

of everyone on this train," Noe said.

For the last five years, he and the company have been exploring ways to use "binaural" technology to enhance the emotional resonance of different kinds of music. A binaural microphone captures sound in 360 degrees and allows for incredibly fine control of the listener's experience.

Stereo experiences capture and mix sound in terms of "left" and "right" ears — this is much more complex and extensive.

It is also comparable in some ways to Dolby Atmos surround sound technology, invented in 2012 for movie theaters, which also allows producers to control what direction sound comes from for a listener. This makes listening more "immersive" and lifelike with sound coming from all different directions.

This technology is seeing an enormous upsurge in usage by artists and on streaming sites, possibly indicating that Noe's insistence on using binaural technology may one day be validated.

For PNME listeners, the organization has staged several demonstrations of the technology's capabilities.

The quality is crystal clear, and a musician playing or singing a great distance away can sound as though they are whis-



Elizabeth Bloom

Kevin Noe is only the second artistic director in the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble's history.

pering right into a listener's ear. Not needing to project as loudly in a large theater has opened up new expressive potential in the music. It also eliminates the variable of

physical acoustics, meaning performances can maintain quality in any space.

"We had a lot of people who would put them on and take them off during our festival to compare," Noe said, adding that at least one person found the experience too isolating, despite the quality of the sound.

"Everyone, even the skeptics, agreed that the sound was better with them on."

In the years since it began experimenting, PNME has commissioned pieces of music specifically written to be performed with this technology, including "The Treachery of Sounds" by Steven Bryant, which also features choreography and dance. The work premiered in 2022 and is reprising this year.

Noe said that the performances were artistically successful and well received. However, "dismal" attendance last year has prompted him to reimagine the company's next steps.

This summer, PNME is recording several pieces of music to put out at a later date. Noe said he hopes that these projects will lead to future touring opportunities and engagements during the year.

On the change from a summer season to year-round programming, Noe said that rising costs at City Theatre are a factor. Diminishing foundation support is also a factor, as the vast majority of PNME's budget

comes from foundation funding.

The details are yet to be worked out, but moving forward, PNME will likely schedule a handful of performances during the year, some at donors houses and some in theaters.

"We continued to get feedback from foundations that we should be doing more stuff during the year to maintain a presence," Noe said. "So we're going to try it."

In the meantime, PNME's final summer schedule is as follows, with details available at pnme.org:

July 7-8: "Antares" by Carter Pan "Words of Love" by James Mobberly, "Night Music" by Thomas Albert

July 14-15: "Sparrows" by Joseph Scwantner, "Einstein on Mercer Street" by Kevin Puts

July 21-22: "The Treachery of Sounds" Steven Bryant, "Trust Falls" by Gilda Lyons

July 28: "Seven Pillars" by Andy Aki with guest artists Sandbox Percussion

Concerts take place at 8 p.m. at City Theatre Mainstage. Tickets are usually \$25.

Jeremy Reynolds: jreynolds@post-gazette.com. His work at the Post-Gazette is supported in part by a grant from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Getty Foundation and Rubin Institute.



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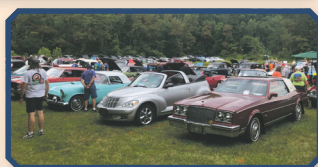
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