



Eastman Percussion Ensemble

Michael Burritt, Director

Percussive Arts Society International Convention

Friday, November 11, 2022; 2:00 PM
Sagamore Ballroom, Indianapolis Convention Center

Program

Derivative (2020)

Jlin

PASIC Premiere

(b. 1987)

Passage to an Uncharted World (2022)

Austin Keck

PASIC Premiere

(b. 2000)

The Inexorable Motion of Time (2022)

Billy Childs

PASIC Premiere

(b. 1957)

Blue Soul (2022)

Michael Burritt

PASIC Premiere

(b. 1962)

Peaux (1978)

Iannis Xenakis

(1922 - 2001)

Program Notes

Derivative (2022) Jlin

Derivative by Indiana composer and producer Jlin is part of her seven-movement work *Perspective*, written for Third Coast Percussion through a highly collaborative process. Jlin visited TCP at their studio in Chicago multiple times to discuss their musical inspirations and new possibilities, and to explore and sample instruments from TCP's vast collection of percussion sounds. She then created the first version of each of the work's seven movements in FL Studio (a Digital Audio Workstation) using these samples and other sounds from her own library. The members of Third Coast Percussion then set about determining how to realize these pieces in live performance. *Perspective* is a reference to this unique collaborative process; the same music, interpreted by two different artists and their different modes of expression.

Perspective by Jlin was commissioned for Third Coast Percussion by the Boulanger Initiative, Carnegie Hall, the Lester & Hope Abelson Fund for the Performing Arts at the Chicago Community Foundation, the DEW Foundation, and Third Coast Percussion's New Works Fund.

Passage to an Uncharted World (2022) Austin Keck

Passage to an Uncharted World is a work for six percussionists and piano. As the title suggests, the piece is about an exploration and journey into a world unexplored and never before seen. While this imagery serves as the narrative for the piece, the very simple idea presented in the opening is constantly manipulated and shaped into something new. Each new idea presented represents a discovery, found both in the literal and figurative sense. Throughout the piece each section transitions seamlessly into the next, so the listener is able to follow the story effortlessly. At the end the audience is presented again with the opening theme, in essence transporting them back to the familiar world from which they came.

— Austin Keck

Program Notes

The Inexorable Motion of Time (2022) Billy Childs

The Inexorable Motion of Time was an interesting and fulfilling project. I conceived it as a percussion ensemble piece with a featured part for the piano. I sought to illustrate the mercurial and elusive nature of the passage of time, and our relation to it. While the architecture of the piece, in retrospect, can be loosely analyzed as an arch form, my actual process of composing the piece was organic in that my sense of structure was guided exclusively by the feel for a logical continuum. This is pretty much how I compose music these days.

The main rhythmic figure in the work is based off of a rather simple pattern inspired by the Tala system of composition in Indian Carnatic music. In this particular fixed time cycle, there are eight beats then a rest, then seven/ rest, six/rest, five/rest, and so on down to one. Since the units of beats and rests are 16th notes, the entire cycle equals two measures of 4/4 and a measure of 3/4. This theme is first introduced by the marimba in the opening statement (F, Bb, C, and Eb). When the piano enters a few measures later, it plays the Carnatic based pattern in retrograde - one beat then a rest, two beats/rest, and so on up to eight. This first section is marked *allegro* at MM 120. The next section features pointillistic interplay between the percussionists with the piano acting as an *obbligato*, doubling the notes and rhythms of the various percussion figures.

We then arrive at the middle section, which is a slow, lyrical dance between vibraphone, marimba, and piano. This section was inspired by (and dedicated to) my father, who used to absolutely love the third-stream and Baroque influenced music of the Modern Jazz Quartet, with the ingenious arrangements and compositions of John Lewis. After the timpani, bell tree, mark tree, and snare drum join in, a dirge-like march ensues followed by rapid-fire pronouncements from the xylophone.

The last section starts with a three-voiced fugue, beginning with the subject being stated in the tom-toms, followed by the snare drum, and concluding with the marimbas. Then a return to the pointillistic section follows, only this time slightly truncated and using different material. What comes next is a recapitulation of the opening passage, concluding with the Carnatic rhythmic figure being played in unison by most of the ensemble, punctuated rhythmically by the brake drums and the tom-toms.

