

**2014-2015 Faculty Research Grant
End of Year Report
PI: Dr. Brian Chin**

Original Title of the Proposal:

Re-Imagining Protestant Hymnody from a 21st Century Perspective

Summarize the project goals and the activities that took place to meet those goals during the grant period. Note who was involved and if anyone was an SPU student.

The primary goal of this project is to compose, develop, perform, and record a body of musical artwork that utilizes Protestant Hymnody as source material. The vehicle for this project is my innovative chamber music ensemble, TORCH. This group is comprised of four musicians with a wide background of diverse musical talents and experience. We share a background in conservatory classical technique, collegiate level theoretical concepts (two members of the ensemble are college theory professors), jazz improvisational techniques, and composition skills.

We began this artistic project in the summer of 2014 and are continuing to write and develop material that is directly influenced by this hymnody project. We have gathered to rehearse three hours a week on average for the past year, culminating a live performance and video session of our group in the spring.

TORCH performed as a featured artist on the Universal Language 21st Century Music Project Series last March and was a featured ensemble for the non-sequitur concert series at the Performance Space at the Good Shepard Chapel. While we performed some of the material for the concert and the subsequent video session, we had a wide variety of very difficult music to master. We are planning a full concert of this repertoire at SPU and a subsequent recording the coming years.

What were the major findings? If there are no findings or completed work at this time, what did you learn from carrying out this project that could be applicable to future scholarly works?

Our biggest discovery has been the difficulty with which it is to generate original work that honors the source material, pushes the boundaries of 21st century music-making that does not pander to an audience. We are striving to create a body of new work that we can stand behind as generative from hymnody, new in concept, smart in design, accessible to our audience, and brilliantly and virtuosic performance.

How were or will the results be disseminated (publication, presentation, creative work, etc. – be as specific as possible)?
projects or provide a time-line for future dissemination.

What future scholarly works will be related to this project?

Is there external funding that you would like to pursue with the Office of Sponsored Programs?

My plan is to continue to develop more material until we have enough quality work to perform a full concert of this music. Another potential solution is to seamlessly weave our work with Protestant hymnody into our other repertoire of music. This might ultimately be the most genuine way to house our music.

We also plan to record this project, either as a dedicated album or interwoven into other repertoire. We would plan to produce this over next year or two.

Below are links to a couple examples of completed pieces. Other prime examples are complete, but not yet recorded.

Almost Hymn-like: For Anna Grace

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/6h4l162zmr7b5hm/06%20Track%2006.wav?dl=0>

This piece was written in honor of young Anna Grace, who was a victim of the school shootings in Connecticut. She was the daughter of a colleague and friend of mine. This piece flips the model of traditional improvisation where here the musicians are given all of the possible notes to use and are instructed to improvise using the elements of timber, texture, instrumentation, dynamic and intensity. The source material for this piece is *Amazing Grace*.

Mov. 3 in C min.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/fkhxyhct2eihfwu/mov.%203%20in%20C%20min.wav?dl=0>

This piece is my contribution to the hymnody canon. This work exists both as a stand-alone piece and as the third movement of a suite. Inspired in style by the post-rock movement in Iceland, this hymn is brought into 21st century art music realm partially by converting the standard symmetrical eight bar phrase into a seven bar phrase that gives a false sense of arrival on the subdominant. Further, the counter theme is the primary ostinato material from the second movement and is harmonically derived from the thematic material of the first movement. I have yet to choose a text for this hymn.

Did you run into any problems or difficulties in completing the project? How were these resolved?

If you had student participation – how did participation in this project further their professional goals or vocational understanding?

I believe that we have produced wonderful material to date by the support of these funds. I estimate that we have five or six usable pieces right now culminating in about a half hour of music. If we were to stop today, I would consider the research a success and worthy of value, and indeed, we have many great pieces as a result. Still, art needs to have an audience to be alive and relevant and I have a vision that we can bring to fruition an entire package of music in the form of a concert and a recorded album. We simply need a few more months to generate material and time to rehearse. I feel this is what will set our project apart from just another collection of songs.