Haunted Topography (2013)
David T. Little (b. 1978)

Haunted Topography is a meditation on a story told to me by Moe Armstrong in the summer of 2011. Moe is the founder of the veteran rehabilitation program Vet2Vet. It was in this capacity that he met a woman whose son had been killed in Vietnam. Even decades after the loss, this mother could not even begin to move past the pain. In speaking with Moe, it came out that, though she had asked, no one had ever shown her a map of where it had happened. She felt that she needed to know this—to see the place where her son had been killed—before her healing process could begin. Moe showed her, and it helped her to begin to heal.

It is a simple story, of course, but it says a lot about the nature of grief, of mortality, and of the peculiarities of each individual's needs while engaging with the healing process.

—David T. Little

The sinfonietta version of Haunted Topography *was originally commissioned by Alarm Will Sound. It was premiered on October 21, 2011, at Roulette as part of the 2011 SONiC Festival. The orchestral version of the work was commissioned by Christopher James Lees. It was premiered on October 18, 2013, by the University Philharmonia Orchestra at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, conducted by Lees.*

Not recorded

Percussion Concerto No. 2 (2014)
James MacMillan (b. 1954)
[United States Premiere | Festival Co-commission]

More than twenty years have passed since I wrote a percussion concerto for the great Scottish virtuoso Evelyn Glennie. This work, *Veni, Veni Emmanuel*, was written for the BBC Proms in 1992. In 2013-14, another great Scottish soloist, Colin Currie, asked me for a second percussion concerto.

It is natural to consider different routes and characteristics when a composer revisits a similar specification. This time the orchestra is bigger, there is an orchestral percussion section which adds to the solo material, and there are a number of different percussion instruments used here. For example, the new work opens with the sound of a new instrument—the aluphone, a metallophone which combines the effects of a vibraphone and bells.

The work is written in one through-composed movement, incorporating a substantial fast and lively section, a middle section which begins ritualistically and subsides into a dreamy, reflective mood, and a third section which gradually builds in momentum and speed. The main characteristic of the opening section is that the soloist plays marimba along with two other marimbas in the orchestra. The accompaniment is rhythmic and spiky. Various untuned metal instruments are also used. The middle section introduces cencerros (tuned cowbells) and a steel drum on which ruminating and expressive lines are played. The metal sounds return in the final section as the music quickens, leading to the climactic return of the aluphone, vibraphone, and crotales as a chorale emerges from the depths of the orchestra. The work is dedicated to Colin Currie.

—James MacMillan

Percussion Concerto No. 2 was commissioned by the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic and Netherlands Broadcasting Organizations AVROTROS/NTR, the Philharmonia Orchestra with the support of the Southbank Centre, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music and Marin Alsop, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and Orchestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo (São Paulo Symphony Orchestra). It was premiered on November 7, 2014, at TivoliVredenburg in Utrecht, with Colin Currie and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, conducted by James Gaffigan.

Not recorded

Anthology of Fantastic Zoology (2015)
Mason Bates (b. 1977)
[West Coast Premiere]

The slim size of Jorge Luis Borges' *Anthology of Fantastic Zoology* belies the teeming bestiary contained within its pages. A master of magical realism and narrative puzzles, Borges was the perfect writer to create a compendium of mythological creatures. Several are of his own invention.

The musical realization of this, a kind of psychedelic *Carnival of the Animals*, is presented in eleven interlocking movements (a sprawling form inspired by French and Russian ballet scores). In between evocations of creatures familiar (sprite, nymph) and unknown (an animal that is an island), brief "forest interludes" take us deeper into the night and deeper into the forest itself.

Imaginative creatures provoke new sounds and instrumentation, with a special focus on spatial possibilities using a variety of soloists. For example, the opening "Sprite" hops from music stand to music stand, even bouncing offstage. "The A Bao A Qu" is a serpentine creature that slithers up a tower; gloriously molts at the top; then slides back down. The entire movement—like the life-cycle of the animal—is an exact palindrome. "Nymphs" features two frolicking clarinets, while "The Gryphon" uses timpani and brass to conjure a flying lion that hunts horses (in this case, the violins).

The lyrical core of the piece, "Sirens," features offstage violins that lure the rest of the strings, one by one, to an epiphany. But it is short lived, as the island they approach devours them in "The Zaratan," an island-sized animal conjured by tone clusters. The sprawling finale occurs at the witching-hour moment between midnight and dawn (*madrugada*, from the Spanish). This movement collapses the entire work upon itself, as all of the animals fuse together in the darkest, deepest part of the forest.

[The work was written for the Chicago Symphony and their music director, Riccardo Muti.] In the virtuosity the piece requires of soloists and sections, it resembles a concerto for orchestra, and every note was written with specific players in mind. Many of the players of the [Chicago Symphony] Orchestra have become dear friends, as has Maestro Muti—whose unique abilities as a musical dramatist inspired the piece from beginning to end.

—Mason Bates

Anthology of Fantastic Zoology *was commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and was premiered on June 18, 2015, at Chicago Symphony Center, conducted by Riccardo Muti.*

Not recorded

HAUNTED TOPOGRAPHY PROGRAM NOTES