



The HARX
(Helen, Abraham, Randy Xperiment)

Primary Contact: Randy Wong
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THE HARX

A simple recipe for a festive musical treat

Ingredients:

- 1 – Maryland’s finest classically trained chamber violinist
- 1 – Drumming sensation from Hawaii providing a solid beat and melodic keyboards
- 1 – Fellow Hawaii standout musician rounding out the bottom on bass
- A dash of Classical
- A touch of Jazz
- An assortment of timeless holiday music

The steps:

Take two of Hawaii’s finest young musicians and compliment with one of the East Coast’s standout violinist. Add elements of classical, jazz and other contemporary flavors to the mix and set aside. Finally, sprinkle in everyone’s favorite yuletide melodies and arrange evenly. Voila! The HARX served fresh for everyday holiday cheer!

Serving suggestion:

The HARX is best enjoyed with family, friends, and loved ones during the holiday season.

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BIOGRAPHY

Interpreting traditional music with contemporary methods is nothing new to The HARX. Its three members represent two of the nation's most prestigious music schools: Berklee College of Music and The New England Conservatory, where much of today's newest music is composed, commissioned, and performed on a daily basis.

Led by Hawaii's **Randy Wong**, a bass player in his senior year at New England Conservatory, The HARX was a lab project specifically created to experiment with various styles of music and traditional melodies. **Helen Liu**, a friend and New England Conservatory graduate student was quickly recruited on violin, providing much of the group's classically tinged sounds. Seeking to add a refreshing twist to the conservatory-trained duo, Randy sought out another Hawaii friend: Berklee College of Music sophomore **Abraham Lagrimas, Jr.** on drums and keyboards. With his swinging beats and inspired piano improvisations, Abraham serves up the group's contemporary palate.

The HARX chose various holiday music as their musical model simply because the songs can be recognized and enjoyed by everybody. People of all ages and backgrounds look forward to the warm familiarity brought by their favorite holiday tunes – whether these memories are brought by the lush harmonies of "The Christmas Song," the gentle sway of "The First Noel," or the upbeat melody of "Winter Wonderland," toddlers to grandparents alike can tune in for a good time.

With each member's exceptional command of his or her instrument, the spirit of the holidays is captured in every song. "We try to use sound colors that other ensembles don't use," explains Randy Wong. "And, since most Christmas songs have already been recorded a hundred ways, it's important for us to bring a new perspective to the music." Violinist Helen Liu agrees. "We like to add an element of surprise to the tunes as well; small details here and there will help keep us and our listeners engaged."

The HARX's recently recorded 3-song demo provides a good introduction to the worlds of classical and jazz, even to the most discerning individual. "Coming up with the arrangements was like throwing ideas on a wall and see which ones would stick," adds jazz-trained Abraham Lagrimas, Jr. "It's a joy seeing different combinations of ideas come to life!" In "Have Yourself A Merry Christmas" the introductory interplay between the violin pizzicato and the piano conjures up images of a child glancing at many gifts surrounding the Christmas tree. Then, the song comfortably segues into a joyous, up-tempo swinging jive. "Christmastime Is Here" showcases the musical depth of The HARX. Set in a jazz ballad style, all instruments have a chance to croon: First, a moody piano sets the tone. A melancholy violin melody follows. Finally, before the tune comes to a close, the bass enters and captivates the soul. The demo CD ends with a rendition of "Silent Night" with many surprises!

With the successful completion of their demo recording, The HARX (a.k.a. Helen, Abraham, Randy Xperiment) is currently planning a full-length holiday album to be released in late 2003. Appearances in the Boston area and Hawaii are also in the works.

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Helen Liu
Violin

Biography

A native of Potomac, Maryland, Helen Liu began studying the violin and piano at age 6. She won several state and regional competitions in high school, including the MTNA Selmer String Competition and Maryland State Music Teachers Association Solo Festival.

Helen is known in Boston as a well-rounded chamber musician. Most notably, she has collaborated with New England Conservatory faculty members James Buswell, Carol Ou, and Carol Rodland, with whom she performed the Brahms Quintet Op. 111, and was featured as the scordatura violinist for the Ligeti Violin Concerto with the NEC Contemporary Ensemble. Helen is also first violinist of an NEC string quartet coached by John Heiss, which specializes in music by Arnold Schoenberg, Milton Babbitt, and Igor Stravinsky.

Helen is also a founding member and first violinist of the Lyric String Quartet, based in Maryland, which was distinguished with Honors in 2000 by University of Maryland. Helen's principle chamber music coaches were Katherine Murdock, David Salness, and the Guarneri String Quartet.

