

Colorado State University Percussion Ensemble Program Notes, Thursday, November 11, 2010

***Fanfare for a New Audience* (2009) - David Skidmore (b.1982) - www.davidskidmorepercussion.com**

Deborah Sobol, artistic director of the Rush Hour Concert Series in Chicago, approached me in January of 2009 about writing a piece to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Rush Hour Concerts. The piece is a gift to Rush Hour's Fanfare Committee, a truly innovative group of people who are helping to bring a love of classical music to an entirely new generation of audience members.

Rush Hour and the Fanfare Committee are passionate about creating a concert experience for the 21st century audience, so I wanted to write a fanfare that belongs in the 21st century. Like so much percussion music, it involves instruments that are both finely crafted (concert drums) and found in a junkyard (brake drums, wooden planks). It is a piece that celebrates both the diversity of percussion and the diversity of musical languages that are available to today's avid listener.

I believe that appreciating concert music is more about thoughtfulness than age, and by the same token I also believe that the audience who is drawn to concert music is curious, creative, and inspired, regardless of age or background. This piece is for that audience.

...David Skidmore

***Amalgamation* (2008) - Michael Culligan (b.1986) - www.honeyrock.net**

Amalgamation is a percussion trio scored for xylophone, marimba, and vibraphone. It was premiered at the Brevard Music Festival on July 18th, 2006. The entirety of the piece is in the key of Eb Major, but there is no tonal center. The chordal introduction outlines harmonic movements that are eluded to elsewhere through the piece. The first theme composed was the xylophone statement in measures 20-21, and from there a bass line (marimba measures 22-23), followed by another bass line - contrapuntal to the original to the original (vibraphone 24-25). The bass line found in the marimba part then becomes the primary melodic material presented and developed as a canon in all three of the parts. The original thematic material returns and sequences until it is joined by the chordal introductory material.

...Michael Culligan

***Structure Set* (2009) - Alex Orfaly (b.1974) - www.c-alanpublications.com**

Structure Set was originally written in the spring of 1997 for the Preparatory percussion ensemble at the Cleveland Institute of Music. The version here has been re-written but contains much of the original material. Most of the musical ideas are derived from the rhythmic cell of the first bar of music. Careful attention should be taken to always find a good balance between ostinato and thematic ideas. In general, the ostanati should not be played too heavily.

...Alex Orfaly

***Sosso-bala* (2008) - Emmanuel Sejourne (b.1961) - www.norsk-percussion.no**

Sosso-bala was written for the Ju Percussion group of Taiwan. The piece represents the energy and groove that epitomizes the notorious repertoire and stage presence of the Ju Percussion group. The music utilizes many alternative playing techniques to create an eclectic and high energy presentation.

***Xati* (2009) - Payton MacDonald (b.1974) - www.paytonmacdonald.com**

In the spring of 2007, I spent two months listening to South Indian Carnatic music on my commute to work in the morning and Xenakis's percussion works on my way home from work in the evening. The effect of this listening schedule was a dream I had in which Xenakis himself was wandering around South India. He was gigantic, with spindly legs and a shock of hair, lost and yet at home in the subcontinent. A curious drumming accompanied him, which provided the inspiration for *Xati*. I've drawn on the Carnatic concept of *jati*, or different polyrhythmic subdivisions, infused with Xenakis's formalized primitivism.

...Payton MacDonald

***Casper's Lullaby* (2009) - James Horner/Arr. Allison Campbell - www.rowloff.com**

Casper's Lullaby is a beautiful arrangement of James Horner's original film score from the 1995 animated movie, Casper.

***Compound Autonomy (eternal dome sibe)* (2010) - Jim Casella (b.1970) - www.tapspace.com**

Compound Autonomy is a complex work written for 15 percussionists, piano, and bass guitar, which aims to integrate a variety of autonomous lines into a unified fabric. As layers of polyrhythmic motives combine, the piece becomes more complicated, but still aims to maintain a good groove.

