

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
RUTGERS

Mason Gross
School of the Arts

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

**RUTGERS
PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE**

Bob Becker, director

Friday, December 2, 2005

8:00 pm

Nicholas Music Center

Mason Gross Performing Arts Center

Douglass College Campus

PROGRAM

* Migratory Systems (2005)

Gordon Stout
(b.1952)

Introduction

Dance 1

Interlude 1

Dance 2 - Homage to Henry Cowell

Interlude 2

Dance 3 - Finale (Homage to G.H. Green)

Josh Aldorizio, xylophone

Dance Variations (1983)

John Hawkins
(b. 1944)

John Daski, marimba

Time Traveler (2000)

William Cahn
(b. 1946)

Kevin Romanski, marimba

INTERMISSION

Unseen Child (2002)

based on the song Mienai Kodomo by Toru Takemits

Bob Becker
(b. 1947)

The Invisible Proverb (2002)

Russell Hartenberger
(b. 1943)

Okarche
Drumtalker
Darkwater
Sky Ghost

Martin Eck, marimba solo

Two Trios

John Cage
(1912 - 1992)

Trio: Nine Tom Toms, Pod Rattle (1943)
Trio: Seven Woodblocks (not Chinese) (1936)

Credo in US (1942)

RUTGERS PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Sarah Adams

Josh Aldoriso

Sarah Burke

John Daski

Brett Deptula

Marty Eck

Dave Eisenreich

Matt Frohnhoefer

Tim Hickson

Robert Lamberson

Britton Matthews

Elizabeth Minot

Mike Neglia

Aaron Ragsdale

Kevin Rank

Annie Stevens

Dan Temkin

Andrea Venet

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

***Migratory Systems* (2005) by Gordon Stout**

One of Stout's most recent compositions, *Migratory Systems* is dedicated to the xylophone virtuoso Bob Becker. The idea for the composition came after completing *Route 666* (2004) for marimba solo and percussion quartet. In the last ten years or so, there has been an explosion of new works in the genre of marimba with percussion, but almost none featuring the xylophone as a solo instrument. The success of the xylophone as a solo instrument is well established through the ragtime and novelty music of such great composers as George Hamilton Green and many others. It was curious to me that very few, if any, have thought to continue that tradition through the composition of new works that go beyond that style established years ago. That was the impetus to write *Migratory Systems*.

It is a multi-movement composition that seeks to explore the possibilities of the xylophone in new settings, while at the same time paying homage to great composers of xylophone music of the past. The Introduction, Dance 1 and Interlude 1 present and develop the basic material of the composition. In Dance 2, I was thinking of the wonderful and challenging xylophone part in Cowell's work for percussion ensemble, *Ostinato Pianissimo*. In Interlude 2, I use the xylophone to orchestrate the harmonics of the marimba. And in Dance 3 I have tried to tie together the basic material of the composition while transforming the "ragtime xylophone" style of the past into a new kind of setting.

- Gordon Stout

Tonight's performance is the premiere performance of this work.

***Dance Variations* (1983) by John Hawkins**

Dance Variations was commissioned by the NEXUS ensemble through the Ontario Arts Council. The work was completed in August, 1983 and is scored for glockenspiel, xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, bongos, congas and roto-toms. There are six movements. The first and second present the basic material of the piece in the simplest possible manner. Movement three (featuring xylophone and bongos) and movement four (featuring marimba and roto-toms) are more complex and developmental. Movements five and six form the coda.

- John Hawkins

***Time Traveler* (2000) by William Cahn**

Time Traveler was composed for the marimba soloist Mika Yoshida. The title has a double meaning. It refers to Ms. Yoshida's many trips back and forth between Japan and Canada, but it also is meant to suggest "time" as musicians use the word in reference to a constant beat or groove. Musicians from differing musical genres often have

different sensibilities about time - they live in differing "time zones". The time of the music in Time Traveler is deliberately ambiguous - utilizing variants of West African rhythms.

- William Cahn

***Unseen Child* (2002) by Bob Becker**

based on the song Mienai Kodomo by Toru Takemitsu In this piece Takemitsu's original melody has been very freely altered, particularly its rhythm. The approach to harmony is also completely divorced from the pop-style chord progressions of the original song and is rigorously based on a system of four non-transposable nine tone scales that I have been using in my own compositions for the past ten years. The piece, written in March, 2002, is scored for glockenspiel, songbells, vibraphone, marimba and suspended cymbals.

Takemitsu's Mienai Kodomo (Unseen Child) was the theme song for the 1963 Iwanami film Kanogo to Kare (She and He), directed by Susumu Hani. The lyrics to the original song are by Shuntaro Tanikawa, here translated into English by Ella Louise Rutledge and Kirsti Kaldro:

Unseen, a little child, someone's child,
hidden within, not yet born,
laughing in the morning, laughing in the sun,
when morning light arrives outside the window.

Unseen, a tiny walnut in its shell,
green like the spring, not yet ripe,
trembling as the night falls, trembling in the woods,
when dark of night arrives, deep in the forest.

Unseen, a little child, my own child,
who no longer will be born,
singing in the morning, singing in the dawn,
when morning light arrives, she flies across the sky.

