

The summer of 2020 was chaotic in many ways, not least here in Minneapolis. A friend facetiously asked if the traumatic events would influence my composing. My answer was evasive, but as I pondered what to write for this commission, his question suggested a possible approach. I began with the old composition class trick of making a musical motive out of a word or phrase by extracting all the letters that could be turned into scale degrees (A B C D E F G H/Bb). The newsworthy words were the names George Floyd (G F/ G F G E F D), Heather Heyer (Bb E A E Bb E E), and the phrase “I can’t breathe” (C A B E A Bb E). These fragments are heard in the slow introduction and are the basis for the rest of the piece.

The other major influence in *Summer 2020* is the abundance of contrapuntal forms in organ literature. The work includes three of these and uses several standard contrapuntal manipulations: transposition, inversion, augmentation, stretto. Following the introduction, there is a syncopated 1920s-feeling ostinato pattern, a 12-tone passacaglia, a fugue, and a coda in which the beginning ostinato figure of the falling minor second is turned upside-down in a “no justice, no peace” rhythmic pattern.

No work of mine would be complete without discernible musical influences and occasional quotes; here are Shostakovich, Piazzolla and Copland, especially his *Passacaglia for Solo Piano*.

Special thanks to Philip Brunelle for his help with registration.

The duration is c. 7:30.

Cover photo taken on June 4, 2020 by St. Paul photographer Lorie Shaul. The mural, located at the site of George Floyd’s death on the corner of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue South in Minneapolis, is the work of artists Xena Goldman, Cadex Herrera, and Greta McLain. The group started working on the mural in the morning days after Floyd’s death and finished it within 12 hours with the help of artists Niko Alexander and Pablo Hernandez.