



Michael Cooke, a 1993 graduate of the University of North Texas, is a talented performer and composer. This Louis Armstrong Jazz award winner mainly plays tenor sax, but you will also hear him play soprano sax, alto sax, flute, bass clarinet, bassoon and percussion. He attended U.N.T. on a competitive bassoon performance scholarship. Michael graduated cum laude with many different areas of study; jazz, ethnomusicology, music history, theory and of course composition.

In 1991 Michael began his professional career performing in many north Texas area symphonies. He also has performed in jazz and free improvising ensembles. Michael has toured Spain, Mexico, and across the United States with various groups. Cimarron Music and Productions of Dallas published many of Michael's compositions in 1994. Relocating to the San Francisco Bay Area, he has been striving to develop his own style and has recently started studying Larry Ochs' "Radar" composition techniques.

In 1999, Michael started a record label called **BLACK HAT RECORDS** and has released two CDs under his name. Michael's latest release, "**Statements**" is a solo album, in the lines of Julius Hemphill's *Blue Boye*, Joe McPhee's *Tenor & Fallen Angels* and Anthony Braxton's *For Alto*. Michael plays all parts and instruments, including some bassoon and percussion. JazzReview.com says Michael has "multifarious talents to make you listen. If this CD doesn't get your attention, you are probably deaf."

<http://www.blackhatrecords.com/>

For booking & information contact **BLACK HAT RECORDS** at [info@blackhatrecords.com](mailto:info@blackhatrecords.com)



## Symphony No. 2 "Mozart ist Tot!" by Michael Cooke



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
1756-1791

SAN FRANCISCO COMPOSERS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA  
Mark Alburger, Music Director  
Saturday, April 5, 2003, at 8:00pm  
Goat Hall, 400 Missouri Street, San Francisco, CA

Welcome to the SFCCO's second season and première of two movements of my new symphony, Symphony No. 2 "Mozart ist Tot!" Mozart is one of the most recognized and performed composers in America. In fact, most American symphonies mainly play European composers from the 19th and 18th century. They very rarely play music by an American composer and if they do play one, it not a new composition. It would be like if the commercial pop radio stations only played rock music from the 50's and early 60's and on top of that music is only by European artist (no Elvis). I feel Mozart is over played by symphony orchestras. I personally do not wish to hear his music at any symphony concert again, unless the piece is altered in a way to make it new and interesting. Symphony No. 2 "Mozart ist Tot!" is my attempt to make Mozart interesting and modern. Though this is a step backward for my musical objectives; because it uses no improvisation and like my first symphony it uses other composers' music or styles, I had some events that made me decided to write this symphony.

The first of these events was in December 2002 and I was looking to entering a composition contest. The rules of the contest made me mad because they were so restrictive. Symphonies and composition contest like to limit the creativity of composers with rules like no longer than 15 minutes and no new notation. They basically do not want to put in the effort to learn a new piece of music. While this was not really news to me, it just upset me that this kind of limiting creativity still is going on.

The next event happen in Atlanta later the same month, I was listening to the radio and a NPR dj was complaining about new music. He said that composers should not write music that was so irritating, and write something that sounds more familiar. Of course if he ever read Meyer's "Emotion and Meaning in Music" he would realize this view of sound is a conditioned response and if he took the time to listen to more new music the dissonance and sounds would not seem irritating. Again I got mad because this dj with nation radio coverage was poisoning listeners against new music.

The last event also occurred in Atlanta, the Atlanta symphony was advertising that they where play a new composition they commissioned, the first new piece in eight years. Eight years, a professional orchestra with money recourses of the Atlanta symphony should be commissioning several pieces a year not one every eight years. In Mozart's time if an orchestra only played one new piece every eight years

the listeners would not have showed up. They only wanted to hear the newest compositions, not the oldest.

One night while I could not sleep in Atlanta, I was thinking about the above events and the first SFCCO concert. Mark Alburger told a story about how his Symphony No. 1 ("It wasn't classical...") got its' theme. The story he told was about how people leaving a concert complained that the new music piece was not classical; it was symphonic but not classical. I guess for those concert goers composers must not try and expand or develop music forms. But without growth music is a dead art form and would only be museum music. Then the idea hit me to use a Mozart symphony and make it modern and interesting.

So when I got back home in January of 2003, I took Mozart's Symphony No. 35 "Haffner" and replaced the notes with my own. Thus only using his rhythms and form, which is ironically how Mozart worked, he wrote that the first movement of "Haffner" symphony was "monothematic, 'worked out' after Hayden's model." I picked the "Haffner" symphony because of its length (without repeats it only last 15 minutes which is the longest most orchestra will allow for new pieces) and that it was written about the time America won the Revolutionary war, 1783. Each movement uses a different compositional style. The first movement, *Twelve Steps of Mozart*, uses a twelve tone row that I improvised in a recording I made in September of 2001 called *Jagged*. (Released on **Statements, BLACK HAT RECORDS**) The second movement, *Minimally Mozart*, uses minimalism and each section is reduced to a three-note pattern. The third movement, *Caging Mozart*, uses chance (I used dice to pick the notes) and is an obvious homage to great American composer John Cage. The 4th movement, *Giant Steps of Mozart*, I used the great saxophonist John Coltrane's solo on *Giant Steps* as a replacement row for some sections and it's chord progression for other sections.

I hope you will enjoy my latest symphony, and that you will join me in a protest against American symphonies. I am calling for a Mozart boycott in order to get more American and new music composers programmed by professional orchestras. I hope that people will stop going to professional orchestra concerts where Mozart is programmed (except groups that perform on period instruments and are solely dedicated to playing Mozart's music), maybe this will help to motivate symphony orchestras to play more new music. They will need to fill up all that space with something else hopefully it will be new music.