

EASTMAN PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

MICHAEL BURRITT, DIRECTOR

Tuesday, November 4, 2025

Kilbourn Hall

7:30 PM



University
of Rochester
Eastman School of Music

PROGRAM

Okho (1989)

Iannis Xenakis
(1922-2001)

vv (2015, rev. 2018)

Juri Seo
(b. 1981)

Percussion Quartet (2019)
I.

Danny Elfman
(b. 1953)

Fēfē (2023)
Bush Taxi
Pas à pas
Tarpaga's Four in Three
Dusty Road to Dolo

Olivier Tarpaga
(b. 1983)

INTERMISSION

Pléiades (1979)
II. Métaux
IV. Peaux

Iannis Xenakis

José/BeFORe JOHN⁵ (2000)

Aurél Holló
(b. 1966)

PERSONNEL

Eastman Percussion Ensemble

Michael Burritt, director

Ryan Cozzolino
Kai Gray
Liz Morad
Grace Tighe
Olly Bangia
Lucy Chugh
Izaiah Gonzales
Aiden Hughes
Lexi Kunz
Ben Landon
John Dawson
Sammy DeAngelis
Jake Kundu
Makena Mailer
Michael Lee Smith
Remy Thomas

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Okho (1989)

Iannis Xenakis

Composed on the occasion of the bicentenary of the French Revolution, *Okho* is composed for three musicians playing djembe and was premiered at the Festival d'Automne in Paris on October 20, 1989. Xenakis' encounter with the West African djembe took place when he came to the studio of the trio Le Cercle, to which this piece is dedicated. We find in *Okho* a rare balance between the visceral and the cerebral, creating a kind of tribal modernism. The work is composed of eight sections containing extremely restricted rhythmic material, recombined in solos, duets and trios.

— *Percussion des Strasbourg*

vv (2015, rev. 2018)

Juri Seo

My primary inspiration for *vv* was the instrument itself, particularly its dark, metallic sound with prolonged resonance. For the opening, I crafted harmonies that evolve during decay by selectively removing individual notes. The musicians use their fingers and mallets to dampen the notes, intimately feeling the vibrations as they fade away. This introduction sets the stage for a playful theme, which leads to an unconventional sonata form where the themes move toward dissolution rather than consolidation. Beyond the music itself, I was interested in how four percussionists interact to collectively execute complex musical gestures. It is as if the mallets are the fingers of a single person.

— *Juri Seo*

Percussion Quartet (2019)

Danny Elfman

When I first got the call from Philip Glass inquiring about my interest in writing a new percussion quartet to play alongside his own *Perpetuum* (in the Days and Nights Festival in Big Sur, California) I had to ponder over it for about 1.3 seconds before agreeing.

Thus began the exciting process of writing my first percussion quartet. One initial challenge was trying to write for a collective group of instruments with as much compatibility with *Perpetuum* as possible to make the live performance simpler.

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Third Coast Percussion was to be performing the piece and we got in touch before I started writing to help work out the logistical side, which can get extremely complicated when you have four musicians constantly switching between many instruments. It becomes, by its very nature, a tightly choreographed performance.

As I wrote I was happy to tap into my many early percussion influences. As I had quite a bit of experience with both West African balafons (similar to a marimba) and Indonesian gamelan. (the metal orchestras of that region) you may notice a lot of those inspirations. The thing that both West African and Indonesian have in common is the five-note pentatonic scale which I use quite a bit. And the interlocking rhythms of the gamelan are also referred to throughout the movements.

When I was young and just getting interested in music in the 70's I was exposed to quite a bit of Steve Reich, Terry Riley, Lou Harrison and, of course, Mr. Glass, as well as the extremely inventive and eccentric Harry Partch. Echoes of their influences surface from time to time throughout the course of the work.

When it comes down to it I am, at heart, attached to melody, or the idea of melody, so I did try and find motifs and melodies to use throughout each movement as well. This was always in the back of my mind while I wrote. And of course, as with my earlier Piano Quartet, I constantly wished I had *just one or two more players...* but that's the beauty of quartets, and the challenge of working with set limitations.

However, in the end I tried to keep it fun and lively and to also find some balance with softer moments. It was a wonderful experience and I hope this is only the first of several attempts at writing a percussion quartet.

— Danny Elfman

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Fèfè (2023)

Olivier Tarpaga

Bush Taxi: The dust, the potholes, the heat, the super old green Mercedes with a hole in the bottom, the nine passengers in a four-seater vehicle.

Pas à Pas: This song was composed in homage to my multiple childhood friends who have lost their lives in the battlefield against Jihadists in the north of Burkina Faso and in the Sahel region.

Tarpaga's Four in Three: This is my contemporary offering of Koreduga played on modern drums and wood. This complex rhythm derived from the Koreduga rhythm is my favorite triplet from the Mandingo empire.

