*Mr.Z.* was commissioned in 2009 by the Los Angeles based concert series Chamber Music Palisades. The composition, which is 16 minutes in length, is dedicated to the memory of Austrian keyboardist/composer Josef Zawinul, co-founder of the hugely influential jazz fusion group Weather Report.

There are no direct quotes from Zawinul’s compositions in Mr.Z., but the piece contains “translations” of some of his compositional, orchestrational and performance techniques into a harmonically expanded chamber music setting, such as:

\* Zawinul’s stacking of synthesizer sounds. Many of the sounds that he used for his soloing were combinations of two or more synthesizer/sampler sounds, each of them in a different octave. This technique translated very easily into the chamber music idiom by giving multi-octave unison runs to the wind instruments (see measures 9-24, 40-56, et al). Color changes were achieved through phrase-by-phrase switching of the instrument and octave configurations.

\* Filler-gestures on the piano that were typical for Zawinul’s performance style.

\* Massive ensemble climaxes in multi octave unisons.

\* Episodic compositional structures with sometimes abrupt transitions between individual sections.

I also wanted to pay homage to other members of Weather Report by writing (written-out) solos inspired by the improvisational styles of saxophonist Wayne Shorter (oboe solo in measure 67 and bassoon solo in m 122), bassist Jaco Pastorius (ensemble solos between alto flute, english horn, bass clarinet and bassoon starting at m 147) and Joe Zawinul himself (flute solo at m 286). Weather Report-influenced fusion grooves, in which bass clarinet, bassoon and piano act as a “rhythm section”, serve as accompaniment for these solos.

Gernot Wolfgang

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