

Hub New Music brings ‘Phantasmagoria’ to Peabody Essex Museum on Dec. 14

By Keith Powers / Correspondent

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Inspired by one of the year’s most notable exhibitions, Hans Hofmann’s “The Nature of Abstraction,” Hub New Music performs “Phantasmagoria,” focusing on the abstract expressionist’s work, this Saturday evening at the Peabody Essex Museum.

If you go...

WHAT: “Phantasmagoria,” with Hub New Music

WHERE: Peabody Essex Museum, East India Marine Square, Salem

WHEN: Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m.

TICKETS: \$25/\$20 students, Salem residents. Visit pem.org or call 978-745-9500.

Inspired by one of the year’s most notable exhibitions, Hans Hofmann’s “The Nature of Abstraction,” Hub New Music performs “Phantasmagoria,” focusing on the abstract expressionist’s work, this Saturday evening at the Peabody Essex Museum.

Hub New Music — Michael Avitabile (founder, and flute), David Dziardziel (clarinet), Alyssa Wang (violin), Jesse Christeson (cello) — will perform a premiere by Michael Ippolito, a recent quartet by Kati Agócs, and “Wavelengths” by Takuma Itoh. Another premiere by Ryan Carter relies on audience participation with mobile phones. The fascinating music takes place in the Peabody Essex Museum atrium space.

“PEM serves as an incubator for what we do,” Avitabile says. “It’s a creative partnership. Pieces that we tour with are workshopped here. ‘Phantasmagoria’ will be our primary touring program for the next couple of seasons, and when we were brainstorming about it, we thought it would be great to formulate a program around Hofmann.”



Hub New Music invokes Boston in its name, but spreads its music around the country.

Highlights this year alone include a Hannah Lash premiere in the Seattle Symphony’s chamber space in April, and concerts in Taos, Ashmont Hill, California and Indianapolis. Residencies in Michigan and Hawaii are complemented by closer-to-home affiliations, not only at the Peabody Essex but with the Celebrity Series as well. Another commission, a song cycle with the composer collective Oracle Hysterical, will be presented in Salem next March.

Anyone who saw Hub New Music’s 2017 collaboration with Urbanity Dance in the PEM atrium (“Soul House,” Robert Honstein’s composition that HNM has just recorded) can at least partially visualize this upcoming exchange between art forms.

“We asked Michael if he would write a piece inspired by Hofmann,” Avitabile says of Ippolito’s “Capriccio,” which has four movements, all titled from Hofmann paintings, and extends about 25 minutes. “Both are colorfully rebellious. And like Michael’s, each of the other three works on the program are hyperemotional, and turn on a dime.”

Carter’s new work will shake up the audience. In fact, turning devices on and shaking them (“I can’t wait to finally tell an audience to turn up their cell phones to the highest volume,” Avitabile says) is part of the score. Carter has written interactive software, and with a dedicated server nearby, the audience will be part of the entertainment.

“It really is the most fun, engaging and creative software,” Avitabile says. “The phones will start generating sounds, and you can shake or tilt them. It’s our first time using this technology, and we’re trying to speak to the tactile nature of Hofmann. In the exhibition itself there’s even a section where you can touch the paintings.”

Hofmann’s “The Nature of Abstraction” will be open, with guided tours available, both before and after the exhibition. For tickets to Hub New Music’s “Phantasmagoria” visit pem.org or call 978-745-9500.

Keith Powers covers music and the arts for Gannett, Opera News and WBUR’s ARTery. Follow [@PowersKeith](https://twitter.com/PowersKeith); email to keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com.