

Máté Szigeti
(blog post for OUT-TAKE ensemble concert, 6/3/17)

One of the things that many of us admire most about Máté is the sheer speed at which he is able to compose music. While some composers struggle for weeks to produce a few minutes of material that we don't immediately want to throw in the bin/paper shredder/fire, Máté seems capable of churning out endless reams of high quality scores each year. Despite the speed at which his works are composed, though, there is no sense that any note he writes is anything less than carefully considered and perfectly placed. His pieces, while often intricately constructed, display an impressive clarity of texture and, despite their sophistication, seem to have an attractive air of child-like innocence about them.

Given this facility for composition, it is impressive that Máté also has the time to cultivate excellent skills in playing the recorder. I first experienced his abilities when I wrote a *Chaconne* for soprano recorder, electric guitar and tuba in 2014, and asked Máté to play it with me (OUT-TAKE founder Alexander Glyde-Bates took the tuba role). The piece was rather tricky, featuring many intricate rhythms and changes in time signature. As nobody I knew had heard Máté's playing before, several people warned me that I might want to be careful about making the part too difficult! Nonetheless, I somehow had a hunch that Máté would surprise us all (after all, I thought, he is from the country that produced Ligeti and Bartók-surely weird rhythms are part of his cultural heritage?), and this hunch was eventually proved right when he nailed the part in the concert performance. We're really privileged to have such an excellent musician working with us in OUT-TAKE Ensemble.

Before I write about the pieces of Máté's that we will play in our concert, I should introduce him properly and tell you something about his background. Born in 1984, Máté began his musical studies at the conservatory in his hometown of Szeged, Hungary, where he played early music on the recorder, alongside private composition lessons from Kristóf Weber and Lajos Huszár. It strikes me that Máté's engagement with the music of earlier periods must have been an important formative influence on him as a composer, as his music often makes historical allusions, whether these are made explicitly clear to the listener or not. After his early years in Szeged, Máté moved to Budapest in 2003 to study composition with László Vidovszky at the Academy of Music. After graduation he taught music at various institutions in Hungary, before moving to Southampton in 2012 to begin his PhD in composition (which he completed last year) with Michael Finnissy and Matthew Shlomowitz. Dr. Szigeti now lives with his wife and two children in Woolston, where he works in childcare, continuing to compose and contribute to OUT-TAKE and *Hermina Galéria*, a collective of Hungarian composers and visual artists.

In our concert on the 6th March, we will perform two premieres of Máté's work. The first short piece, *Elude* (2016), is written in response to Erik Satie's music. I hadn't previously considered Satie as an influence on Máté, but I can definitely see a link between the two composers' styles. I see this connection particularly in the 'child-like' quality in Máté's music that I mentioned above, which seems to mirror his French predecessor's irreverent approach, and the delicacy and lightness of touch that both often display in their work. Much of *Elude* resembles an eccentric four-part chorale, full of bizarre and pungent harmonies, but never overly abrasive. In the concert this piece will be immediately followed by a performance of *In the Lover's Orchard* (2016), an open score work for 3-6 melody instruments and piano. This piece also reminds me of childhood, as performing it feels a bit like a game. The score is divided into different modules of melodic material, grouped into sets of three, which the musicians play through in order. The order of the modules within any given set always remains the same, but any player can initiate the set, forcing the other performers to continue with the appropriate following modules. Because the pauses between each set of three modules are different each time (depending on the inclinations of the musicians), playing the piece almost feels like a game of 'chicken'-a test of bravery, or patience, depending on how you look at it! We hope you'll enjoy hearing these new works performed at the Talking Heads on the 6th.