As a soloist, Helen has received numerous honors: In 1998 she won the Homer Ulrich Solo String Competition and was awarded a Dorothee Einstein Krahn Scholarship to study with Daniel Heifetz at University of Maryland; performed J. S. Bach's Concerto for Oboe and Violin in C minor with the UM Philharmonia Ensemble in 2001; and most recently, performed for Pamela Frank in a masterclass at New England Conservatory.

Helen is currently in her second year as a Masters degree candidate at NEC, and is a student of Mr. James Buswell IV.

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Abraham Lagrimas, Jr.
Drums & Keyboards

Biography

Abraham was born in March 1983 in the U.S. territory of Guam. His father, a U.S. Navy sailor and amateur musician, moved the family all over the Pacific Rim eventually settling in Hawaii. It was here that Abraham began playing drums at the age 4. Along with his two older brothers (who were also musicians), they formed a band playing mostly hard rock and heavy metal music. Within a few months, Abraham and his brothers performed extensively at community events and private parties all over Hawaii.

At the age of 10, Abraham started private studies on drums and continued for a year and a half. In 1996, at the age of 13, Abraham was the Grand Prize winner in a worldwide competition sponsored by Modern Drummer Magazine and New York City's premier drum school, The Drummer's Collective. He was awarded a scholarship to their 4-week summer program. There, he gained valuable insight from New York's top drummers and musicians. In 1999, he furthered his musical studies by attending Berklee College Of Music's summer performance program, also on a scholarship. The following year, in 2000, Abraham was one of the youngest musicians chosen to participate in Betty Carter's Jazz Ahead Residency Program located at Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center For The Performing Arts. Not only did this program showcase the world's finest up-and-coming jazz artists, but also each participant's talent as jazz composers as well. Under the tutelage of Terrance Blanchard, Nathan Davis, George Cables, Winard Harper and John Patitucci, his original composition "Headache" made its national debut at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage.

While still in his teens, Abraham received two endorsement deals from major drum manufacturers (Paiste Cymbals and Vic Firth Drumsticks), earned a reputation as one of Hawaii's top professional musicians, participated in a brief tour of the U.S. Midwest and performed in Japan. In addition to his drumming and composition skills, Abraham is equally proficient in other instruments such as the vibraphone, piano, guitar and ukulele. He is currently a second year student at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts and recipient of their North American World Tour Scholarship. Working with artists/teachers such as Tiger Okoshi, Kenwood Dennard and Rod Morgenstein, Abraham continues to expand his reaches in the contemporary music market. As a Music Education major, Abraham is also one of the school's top-call drummers; appearing in numerous recitals, sessions and club dates in Boston and the Northeast.

Learn more about Abraham at www.abrahamlagrimasjr.com

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Randy Wong
Bass

Biography

Born in sunny Honolulu, Hawaii, Randy Wong has long been involved with music and education. As a double bassist, Randy has shared the stage with many popular Hawaii entertainers and musicians, including Noel Okimoto, Na Leo Pilimehana, Puamana, George Kuo, Todd Yukumoto, and the Honolulu Symphony.

Randy's training as a double bassist began with lessons from former Honolulu Symphony bassist Gary Hickling and continued with Associate Principal Michael Gorman. While in Hawaii, Randy was an active member of the Hawaii Youth Symphony Association, and performed frequently with the Oahu Band Directors' Association High School Select Jazz Band and Wind Ensembles, the All-State Orchestra, the Maui Symphony Orchestra, and the Kona Symphony Orchestra.

Randy's yearn to learn more about orchestral bass playing led him to pursue more advanced training on the Mainland. While in high school, Randy spent two summers at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute, where he studied principally with Boston Symphony Orchestra members Todd Seeber and Dennis Roy, and also received mentorship from Tanglewood Fellows Irving Steinberg and Eric Larson. Randy was also the recipient of one of two Trustee Fellowships from the Kennedy Center/National Symphony Orchestra Summer Music Institute in 1999.

As an educator, Randy's interests stem from early experiences with tutoring elementary music students at Iolani School, where Randy also attended middle school and high school. Although only in 11th grade, Randy quickly saw the value of being able to teach from a performance background, and sought to further his understanding of this concept. His decision to attend the New England Conservatory of Music (Boston, MA) was partially based on the opportunities offered through the school's Music-In-Education program, which allows performance majors teaching experience in public schools.

Randy has studied jazz and contemporary music most notably with Cecil McBee and Michael Cain; he was the bassist in the Michael Cain Ensemble at New England Conservatory in 2001-2002. Next year he will attend the Arts-In-Education program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Learn more about Randy Wong at www.randywong.net

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