

Nathan Brock 1977–2012



Nathan's academic background includes his completion of a triple-major at the University of Louisville, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2000 with a

Bachelor degree in music, composition, and a Bachelor of Arts in literature and mathematics. He completed his Master of Arts degree in 2002 and his Ph.D. in music composition in 2007 at the University of California, San Diego (La Jolla, CA). Roger Reynolds was his dissertation advisor.

Nathan Brock wove an uncommon set of creative capacities—musical and technological—from an admirably varied and intensely cultivated knowledge and skill set. That it was not always easy for him was less important than the fact that he continued always to search, to grow, to find, and to achieve. He was not to be stopped, it seemed; and it is particularly to be regretted that he is lost to us just as everything had come together for him professionally, in an idiosyncratic and admirable way. I know that he felt this deep satisfaction—a state of mind that had earlier eluded him—as a result of a recent conversation.

Earlier, I remember many hours of interaction with him. Sometimes luminous, sometimes prickly, sometimes perplexed, and others fiercely resolved. His breakthrough engagements, from my perspective, centered around the guitar (epigrammatical for guitar duet (2002) and Resonance Cycle for solo guitar (2004)). The conceptual clarity and decisive musicality of the former was unprecedented in his work, and very striking indeed. As his composing evolved, his always questioning and often skeptical mind worried the bone of intent: should music (his? others?) remain absorbed within the bound-

aries of its own awareness, ways, and aspirations, or might it be better to direct it toward more accommodating ways, as in the "Texture Meditations for Piano, Bassoon, and Strings (2005)." He wanted, sometimes, that his music would be more easily, more widely heard, and worked with this intent. While others (many) think about these questions, he acted upon them. More often, his was a stern and demanding voice."

Nathan's success in gaining approval from Nobel bard Seamus Heaney, who granted permission to use his masterful recreation of Beowulf, attests to the force and clarity of Brock's artistic vision. I will not forget a particular passage in the premiere performance of "The Lay of the Last Survivor" (from Beowulf), as sung by his composer colleague Derek Keller. The lyrical force of this manifested anguish was singular. After our work together ended, Nathan continued: composing, organizing events, and entering into the new world of networking. Although I know less about this, I had the feeling that he continued there as he had in his musical life to be tough, demanding, wry, intelligent, and always growing.

In addition to his wide-ranging education in the arts, humanities, and mathematics, Nathan had considerable background in music technology as a recording engineer and computer musician. By 2009 Nathan's professional interests expanded to include an active engagement in the newly formed Sonic Arts R&D group at CalIT2, the interdisciplinary research powerhouse on campus at the University of California at San Diego that opened in 2006. The topic that captured his interest was the emerging but difficult and uncharted field of advanced audio networking.

He quickly came up to speed with an array of emerging technical and collaborative practices, and forged relationships with leaders throughout the field. Research collaborators included academics, audio and networking industry professionals, professional societies (AES Technical Committee on Networked Audio Systems), top-tier sound-for-cinema studios (Lucas Film and Disney), the Japanese telecom giant NTT, and CineGrid, the international community "dedicated to the research, development and demonstration of very-high-quality digital media over photonics networks."

Since 2009 Nathan was the author or coauthor of six scholarly articles published on topics including cinema-sound

synchronization, networked opera, collaborative cinema postproduction, and predicting orchestral conductors' baton movements. He also collaborated in groundbreaking networked musical performances, many of them international in scope. In these and other techno-musical projects he frequently collaborated with the eminent bassist Mark Dresser, and worked closely with his CalIT2 colleagues Todd Margolis and doctoral candidate Michelle Daniels. At the time of his death he was planning a new UCSD Music Department course and advanced production project with Dresser, Margolis, and Pulitzer prize-winning composer Roger Reynolds. Dresser and Reynolds plan to carry through with this project, building on technical and conceptual foundations laid by Nathan.

He served with distinction as chair of the AES 44th International Conference on audio networking held in 2011 and moderated panels and presentations at many professional meetings. He was in demand as a speaker and consultant, and traveled to Europe and around the U.S. to numerous conferences and conventions. In addition to his prodigious research career, he maintained a 12-year relationship with the San Diego symphony as a score reader and video director and taught courses in the music departments of USD and SDSU.

A man of no small vision, Nathan had repeatedly expressed a desire to someday stream the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympics (and other related cultural events) into cinema theaters around the world, in ultrahigh-definition video and 3D audio.

Of Nathan's research, Mark Dresser writes: "Thank you, Nathan Brock for your intelligence, wit, expertise, and the ability to create networks of people who not only believed in you, but to whom you served in the greater interest of new music and technologic evolution. Your impact was palpable and significant, your absence is even more so."

Jeremy Cooperstock, professor of electrical and computer engineering at McGill University, Montreal, writes: "I worked with Nathan on several projects and recall every interaction with him as a real pleasure. He was a delightful research collaborator, energetic, insightful, and perennially upbeat. I know that he will be missed dearly by all who knew him."

Peter Otto and Roger Reynolds