The subtitle of the piece is basically a simple description of its primary components. The main ostinato is an ongoing 4-3 pattern of a minor third interval (C, and E-flat), translating as the syllables "Do" and "Me" in solfege. Sibe is the Swiss/German word for "seven", the meter of the piece. This is simple a tip of the hat to one of my favorite musicians, Zurich composer and pianist, Nik Bartsch, whose music inspired the piece.

...Jim Casella

***Rub-a-dub-dub-DUB!* (2010) - Charles Griffin (b. 1968) - www.charlesgriffin.net**

I've long been interested in exploring elements of popular and world music genres in my own music as a kind of continuing experiment. When Dr. Eric Hollenbeck first approached me about the possibility of writing a piece for the Colorado State University Percussion Ensemble with a trumpeter as a guest instrumentalist, it didn't take long for my imagination to start turning toward popular styles that prominently feature that instrument. I finally settled on this particular title for this piece for a number of reasons, only one of which was because I was running out of time and had to call it something. The main reason was the obvious reference to Dub, a sub-genre of (mostly) electronic music originally derived from Reggae. I spent a large portion of the piece exploring reggae rhythms and motives, but I also attempted to emulate with acoustic instruments some of the digital delay effects so common to dub as a style.

But that's not all the piece is. It has a Spanish flavor in the beginning and also takes turns towards post-minimalism, though some players' parts are quite maximal in their details, particularly the part written for the drum-set player. Finally, there is a larger reason for titling the piece as I did, with the multiple versions of the nursery rhyme "Rub-a-dub-dub" collectively suggesting elements that I hear in the piece, not to mention the fact that the piece itself is a stylistic soup: maybe a little inebriated, maybe a little sensual, definitely relaxed and non-self-serious, and hey, the tub's got a bunch of people in it.

...Charles Griffin

***Colored Windows, Tempered Rooms* (2009) - Baljinder Sekhon (b.1980) www.sekhonmusic.com**

Colored Windows, Tempered Rooms explores multiple ways of interacting with specific abstract ideas and concrete elements. Scored for eight percussionists, each performer interacts with a metal, wood, and "skin" (containing a drum head). A spectrum of possible colors is explored as the percussionists implement a variety of conventional and unconventional techniques. Striking the instruments in a non-traditional fashion, the percussionists alter their technique to bring subtle changes of timbre and pitch to the fore. This is most evident when the keyboard instruments are used, as the performers will use their hands to alter the amount of resonance produced naturally by the instruments, creating a variety of nuanced sounds. The organization of these sounds follows one simple rhythm that is heard most clearly at the outset of the piece. This rhythm is then stretched over long periods of time and diminished into shorter phrases. There are always multiple versions (speeds) of this rhythm occurring at once, with the augmented versions serving as structural points or phrase proportions and the diminished versions serving as local material.

The title of this piece comes from thoughts I was having about perception at the time of composition; I was specifically thinking about the diverse reactions individuals have to the same objects or ideas we encounter and share in the world. Depending on our dispositions and past experiences, we encounter our shared surroundings with varying degrees of difference. When a group of people exist in a shared space and one type of reaction prevails as the most common or evident then that room is often said to have an aura, as if the room suddenly came into "tune" with a particular mood or view. This is often experienced when two or more people become excited during a conversation and are thought to be on "the same page" or "wavelength." At the same time, due to a matter of taste or differing intuition, our views about something might contrast so strongly from one another that we question whether or not the same object or idea is being discussed. I imagined this interaction as if two (or many) people are viewing the same object from different rooms of the same building; each room has a different colored window through which the subject is viewed and what seems blue to one is red to another.... or, perhaps these colors are moods and what seems pleasant to one is evil to another. During this piece, the behavior of the percussionists is modeled after these two types of interaction. The performers all utilize the same groups of instruments. Their treatment of those instruments is at times similar or "in tune" with one another through timbre, rhythm or pitch space; at other times, they exhibit a variety of interactions simultaneously, creating a sentiment of diversity. Special thanks to Michael Burritt and the Eastman Percussion Ensemble for their support and tremendous dedication in preparing for this premiere.

