

Wesley Thompson is a composer and pianist from the coastal town of Fairhope, Alabama. Born into a home filled with music, he grew up listening to pianist George Winston. As such, it was no surprise when he quickly took to classical piano lessons. Shortly thereafter, he began arranging his favorite songs from the soundtracks to video game franchises such as Halo and Pokémon. The structure of these arrangements became increasingly fluid over time, with Thompson often improvising on the chord progressions and stringing together multiples pieces with extemporaneous transitions between them. This early experimentation initiated a love for improvisation that continues to color his musical style to the present day.

Thompson possesses a unique musical heritage with an eclectic bevy of influences. In addition to George Winston and the aforementioned video game soundtracks, his work as both composer and pianist pays homage to numerous periods from Western art music history, jazz, rock and heavy metal, and other popular musics such as hip-hop and J-pop. Among classical composers, Chopin and Bach reign chief; both of these composers have played a huge role in Thompson's conceptualization of form. Other favorites include Ravel, Stravinsky, Bartók, Ligeti, and numerous other 20th century and contemporary composers. Traits of both thrash and progressive metal are present within his compositions, a trait that can be traced to bands like Machine Head, Dream Theater, and Animals as Leaders.

All of these seemingly unrelated influences point toward one of Thompson's key musical goals: the blurring of boundaries between the categorical tools called "genres." In pursuit of this goal, he combines aspects from all these musics to create his unique compositional voice. Above all else, Wesley Thompson seeks to connect with his audience by producing music that is gripping, emotional, and listenable.

Thompson's compositions have been featured at events such as the Charlotte New Music Festival and have been performed by artists as diverse as the Beo String Quartet, Transient Canvas, and Lindsay Garritson. His 2021 piece *Crystal Cavern* was written for and premiered by Duo Sequenza in collaboration with the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami. This project was made possible by a CREATE grant from the Mellon Foundation.

As a pianist, Thompson frequently performs in and around his home state of Alabama. He has recorded and self-produced an EP of solo piano music, *Ruminations and Impressions*, as well as a full-length album, *Improvisations and Arrangements*. The first of these is a collection of original, pseudo improvisational works from his high school days, while the second features his interpretations of numerous songs from video games, anime, and movies. Thompson is currently

working on producing a second album in the same vein as *Improvisations and Arrangements*, along with a collection of classical recordings.

In addition to his compositional and pianistic activities, Thompson plays the electric guitar and dabbles in electric bass. He is also an avid fiction writer, poet, and consumer of visual media such as books, video games, and movies/television. Thompson is currently pursuing his M.M. in composition at the Manhattan School of Music, where he is under the tutelage of Dr. Reiko Fütting.

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