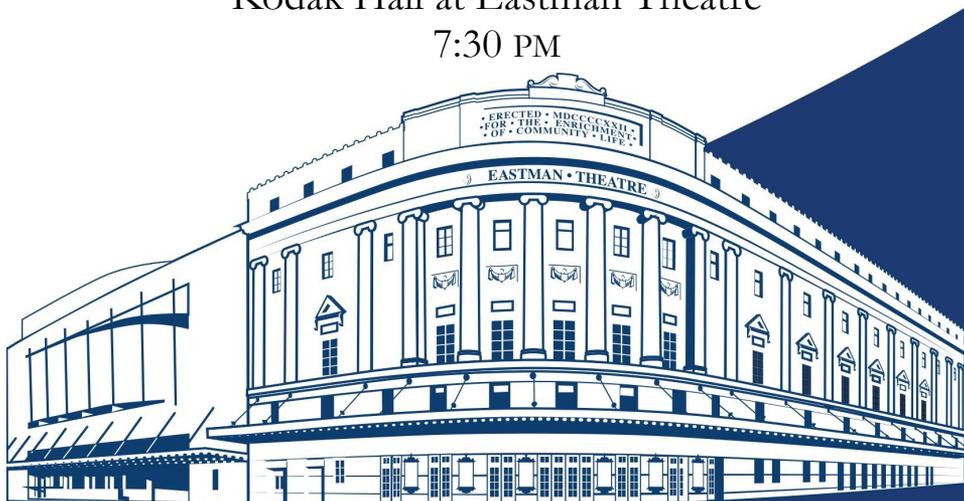


EASTMAN PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

PATTERNS & FORMS—THE MUSIC OF
ALEJANDRO VIÑAO

Tuesday, March 4, 2025
Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre
7:30 PM



EASTMAN
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

PROGRAM

A Spanish Groove from *Book of Grooves* (2011)

Alejandro Viñao
(b. 1951)

Estudios de Frontera (2004/2016)
II. of Melody & Pulse
I. Hommage to Nancarrow

Alejandro Viñao

Stonewave (1990)
I.
II.
III.

Rolf Wallin
(b. 1957)

INTERMISSION

Patterns & Forms (2024)
The Fabric of Pulse
Bells Keep Tolling
The Fabric of Form

Alejandro Viñao

New York Premiere

Samuel Leung, piano

PERSONNEL

EASTMAN PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Michael Burritt, director

Olly Bangia
Brandon Berlanga
Lucy Chugh
John Dawson
Sammy DeAngelis
Daniel Davis
Izaiah Gonzales
Aiden Hughes
Jake Kundu
Lexi Kunz
Ben Landon
Andrew Lauler
Fletcher Leonard
Cass Lo
Michael Lee-Smith
Remy Thomas
Seth Tupy
Irene Yang
Ruyi Yuan

Brian Stotz, percussion technician

PROGRAM NOTES

A Spanish Groove from *Book of Grooves* (2011) Alejandro Viñao

The 'groove' or 'feel' of a piece is understood to consist of a pattern or sequence that repeats periodically in such a way as to create in the listener the desire to move, or dance, or to foot-tap following the repeated rhythm. A groove is therefore a rhythm 'locked' into a pattern of repetition. To 'unlock' a groove would mean -to some extent- to threaten its very existence. This is precisely what happens in this piece. The grooves are presented at first in their simple 'locked' form, so that the listener may swing unequivocally with the initial grooves. But gradually these grooves are 'unlocked', that is to say, they are subjected to transformations that change the point at which they repeat. In this way the shape of each groove is changed. This involves a risk because the listener may stop feeling the 'desire to move' with the groove. If this were to happen, one could say that the groove has been 'killed'. My idea in *Book of Grooves* was to explore changes that would transform each groove without 'killing' it. It is a risky compositional strategy: new grooves must be created or 'cloned' from the original ones without disturbing the delicate balance that makes the music 'groove'. If the piece is successful the listener should be able to follow the process of 'unlocking' or changing of the original grooves into new ones, and experience this as a voyage of transformation. But unlike what happens with grooves in popular music, in *Book of Grooves* the voyager never returns to the port of departure. The process is not cyclical but developmental. And yet, while the music material is permanently transforming into something new, I wanted to make sure that the listener would never cease to 'swing' with a groove. This much I wanted to achieve.

— *Alejandro Viñao*

Estudios de Frontera (2004/2016) Alejandro Viñao

2nd movement: of Melody & Pulse

(this movement was added to the piece in 2016)

As the title suggests, this second slower movement is a melodic etude, but one where we perceive melodies and themes, slow and fast, entwined or laced in layers of pulse. In a poetic sense, I would like to think that the recurring melodies are progressively heard through 'layers of time'.