I want to thank Michael Burritt for commissioning this composition. I also want to thank the Eastman Percussion Ensemble for premiering it. The piece was composed between November 2021 and January 2022.

— Billy Childs

Program Notes

Blue Soul (2022) Michael Burritt

Blue Soul is the most recent work in my series of “blue” pieces. It was commissioned by Edition Svitzer in collaboration with Daniel Berg, The Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Sweden, and the Academy of Music and Drama in Gothenburg, Sweden. The Quintet features 2 vibraphones and two marimbas with rhythmic and timbral reinforcement in the fifth part, primarily comprised of skinned membranes and wooden sounds.

When I think of a blue soul, I don't think of sadness, as might be associated with such a title. It's more of a reflective and present soul, appreciative and fully immersed in the world and people in their lives. Blue is my favorite color and one that reminds me of hope and good things.

Blue Soul is in memory of Dex, my dog and best buddy. I'll miss you on my walks, but I'll never forget you pal.

— Michael Burritt

Peaux (1978) Iannis Xenakis

Peaux (1978) is one of four movements from Xenakis's second and seminal work for percussion ensemble, *Pleiades*, the first being *Persephassa* (1969). It was commissioned and premiered by Les Percussions de Strasbourg at the Opera du Rhin in May 1979. Like Xenakis's solo piece *Psappha*, the piece is scored for instrument groups consisting of different sonorities. *Pleiades*'s four movements are *Claviers* (keyboards), *Peaux* (skins), *Metaux* (metals) and *Mélanges* (Mixtures). *Peaux*, is scored for 12 bongos, six tumbas, 18 tom-toms, six timpani and two bass drums evenly dispersed to each player.

Peaux, is the most musically forward and viscerally exciting of the four movements. The structure consists of four main sections. The first is a series of brief tutti statements interspersed between various duo pairings of the six players. The tension of the first section is momentarily released with a large unison that is immediately interrupted. The second section introduces a canonic process where each player enters separately with varied manipulations of the motive creating a dense textural grid in 32nd notes. The canon releases into a driving tutti comprised of thirty-second notes on the bongos and augmented statements of the motive powerfully scored in the lower membranes. The third section is built in two opposing trios of polyrhythmic sound clouds that ultimately resolve with a dispersing of the texture into large tutti attacks setting up the final section. The closing section of the movement exploits the full range of each player's instrumentation, featuring glissandi on the timpani and powerful ascending and descending scales of the drums from the highest bongo down to the extreme lowest pitch of the timpani. The final statement is a brilliantly clear voice of unison sixteenth notes on the tumbas that descends to *niente*.

“The sole source of this polyrhythmic composition is the idea of periodicity, repetition, duplication, faithful, pseudo-faithful, unfaithful copy.”

— Iannis Xenakis

Eastman Percussion Ensemble

Michael Burritt - Director
Brian Stotz - Percussion Technician

Personnel:

Ben Blaesing
Sammy DeAngelis
Kana Funayama
Emma Gierszal
Ethan Hall
Justin Lamb
Kevin Luo
Liam McManus
Sean McWilliams
Rachel Richards
Remy Thomas
David Wang
Anders Wong
Irene Yang

Eastman Percussion Faculty

Michael Burritt - Professor of Percussion and Department Head

Adjunct Faculty:

Mark Hodges - Percussion - Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra
Charles Ross - Timpani - Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra
Shane Shanahan - World Percussion - Silk Road Ensemble
Rich Thompson - Drum Set - ESM Jazz Studies

Biography

The Eastman Percussion Ensemble, under the direction of Michael Burritt, is a three-time winner of the Percussive Arts Society International Percussion Ensemble Competition and has performed at the international convention as a result in the 2013, 2017, and 2022. The group was also the featured ensemble at the 2009 Paris Conservatory International Percussion Festival, made its Kennedy Center debut in 2012, and has performed at numerous local festivals. The ensemble has commissioned and premiered works by Alejandro Viñao and John Psathas and this past spring gave the world premieres of works by Grammy Award winning jazz pianist and composer Billy Childs and the Pulitzer Prize winning composer Joseph Schwanter in March 2022. The ensemble is the primary chamber experience for percussionists studying at the Eastman school and represents the upperclassman and graduate students in the studio.

This year the ensemble will release its first recording, *The Works of Alejandro Viñao*, in collaboration with the Grammy award-winning ensemble Third Coast Percussion.



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