

NEOSonicFest: FiveOne Experimental Orchestra to perform at Rising Star Coffee Roastery March 5

by Mike Telin



“We feel more at home in a post-industrial setting, and we’re happy to have found Rising Star Coffee Roastery,” Five One Experimental Orchestra executive director Jeremy Allen said during an interview. “We always try to create a unique concert experience in collaboration with a non-traditional venue that benefits all parties — there are Rising Star patrons that are yet unfamiliar with what 51XO is all about, and I’m sure some of our fans will be newly introduced to this fabulous coffee roastery that’s right here in our great city of Cleveland.”

On Saturday March 5 at 8:00 pm, [51XO](#) will perform works by Nico Muhly, Greg Pattillo, John HC Thompson, Jeremy Allen, Buck McDaniel, and Sarah Kirkland Snider, plus a new “experiment” conceived of and led by 51XO’s Tracy Mortimore at Rising Star Coffee Roastery, 3617 Walton Avenue, Cleveland. The concert is presented as part of the 2016 [NEOSonicFest](#).

Allen said that he was familiar with the Rising Star coffee shops around town, but discovered the roastery by chance. “I was at the shop in Hingetown and started talking to one of the guys working there. He mentioned that they had a roastery on the West Side that they were starting to open up for events and suggested that I get in touch with the general manager. I did, and he was very open to having us invade the space for the weekend.”

In addition to being “a really cool space” for the concert, Allen said that Rising Star will be offering a special blend of beans they have put together for the event. “Given that many of our members are coffee connoisseurs, we’re excited about the event for selfish reasons as well,” Allen quipped. “We’re also really thrilled to be part of the third

NEOSonicFest, and we're doing our best to get the word out about the fact that we have a new music festival in Cleveland that's ripe for enjoyment."

Presenting world premieres at their concerts has become a 51XO tradition, and Saturday's program will include two. Allen's own *Manual Focus* and Tracy Mortimore's *Seven Strategies* both utilize 51XO's full instrumental ensemble of flute, clarinet, percussion, piano, guitar, violin, cello, and double bass.

"My work is written in open score," Allen said. "Each player repeats musical cells autonomously, using guidelines that spell out the number of repetitions they should play before they move on to the next. There are dynamic swells in each cell, so the listener can hear each instrument pop out of the texture. Everyone plays the same cells, but not at the same time, so there is a sense of harmonic progression as the piece moves forward. All of this creates an effect similar to what you see when you adjust the lens of a camera in and out of focus. Sometimes things sound clear and at other times cloudy."

In his *Seven Strategies*, Mortimore does not provide the players with a written score but rather with seven points of departure to be used as the basis for improvisation. These include [pointillism](#), ostinato, and a single repeated note. During the performance, players take turns leading the group by using hand signals to indicate when to speed up or slow down, or to get louder or softer. "It's a unique experiment and it's working really well," Allen said. "Everybody loves it and there's been a lot of laughter during rehearsals: I think it's really freeing for the players."

The program will also include Sarah Kirkland Snider's *Pale as Centuries* (2011) for flute, clarinet, guitar, and bass, which Allen described as a work that draws the listener in from the very beginning. Flutist Audrey Whartenby will demonstrate her beatboxing chops during *Three Beats for Beatbox Flute* (2011), by Project Trio's Greg Pattillo, a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Allen said that the title for John HC Thompson's *Fine. Whatever. Awful. Great* (2015), can be traced to words Thompson scribbled in the margins of the manuscript when he was writing the piece. "I don't want to be a spoiler, but John has drawn on his rich jazz background, and he's placed his own delightfully quirky stamp on it."

About Buck McDaniel's *Put it all in* (2014), Allen joked, "It sounds just like the title: it feels like a kitchen sink sort of piece, but it's really cool."

Rounding out the program will be Nico Muhly's *Doublespeak* (2012). "The piece was written for eighth blackbird and it's an interesting work with a lot of depth," Allen said. "Muhly's a disciple of Philip Glass, but definitely from a later generation: this piece is

almost post-post-minimalism, if that makes sense. It has a lot of soul and sounds very youthful and exuberant. I think people will connect with it.”

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