

## ACS Mellon Foundation Faculty Renewal Grants

### Final Report

*Nocturnes: Composing, Performing and Recording with Technology*

Date(s) of Project	May 2009-May 2010
Amount Awarded	\$8,000
Participants	Benjamin Broening (Music Department) University of Richmond bbroenin@richmond.edu 804.289.8278  Daniel Koppelman (Music Department) Furman University daniel.koppelman@furman.edu 864.294.2094

#### *Project Goals, Execution, and Assessment*

The project included three principal goals: (1) the composition of a set of new works collectively entitled *Nocturnes*, that would (2) be performed by Daniel Koppelman and then (3) be recorded by him for release on everglade records. Koppelman and Broening would also work with students on some of the issues central to this project (writing effectively for piano and electronics, how to combine acoustic instruments with electronics in live performance and how to record piano with electronics) and the process of composing, performing, and then recording the works would be documented on a website or blog.

The three primary objectives were met: Broening completed four new works (*Nocturne Fragments* (16 minutes), *Double Nocturne* (10 minutes), *Third Nocturne* (10 minutes) and *Night Falls* (*Nocturne Loops*) (7 minutes), Koppelman learned and performed them, and these pieces, along with two other works by Broening (*Nachtlied* [*Second Nocturne*] and *Nocturne/Doubles*) were recorded in May 2010 at the University of Richmond. The recordings were edited in May and June. A rough edit was submitted to the record label Innova Recordings in June for approval. The complete set of pieces, retitled *Recombinant Nocturnes*, will be released by Innova in December 2010.

The project's title and recording label changed during the course of the project. Broening changed the title of the recording from *Nocturnes* to *Recombinant Nocturnes* to draw attention to the interconnections between the works in the group of pieces. Materials, gestures, rhythmic ideas and brief melodic fragments drift from one piece to another in the set, constantly recombining in a new ways: the music from two pieces for piano and electronics (*Nocturne/Doubles* and *Third Nocturne*) combine to make a third piece (*Double Nocturne*), two pairs of movements from *Nocturne Fragments* are exactly the same except for the tempo, dynamics and performance directions, and yet somehow sound completely different, one chord from *Nocturne/Doubles* spawns all of *Night Falls* (*Nocturne Loops*).

Both Broening and Koppelman had released prior projects with everglade, a label that specializes in multichannel music recordings. To avoid confusion with our other recordings on the label, and because this project was stereo only (not multi-channel), we approached Innova Recordings. After accepting the project, Innova has scheduled it for release in December 2010. Considering Innova's broad international distribution of physical media, as well as online distribution through Naxos, the recording will be more widely available and will also come out more quickly than it would have on everglade.

The proposed project was very ambitious. Broening had to compose more than forty minutes of music that Koppelman had to learn to a performance/recording level – all within a year. And it was a success: Broening completed the work (and considers it among the best work he's done); Koppelman learned, performed and recorded the music; and the compact disc was accepted for publication. That said, one of the "lessons learned" is related to this compressed time frame. It took until the end of spring term (several months later than anticipated) until the last of the pieces had been completed and the music was in Koppelman's fingers. So, although the planned-for multimedia website did not emerge as described in the grant proposal, both Koppelman and Broening had plenty of opportunities, as we wrote in our application, to "illustrate the aesthetic, technical, practical and musical issues" faced during the project, as well as to work directly with students to "illuminate a process that is typically fairly opaque to beginning student composers". We therefore feel that the objectives to be addressed by the creation of a website were effectively achieved by other means (see below), and it may still be possible — through the utilization of copious notes/sketches (Broening) and digital audio memos (Koppelman) kept during the project — to follow through with the development of multimedia documentation of relevant aspects of our project.

#### *Student Engagement and impact on faculty colleagues and institution*

In March 2010, Broening traveled to Furman where he worked with a group of music technology students as well as members of the composition seminar. Broening talked with students about the project, the particular challenges of combining piano and electronics, the compositional process from sketch to finished score, how to coach performers in rehearsal and performance, and the details of the hardware and software configurations used in composition and performance of these pieces. He also worked with students who were writing their own pieces for piano (the seminar focused on composing for the piano). Broening returned to Furman at the end of April to rehearse with Koppelman. Students and recent graduates helped with the recording and editing process by running sound generating computers used in live performance, by assisting with extended piano performance techniques during the recording (some pieces called for muting specific piano strings by pressing firmly on them with fingertips), by maintaining careful logs during the recording sessions and by assuming the role of assistant producer for the studio sessions.

