

SIRIUS QUARTET

DESCRIPTION OF RESIDENCY FOR GRADUATE AND STUDENT LEVEL COMPOSERS

The Sirius Quartet is a rare chamber ensemble in that they write and perform their own music. From this unique position, they can offer graduate level and student composers the opportunity not only to hear a professional performance of their works, but also a critique from the perspective of both performers and composers.

For these special composition workshops, student composers submit pieces in advance to the Sirius Quartet. In a master class setting, the quartet then reads through each composer's work and comments not only on compositional aspects, but also from the point of view of performers, offering feedback, as well as ways to consider their approach. This process can include a recording and/or performance of some or all of the presented works.

Either in separate seminars, or interspersed within the read-throughs, Sirius members can demonstrate and discuss technical issues in string writing and notation.

Discussion topics can include:

- Principles of the contact point of the bow in relation to color, such as flautato, sul pont, fullness vs. transparency of sound;
- Variety of bow strokes - their notation and relationship to the emotional content of phrases (understanding of this is important in film scoring);
- Notation of harmonics and their technical possibilities and limitations;
- Pizzicato's possibilities and limitations.

A syllabus of scores can be provided to demonstrate each of these issues.

A second seminar/tutorial covers the performance and notation of extended techniques in string playing, from both the avant-garde and world music, including how they are achieved and how the composer can clarify his ideas with notation. We can use the students's scores, Sirius Quartet repertoire and/or works by Ligeti, Elliot Sharp, Zorn, Piazzolla and other world music traditions to demonstrate these issues.

A third seminar/tutorial covers the integrating of improvisation into through-composed composition with a demonstration/performance using Sirius repertoire.

Topics include:

- Elision of through-composed and improvised material;
- Notation of style, rhythmic feel/texture, emotional content;
- Finding the right players for your style.