

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

CHAMBER
PERCUSSION
ENSEMBLE

Thursday, March 23, 2023
Kilbourn Hall
3:00 PM



EASTMAN
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY *of* ROCHESTER

PROGRAM

Square and Round (1985)

Per Nøgård
(b. 1932)

Aiden Hughes, Ben Landon, Izaiah Gonzales,
Cass Lo, Fletcher Leonard & Ruyi Yuan

White Ranger (2019)

Andrea Venet
(b. 1983)

Fletcher Leonard, Daniel Davis, Seth Tupy,
Ruyi Yuan & Izaiah Gonzales

Gravity (2013)

Marc Mellits
(b. 1966)

Lucy Chugh, Izaiah Gonzales, Aiden Hughes,
Lexi Kunz & Ben Landon

**Aurora borealis for Marimba
and Percussion Ensemble** (1997)

John Thrower
(b. 1951)

Cass Lo & Ruyi Yuan, marimba
Aiden Hughes, Lexi Kunz & Lucy Chugh, percussion

Unseen Child (2002)

Bob Becker
(b. 1947)

Daniel Davis, Lucy Chugh,
Lexi Kunz, Seth Tupy & Ben Landon

spero (2019)

Michael Burritt
(b. 1962)

Seth Tupy, Cass Lo, Fletcher Leonard,
Daniel Davis & Emma Gierszal

PROGRAM NOTES

Square and Round (1985)

Per Nøgård

Composed for the Kroumata Ensemble, *Square and Round* is a set of two dances that refers to the Square Dance and the dance-like Round, or Rondo. These movements also somewhat symbolize masculinity and femininity and the principles of yin and yang. The first short dance Square features vivacious and lively percussion with mallet keyboards which start in unison and eventually mirror each other in pitch for a majority of the movement.

After a slow developing introduction, the second dance Round displays a rhythmic interlocking pattern which creates an intense hocketing effect between the two sides of the ensemble, before reaching a cadenza-like duet between the vibraphone and marimba, which exemplifies a Shepard tone-like illusion but with rhythm rather than pitch. After a slow build to the hocketing statement heard near the beginning, the movement ends in palindromic fashion, slowly collapsing into a single pitch.

White Ranger (2019)

White Ranger was written for the first commissioning cycle of The Green Vibes Project, started by Chase and Christine Banks in 2018. The Green Vibes Project inspires environmental awareness, discussion, education, and community through the performance and commissioning of new music. The piece is written for solo vibraphone and percussion quartet. The percussion parts are scored for recycled materials which include glass bottles, scrap metal, brake drums, trash cans, an empty beer keg, and a brand new instrument I have created for this piece named the 'Lagerine'. Finding sounds and assembling the necessary instrumentation should provide a creative and fun project for performers.

With unique and unconventional sounds, my goal was to put focus on rhythm and timbre. I wanted to explore and expand upon the timbral possibilities of the vibraphone itself, while blending it with the unique and varied instrumentation scored for the ensemble. I own a green Omega vibraphone made by Malletech, affectionately named 'The Green Ranger', which also happens to be the title of the first vibraphone + percussion quartet I wrote in 2018. Chase Banks is also the proud owner of a green vibraphone of the same kind, which happens to be my instrument's green counterpart. As a child who grew up in the 90's with the popular kid's show, the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers, and in the spirit of this "green" project, I thought the title of 'White Ranger' was a fun nod to this project and element Chase and I share.

—Andrea Venet

PROGRAM NOTES

Gravity (2013)

Marc Mellits

Gravity was commissioned by a consortium led by Thad Anderson. First premiered in 2013 in Lyon, France, it has since been performed by many high profile percussion ensembles in the United States. There are two versions of the work; a quartet and quintet, which adds an optional bass marimba part that fills out the texture even further. This exciting work by Marc Mellits gained its abstract title after Mellits realized the piece created a sense of depth and attraction to a center point. He explains how the homorhythmic textures and differing speeds produce a “gravitational pull in the music”, which can be heard through metric modulation, accelerandos, and *subito* tempo changes.