Using Broening's works as a springboard, Koppelman discussed many issues surrounding the use of technology in live performance in his spring-term "Projects in Music Technology" course at Furman. It was encouraging to see that several students in the course were subsequently inspired to compose pieces involving the combination of live performers and electronics for their final projects.

Following Koppelman's performance at Furman in March 2010, two Furman piano majors

expressed interest in performing some of the *Nocturne Fragments*. After receiving the approval of their piano instructor, Koppelman distributed the music to these students.

Koppelman performed the *Nocturne Fragments* and *Third Nocturne* for high-school students at Furman's Summer Keyboard Institute (SKI) in June 2010, and discussed Broening's use of electronics during his technology classes at this Institute.

In addition to providing the opportunity to hear premier performances of newly composed music, the project had a local impact in two other ways: Koppelman's faculty piano colleague encountered student interest in new and unfamiliar repertoire, and the incorporation of Broening's compositions and ideas into Koppelman's presentations at SKI assisted with Furman's recruitment efforts.

#### *Future Work*

We plan to continue the work of this project in the next year through continued performances, the release of the compact disc in December 2010 and through continued collaboration and inter-campus activities. Additional performances of works on the compact disc have been scheduled for September (at Furman University) and November 2010 (at University of Richmond), March (at Middlebury College) and April 2011 (at Wayne State University) and we will apply to present this work at national and international electroacoustic music conferences including Society for Electroacoustic Music in the United States, New York Electronic Music Festival and International Computer Music Conference among others. Furthermore, Broening will visit Furman seven times in Spring 2011 to work with the composers he met during his visits to Furman in Spring 2010. Koppelman will perform at University of Richmond in Fall 2010.

#### *Project Summary*

Benjamin Broening (University of Richmond, composer) and Daniel Koppelman (Furman University, pianist) completed a multifaceted project involving music for live performer and electronics. Broening composed four new works, which Koppelman then prepared, performed and recorded; the recording has been accepted for publication and distribution (in both CD and online formats) by Innova Recordings and will be released in December 2010. Students were engaged in three main ways during the project: (1) at Furman, Broening visited Koppelman's advanced music technology course and the department's composition seminar to discuss aspects of composing with state-of-the-art software and hardware resources as well as the effect of new technologies on the dynamics of the composer/performer relationship; (2) during the recording sessions at Richmond, students assumed the role of assistant producer: maintaining carefully annotated logs, reviewing and commenting on the quality of takes and edits, and assisting with extended performance techniques; and (3) Koppelman's performances exposed students (as well as faculty colleagues) to music literally "hot off the press", stimulated theoretical and esthetic discussion among young composers, and elicited interest from piano majors regarding study and performance of these new works. Broening and Koppelman have scheduled performances of this repertoire on the 2010 and 2011 concert seasons, and intend to pursue opportunities to present their work at both national and international conferences in the years to come.

Detailed budget is attached.

APPENDIX I - CONTENTS OF RECORDING

*Recombinant Nocturnes* Benjamin Broening  
Performed by Daniel Koppelman  
Innova 734, to be released December 2010

<b>Track #</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Duration</b>
1	Nocturne Fragments: Eternal	2:04
2	Nocturne Fragments: Aggressive, bright, eventually giving way	2:18
3	Double Nocturne	9:50
4	Nocturne Fragments: Remote	2:06
5	Nocturne Fragments: Mercurial	2:34
6	Nachtlied (Second Nocturne)	9:46
7	Nocturne Fragments: Gentle, tolling, flexible	2:48
8	Nocturne Fragments: Flexible, mysterious, resonant	3:04
9	Nocturne/Doubles	6:02
10	Nocturne Fragments: Tenderly (i)	2:08
11	Third Nocturne	10:28
12	Nocturne Fragments: Tenderly (ii)	2:12
13	Night Falls (Nocturne Loops)	6:45
	Total:	62:05