

*Entropic Developments* (1989)

Nathan Currier

"I completed *Entropic Developments* in September of 1989, after having worked on it slowly and meticulously during a period of more than six months. It is a highly exacting score, inspired by the Verdehr's performance of an earlier piece, *Variations for Violin, Clarinet and Piano*, written for them in 1987.

When I told one composer colleague of my new work, *Entropic Developments*, he said, 'God, I thought people were done writing pieces like that, based on physics, scientific principles, and stuff.' It is, I suppose very easy to misunderstand—for indeed, my piece develops as though it were a little musical portrait of the principle of entropy, an adjunct of the second law of thermodynamics, which could be said to describe the general motion of all natural processes—and, by extension, of the universe itself—towards increasing disorder and inertness, by measuring the amount of energy unavailable for work.

But for any one following the programmatic form of my composition, there comes a great surprise near the end, where, after the gradual dissipation of the thematic impetus has brought things virtually to a standstill, one hears a sudden burst of energy, bringing the piece to a brilliant close—and in the surprising little coda lies the key to the possible misunderstandings; my piece is called *Entropic Developments* because it seems to develop along the lines of this principle, but it is not, ultimately, a depiction of entropy, or, as my colleague had expressed it, another piece about 'physics...and stuff.'

Just the opposite: it is much more spiritual, much, much more metaphysical than one would imagine from the title. In fact, it is more about music's ability to seemingly break out of physical laws, and the coda should be seen as a jubilant refutation, as poetic, as unscientific, as 'impossible' as, say, the statue that comes alive at the end of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*."

—Nathan Currier

The world premiere of *Entropic Developments* was on November 13, 1992 at Rice Concert Hall, State University of New York (SUNY), Buffalo, New York.

Nathan Currier (born 1960, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania) grew up in a musical family in Providence, Rhode Island. He received a doctorate in composition from the Juilliard School in 1989. His principal teachers were David Diamond, Joseph Schwantner, Bernard Rands, Stephen Albert, and Frederic Rzewski.

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Currier's compositions have been performed from Moscow and the Far East to Western Europe and the United States. He has been commissioned by the Jerome Foundation, Concert Artists Guild, Chamber Music America, and the Readers Digest. In addition to the Verdehr Trio, he has written works for the Shanghai and Lark String Quartets, the Chelsea Ensemble, the Ravel Trio, and tenor Paul Sperry. His music is published by Theodore Presser.

Currier has received numerous grants and awards: a Guggenheim Fellowship (1993), the Charles Ives Fellowship from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1991), a Fulbright Grant (1987), a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship (1992), a grant from the Fromm Foundation at Harvard University (1991), the Leonard Bernstein Fellowship at Tanglewood (1987), and two ASCAP Young Composer Awards (1988-1989). He has received prizes in

numerous competitions: the International Barlow Competition (1987), the Juilliard Orchestral Composition Competition (1989), International Olympia Competition for Composition (1990), Chamber Music Chicago (1989), National Orchestral Association (1991), and Concordia Competition (1992). As a pianist, he won the Silver Medal in the International Piano Recording Competition (1984) for his performance of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

For ten years, Currier served on the Evening Division faculty at Juilliard, after which he served two years as a visiting faculty member at the University of Virginia. He has had frequent residency fellowships at the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo Colony, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Other fellowships include an Irving Berlin Fellowship, a Victor Herbert Fellowship, and a Gretchinoff Fellowship. In 2016, he initiated a concert series called *Orchard Circle* with concerts in New York City and Philadelphia.

Additional information is available at [www.nathankindcurrier.com](http://www.nathankindcurrier.com).