



INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED COMPOSER ALEX HELD TALKS UP THE INFLUENCE OF STEINER, WILLIAMS & LIGETI

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Ashley Jude Collie 20/05/2023 14 06:09 Listen to this article



"What got me interested in Alexander Held and his work was his diversity and proficiency with electronic sounds. It has also been evident that Alex is very eclectic in his compositional approach and has mastered many styles of music, but is keeping his own musical voice...His unique compositions have attracted the attention of the international music festival circuit and have had their debuts worldwide: in New York, in the Czech Republic, in Germany, just to name a few—Petr Kotik, artistic director of the Orchestra of the SEM Ensemble, which has performed at Carnegie Hall"

Alexander Held. Is one. Busy music composer.

Germany-born Held has been getting commissions to create music for professional ensembles worldwide since he was in College. Brought up on listening to the likes of music legends such as Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, Fausto Romitelli, Gerard Grisey, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, now Held's prodigious talents have made him extraordinarily in demand.

Indeed, alongside his ongoing commissions, he has participated in huge international festivals including: the *International European Composers Slam 2022* where he was "immensely honored" to represent his country and have a large piece performed; at various shows like the *Composer Orchestra Concert*, Manhattan School of Music, "Apply Triangle" Ensemble Tour, *Goho Ol Ollog* Lincoln Center Performance, *SinusTon Festival*, and the *Ostrava Festival*. Additionally, there was his contribution to that *Zodiac Festival* in the French countryside, about which he recalls "was a great change of pace from the usual busy City life."

"We were thrilled to have Alexander participate in our Zodiac Festival, as we are well aware of his reputation and significant achievements as a composer. Alexander has made headlines in his native Europe, but also has made big waves in the United States, where he has worked alongside high-profile Hollywood Film composers—Kliment Krylovsky, the Artistic Director of the world-renowned Zodiac Festival, who has also given performances at the White House and Kennedy Center in Washington, DC"

Ashley Jude Collie
Entertainment Expert

Ashley is an award-winning journalist/author/blogger who has written for Playboy, Toronto Star, Movie Entertainment, Sports Illustrate...