...Baljinder Sekhon

***Rounders* (2009) - Michael Burritt (b.1962) - www.mostlymarimba.com (KPP)**

I have often thought that performing and amusement park rides hold much in common. For me, there are two distinct sensations that we experience in both scenarios that entice us to take the "ride" time and time again. The physical sensation of the movements of sudden meter change and rhythmic syncopation creates the feeling of "rounding" the corners of a rollercoaster ride where centripetal force pulls our body in all directions. The mental sensation-like that of a game where chance and gambling are involved-is not dissimilar from taking the stage and performing this piece or any other. Think of *Rounders* as a "thrill ride" at the Burritt Amusement Park. *No refunds for bruised egos.*

...Michael Burritt

Rounders was commissioned by the 2009 Paris International Marimba Competition and its director Frederic Macarez.

***Shifting Cells* (2008) James David (b.1978) - www.jamesmdavid.com**

The inspiration for *Shifting Cells* is a constantly changing sense of pulse that can be heard in many types of music. Such diverse sources as East African folk music, Balinese Gamelan ensembles, medieval isorhythmic motets, and, surprisingly, modern American drum corps employ the technique. Also common to these diverse genres is the idea of tempo modulation. This creates the illusion of a change of speed when there, in fact, there is none. While listening to this piece the audience will hear a gradual slowing followed by an even greater sense of acceleration. The performers achieve this through the precise execution of rhythmic integral ratios thereby eliminating the need for a conductor or visual cues. The pitch content is based exclusively on the pentatonic scale, which is in keeping with the work's multicultural origins. Hopefully, the various techniques involved will create a sense of constant renewal as new ideas appear, grow stronger, and recede within a seamless texture.

...James David

Hemispheres (2009)- Kevin Bobo (b.1974) - kbobo@indiana.edu

Hemispheres was commissioned by Dr. Dennis Rogers and the Missouri Western State University Percussion Ensemble in 2008. The piece is an exploration of several musical styles found throughout the world. While the music of some cultures will be more obvious than others, Hemispheres draws its influence from the music of Indonesia, India, Cuba, Spain, Japan and parts of West Africa.

...Kevin Bobo

Quick Blood for percussion quartet (2001) - Adam Silverman (b.1973) - www.adamsilverman.com

Premiere performances by Battery Four percussion, January 2003 at Delaware Symphony Chamber Music

"Quick Blood" was composed in 2001 for Battery Four Percussion, and it is mostly for mallet instruments (marimbas, vibraphones, xylophone) often in the "four hands" method of having two people simultaneously share an instrument. Melodies are passed note-by-note back and forth from one marimba to the other, creating a special kind of stereo sound that works very well on their recording of the music. The music is "tonal," meaning that it uses the sorts of diatonic harmonies that are common to much older classical music. It is rhythmically very vigorous, with a feeling of perpetual motion. There is also a very dramatic use of the large orchestral bass drum. The title "Quick Blood" comes from Silverman's orchestra piece "Her Quick Blood Runs Dancing," of which this percussion quartet is a slightly expanded and embellished re-orchestration of the middle movement. The original, longer title is itself taken from a poem written in 1640 by Thomas Carew, a contemporary of Shakespeare. It's a love-poem sung by chorus in the orchestral work, that Silverman chose to continue a series of works that address historical conflicts between religion and science:

...Adam Silverman

*Fond man, thou canst believe her blood
Will from those purple channels flow;
Or that the pure untainted flood
Can any foul distemper know;
Or that thy weak steel can incise
The crystal case wherein it lies.
Know, her quick blood, proud of its seat,
Runs dancing through her azure veins;
Whose harmony no cold nor heat
Disturbs, whose hue no tincture stains:
And the hard rock wherein it dwells
The keenest darts of love repels.
But thou repli'st, "behold, she bleeds!"
Fool! Thou'rt deceived, and dost not know
The mystic know whence this proceeds,
How lovers in each other grow:
Thou struck'st her arm, but 'twas my heart
Shed all the blood, felt all the smart.*