The movement opens with a melodic phrase in its simplest form. At this point we hear a slow tune and we barely think about time and pulse

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because of the simplicity and bareness of the context. As the movement progresses, the context changes and the initial melody is presented in various polyphonic incarnations, each layer suggesting a different pulse, and to that extent too, a different time.

In this way, what changes in this melodic etude as the music unfolds is not only the pitch and phrasing that give the melodies their identity, but the complexity of the context in which we hear them.

1st Movement: Homage to Nancarrow

The concept and its realization in performance

As the title suggests the central idea of this movement concerns multiple simultaneous times or rather the perceptual illusion of multiple simultaneous times or tempi. The players' main task is to convey this illusion as convincingly as possible. I have avoided irrational rhythms and tried to create this illusion using only conventional notation. I have avoided rhythms that human performers cannot play in synchronicity with each other. I have also tried, as much as possible and throughout long passages, to maintain a common rhythmic unit - e.g. the 16th note - so that if the complex accents, changing time signatures and polyrhythms make synchronicity difficult, at least the players share as much as possible a common rhythmic unit. This common unit should keep them together and guide them towards the pivotal points and dramatic nodes where they often converge.

It is worth describing in some detail the 'trick' I used to simulate different tempi and acceleration or deceleration of melodic phrases. These melodic lines (mostly ascending or descending scales with occasional melismatic ornaments) often come out of a continuous stream of 16th notes or some other basic unit, as mentioned earlier. To bring out these melodic lines within one instrument I have used accents and differences in register (e.g. mba. 1, bar 36 to 38, bar 44, bar 46 to 49; mba.2, bar 38 to 47; mba1 + vib, bars 71/72 etc) so that the melodic line or scale that simulates the process of speeding or slowing down is both higher or lower in pitch and louder in volume than the rest of the notes played by a given instrument. One of the difficult tasks of the player is to make sure that in the process of bringing out these line, the evenness of the underlying rhythmic unit (in the above examples the 16th note) is never compromised so that all

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the different instruments may remain vertically aligned. (The only exception to this rule is in the relation between the congas and gran cassa, where -in some places- the precise hocketing between the two instruments is more important than their individual rhythmic accuracy with the rest of the ensemble.)

Dynamic markings and articulations for the marimbas and vibraphone must be understood -in general- in a thematic/melodic sense (to bring out the polyphony of the various lines/scales) more than as rhythmic syncopations in themselves.

A similar polyrhythmic/melodic compositional technique as I used in this movement may be found in the piano music of Chopin and Ligeti. The main difference is that in my piece the various melodic lines do not only seem to be moving at different speeds but often also seem to be accelerating and decelerating against each other or against some underlying overall pulse. This is an aspect of the piece that the players need to be concerned with as a matter of priority.

— *Alejandro Viñao*

Stonewave (1990)

Rolf Wallin

The last few years I have become increasingly involved in some peculiar mathematical formulas called “fractals.” These formulas, used in the fast-growing field of chaos theory, are relatively simple, but they generate fascinating and surprisingly organic patterns when shown graphically on a computer screen, or played as music. One should think that such a mathematical approach would lead to sterile and “theoretical” music. The sound world of *Stonewave*, however, is not one you would associate with math books. The steady, insistent pulse and the use of sequences put squarely up against each other or divided by long rests suggest an invisible ritual. A ritual for what? Well then, let it be a ritual for the exorcism of some evil spirits which now ride our part of the world under the name of Liberalism, making people the servants of the market forces instead of vice versa. *Stonewave* is therefore an incantation, as it seems that only divine forces can save European culture from a political system that proclaims the jungle law as the guiding principle in social and cultural life.

— *Rolf Wallin*

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Patterns & Forms (2024)

Alejandro Viñao

I. “The Fabric of Pulse” (La Trama del Pulso)

The first movement starts with a simple pulse and melodic fragments which combine together into a basic structure. As the piece progresses, the various instruments which played the initial pulse become decoupled from each other unfolding their own pulses. In this way, a polyphony of pulses is created which come in and out of phase with each other. The dramatic structure of this movement is governed by this process where moments of greater tension result from the perception of various pulses conflicting with each other and the resolution of this tension is perceived to take place when these pulses merge back together into the initial simple pulse.

II. “Bells Keep Tolling” (Las Campanas siguen Doblando)

At the beginning of this movement, the simple slow repeated tolling of bells establishes an initial pattern. As the music unfolds, this pattern 'tolls' in various ways, faster or slower, higher or lower in pitch, with greater or lesser intensity and orchestrated in various ways. As melodies appear, they combine and merge with this always changing pattern which nonetheless 'keeps tolling' through the movement.

