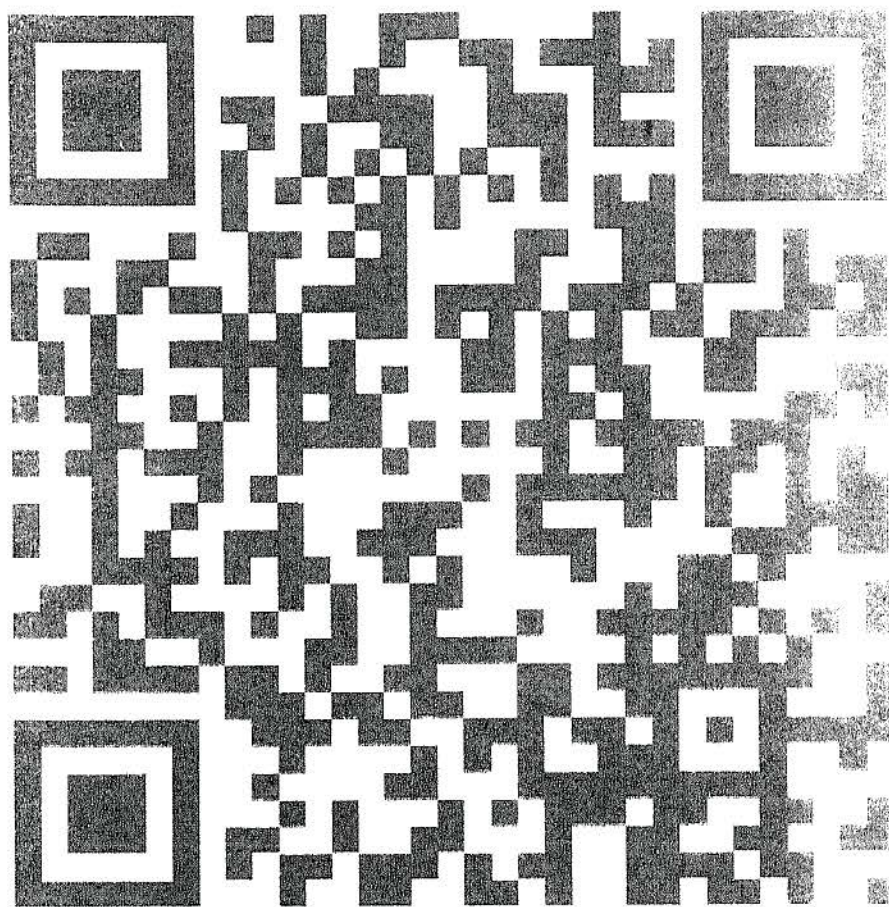


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Ceci n'est pas Zack Merritt

Friday, April 1, 2011
Smith Recital Hall
6:30 p.m.

I still remember the first thing I ever composed. I was in second grade and we were creating gifts for mother's day. I decided that I would write a song. I wrote lyrics and then improvised a melody and accompanied myself on the piano. I performed this work for my mother and essentially the rest is history.

I remember performing miniature concerts in the basement of my house when I got a bit older and had a small bit of piano training. I would make a storyline for these concerts, get costumes put together, and had music composed for every aspect of the performance.

When I entered second grade I joined the elementary drama group and that solidified my hunger for "putting on shows." I never took a lead role, however I took roles that put me in different acting situations. I was the dog in Annie, the comic relief in Jack and the Giant, or Michael in Peter Pan. As a result these roles taught me how supporting elements aid the principal element in theatre, art, and music.

Then in fifth grade I remember coming to a roadblock in my life. I was sitting in class and this lady came in and was talking about being in Band when you got to sixth grade. I watched as the sheet was passed around the room and other students were scoffing at the idea of being in band. When the paper got to me I realized how important individuality is to me. I was the only person that registered for band in my entire class and was thereby permanently dubbed the "weird kid".
I was completely fine with that.

