

Percussion @ Penn State Concert Fall 2024

December 4, 2024, 7:30 pm, Recital Hall

Percussion Ensembles I - II, & Mallet Ensemble

Dr. Lee Hinkle, music director

Ryder Haines, Isabella Scotti, Eunice Sun, & Michael Valente, assistant directors

Members:

Andrew Andrade

Josh Bazala

Elijah Bradley

Jessica Dragan

Izzy Gaspar'raj

Kieran Gresko

Ryder Haines

Jack Kerness

Charles McCall

Joseph Modestine

Alex Mummert

Jack Nedrow

Thomas Pelesky

Mako Robeson

Bella Scotti

Eunice Sun

Robert Trifiletti

Michael Valente

Caden Werner

Program:

Rüdiger Pawassar (b. 1964)

Sculpture in Wood (1995)

Susan Powell (b. 1971)

The Gilded Cage (1998)

Alejandro Viñao (b. 1951)

WATER sextet for percussion with piano (2013)

III. Todos los ríos El río (All the Rivers The river)

<<<Intermission 10'>>>

Baljinder Sekhon (b. 1980)

Show Us How to Live (2014)

Gemma Peacocke (b. 1984)
Upstroke (2020)

Viet Cuong (b. 1990)
Cymbal-isms (2018)

Edgard Varèse (1883 – 1965)
Ionisation (1931)

Program Notes:



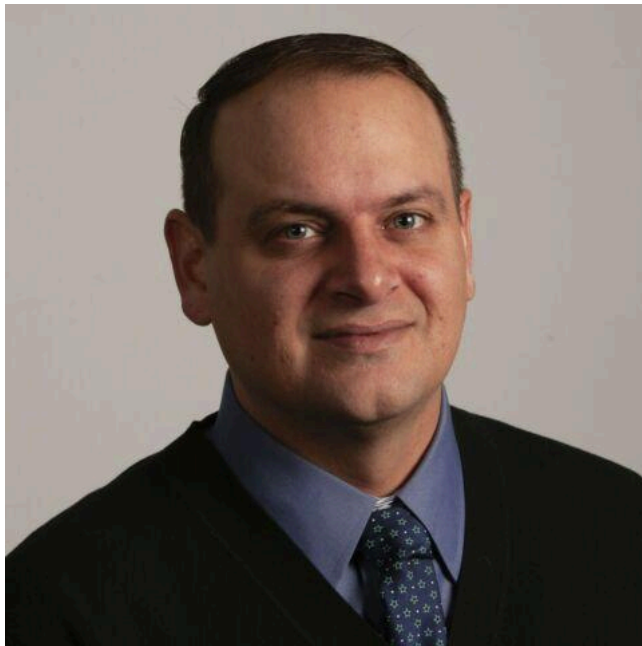
Sculpture in Wood was written in 1995 for the Marimba Art Ensemble Basel/Switzerland. The quartet played the world premiere at a percussion festival in Friburg in 1995 and later recorded it on the CD Japan Tournee 97. Since then, the piece has been performed all over Europe and most recently has become a hit in the United States with Universities and professional marimba ensembles.

The work is written in an A-B-C-A form. The piece is almost a classical sounding work, but resembles many harmonic structures found in 70's and 80's jazz. The composer comments that when writing this work it resembled to him the making of a wood sculpture where in his drafts, many parts were cut off, added again, shifted, and intertwined with one another. Not to mention the semicircular formation of the marimbas quartet is a sculpture of wood in and of itself. -Pawassar

The Gilded Cage was written by Susan Powell in 1998 for the Northwestern Doctoral Percussion Quartet's European appearances in Wurzburg, Germany and at the RhythmSticks Percussion Festival in London, England. The title is a combination of two separate sources; the 19th century popular song *The Girl in the Gilded Cage*, and the 20th



century percussion ensemble work *Third Construction* by John Cage. There are numerous influences from Cage's notable piece, including an early quote of the opening theme, here divided between the four performers and played on tom-toms. The "cage" theme is further exhibited in the way the performers create a constantly evolving visual cage with their sticks.



Penn State Associate Professor of Music Composition Baljinder Sekhon composed *Show Us How to Live* in 2014 for the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire Percussion Ensemble.