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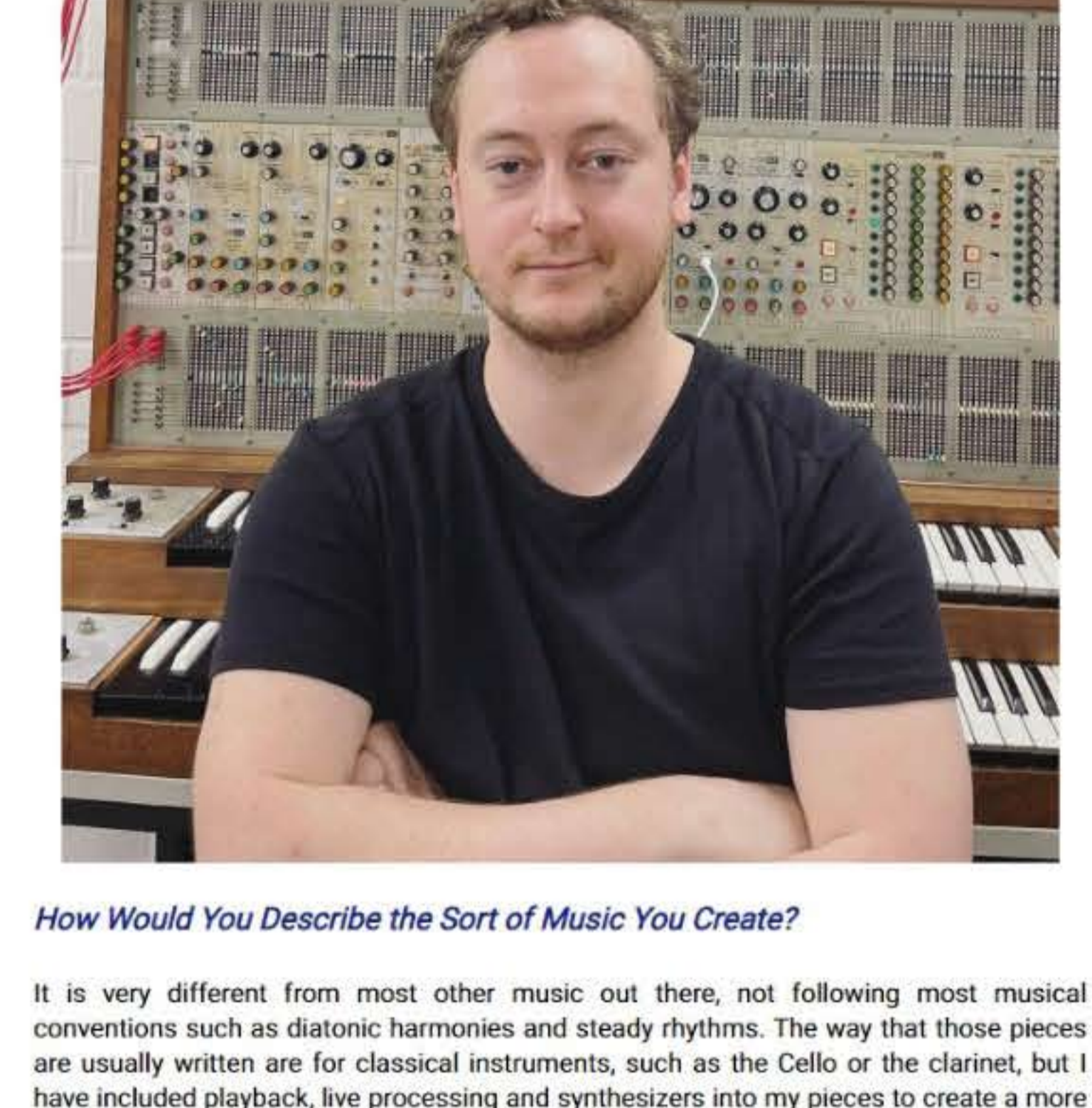


Overall, internationally recognized composer Held enthuses that it's always thrilling to get commissioned to write pieces for a festival or ensemble. But he's also been expanding his repertoire, as he's recently working in Hollywood on film composing. He insightfully talks about the importance of music to the storytelling involved in movies: "Music has always been a core part of storytelling on the big screen. The best first example of that would be Max Steiner who composed the music for the early blockbuster movie *King Kong* in 1933. Without the score the movie would not have had the scary effect the director was aiming for. Ever since then, music has become an integral element of any film."

So very true.

Moreover, Held notes something that Oscar winning director Steven Spielberg once said about legendary music composer John Williams' music: "Without John Williams, bikes don't really fly, nor do brooms in Quidditch matches, nor do men in red capes. There is no Force, dinosaurs do not walk the Earth, we do not wonder, we do not weep, we do not believe."

We tackled with Alexander Held to talk further about his background and inspirations, his take on music as a major element of storytelling on the big and little screen.



How Would You Describe the Sort of Music You Create?

It is very different from most other music out there, not following most musical conventions such as diatonic harmonies and steady rhythms. The way that those pieces are usually written are for classical instruments, such as the Cello or the Clarinet, but I have included playback, live processing and synthesizers into my pieces to create a more unique experience.

What Role Does Technology Play in Composing Music for Film or Live Performances These Days?

I am very interested in music tech in general and it is a very vast field. From the digital world that includes digital audio workstations such as Cuebase and Logic Pro to write music, and Pro Tools for recording and editing. But then there is the gear side of it that I really love such as electric guitars, synthesizers and drum machines that take you away from the computer and offer a more haptic experience. Speaking of guitar, the instrument helped me re-discover my inherent love of music in my later teens, and then I knew that this is what I wanted to do in life. Indeed, guitar still plays a role as one of my most recent projects has been working on the SoundLinks Festival piece called "Prism" for the Cologne Guitar Quartet.