Aurora borealis (1997)

John Thrower

The Aurora borealis is commonly known as 'the northern lights' and is the phenomena of the reflection of sunlight on atmospheric dust particles generally seen in the dark evening hours in countries of the upper northern hemisphere. I can remember very much the summer evenings of my youth spent in Canada, often laying on my back in the grass watching the incredible panorama of the Aurora borealis unfolding before my eyes. Often it seemed like a kaleidoscope of colours and at other times it reached cataclysmic proportions as if a giant paintbrush was swathing through the heavens. The first part of this piece is entitled "Starry night". The viewer sees the stars appearing in pinpoints one by one under a carpet of improvised percussion which build to a quick climax in the introduction making way for the main theme, a pop-jazz groove of 178 beats per minute. Formally very simple, the theme is repeated, building, always expanding - only interrupted by the short appearance of a second theme and then returning again to build to a dramatic closing.

The Marimba starts the second part named "Light waves" - a slow moving, romantic, ballad, quasi improvised theme which is underlined by expanding and contracting dynamic waves in the percussion. This moves immediately to part three entitled "Aurora's dance" which has an harmonic "idee fixe" underlying the whole movement except for the closing. Here the Marimba starts with a playful dance-like theme but soon begins to 'improvise' variations on the underlying harmonic pattern. Building to virtuoso proportions, the piece then takes a sudden turn leaving the harmonic pattern abruptly to continue repeating a new pattern 'molt marcato marziale con ritmo' (very accented in a rhythmical war-like style). It is as if Aurora, the goddess of light, has turned into Mars, the god of war - changing to an intense, war-like state of awareness - the percussion expanding fiercely to the finish, but then suddenly returning - fading - seemingly falling away, dispersing quickly into nothingness as if the first rays of morning sunrise have started to appear on the horizon, bidding Aurora - to take her leave.

—John Thrower

PROGRAM NOTES

Unseen Child (2002)

Bob Becker

In this piece Takemitsu's original melody has been very freely altered, particularly in its rhythm. The approach to harmony is also completely divorced from the pop-style chord progressions of the original song and it's rigorously based on a system of four non-transposable nine tone scales that I have been using in my own compositions for the past ten years. The piece, written in March 2002, is scored for glockenspiel, songbells, vibraphone, marimba, and suspended cymbals. Takemitsu's Mienai Kodomo (*Unseen Child*) was the theme song for the 1963 Iwanami film Kanogo to Kare (she and he), directed by Susumu Hani. The lyrics to the original song are by Shuntaro Tanikawa, here translated into English by Ella Louise Rutledge and Kristi Kaldro.

*Unseen, a little child, someone's child,
Hidden within, not yet born,
Laughing in the morning, laughing in the sun, When
morning light arrives outside the window,
Unseen, a tiny walnut in its shell,
Green like the spring, not yet ripe,
Trembling as the night falls, trembling in the woods,
When dark if night arrives, deep in the forest,
Unseen, a little child, my own child,
Who no longer will be born,
Singing in the morning, singing in the dawn,
When morning light arrives, she flies across the sky.*

spero (2019)

Michael Burritt

spero means hope in latin and comes from the phrase, "dum spiro, spero" - when I breathe, I hope. During my travels this past summer while writing this piece, I kept reflecting on the need for hope. It also struck me that when I do think of hope, I think about my students and young people everywhere who are the hope for the future of music, and so much more. I have wanted for some time to write a piece for solo drum and chamber ensemble. *spero* features muted tenor drum and snare drum in addition to cajon. I am a drummer first, and snare drumming in particular is absolutely the foundation of my performing and teaching. The work is a nod to one of my favorite pieces in the repertoire, *Mudra*, by Eastman graduate and percussion legend Bob Becker. *spero* is dedicated to Liz and Stephen Biggar for their kindness and enthusiasm for the arts. The work received its premier on September 27, 2019 in Kilbourn Hall at the Eastman School of Music.

—Michael Burritt

UPCOMING EVENTS AT EASTMAN

Saturday, April 1, 2023
Eastman Virtuosi
Kilbourn Hall, 7:30 PM
Tickets Available at EastmanTheatre.org

Monday, April 3, 2023
Chamber Jazz Ensemble
Kilbourn Hall, 7:30 PM
Free Admission

Tuesday, April 4, 2023
Eastman Saxophone Project
Kilbourn Hall, 7:30 PM
Free Admission

Wednesday, April 5, 2023
Eastman Philharmonia
Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre, 7:30 PM
Free Admission

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