"It's the movies that have really been running things in America ever since they were invented. They show you what to do, how to do it, when to do it, how to feel about it, and how to look how you feel about it."

-Andy Warhol

Show Us How To Live is a theatrical work that addresses performativity in our society and combines predetermined musical structures, improvisation, indeterminacy, acting, mimicry,

and theater. The work requires each percussionist to have a laptop for triggering a video notation consisting of a person moving on the screen. The video notation is presented in a series of "scenes" that consist of a range of actions from musicians performing to typical actions and gestures found throughout society. In addition, each video includes musical instructions such as pitch collections, rhythmic

suggestions, and dynamics. Each percussionist follows a different synchronized video. The work includes a variety of stylistic ideas, from very beat-oriented music to more silent actions to a free flowing fabric of sound and movement. We are constantly learning how to act from each other, from mannerisms to fashion, and the trends that permeate our society can range from absurd to serious. This work highlights this characteristic of humanity and draws attention to all aspects of it.

Gemma Peacocke's *Upstroke* was composed for the Interlochen Arts Academy Percussion Ensemble

A bird makes its downstroke with an outstretched wing. Its upstroke is a complicated set of movements: quickly drawing in the wing towards the body, raising the wing, and finally extending it out, all done in such a way that the lift and thrust of the downstroke are maintained.

I think of a downstroke as the exhilarating payoff to the arduous, careful preparation of an upstroke. Upstrokes are the intakes of breath that fills the our lungs with air. They are the lift of the mallet before the strike.





Viet Cuong's *Cymbal-isms* is composed for four players playing one suspended cymbal each. Cuong has the players employ a variety of striking implements, mute & unmute the cymbals, and play a variety of beating spots on the cymbals to explore the wide variety of percussive timbres within each player's instrument. The rhythms are tightly interwoven throughout the piece with each players part combining into a larger rhythmic and sonic fabric.

Cuong will be an artist-in-residence next week at the Penn State School of Music

Argentinian composer Alejandro Viñao provides us with the following program notes in the score to his sextet *Water*. For this performance, only the third movement will be performed.



III. Todos los ríos El río (All the rivers The river)
The title of this movement paraphrases the title of a short story by the Argentinean writer Julio Cortazar ('All the fires The fire') where various characters in two different historical periods appear to relate to each other through time and space as their two stories follow similar trajectories. In this music, the various melodic lines, cells and phrases that are first presented to the listener, the various 'rivers', appear to follow their own course, their own independent trajectory. At times, they even seem to be running away from each other as if heading in opposite directions. As the music progresses, the perception changes giving the impression that all these musical strands are homing into the same pivotal point, shearing perhaps one single path. The music explores this duality where all these rivers appear to be, or perhaps indeed are, just the one river.

-AV. February 2014



Edgard Varèse's (1883-1965) seminal work *Ionisation* (1931) for percussion ensemble is probably the best known and most performed work for percussion ensemble. It is considered by many to be one of the first pieces ever written for percussion ensemble alone. At its premiere performance in New York City's Steinway Hall on March 6, 1933, Nicolas Slonimsky led the thirteen percussionists in a performance that was so powerful to the audience that one critic famously described it as "a sock in the jaw."

While the piece adheres to a strict sonata form, the form is obscured to the listener through Varèse's sonorous use of timbral colors from the percussion. The large battery of percussion instruments employed include many standard percussion instruments such as snare drums, tom-toms, cymbals, woodblocks, cowbells, bongos, guiros, and gongs as well as some unusual instruments such as hand-cranked air raid sirens and a lion's roar. The piece features pitched percussion instruments in the closing Coda section that include chimes, glockenspiel, and a piano that is thunderously played with the forearms.

Edgard Varèse is probably best known for his redefining of western music philosophy and as the father of electronic music. He coined the term "organized sound" which means that certain timbres and rhythms can be grouped together. *Ionisation* is a precursor to his later fascination with electronic music and electronic instruments. Listening to *Ionisation*, it is no wonder that he would later explore this genre as his implementation of the percussion instruments is characterized by great attention to color and timbre rather than regular rhythms.