My music teacher while in middle school was a lady named Maggie Jusiel. She was an amazing teacher and I would easily say that she is one of the reasons I'm at college now. She talked about music theory with me and gave a "why" to music. We would talk about music theory and music composition before school in the cafeteria and after school in the band room. She really made music "cool" for me.

High School Band was what could only be called a learning experience. I finally had an ensemble that would read anything I wrote. I started by arranging Beatles tunes for concert band and Mrs. Green would take them and always read through them. I learned how band orchestration works (especially at the high school level) through the immediate response of the ensemble. Green always encouraged me to write and ultimately convinced me that I could go to college and major in Music Composition and succeed (and I thank her for that).

When I got to Marshall I was extremely unsure of what kind of music I wanted to write. Dr. Zanter took me through the basics of composition but I never could find a good "style" that I enjoyed. Every semester seemed to be devoted to a different technique, (serialism, set theory, neo-romantic, spatial work) but I never found something I was satisfied with. I began working with Ashleigh Gill to create summer musicals but I still couldn't find what I wanted to create.

Then I had a breakdown.

During the beginning of my senior year I had my recital planned out and was working on pieces. I then woke up one day and realized that everything I had been doing was "crap" (luckily this happened early). I discarded everything I've done into a folder on my computer that I called "bad music". I then drove to a coffee shop and sat for hours just thinking about everything.

Why did I want to create music?

I was then thinking back on a simpler time in my musical career. I first composed because I was singing for my mother. Something as simple as pleasing my mother was the basis for my first composition. That, to me, is exactly the beauty in music.

And that's when I returned to improvised music.

I became fascinated with music where the performers are given simple instructions to create music. When I started composing I wrote down text and improvised everything based on the text. Why not give performers the same flexibility that I had? I enjoy specifying the music just enough to create a similarity between repeat performances of the work. That way, the piece will be specified enough to be able to judge that it is the same work and not another work.

So I propose to you a recital of Zack Merritt.

Using divergent media, Zack Merritt creates vignettes that are suspended in time and blur the boundaries between reality and fantasy. His works are presented in a framework that encourages audience participation and interpretation.

"My work is as simple as you think it is."

Mr. Merritt's work has been performed regionally on recitals and festivals including the 2010 SCI Student National Conference, and 2011 Marshall University Festival of New Music. He frequently collaborates with poet Ashleigh Gill, and the two have started their own theatre company, Ars Creo, creating full-scale productions each summer since 2009.

Merritt is in the process of obtaining his BFA in Music Composition at Marshall University (Graduation May 2011). He studies composition with Mark Zanter, saxophone with Ed Bingham, and is an officer in various organizations at Marshall including Society of Composers Inc., MENC: The National Association for Music Education, and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. Upon graduating, he plans to earn a terminal degree in the field, and hopes to one day open an arts school whose mission it will be to teach creative work in the context of free exploration and disciplined work.

Merritt is a vegetarian who greatly enjoys various curries. His other interests include thinking, l'français, knitting, and Google Earth.

This recital is being presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Composition. Mr. Merritt is a student in the composition studio of Dr. Mark Zanter.

I

"At the concert hall"

Smith Recital Hall

Quick find your seat, the show will begin soon!

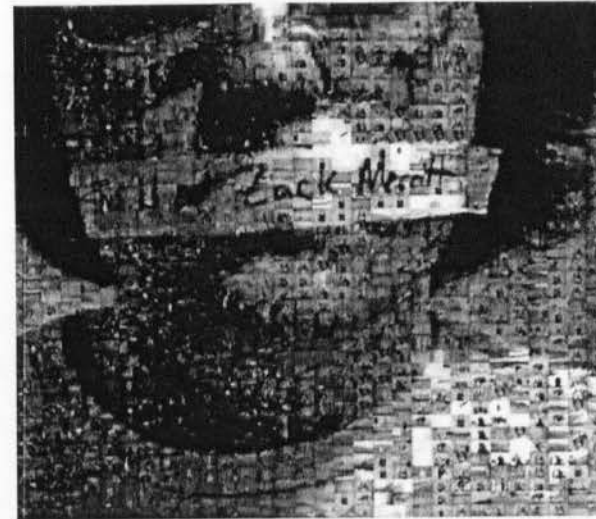
"I heard the movie was based on snapshots of this guy's life. Kind of like if you were walking in someone else's shoes."

