

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

**CHAMBER  
PERCUSSION  
ENSEMBLE**

Michael Burritt, director

*Coaches*

Chris Amick

Justin Lamb

Brant Blackard

Youngkyoung Lee

Andrew Bockman

William Newton

Emma Gierszal

Tuesday, March 23, 2021  
Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre (livestream)  
7:30 PM



**EASTMAN**  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC  

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UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

## PROGRAM

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**Gutterflys** (2019) JaRon Brown  
(b. 1990)

**Changing Tensions** (1939) Franziska Boas  
Moderately Fast (1902-1988)  
Slow

**Second Construction** (1940) John Cage  
(1912-1992)

**Pavane pour une infante défunte** Maurice Ravel  
(1875-1937)  
arr. Andrew Bockman

**Springs** (2016) Paul Lansky  
(b. 1944)

**Reflections** (1985) Ross Edwards  
(b. 1943)

**Flux Four** (2021)\* Justin Lamb  
(b. 1996)

\*World Premiere

# PERSONNEL

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Michael Burritt, director

## CHAMBER PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Ben Blaesing

Liam McManus

Rachel Richards

David Wang

Remy Thomas

Owen Wetterhan

## COACHES

Chris Amick

Brant Blackard

Andrew Bockman

Emma Gierszal

Justin Lamb

YoungKyoung Lee

William Newton

## PROGRAM NOTES

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### Changing Tensions

Franziska Boas

On July 27, 1939 the Cage Percussion Players presented a concert at Mills College entitled, *Modern American Percussion Music*, which included Boas' *Changing Tensions*, alongside works by Johanna Beyer, John Cage, Lou Harrison, and William Russell. It is surmised that *Changing Tensions* was first notated as a fixed composition by Boas for this concert with the Cage Percussion Players. Boas' daughter, Gertrud Michelson, wrote to the author: "Franziska's music was really meant to be improvised with and could go on and on, it wasn't completely written out." This is supported by the fact that Boas' other eight titled percussion works all exist as incomplete sketches, suggesting that each is a set of motives to launch an improvisation in a certain direction with certain instruments.

Boas developed a unique improvisation-based dance style and pedagogy influenced by non-European cultures. Percussion playing was integrated with Boas' dance practice, primarily through improvisation based on predetermined musical motives related to the particular movement being explored, including an exercise titled *Varying Tensions*. She improvised, performed, and composed percussion music for her own choreography and for others such as Hanya Holm, including teaching and performing at the Bennington School of tee Dance in Vermont during the summers of 1937 and 1938. In 1939 the Bennington School of the Dance was in residence at Mills College in Oakland, CA for the summer alongside members of the Cage Percussion layers: John Cage, Xenia Cage, William Russell, Mercier Cunningham, Ralph Gilbert, and Zoe Williams.

—Ron Coulter

### Second Construction

John Cage

John Cage was a brilliant student, both in high school and in college. He was valedictorian of his high school in Los Angeles despite his family's peripatetic life, which saw him in a new school every year, and sometimes in more than one in a single term. There seemed to be only one subject at which he was poor: harmony. Thus it seems to be inevitable that Cage, when he got a job in the 1930s providing music for an experimental dance company, was drawn to writing music for percussion ensemble, a type of music which largely has no harmonic structure. He even managed to transform pianos into a non-harmonic percussion instrument by adding strange bits of hardware inside them, calling the resulting instrument the "prepared piano." Later, Cage would question all the accepted conventions and assumptions underlying Western music, including the assumption that the composer is the one who decides in advance what notes should be

## PROGRAM NOTES

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played in what order, or has freedom to select each individual note or rhythm.

