

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 E 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 discernable musical influences and occasional quotes; here are Shostakovich, Piazzolla and Copland, especially his *Passacaglia for Solo Piano*.

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The duration is c. 7:30.