



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/>

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## Pollock

by Michael Cooke



Jackson Pollock  
1912-1956

SAN FRANCISCO COMPOSERS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA  
Mark Alburger, Music Director  
Friday, October 4, 2002, at 8:00pm  
Goat Hall, 400 Missouri Street, San Francisco, CA

Welcome to the première of “Pollock” which is named after the great American painter Jackson Pollock. Pollock is famous for his unique ‘drip and splash’ style that he came up with in 1947. In 1952, New York art critic Harold Rosenberg coined the term “Action Painting” referring to a gestural method of painting that epitomized by the work of Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, and Willem de Kooning. “The drips and splatters that characterize



action painting reveal the artist’s process of creation, which in Rosenberg’s view was as important as the finished product. Pollock’s style of painting differed markedly from that of the other action painters in that he placed his large canvases on the floor rather than working on an easel. This shift in the physical relationship of the artist to his canvas

allowed him to develop a full-body gestural technique incorporating rhythmic movements that resembled dance and a snap-the-whip type wrist action that facilitated his exquisite control of the paint.” <http://www.nga.gov/feature/pollock/actionpainting.html>

I admire Pollock for creating a unique style that helped keep art growing as an art form. It has long been my dream to be able to contribute to music in this way and hopefully someday I will. But for now I just admire those who have been able to do this.

The music in “Pollock” is my attempt to create a sound style to match the visual style that Jackson Pollock created. In order to do this I use sections of note cells and intervallic relationships as germs for improvisation. While the orchestra does not have melodies written in the classic way, they do have rules and each section has note cells to control the over all sound. Thus the music is spontaneous and an unrepeatabe event, but it is no accident in the way it sounds. This is similar to Pollock’s own description of his painting.

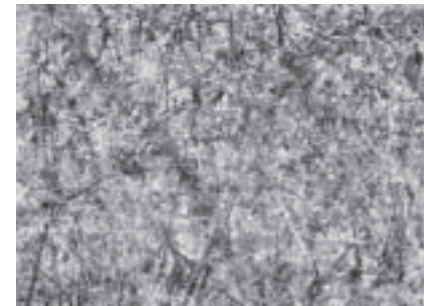
“The painting is the result of both split-second decision making and happenstance, choreography and chance.

Each physical ‘performance’ was a unique, spontaneous, and unrepeatabe event, but the final product was always subject to artistic will. I can control the flow of the paint,” Pollock contended. “There is no accident.”” <http://www.nga.gov/feature/pollock/process2.html>

The work contains 8 sections (6 of them are repeated) that flow together in an arc form. Each section focuses on a particular intervallic relationship. The work is also divided into smaller groups within the orchestra that are then slowly mixed together. Since Pollock “spread his canvas on the floor and developed his compositions by working from all four sides, allowing the imagery to evolve spontaneously, without preconceptions.”

<http://naples.cc.sunysb.edu/CAS/pkhouse.nsf/pages/pollock> I use the four basic color groups, woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings to represent the four side of the painting; making sure that each of the smaller groups are comprised of all four groups.

I would like to credit John Luther Adams’ *Clouds of Forgetting*, *Clouds of Unknowing* with inspiration for working with intervallic relationship as source material. Larry Ochs should be credited for showing me techniques of notating improvisation. Plus I should thank the Guided Improv Ensemble/Workshop for playing early versions to help me clarify my ideas. I would like to thank the SFCCO for taking the time and effort in making the performance possible. I hope you will enjoy my tribute to Jackson Pollock.



Jackson Pollock, Number 1, 1950 (Lavender Mist), 1950, National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 1976.37.1

“Lavender Mist epitomizes Pollock’s ultimate style, in which physical action and emotional expression achieve balance. It is an astounding tapestry of color, poured, dripped, and flung on the canvas.”