

MASON BATES

Born in Richmond, Virginia in 1977

Warehouse Medicine from *The B-Sides* Composed in 2009

Mason Bates was born on January 23, 1977 and raised in Richmond, Virginia, where he attended St. Christopher's School. He graduated from the Columbia University-Juilliard School Exchange Program, with a bachelor of arts degree in music composition and English literature. He graduated from the University of California, Berkeley with a PhD in composition in 2008.

The music of Mason Bates fuses innovative orchestral writing, imaginative narrative forms, the harmonies of jazz and the rhythms of techno. One of the most-performed composers of his generation, Bates' is best known as the first composer to receive widespread acceptance for its expanded use of electronic sounds. He has worked closely with the San Francisco Symphony and currently holds the position of composer-in-residence with the Chicago Symphony.

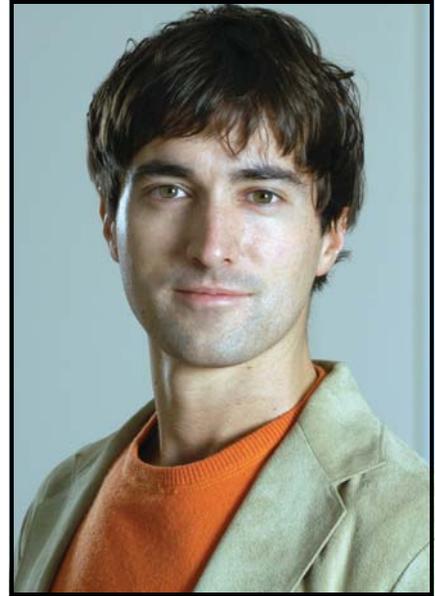
Notable works include "Liquid Interface," a water symphony commissioned by the National Symphony; "The B-Sides," a symphonic suite commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony; and "Rusty Air in Carolina," a pastoral work commissioned by the Winston-Salem Symphony. He has worked closely with conductors such as Leonard Slatkin, Michael Tilson Thomas, and composer/conductor John Adams.

In 2010, Bates was commissioned to write for the YouTube Symphony Orchestra 2011, an ensemble composed of musicians from around the world. His piece *Mothership* was performed by the London Symphony Orchestra and went on Youtube on October 11, 2010. The piece is a mixture of acoustic and electronic elements and features sections for improvisation.

In addition to being a classical composer; Bates also works frequently in Bay Area clubs as Masonic, a DJ and techno artist. Working clubs is the easier task for Bates, who can just set up his gear and play. "When I'm performing in an orchestra—live electronics with a laptop and drum pad—it's not like I'm a soloist," he explains. "I'm an extension of the percussion section. And with orchestras, anything that requires an extension cord is controversial."

He has become a visible advocate for bringing new music to new spaces, whether through institutional partnerships such as his residency with the Chicago Symphony, or through his classical/DJ project Mercury Soul, which embeds sets of classical music into a fluid evening of DJ-ing and immersive stagecraft. Sold-out performances in venues ranging from commercial clubs to concert halls have brought a new vision of the listening experience to widespread audiences.

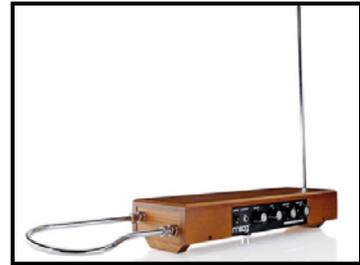
For more info, go to www.masonbates.com



Electronic Music & Techno

Electronic music is music that employs electronic musical instruments and electronic music technology in its production. This includes instruments such as the electric guitar and Hammond organ, or purely electronic devices such as the Theremin, synthesizers, or computers.

Electronic music was once associated almost exclusively with art music but beginning in the late 1960s music technology became increasingly more affordable, and thus, music produced using electronic means became more common in popular music. Today electronic music can be heard as a part of many musical genres from experimental art music to popular forms such as electronic dance music.