Dusty Road to Dolo: The sound of the Lobi and Djan's balafon, my grandmother's guinea fowls climbing the baobab tree, the smell of boiling millet beer, the rooster crowing at 5 AM. The melody of this song is inspired by my childhood trips to the small village of Dolo in the west of Burkina Faso with Jeanne, my dear mother.

— Olivier Tarpaga

Pléiades

Iannis Xenakis

Pléiades, one of the most beautiful pieces written by Iannis Xenakis. The richness of the timbres, the freedom and the coherence of the composition make this work a unique rhythmic adventure.

The Pleiades usually evoke the cluster of sparkling stars in the right shoulder of the Taurus constellation. In the northern hemisphere, the Pleiades are only visible in winter. A telescope allows us to observe dozens of stars, of which only six are visible to the naked eye, as well as a light milky fog in the same area. According to Greek mythology, this cluster of stars represents the seven sisters or Pleiades, servants of Artemis, Goddess of the Moon. One of the sisters, Electra, is said to have disappeared as a comet, eaten away with grief after the siege and destruction of the city of Troy built by her son Dardanus, victim of the famous Trojan Horse ploy. The whiteness and fog in which the Pleiades appear would be the result of the tears shed by the six sisters abandoned by Electra. Thus, the title Pléiades refers to the six members of the Percussions de Strasbourg. But for Xenakis, the reference to the multiplicity of existence seems more important.

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The very essence of this piece rests on the fact that it is not limited to a simple definition. The instruments used range from keyboards (vibraphone and marimba), to various percussion instruments and the «sixxen» – a percussion instrument specially created for this composition.

The sixxen is a unique instrument which represents in itself all the idea of Xenakis' music. It is a huge contribution to modern percussion and to musical creation in the Twentieth Century, because it first places the percussionist into the position of sound designer, producer of his own concept and sound material.

The piece is divided into four parts whose titles refer to the materials used to make the instruments and the sounds they produce: «Mélanges» performed simultaneously by various percussion instruments, then «Métaux», «Claviers» and «Peaux». Listening to the sixxen in «Métaux», one immediately thinks of the gamelan of Indonesia, especially those from Bali, the instruments used in festive music in Japan, the chimes of churches in the Mediterranean basin and the cowbells of the Alps. The richness of timbre of the sixxen is in a way an expression of the different types of life led by man, of which metals are an integral part.

While giving absolute freedom to the concept of a multiplicity of existence, Xenakis has been able to impose a rule of diversity and unity in the temporal structure of his research towards the creation of a single composition.

— *Percussion des Strasbourg*

José/BeFOrE JOHN⁵ (2000)

Aurél Holló

The basic idea of my piece José was born when I was listening to the recording Oriental Bass by the ethnic contrabass-player Renaud Garcia-Fons. I wondered many times whether it would be possible to present his fundamentally Spanish style with it's Arabic and Gypsy effects in an original percussion composition instead of a simple adaptation. My answer to this question is "José."

Besides Garcia-Fons's recording I also used a theme by Paco de Lucia in this composition. Marimba has the lead through in this short character

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piece almost exclusively: two players standing face to face play especially virtuoso complementary motives. Most of these figures are based on the traditional xylophone music of Africa. The players use techniques of amadinda and akadinda (traditional percussion instruments from Uganda) yet the scale they cover is typically flamenco-like at the same time. In the end these two players sound a real guitar as well, with the same technique. This rhythmical-melodic source is enriched by the playing of two other musicians who create many interesting and exciting sounds for example with the Spanish cajon or the favourite instrument of Gypsy folk music, the simple sheet-iron can and many more.

I dedicate this piece of mine to Josep Vicent, former artistic leader of Amsterdam Percussion Group.

— Aurél Holló

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 PRESENTS CONCERTS

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

EASTMAN PRESENTS - RANLET SERIES

Zemlinsky Quartet

Sunday, November 9, 2025 at 3:00 PM

Kilbourn Hall

Founded in 1994 while the members were still students, the Zemlinsky Quartet has become a much lauded example of the Czech string quartet tradition. The Zemlinsky Quartet won the First Grand Prize at the Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition in 2010, and has been awarded top prizes at the Banff International String Quartet Competition, Prague Spring International Music Competition, and London International String Quartet Competition where it also received the Audience Prize.

FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

David Bowlin, violin and Tony Cho, piano

Tuesday, November 18, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Hatch Recital Hall

UPCOMING EASTMAN ENSEMBLE CONCERTS

All student performances are free unless otherwise noted.

Eastman Wind Ensemble

Wednesday, November 5, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre

Horn Choir

Thursday, November 6, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Kilbourn Hall

Eastman Philharmonia

Friday, November 7, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre



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