- Bob Becker

***The Invisible Proverb* (2002) by Russell Hartenberger**

Composed during 2001 and 2002, The Invisible Proverb uses elements of talking drum styles and the rhythm patterns of West African drumming ensembles. Okariche and Darkwater use atenteben flute melodies from Ghana and elements of the horn ensembles of Central Africa. Sky Ghost is based on some of the musical material from the song Small Sky by Toru Takemitsu. The Small Sky melody appears in the first section of the piece. In the second section, the talking drum melodies are heard against a backdrop of African bell patterns played on a xylophone. There are, in essence, two bell patterns heard at once. The left hand plays a five-note pattern while the right hand "ghosts" a

seven-note pattern against it. The third section reverses this procedure while the melody reappears.

- Russell Hartenberger

***Two Trios* by John Cage**

Trio: Nine Tom Toms, Pod Rattle (1943)

Trio: Seven Woodblocks (not Chinese) (1936)

The Western percussion ensemble came into being in the 1930s and although John Cage did not invent it, "it was already in the air", he said. Cage was the first person to form an ensemble that rehearsed regularly. Its raison d'être was to explore through percussion Cage's ideas about music. This ensemble (and the music Cage wrote for it) was the beginning of a new world for percussionists.

The ensemble consisted of Cage and his friends - bookbinders, dancers, and artists, whoever was available at the time. None of them were trained percussionists so they couldn't play rolls, a fundamental technique for sustaining a sound with two sticks. Therefore Cage's music consisted of single strokes only, making it accessible to anyone with a fair degree of manual dexterity and an ability to read music. It is ironic that from this ensemble came the most important percussion music of the 20th century. Because Cage was financially strapped at the time, his instrumentations were affordable, small, and portable. Cage accepted the sound of anything as musical, as long as it was not a cliché. In Trio for Seven Wood Blocks (Not Chinese), Cage turned the negative "not Chinese" into a positive by condoning the use of any other blocks of wood whilst simultaneously suggesting a comprehensive exploration of wood sounds.

Cage's music is about exploration. One cannot examine a score by Cage without reassessing one's musical craft and concepts. A percussionist's technique, honed on instruments built for war and with exercises developed centuries ago, is helpful in Cage's music but not entirely necessary, and anyway, his music is not a technical display. It is music for virtuosos - but virtuosos of sound. Cage understood the fact that percussion sounds are ambiguous, that no two instruments sound alike. Therefore, a successful performance depends upon the orchestration skills of the performers more than their technical abilities.

Cage took simple, tuneless instruments and, with imagination and some elaboration, achieved for percussion an important independent position in western art music. Of course Cage was not alone. Berlioz, Ravel, Debussy, Stravinsky and Milhaud also played important roles in our awakening, but Cage - and Takemitsu who wrote importantly for percussion - say to us in a very special way: "Listen, listen to everything".

- Robin Engelman

***Credo in US* (1942) by John Cage**

Credo in US dates from 1942, which is to say practically from the outset of Cage's career.

Nonetheless, his originality is already on full display. It was written as a piece to be danced by Merce Cunningham and Jean Erdman, and it requires the unorthodox ensemble of four percussionists, a radio or phonograph, and a piano. Except for a lazy, lyrical passage near the end, the piano is treated mainly as a percussion instrument. The percussion section is itself

imaginatively devised, comprising gongs, tin cans, tom-toms, and an electrical buzzer. The radio (or phonograph) provides both an electronic component to the soundscape and injects an element of chance into the proceedings. The performers may choose which of these electronic appliances to use. "If phonograph," notes Cage in the score, "use some classic, e.g. Dvorák, Beethoven, Sibelius or Shostakovich." Using a radio (the choice in this concert) is rather braver, for it opens the piece to limitless possibilities of sound incursions, from classical music to rap, from traffic reports to broadcast sermons to call-in gardening shows.

- James M. Keller

About the Department of Music

The Department of Music at the Mason Gross School has a faculty of 35 full-time and 38 part-time members. There are approximately 500 students enrolled in its seven degree programs: Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Arts, Master of Music, Master of Arts, Artist Diploma, Doctor of Philosophy, and Doctor of Musical Arts. All of the music degree programs have as their common aim the development of well-educated professional musicians who have a deep historical and theoretical understanding of all aspects of music. The diversity of faculty specializations within the school provides a breadth of expertise rarely encountered in other programs.

- Fire regulations strictly prohibit smoking in Nicholas Music Center. Smoking is only permitted outside the building.
- FIRE NOTICE: Nearest exits are located by the red signs; exits are located to the right and left of the stage and lobby.
- Please turn off all phones and pagers prior to entering the performance area.
- Latecomers may have to wait to be seated until an appropriate pause in the program.
- The taking of photographs and possession and/or use of audio or video recorders during performances are strictly prohibited.
- The Lost and Found is located at the Mason Gross Performing Arts Center Ticket Office, next to the Philip J. Levin Theater.
- A public telephone and water fountain are located at the western end of the lobby.
- **Ticket Office Hours:** Weekdays: Performance Days, 10am to Curtain
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Weekends: Performance Days, Noon to Curtain
Non-performance Days, noon to 6pm