Theremin

Techno is a form of electronic dance music that emerged in Detroit, Michigan in the United States during the mid-to-late 1980s. Stylistically, techno is generally repetitive instrumental music produced for use in a continuous DJ set. The central rhythmic component is most often in 4/4 time, where time is marked with a bass drum on each quarter note pulse, a backbeat played by snare or clap on the second and fourth pulses of the bar, and an open hi-hat sounding every second eighth note. The tempo tends to vary between approximately 120 beats per minute and 150 bpm, depending on the style.



**The Roland TR-808 (Drum Machine)
Produced 1980–1984**

The creative use of music production technology, such as drum machines, synthesizers, and digital audio workstations, is viewed as an important aspect of the music's aesthetic. Many producers use retro electronic musical devices to create what they consider to be an authentic techno sound. Drum machines from the 1980s are highly prized, and software emulations of such retro technology are popular among techno producers.

The B-Sides: Five Pieces for Orchestra

Instrumentation:

2 flutes, 2 oboes, 3 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 tenor trombones, bass trombone, tuba, electronica, percussion, harp, piano, strings

(Program Notes written by Mason Bates)

It was between Tchaikovsky and Brahms that (conductor) Michael Tilson Thomas, surprisingly mellow in his dressing room during one intermission, broached the idea of a new work. Fresh off the podium after the concerto, and apparently undistracted by the looming symphony in the second half, he suggested a collection of five pieces focusing on texture and sonority - perhaps like Schoenberg's Five Pieces for Orchestra. Since my music had largely gone in the other direction - large works that bathed the listener in immersive experiences - the idea intrigued me. I had often imagined a suite of concise, off-kilter symphonic pieces that would incorporate the grooves and theatrics of electronica in a highly focused manner. So, like the forgotten bands from the flipside of an old piece of vinyl, The B-Sides offers brief landings on a variety of peculiar planets, unified by a focus on fluorescent orchestral sonorities and the morphing rhythms of electronica.



Michael Tilson Thomas

The first stop is the dusky, circuit-board landscape of "Broom of the System". To the ticking of a future clock, our broom - brought to life by sandpaper blocks and, at one point, an actual broom - quietly and anonymously keeps everything running, like a chimney-sweep in a huge machine. The title is from a short-story collection by David Foster Wallace, though one could place the fairy-like broom in Borges' Anthology of Fantastic Zoology.

The ensuing "Aerosol Melody (Hanalei)" blooms on the Northshore of Kauai, where a gentle, bending melody evaporates at cadence points. Djembe and springy pizzicati populate the strange fauna of this purely acoustic movement, inspired by several trips with the Fleishhacker family. The lazy string glissandi ultimately put the movement, beachside, to sleep.

"Gemini in the Solar Wind" is a re-imagination of the first American spacewalk, using actual communication samples from the 1965 Gemini IV voyage provided by NASA. In this re-telling, clips of words, phrases, and static from the original are rearranged to show Ed White, seduced by the vastness and mystery of space, deliriously unhooking from the spacecraft to drift away blissfully.

His final vision of the coast of Northern California drops us down close to home. The initial grit of "Temescal Noir," like the Oakland neighborhood of the title, eventually shows its subtle charm in hazy, jazz-tinged hues. Unbothered by electronics, this movement receives some industrious help in the rhythm department by a typewriter and oil drum.

At its end, the broom returns in a cameo, again altering the tempo, and this propels us into "Warehouse Medicine." An homage to techno's birthplace - the empty warehouses of Detroit - the final stop on The B-Sides gives no quarter. Huge brass swells and out-of-tune pizzicati emulate some of the visceral sonorities of techno, and on this pounding note The B-Sides bows out.

Listening Examples:

The B-Sides (complete)

Leonard Slatkin, conducting

Mason Bates, electronic

Detroit Symphony Orchestra

- **Mvt I:** Broom of the System <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrnsy9KHdwQ>
- **Mvt II:** Aerosol Melody (Hanalei) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hbd0QhEJAs>
- **Mvts III—V:** Gemini in the Solar Wind / Temescal Noir / Warehouse Medicine: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYpkGvtZzbM>

Warehouse Medicine (alone)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYpkGvtZzbM>

* *The CSO will only be performing Warehouse Medicine at the concert.*