What Are your Strengths, What Do you Bring to the Table that is Unique?

I believe in having a strong sense for complex harmonies, such as distorted "overtone spectra" and "symmetrical constructs." Having studied contemporary music, which is less intuitive when writing it and more conceptually constructed, might be something very exciting to bring to the table of storytelling. In cinema this has already been used by brilliant director Stanley Kubrick who used the music of contemporary concert composer Geörgy Ligeti in films like *Eyes Wide Shut*, with Tom Cruise, back to *The Shining* with Jack Nicholson.

What Are Your Mid and Long-Term Goals in the Entertainment Business?

One can only dream big, but I just want to say that I am so happy and fortunate to be doing what I love. Working in music is a wonderful privilege by itself. I have had many great opportunities all over the world so far, having my music performed in some very esteemed venues. I hope that I can continue living off of writing music and can continue creating it. The wonderful thing about the arts is that there are so many great possibilities and chances one can take, so the sky really is the limit, whether it's a short piece played in front of a tiny audience or bringing my musical language to film and scoring a big Hollywood blockbuster. My dream is to experience the whole spectrum!

Here's to Alexander Held helping to make brooms fly in Quidditch matches, and may the "Force" be with composers like him.



Drop in on Alexander Held's website, and check out some samples of his music, including: *Apply Triangle @ SinusTon 2019*; *the premiere of Goho ol Ollog*; and, *Bird Tali and Slew on Soundcloud*.



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William Jenkins
As a fan of film scores, I appreciate the importance of music in storytelling, and Alexander Held seems to understand this perfectly. His compositions evoke emotions and enhance the cinematic experience. It's no wonder he's gaining recognition on an international level.
about 1 month ago

Ashley Collie In reply to: William Jenkins
It is amazing how music plays such a key role in storytelling. And European-born composers bring different takes to the table. Thanks.
about 1 month ago

William Jenkins In reply to: Ashley Collie
Cheers mate!
about 1 month ago

Laura Anderson
His willingness to experiment with different instruments and technologies adds an exciting dimension to his work. I'm excited to see where his musical journey takes him.
about 1 month ago

Ashley Collie In reply to: Laura Anderson
It seems the sky is the limit. Thanks for commenting.
about 1 month ago

Laura Anderson In reply to: Ashley Collie
You're welcome.
about 1 month ago

David Matthews
I had the pleasure of attending one of Alexander Held's performances, and it was a truly unforgettable experience. His ability to blend different musical elements and create complex harmonies is outstanding. He's definitely one to watch in the entertainment business.
about 1 month ago

Ashley Collie In reply to: David Matthews
That's great, Dave, where was this and what was the performance? Cheers
about 1 month ago

Emma Turner
Wow, Alexander Held's achievements as a composer are remarkable! From international music festivals to Hollywood film composing, he's making waves in the industry. His passion for storytelling through music is evident, and I can't wait to see what he does next.
about 1 month ago

Ashley Collie In reply to: Emma Turner
I'd bet he'd love to emulate a master like Hans Zimmer and maybe do a movie like *Gladiator*. Watch for the future, eh?!

James Wilson
It's impressive how Alexander Held has mastered various music styles while maintaining his own musical voice. His compositions have a mesmerizing quality that resonates with audiences worldwide. I'm looking forward to hearing more from this talented composer.
about 1 month ago

Ashley Collie In reply to: James Wilson
James, have you see his music performed live? Cheers!
about 1 month ago

Sarah Thompson
Alexander Held's compositions are truly captivating! His diverse musical style and incorporation of electronic sounds create a unique and immersive experience. I can't wait to explore more of his work.
about 1 month ago

Ashley Collie In reply to: Sarah Thompson
And, now he's working with big Hollywood music composers, Sarah. Cheers
about 1 month ago