



PERCUSSION DEPARTMENT

# *Percussion Ensemble*

**Kyle Ritenauer, Director**

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2025 | 7:30 PM  
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL



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PROGRAM

ANDY AKIHO  
(b. 1979)

*Pillar VII* (2021)

**Campbell Stewart, Mischa Gerbrecht,  
Josh Conklin, and Jason Chin**

PAUL LANSKY  
(b. 1944)

*Threads* (2005)

**Glenn Choe, Aaron Levine, Ariel Metzger,  
and Joleen Lin**

*Intermission*

NINA YOUNG  
(b. 1966)

*Etched in Sand* (2013)

**Jay Walton, Owen Bloomfield, Mischa Gerbrecht,  
Jason Chin, Campbell Stewart, and Emma Stewart**

DAVID LANG  
(b. 1967)

*So Called Laws of Nature* (2002)

I.

**Will Chinn, Emma Stewart, Jason Chin,  
and Mihail Babus**

II.

**Glenn Choe, Josh Conklin, Gabe Levy, and Jay Walton**

III.

**Owen Bloomfield, Mischa Gerbrecht,  
Campbell Stewart, and Mihail Babus**

# PROGRAM NOTES

## ***Pillar VII***

### **Andy Akiho**

Andy Akiho's *Seven Pillars* stands as one of the most ambitious contributions to the percussion-quartet repertoire in the 21st century. Conceived as a 75-minute "modular" chamber work, it is constructed from eleven interconnected movements: seven ensemble pieces—the Pillars—and four solo interludes, one for each performer. The architecture of the work is highly deliberate: recurring rhythmic cells, pitch sets, and physical gestures weave through the entire cycle, creating a sense of symmetry and structural resonance akin to the architectural metaphor of pillars supporting a larger edifice. While the craftsmanship is intricate, the sound world remains vibrant and visceral, blending driving grooves, metallic timbres, and the kinetic energy that has become Akiho's signature.

*Pillar VII* serves as the culminating quartet movement of the full cycle. It gathers and transforms material introduced throughout the earlier pillars, functioning as a kind of summation and expansion. Rhythmically, the movement is built on tightly interlocking patterns that slide across one another in shifting metrical groupings, creating a feeling of propulsion and inevitable convergence. Motives heard earlier in the work reappear in distilled or heightened forms giving *Pillar VII* a sense of both retrospection and forward momentum.

Timbre plays a crucial role: crisp wood textures, resonant metallic colors, and sharply articulated unison gestures create a landscape that alternates between explosive ensemble unity and intricate, puzzle-like subdivisions. In performance, the movement feels like a final architectural capstone: the energy intensifies, grooves lock into place with thrilling precision, and the musical threads from the preceding pillars are drawn together into a bold, coherent finale.

## ***Threads***

### **Paul Lansky**

*Threads*, written by Paul Lansky for So Percussion in 2005, is a 'cantata' for percussion quartet in ten short movements. There are three 'threads' that are interwoven in the piece: Arias and Preludes that focus on the metallic pitched sounds; Choruses in which drumming predominates; and Recitatives made largely from Cage-like 'noise' instruments. The aims of the different threads are to highlight the wide range of qualities that percussion instruments are capable of, from lyrical and tender to forceful and aggressive, and weave them into one continuous texture.

*-Paul Lansky*

## ***Etched in Sand***

### **Nina Young**

To etch is to cut, carve, or engrave a text or design onto a surface (traditionally metal, glass, or stone). This process leaves a permanent design on the original surface.

I recall going to the shore as a child and spending hours etching designs in the wet, hardened sand at the threshold of beach and sea. With the sun on my back I would revel in the glory of these beautiful and ephemeral pieces of art that I created using the sand as my canvas and a stray seashell as my stylus. As evening encroached, the tide would slowly come in, its regular cycles of crashing waves a whispering reminder of the passing of time. The gently lapping water would inevitably creep towards my etchings, and as it neared I waited, in tense anticipation, for the arcs of water blindly reaching up the beach. As the first finger of water washed over my design, the image began its transformation into a subdued echo of itself. For a short time—an eternity—I would solemnly watch my day's work gently fade into the original blank canvas.

*Etched in Sand* was written for Sixtrum percussion sextet as part of their young composer workshop centered around the instrumentation of Philippe Leroux's work *De l'itération*. *Etched in Sand* was premiered on December 7, 2013 at Salle Bourgie in Montreal, QC.

— *Nina Young*

## ***So Called Laws of Nature***

### **David Lang**

I went to college to study science. I was expected to become a doctor, or at the very least a medical researcher, and I spent much of my undergraduate years studying math and chemistry and physics, hanging out with future scientists, going to their parties, sharing their apartments, and eavesdropping on their conversations. I remember a particularly heated discussion about a quote from Wittgenstein: "At the basis of the whole modern view of the world lies the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanation of natural phenomena." This quote rankled all us future scientists, as it implied that science can't explain the universe but can only offer mere descriptions of things observed. Over the years it occurred to me that this could be rephrased as a musical problem.

Because music is made of proportions and numbers and formulas and patterns, I always wonder what these numbers actually mean. Do the numbers themselves generate a certain structure, creating the context and the meaning and the form, or are they just the incidental byproducts of other, deeper, more mysterious

processes? My piece the so-called laws of nature tries to explore the “meaning” of various processes and formulas. The individual parts are virtually identical – the percussionists play identical patterns throughout, playing unison rhythms on subtly different instruments. Most of these instruments the performers are required to build themselves. Some of the patterns between the players are displaced in time. Some are on instruments which have a kind of incoherence built into their sound. Does the music come out of the patterns or in spite of them? I am not sure which, but I know that this piece is as close to becoming a scientist as I will ever get.

*—David Lang*

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