"It's one of those productions that Zack always does with Ashleigh. That's pretty cool. I went to one of their musicals and it was pretty fantastic."

"Is that piece really about Dairy Queen? I know Zack works at that Dairy Queen in Hinton maybe there's a story about a bird. I'll have to ask him."

Ceci n'est pas Zack Merritt

Zack Merritt – Piano & Electronics



n'est-ce pas evident?

For my mother

a communication

Kaitlin Despain – Girl
Michael Rose – Boy

Zack Merritt – Conductor
Allie Hughes – Accordion
Dustin Moraczewski – Electric Guitar
Ethan Howard – String Bass
Chris Miller – Piano
Andrew Winter – Drum Set



We have been taught to view the world through distinctions.
Mind separate from body, creator separate from creation,
individual very separate from individual. That spark which is in
me is not the spark which is in you, or her, or him, or it. In this,
there is no possible shared revelation, no teaching, no equal
stance. There is only higher and lower, 'this' and 'other' – a
singular and lonely being in his chair, brushing the world but
never connecting with it, shouting to himself under the ceiling
of an empty room. This piece seeks to dissolve that distinction.

- Ashleigh Gill

please, don't clap before the enxaneta makes the little wing

Jake Arnoldt – Ukulele
Carl Hamlin – Flute



Four different groups came to make the castellers (each from
different places), but I was closest to the ones in the blue shirts.
They wear the wraps around their backs for support and while
they're making the tower everyone is quiet (except for the
tourists). I suppose that's why someone had this shirt on, asking
people not to clap until the child who climbs to the top of the
tower "makes the little wing" when it's completed.

-Mary Maier

Improvisation

Player Piano, picture frames, and tracing paper.



The relevance of this piece is irrelevant. I'm playing to feel.

le chien excité

Andrew O'Neal - Trombone

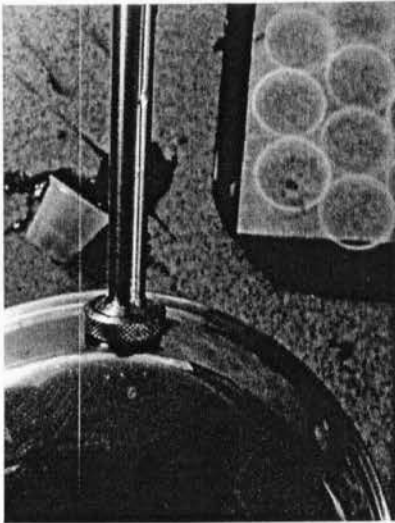


Il était une fois il y avait un chien excité.
Le chien était très excité parce qu'il a
entendu une voiture.
Le chien aimé la voiture.

On the Suicide of the Infamous DQ Diving Cardinal

Jen Billups – Soprano
Jason Mitchell – Soprano Saxophone

Kriss Liegey – Dancer



He
Who thinks glass
Is a metaphor for company –
(Reflection of Ketchup,
Worth it, worth it, worth
It) –
Whose gods are the gods
Of such small stuff –
Spooned ice, white hair,
Each others noise over
The rattled window
(Too- clean window, red
Ketchup window)
And
Birds
Who do not know
They are dying.
- Ashleigh Gill

I'll devote my life to this one cause...

Nature's Symmetry

Emily Crabtree – Alto Flute
Zack Merritt – Marimba

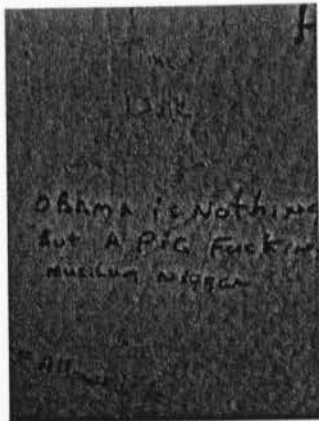


The choices that we make are based solely
on what we sense.

