



PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Kyle Ritenauer (BM '11, MM '15), Director

MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2027 | 7:30 PM
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL

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PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

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Program

STEVE REICH
(b. 1936)

Mallet Quartet

Glenn Choe

Ariel Metzger

Aaron Levine

Joleen Lin

CHRISTOPHER CERRONE
(b. 1984)

Ode to Joy

Campbell Stewart

Josh Conklin

Joleen Lin

Mischa Gerbrecht

ANDY AKIHO
(b. 1979)

Pillar III from *Seven Pillars*

Owen Bloomfield

Jay Walton

Emma Stewart

Jason Chin

Intermission

PIERRE BOULEZ
(1925–2016)

Improvisation I sur Mallarmé from *Pli selon pli*

II. *Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui—
Pas trop lent, très souple*

Piper Weldon, soprano

Will Chinn

Glenn Choe

Gabe Levy

Ariel Metzger

Aaron Levine

DUNCAN PATTON

(MSM Percussion Faculty)

The River

Mihail Babus

Jay Walton

Jason Chin

Glenn Choe

Emma Stewart

Mischa Gerbrecht

Owen Bloomfield

Campbell Stewart

Josh Conklin

Ruben Hogg, piano

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Improvisation I sur Mallarmé from *Pli selon pli* Pierre Boulez

“Le vierge, le vivace, et le bel aujourd’hui” —Stéphane Mallarmé

*Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd’hui
Va-t-il nous déchirer avec un coup d’aile ivre
Ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre
Le transparent glacier des vols qui n’ont pas fuit !
Un cygne d’autrefois se souvient que c’est lui
Magnifique mais qui sans espoir se délivre
Pour n’avoir pas chanté la région où vivre
Quand du stérile hiver a resplendi l’ennui.
Tout son col secouera cette blanche agonie
Par l’espace infligé à l’oiseau qui le nie,
Mais non l’horreur du sol où le plumage est pris.
Fantôme qu’à ce lieu son pur éclat assigne,
Il s’immobilise au songe froid de mépris
Que vêt parmi l’exil inutile le Cygne.*

The virgin, the lively and the beautiful today
Will it tear from us with a drunken wingbeat’s blow
This hard lost lake a limpid glacier down below
The frost haunts with the flights that never flew away!
A swan of other times remembers that it’s he
Magnificent but with no hope to be spared pains
For having never sung the kingdom where life reigns
When sterile winter lends a glisten to ennui.
His whole neck will shake off this blank agon that space
Inflicts upon the bird denying it, but not
The horror of the earth in which his plumes are caught.
Phantom whose own pure radiance assigns this place,
He is immobilized in the cold dream of scorn
That by the Swan is through his useless exile worn.

PROGRAM NOTES

Mallet Quartet

Steve Reich (b. 1936)

Mallet Quartet (2009) is scored for two vibraphones and two five octave marimbas. I had never written for five octave marimbas extending down to cello C. On the one hand I was delighted to have the possibility of a low bass and on the other hand apprehensive since just slightly too hard a mallet that low can produce noise instead of pitch. Eventually, after a bit of experimentation, this was well worked out.

The piece is in three movements, fast, slow, fast. In the two outer fast movements the marimbas set the harmonic background which remains rather static compared to recent pieces of mine like Double Sextet (2007). The marimbas interlock in canon, also a procedure I have used in many other works. The vibes present the melodic material first solo and then in canon. However, in the central slow movement the texture changes into a thinner more transparent one with very spare use of notes, particularly in the marimbas. I was originally concerned this movement might just be 'too thin', but I think it ends up being the most striking, and certainly the least expected, of the piece.

Mallet Quartet is about 15 minutes in duration. It was co-commissioned by the Amadinda Quartet in Budapest, on the occasion of its 25th Anniversary, Nexus in Toronto, So Percussion in New York, Synergy Percussion in Australia, and Soundstreams in Canada. The world Premiere was given by the Amadinda Quartet in Bela Bartók National Concert Hall on December 6, 2009. The American Premiere was given by So Percussion at Stanford University Lively Arts in California on January 9, 2010.

—Steve Reich

Ode to Joy

Christopher Cerrone (b. 1984)

Ode to Joy is my sixth composition to feature a percussion quartet, but my first for a solely acoustic quartet (the other pieces featured piano solo, voice solo, or electronics). It was written at the behest of my good friends Sandbox Percussion, based in Brooklyn, NY, who asked for a relatively short, relatively simple piece in terms of instrumentation that they could take on tour without a soloist or sound system.

