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in Music

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

*Human Anatomy*

by

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Master of Arts in Music

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor David Samuel Lefkowitz, Committee Co-Chair

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*Human Anatomy* is a three-movement work for Pierrot Ensemble. Each of the movements explores one human organ and the dichotomy within it. In the first movement, “Heart,” I focused on the rhythmic pulse of the beating heart and explored the vitality and fragility of it. In the second movement, “Skin,” timbre is my primary language. The movement starts with the glossiness and perfection of human skin and migrates to the aging of the skin. This movement is my statement to demystify the socially valued “youth looking” and beauty standard. The third movement, “Inside My Feminine Brain” exemplifies my exploration of heterophonic music. It starts with stereotypical feminine sounds, which is nurturing and tender, and by slowly introducing rigid and assertive morse code on top of it, I morph the stereotype, and shape a new voice of women that is both tender and nurturing, and powerful and assertive.
The thesis of Yifeng Yuan is approved.

Ian Krouse
David Samuel Lefkowitz, Committee Co-Chair
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University of California, Los Angeles
2021
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Techniques and Philosophy

*Human Anatomy* is a self-exploratory journey for me both philosophically and musically. Each movement addresses a question about the modern society that I contemplate on a day-to-day basis.

In the society of today, where everyone admires success and power, are we still allowed to be fragile?

In the era that cosmetic products and Instagram filters become manipulative tools of Capitalism, are we still allowed to age, and be imperfect as who we really are?

In the time of the present that is still dominated by patriarchy, what is the real voice of femininity and what is masculinity?

Within the framework of these questions, I explored and expanded my musical language in all movements, each with a different musical parameter.

In the first movement, “Heart,” I borrowed the human heartbeat pattern as the primary material of my piece. I also used metric modulation to link the fast-moving vitality with the slow and fragile moments.

The “Skin” movement was my first attempt in writing timbre-driven music. I borrowed the philosophy of Spectralism in this movement and built my harmonic language primary based on overtone and undertone series. To me, the overtone series resembles the perfect skin. Specifically, the small intervallic relationship in the high register resembles the perfect and glossy looking skin. Undertone series, in reverse, is about imperfection. The microtonal intervallic relationship happens in the lower register, and the cluster of highly resonant bass
register sound forms a chaotic mess. By juxtaposing the perfect and the imperfect using two
different pitch systems, along with my choice of various timbres, I not only made my political
statement in the movement, but also allowed it to be a complete musical work.

The third movement, “Inside My Feminine Brain” is intentionally named with a sarcastic
title. In this movement, I used free flowing, senza mizura piano writing as the nurturing, and
wave-like “femininity”. I then introduced rigid morse code rhythms, played by the rest group of
the instruments as an opposite strand of energy that stands as a clear contrast against the piano
music. The heterophonic music goes on for a while, until they morph into one, forming a new
feminine voice, that is both nurturing, and assertive.
Yifeng Yvonne Yuan

HUMAN ANATOMY

For Pierrot Ensemble
(2021)
INSTRUMENTATION

1 Flute
1 Clarinet in Bb
1 Violin
1 Cello
1 Percussion (Bass Drum, Vibraphone, Suspended Cymbal, Crotale)
1 Piano

Three Movements:

I. Heart
II. Skin
III. Inside My Feminine Brain

20’
Human Anatomy
I. Heart

Yifeng Yvonne Yuan (2021)
II. Skin

*Senza misura - expressive, fragile*

Yifeng Yvonne Yuan (2021)
Crotale with acrylic mallet and

Fl.
B. Cl.
Vln.
Vc.
Perc.
Pno.
III. Inside My Feminine Brain

\[\text{\textit{56 Freely}}\]

Yifeng Yvonne Yuan
(2021)

Durations correspond to approximate horizontal space allotted to each note
(N.B. left hand and right hand do not coincide prior to m.)

\[\text{\textit{legato}}\]

\[\text{\textit{pp} \textit{mp}}\]

\[\text{\textit{pp} \textit{mp}}\]

\[\text{\textit{una corda}}\]

\[\text{\textit{pp} \textit{p} \textit{mp} \textit{pp} \textit{p} \textit{mp} \textit{p} \textit{mf}}\]

\[\text{\textit{pp} \textit{p} \textit{mp}}\]

\[\text{\textit{p} \textit{mp} \textit{p} \textit{mf}}\]
airy sound, very tender, from far away