

syracuse.com

Cazenovia Counterpoint: Composer Chris Cresswell: MIxing classical, contemporary

Melinda Johnson | mjohnson@syracuse.com By Melinda Johnson | mjohnson@syracuse.com

[Email the author](#) | [Follow on Twitter](#)

on July 10, 2011 at 4:00 AM



[View full size](#)

Submitted photo

Composer Chris Cresswell

Chris Cresswell knows his arrival as a classical music composer is atypical.

He began writing music mostly for the guitar he picked up when he was 13. Cresswell chose music composition as his major at Syracuse University, but he was not sure what that meant.

"I ended up falling in love with classical music and creating that much more," says Cresswell after an afternoon of working with composers younger than his 23 years.

Unlike many of his classmates at SU, Cresswell says he wasn't schooled in classical music during his youth. His musical tastes veered toward Bob Dylan, James Taylor and folk music performed by contemporary artists and the veterans. He heard some of his parents' favorites and discovered other singers/songwriters on his own.

"I sort of gravitated to that music. In high school I had sort an insatiable appetite for it."

His dad also clued him in that some of Cresswell's new discoveries had been around for awhile. He recalls his initial reaction to this news: "Wait, Paul Simon is a person."

In time, Cresswell delved into another genre foreign to him, classical music. He knew who Beethoven was, but that was the extent of his knowledge.

"I didn't really care that much in high school. I just sort of was on the periphery. I always used to joke that Beethoven and Steve Reich are both new to me," he says. "Two years ago, Mozart suddenly clicked with me. I just became obsessed with Mozart for two months.

Cresswell, who is featured for the second year in the Rising Stars program at Cazenovia Counterpoint, has combined his musical influences for a composition, titled "Nocturne No. 1: Lonely Tonight." It's the classical music inspired by Chopin's Nocturnes with a nod to James Taylor's "Don't Let Me Be Lonely Tonight." Pianist Rhimmon

Simchy-Gross will perform the three-minute piece.

Since his graduation in May, Cresswell has been busy. He is helping composer Diane Jones with Cazenovia Counterpoint's Young Composers Corner and packing up for the start of his job as a promotions assistant at Boosey & Hawkes, a classical music publishing company in New York City.

Performance: Premieres of Rising Stars at 12:30 p.m. Wednesday at St. Peter's Episcopal Church Hall, 10 Mill St., Cazenovia. Free.

© 2014 syracuse.com. All rights reserved.