“Bells Keep Tolling” is loosely based on the middle movement (“Bells of Time”) of an earlier piece of mine titled “Relative Riff”.

III. “The Fabric of Form” (La Trama de la Forma)

In this movement I explored a process that the composer György Ligeti called 'micro-polyphony' which features in some of his works from the 1960's such as *Atmospheres* and *Lontano*. These works have a beautiful static quality. I wanted to take Ligeti's micro-polyphony in a different direction. This involved transforming the static nature of the micro-polyphonic texture into rhythmic patterns that eventually 'groove' in a clear and recognisable form. I wanted the music in this movement to evolve from a sound world that is texture-like into a sound world of rhythms that are pulsed, immediate and dance-like. And I wanted this process to happen repeatedly throughout the movement, each time unfolding 'the fabric of form' in a different way. The movement starts with apparently formless, dark or obscure patterns, which over a period of time, reconfigure themselves from within to become rhythms familiar to us for having the dance-like quality of popular music. The interest here lies more in the

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process of transformation than in the departure or arrival points.

Harmonically, this process moves from initial clusters of different intervallic widths (a third, a fourth or a fifth) into modes that are derived or 'carved out' from the notes of the clusters and have a scale like structure. This harmonic transformation accompanies a similar rhythmic transformation resulting in a fluid and integrated discourse which describes a voyage from apparent chaos to a well defined rhythmic form.

— *Alejandro Viñao*

MEET THE COMPOSER

Alejandro Viñao studied composition with the Russian composer Jacobo Ficher in Buenos Aires. In 1975 he moved to Britain where he continued his studies at the Royal College of Music and the City University in London. He has been resident in Britain since then. In 1988 he was awarded a PhD. D. in composition at the City University.



Viñao has received a number of international prizes and awards including the 'Golden Nica' Prix Ars Electronica, 1st Prize at The International Rostrum at the Unesco World Music Council and many others. Viñao's music has been played and broadcast world-wide and has been featured in international festivals such as the Tanglewood Festival, the Warsaw Autumn Festival and the London PROMS. His work has been presented in 'portrait concerts' in Japan, the USA and Europe and his compositions has been the subject of research in universities in Europe and the USA. He has received commissions from various performing groups and institutions around the world such as I.R.C.A.M, in France, MIT in the USA and the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Group du Recherche Musical at Radio France. His opera *Rashomon* was commissioned by ZKM for the opening of their new building in Karlsruhe, Germany. *Rashomon* was later produced in Paris, London and Sweden.

Viñao has worked at IRCAM in France at regular intervals and has been composer in residence joining the faculty at M.I.T., Yale University, Cambridge University and other institutions.

Viñao has written music for a wide range of musical genres including opera, music-theatre, choral, orchestral and electro-acoustic compositions. He has created multimedia works, composed music for some 20 films and produced several radio programmes for the BBC. His works have been played by the English Chamber Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra the Ensemble Intercontemporain, the London Sinfonietta, the Ensemble Modern and many other international ensembles.

His music is characterized by the use of pulsed rhythmic structures to create large scale form, and by a melodic writing which -as in the case of much non-European music- develops through rhythm rather than harmony.

MEET THE COMPOSER

In recent years Viñao has moved in a new direction composing vocal works such as *The Baghdad Monologue*, *Greed*, *Fear & Poems & Prayers* which focus on contemporary social and political issues. Another strand of Viñao's output consists of a wide range of percussion works which have become standard repertoire.

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the "Great Hill People" and "Keepers of the Western Door" of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.

UPCOMING EASTMAN SERIES CONCERTS

Tickets for all series concerts can be purchased at EastmanTheatre.org

EASTMAN PIANO SERIES

Haochen Zhang

Kilbourn Hall

Thursday, March 6, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Since his gold medal win at the Thirteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2009, Haochen Zhang has captivated audiences in the United States, Europe, and Asia with a unique combination of deep musical sensitivity, fearless imagination, and spectacular virtuosity. In 2017, Haochen received the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, which recognizes talented musicians with the potential for a major career in music.

KODAK HALL SERIES

Trey Anastasio

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre

Wednesday, March 12, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Over the past four decades, composer/guitarist/vocalist Trey Anastasio has forged a singular, multi-faceted career, winning acclaim and garnering accolades across genres and disciplines including rock, classical, musical theatre, and more. He is a founding member of Phish, one of today's most successful and innovative rock bands.

UPCOMING STUDENT ENSEMBLE CONCERTS

All student performances are free unless otherwise noted.

Collegium Musicum

Kilbourn Hall

Tuesday, March 4, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Composers Concert

Hatch Recital Hall

Tuesday, March 4, 2025 at 7:30 PM



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