As an earlier work, "Second Construction" comes from a time when Cage was a pioneer of percussion music, but while his music otherwise was traditionally constructed. The orchestra used includes standard instruments such as various drums, tam-tam, gongs, maracas, and piano, plus some unconventional noisemakers. Cage introduced here a novel effect which has been much copied, even in movie music: the "water gong," an effect caused by putting a gong on a pulley so that it can be lowered into or raised out of a tub of water while it is vibrating. This produces a glissando on the gong. The relatively short piece (seven minutes) has been immensely influential on subsequent percussion music. Cage starts out with a rhythm that seems Latin American. But he constantly interrupts or contradicts the rhythm with irregularities, extra-added beats, or counter-rhythms, all seemingly intended to upset any sense of order. In this piece Cage is well on the way to producing a chaotic, unpredictable music. Even so, the work is traditionally written out, performed without any chance procedures, and has a traditional form comprising a statement, a ratcheting up of tension and complexity to a high point, and a relaxation back to conclusion.

—Joseph Stevenson

### **Pavane pour une infante défunte**

Maurice Ravel

With the title *Pavane* Ravel turned, in stylized form, to the Baroque suite movement of Italo-Spanish origin that had reached a flowering in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a solemn and stately processional dance performed at court. The full title - the sonorous and richly associative "Pavane for a dead princess" - led from the very outset to speculative interpretations. Ravel responded to the question of the title's secret message with the curt explanation: "When I assembled the words of this title I had nothing more in mind than the pleasure of alliteration. One should not attach any more significance to this title than it has and avoid dramatizing it. It is not a dirge for a recently deceased princess, but evokes a pavane that such a young princess might once have danced at the court of Spain." Proof of Ravel's delight in the alliteration of the French words may be found in the following anecdote. The young pianist Charles Oulmont played the *Pavane* for the composer at a quite slow tempo, after which Ravel took him aside and said: "Listen, young man, next time bear in mind that I've written a *Pavane for a dead princess*, not a *Dead pavane for a princess!*"

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### **Reflections**

Ross Edwards

*Reflections* is a delicate, trance-like meditation on intimate minutiae gleaned from the sound environment of Central Eastern Australia. Dominant among these are strands of insect sounds, whose quirkily overlapping patterns and irregular periodicity have for many years captivated the composer's imagination and played an essential role in his search for a transcendental language outside the rhetoric of Western Art Music.

The texture and sonority of *Reflections* result from interplay between keyboard percussion and piano, the piano sonorities often tempered by simultaneously struck ideophones such as cowbell, gongs and tam-tam. The work is characteristic of Edwards' so-called Sacred Series, a body of instrumental works mainly composed in the 1970s, which include the piano pieces Kumari and Etymalong, and The Tower of Remoteness, for clarinet and piano, and which have been described as contemplation objects in sound.

*Reflections* was commissioned by the Synergy Percussion Ensemble, which first performed it in the Sydney Opera House on July 7 1985.

### **Flux Four**

Justin Lamb

Inspired by the music of multi-instrumentalist Binkbeats, *Flux Four* was first conceptualized as a one man band looping project before being rewritten for percussion quartet. In the spirit of this inspiration, each performer is asked to perform on their respective keyboard instruments while, at times, also playing additional instruments simultaneously. Similar to how one would layer tracks with a loop station, *Flux Four* is constructed through a series of layers that slowly evolve over time. In addition to the inspiration from Binkbeats, this piece also draws influence from traditional Shona music, most notably heard by the "hosho"-inspired ankle bell part, performed by one of the marimbists.


# UPCOMING EVENTS AT EASTMAN

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Information about upcoming Eastman concerts and events can be found at:

[www.rochester.edu/Eastman/calendar](http://www.rochester.edu/Eastman/calendar)

 [www.facebook.com/ConcertsAtEastman](https://www.facebook.com/ConcertsAtEastman)

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**Please note:** The use of unauthorized photographic and recording equipment is not allowed in this building. We reserve the right to ask anyone disrupting a performance to leave the hall.

**Restrooms** are located on the main floor of Kilbourn Hall. Fully-accessible restrooms are available on the first floor of the Eastman School. Our ushers will be happy to direct you to them.

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