

In the Spotlight: Daniel Eichenbaum

One of the most essential elements of a film is the music. You may not always be conscious of it, but the combination of picture and sound allows viewers to become fully submerged in the experience. This concept of partnering one form of art with another is exactly what composer Daniel Eichenbaum had in mind for his latest project "Dark Matter," coming soon to the Union Station's Gotlieb Planetarium. He intends to help answer the question, "What is like to be in space floating two hundred miles above the surface of the earth?"

"'Dark Matter' is a blend of electro-acoustic music, science discussion, performance art, education, and entertainment," Eichenbaum said. "We use music, visual display, and lecture content to submerge the audience in the idea of space travel."

Specifically for this project, Eichenbaum has written a work entitled "Gagarin" after the first astronaut to not only orbit the earth, but perform and broadcast a piece of music in space. He takes the melody sung by the astronaut and re-imagines it, performed by a solo clarinet accompanied by computer generated sounds.

Among his other work in the film is "Orbit" which uses both live performers and computer-processed sounds to create an environment that is familiar and alien, as well as organically human and mechanical. Eichenbaum states that "if astronauts needed computer technology to live and travel in space, then I felt that music about space travel should include both live performers and computer-generated sounds."

Eichenbaum's love of composing began when he was young. Also a self-confessed science fiction nerd, Eichenbaum remembered watching Carl Sagan's "Cosmos" and being transfixed by Leonard Bernstein's Harvard lectures, "The Unanswered Question." One day his dad brought home a software program that allowed him to create music on his old Atari home computer. By high school, he loved making his own melodies and ideas.

When the idea and opportunity for this project came up, he jumped on it. Through a friend, he connected with Rob Riddle, an experienced astronomer with the Gotlieb Planetarium. "Rob was excited about the project and we began to plan a kind of performance that blended together music, performance art, science discussion, entertainment, and education wrapped into a single performance experience," Eichenbaum stated.

Due to an Inspiration Grant, Eichenbaum was able to demonstrate that the project had community support and that much of the production costs would be covered. As a result, the grant helped convince administrators at Gotlieb Planetarium that this project was worthwhile and allowed him access to their space, which was his choice venue. "The domed projection screen seemed vital to creating the visual experience of space travel," Eichenbaum said.

He continued that many local artists work part-time jobs, attend school, and have commitments outside of their craft. If these local artists did not have financial support, many of them would not be able to afford the supplies they need to create their works. "Without funding, I would still have attempted to make "Dark Matter" happen. However, without the support of the ArtsKC Fund behind me, I'm not sure my access to the Gotlieb Planetarium would have been as easy to gain."

This was Daniel Eichenbaum's first time receiving funds as an Inspiration Grant recipient. To learn more about Daniel Eichenbaum, please visit his website at <http://www.danieleichenbaum.com> . To learn more about the ArtsKC Fund and our other grant recipients, please visit our website at www.artskc.org.