

Honolulu-based composer and pianist Andrew Filson creates music inspired by the various cultures with which he interacts. His interest in working with both Western and non-Western music has resulted in compositions utilizing traditional instruments from Korea, China, and Japan, and it is through this merging of distinct cultural elements that he strives to uncover a unique voice in the expanding field of intercultural composition.

Once described as “wonderfully exhausting” and “relentless in its energy,” Filson’s music is often brimming with rhythmic intensity. By coupling high-energy rhythmic devices with a colorful harmonic language, his music aims to stimulate the audience. Filson’s interest in cross-cultural composing has resulted in a merging of musical elements from both East Asia and the West with a unique voice that neither entirely derives nor ignores their respective traditions.

Filson is the recipient of multiple commissions, including his “Chasing Autumn” for two violin soloists, percussion, piano, and strings, “Fighting Against the Current” for 7-string electric guitar and cello, and an upcoming chamber orchestra work. In addition to commissions, Filson has received several awards and grants including an invitation to the International Gugak Workshop at the National Gugak Center in Seoul (2018) and an Erasmus+ grant for study at The Academy of Music in Kraków, Poland (2017).

Recent premieres include “Building Castles in the Sky” as performed by gayageum player Sohyun Youn (윤소현) and janggu player Dongwoo Ham (함동우), “Fractured Mirrors” for flute and guitar, which was performed and recorded by Duo Alterity, and “Tone at Twilight” in Tokyo, Japan by the Japanese Orchestra Dolce. Filson’s music has also received performances by notable musicians such as world-renown pipa virtuoso Yang Jing, the highly acclaimed Duo Yumeno, and many others.

As an active performer and advocate of new music, Filson has premiered and performed works of contemporary composers. His fluency in improvisatory playing has resulted in a broad spectrum of performance competency as well as comfortability with non-traditional methods of piano performance. Instilled with a love for collaborative projects, Filson hopes to continue working with fellow musicians of all backgrounds to create innovative and intercultural artistic experiences.

Filson is currently a doctoral student and lecturer at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. He has received degrees from Anderson University and Butler University, and his principal teachers have been Thomas Osborne, Donald Reid Womack, Takuma Itoh, Michael Schelle, Frank Felice, and Marcel Chyrzyński.