To that end, I endeavored to use a maximum number of traditional percussion instruments—vibraphone, marimba, glockenspiel, crotales—while limiting the

“special” instruments to those that can be carried in a small bag or suitcase.

Six is a lot of percussion quartets. When surveying the prior five, I found a relatively wide range of emotions: from contemplative to dramatic to mysterious to elegiac. But one felt missing: joy. This composition—through its use of simple, optimistic harmonies and pulsating rhythms—seeks to remedy that. Its title playfully references the iconic Beethoven tune, but the source is one of America’s, and one of New York City’s, great joy-havers: the poet Frank O’Hara. His poem of the same name iterates an enthusiastic passion for the city I have long called home—a passion I felt more urgently while living in Europe on a residency.

One more thing about joy: Joy is hard. It’s much easier to feel anger, sadness, or nothing. That hardness is part of the piece. While writing, I set these harmonicas in unison against bowed crotales and vibraphones. Despite the best efforts of these excellent musicians, none of these instruments will ever sound entirely in tune with one another. These imperfections, these distances between the joys I have in my life and the joys I aspire toward, are something I have come to embrace.

Ode to Joy is jointly dedicated to Sandbox Percussion and to Blow Up Percussion, a group from Rome who have been wonderful champions of my music in Italy and beyond and who co-commissioned the work. The work was created with the support of a residency from the Stiftung Laurenz-Haus in Basel, Switzerland.

–Chris Cerrone

Pillar III from *Seven Pillars*

Andy Akiho (b. 1979)

Andy Akiho’s *Seven Pillars* examines the idea of openness within a carefully constructed framework. The full-length composition consists of seven quartets and four solo sections, but it originated with the central movement, Pillar IV. Initially written as an independent piece, Pillar IV featured a tightly organized structure and distinctive motifs that Akiho later chose to develop into a larger work. It ultimately became the core of *Seven Pillars*, serving as the source material from which the other movements evolved.

In the broader arc of the composition, Pillar III grounds the listener through its strong rhythmic foundation. Its interwoven patterns move independently before locking together in moments of unity. Akiho introduces a reinterpretation of the backbeat here, set in a cycle of 13 beats instead of the conventional four, and expands it through intricate variations that build toward an intense, alarm-like climax. This chaotic energy eventually subsides into a calmer closing section, offering a sense of recovery after the preceding intensity.

Improvisation I sur Mallarmé from *Pli selon pli*

Pierre Boulez

Pierre Boulez's *Improvisation I sur Mallarmé*, from his larger cycle *Pli selon pli*, draws inspiration from the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé and transforms it into a highly nuanced musical language. Rather than presenting the text in a straightforward lyrical setting, Boulez fragments and reshapes the words, allowing their sounds and rhythms to shape the vocal line, which moves between clarity and abstraction. The soprano part often dissolves into pure timbre, reflecting Boulez's expansion of serial techniques beyond pitch to include rhythm, dynamics, and tone color. The accompanying ensemble creates a delicate, constantly shifting texture in which individual instrumental colors briefly surface and fade, contributing to a sense of suspended time where silence is as meaningful as sound. Within this carefully structured yet fluid framework, *Improvisation I* balances precision with spontaneity, capturing the elusive, suggestive qualities that define Mallarmé's poetry.

The River

Duncan Patton (MSM Percussion Faculty)

High in the mountain forest, a spring bubbles up from the ground. The water makes its way down the hillside; it is fed by snowmelt and rain, and coalesces into a mountain brook. As it continues down the mountain, it joins with other tiny flows to form a swifter running stream. It makes its way further down into the valleys and plains, it is fed by more tributaries, and eventually becomes a great river. Sometimes it is narrow and rushing, there may be rapids or waterfalls; other times it is broad and wide and slow moving. It passes by woodlands and farms, villages and cities, and eventually pours itself into the ocean, merging its identity with all the waters of the seas.

This piece is about a river, but a river can be a metaphor as well. Perhaps the journey of the river is also the journey of a life. I also have two personal associations with this image. As a long-time teacher at MSM, I have a sense of the generations of students flowing through our hallways, entering often as teenagers, and emerging as genuine artists; always with another generation to follow. And in my own life, born and raised in the Albany, NY area, I have literally travelled down the (Hudson) river to make my life and career in New York City and New Jersey. We will not always be here, but the river flows on.

—*Duncan Patton*

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