

Music Alive: New Partnerships
A Residency Program of
Meet The Composer and the League of American Orchestras

Unfadeable (2005)
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Program Notes

The title *Unfadeable* comes from urban slang. While its meaning is a bit difficult to explain, the title was taken from a Dr. Dre lyric (from the Chronic album of 1992) which reads:

[I'm] unfadeable so please don't try to fade this.

This particular work for chamber orchestra is not and does not at all pretend or try to be some sort of concert hall representation of hip-hop/rap music. Nor are meant to be inferred any subtle references to hip-hop/rap music. Rather, the spirit of what it is to be unfadeable is what drives this work: Without apology, it is unforgiving on those who perform it and those receive it. It is the most challenging piece I have ever attempted and in it I have sought to throw caution to the wind as much as possible and take the advice of an early mentor, Stefan Asbury, who suggested I stop playing it safe and start taking chances with my music.

Unfadeable is cast in two sections. Preceding the first section is a brief introduction which sets out to clearly establish the mood of the piece. Here, as well as throughout the work, cross-rhythms and differing temporal plates glide on top of each other, sometimes aligning but mostly missing each other by small amounts. The introduction gives way to a new section and faster tempo (which relentlessly drives the music until its final bars).

Following the introduction, the music is seemingly in constant chase as textural strands accumulate and counterpoint becomes more of a factor. The idea of what it is to be “unfadeable” takes root in this particular section. The music never seems to let up as lines are thrown about with abandon and the rhythms form a jagged composite whole. Still driving, the orchestra is gradually reduced until only six solo violins are playing, accompanied by percussion and harp.

With the six-violin soli, the second section begins. From here to the end, an orchestral crescendo is implemented and the work becomes more charged. Marked abstractly with the designation “thrashing at the hold of scarves”, the musicians engage in passionate play while the rhythm reaches its most frenzied point. Finally, the work is “faded”, if you will, but blurs in the high strings and a quiet decrescendo in which all of the energy preceding is dispersed.

Unfadeable was composed for the Conductors Guild Training Workshop at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music. The piece is dedicated to Tony Lanman and Mutsuhito Ogino; two friends and composers whose music I respect and who have inspired me to reach out beyond my comfort zone and attempt to be daring in my music.

To inquire about a residency, please contact:
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