Take an inkblot; give it to the performers.

"...everyone who does not agree with me is
a traitor and a scoundrel."

Adam Stephenson – King George III
Briana Blankenship – Trumpet
Chris Chapman – Trumpet
Matt Chaffins - Trumpet
Mindy Kelle – Mellophone
Kris Liegey – Mellophone
Karen Barnett – Trombone
Jared Layman – Trombone
Adam Phillips – Sousaphone
Jenna Palmer – Percussion



"Lord Chancellor, did I deliver the speech well? I am
glad of that, for there was nothing in it."
- King George III

whispers

Pipe cleaners, fishing line, and electronic processing.



I can't hear you over that girl whispering.



"In the gallery"

Across the Marshall Campus

Enjoy the art as you walk about at your
leisure.

"I don't know how those inkblots are supposed to analyze how
you think. I just see a big blue bug."

"I wish I could stay and listen to those guys play but I'm late for
work. Maybe tomorrow I'll get to the subway early..."

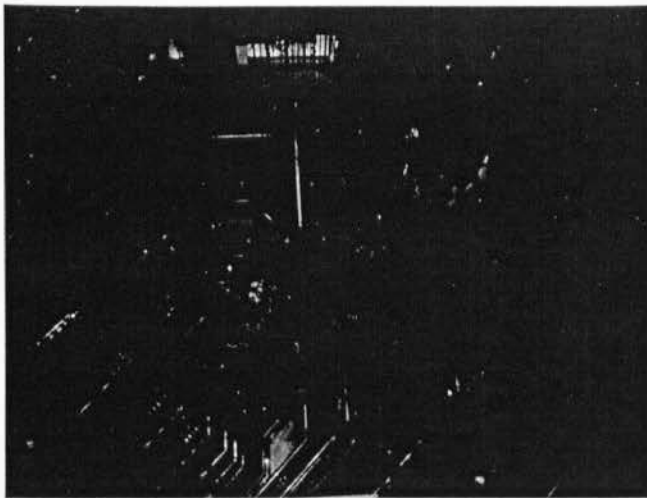
"I don't speak French... Is it about a dog?"

"Is the piece about King George? Why are there people in
retro costumes playing marching band music?"



Open!

"Medallion" Tortilla Chip Boxes and various gifts.
(Note. The objects are for you to keep. Enjoy!)



Congratulations! Your Social Security just came in!



Jomie Jazz Center Forum

"The after-party"

Eat and socialize. It's a party!

"...lemme play the piano!!!"

"Whoa it's like Christmas!"

"Did that thing just move? That's pretty awesome."

Special Thanks:

- ...all performers for giving up precious time to rehearse and memorize this music.
- ...Erika Lawson for making a majority of the costumes you will see tonight.
- ...Jake Arnoldt for creating the electronics for *Ceci n'est pas Zack Merritt*
- ...Mary Maier for maintaining a wonderful travel blog. (<http://marymaier.com>)
- ...Ashleigh Gill for all of the text and poetry that was used in the recital.
- ...Dr. Zanter for somehow always knowing how to help me focus my craft.
- ...my parents for their constant (and continued) support over all of these years.



MUSIC

The Marshall University Department of Music is grateful for the support of many families and individuals who help make our department strong and vibrant.

If you would like to support the Department of Music through a donation and assist with student scholarships, academic travel for students and ensembles, or general support of the department please contact:

Melanie Griffis, Director of Development
College of Fine Arts
SH 161/304-696-3686
griffism@marshall.edu

This program is presented by the College of Fine Arts through the Department of Music, with the support of student activity funds. For more information about this or other music events, please call (304) 696-3117, or view our website at www.marshall.edu/cofa/music.