The Hartt Graduate Percussion Group

Christopher Calderon, Jianpeng Feng, Adam Rhan, Kevin Thompson

Benjamin Toth, Director

Saturday, March 3, 2018  7:30 p.m.  Berkman Recital Hall

Sandy, the Hurricane (2013)  Nebojsa Jovan Zivkovic (b. 1962)
The Narrow Path (2007)  Stuart Saunders Smith (b. 1948)

Intermission


ii - Dance of the Drums
THE HARTT GRADUATE PERCUSSION GROUP

The Hartt Graduate Percussion Group is comprised of students currently enrolled in a graduate program (Master of Music, Doctor of Musical Arts, or Artist Diploma) at The Hartt School, University of Hartford. The ensemble maintains a rigorous rehearsal schedule, and is an extension of the Hartt Percussion Ensemble. Ensemble members also serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants for the Hartt Percussion Program. Director Benjamin Toth joins the ensemble for select repertoire.

Now in its twenty-fifth season, the ensemble’s varied repertoire has included the music of Keiko Abe, George Antheil, John Cage, George Crumb, Thierry de Mey, Peter Garland, George Hamilton Green, Lou Harrison, Maki Ishii, Mauricio Kagel, Paul Lansky, Russell Peck, Steve Reich, Frederick Rzewski, Stuart Saunders Smith, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Toru Takemitsu, Michael Udow, Iannis Xenakis, Frank Zappa, and Nebojsa Zivkovic. The ensemble has recorded for the Innova, Yesa, and Hartt record labels, and has premiered works by David Macbride, John MacDonald, Robert Carl, Stuart Saunders Smith, and Daniel Wohl. Highlights from the ensemble’s concert venues include: Percussive Arts Society International Conventions (Phoenix 1995, Columbus 1999, Austin 2008, and Indianapolis 2013); the Extension Works concert series (Boston); the National Association of Composers - USA concert series (New York); the Connecticut Music Educator's Annual Conference; and residencies at various educational institutions, including Bennington College (Vermont), Michigan State University, West Chester State University (Pennsylvania), University of North Carolina (Pembroke), and Grand Valley State University (Michigan). The ensemble has also presented numerous concerts and children’s programs throughout New England, and has recorded for 11 West Records, and the Hartt and Yesa labels.

Benjamin Toth, Professor of Percussion at The Hartt School, brings more than 30 years of professional chamber music performing experience to the ensemble – his chamber music performance highlights include Percussion Group Cincinnati (recently inducted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame), and Nebojsa Zivkovic and the Jovan Percussion Projekt. His performances have spanned six continents, particularly throughout Europe and the United States, and he has appeared on twenty recordings.
**Sandy, the Hurricane by Nebojsa Zivkovic** is a percussion trio inspired by the composer's experience with Hurricane Sandy. Zivkovic was set to perform with a group from Madrid at PASIC in 2012. Just before PASIC, hurricane Sandy hit on the US east coast. Zivkovic barely made his flight from Germany but the group he was performing with (from Spain) got stuck at the airport in Madrid. As a result, Zivkovic was not able to perform the program that was planned at PASIC and had to cut everything but a few solo pieces from the concert. Because of this, Zivkovic announced that he would return to PASIC in 2013 and promised to compose and premier a new piece about Sandy.

The piece itself features energetic drumming which starts softly, as if from far away, in stampede-like rhythms that develop during the piece in various unison and fugato passages. The score calls for three medium-small size setups, with standard percussion instruments except for the kitchen pots used by players 1 and 2. There are also some natural (field recording) audio effects at the beginning and once during the piece, in order to achieve a more realistic, dramatic atmosphere of the storm.

Premiered at the University of Michigan in 1966, **Russell Peck's "Lift-Off!"** for three percussionists each playing three drums, including one low bass drum, a medium drum, and a high drum, has earned the status of a "classic" in the percussion ensemble repertoire. The 8-minute work is cast in two sections. The first features rhythms with conflicting accent patterns and metric modulation; in the second section, the three percussionists play unison sixteenth notes, eventually beginning a general crescendo that drives the music to a hair-raising finale.

**The Narrow Path, by Stuart Saunders Smith** was written in 2007, and has been dedicated to Ben Toth and his percussion program at the Hartt School. The piece is scored for orchestra bells and two vibraphones. The bell player acts as the centerpiece of the music, with the vibraphones positioned on either side to create a stereophonic effect. The majority of the piece consists of unique music being played by each performer, independently of one another. Stuart Saunders Smith calls this music of coexistence, or mobilic music. Each player chooses their own tempi, as well as their own dynamic scheme without regard for what is happening around them. At a few key moments in the piece, the players come together to perform highly polyrhythmic, complex unison music. The Narrow Path has been recorded by the Hartt Graduate Percussion Group to be included on a CD featuring all the percussion music of Stuart Saunders Smith.

**Eight on 3 and Nine on 2** is a multipercussion duet like no other. Written for eight pitched tom toms, 2 rototoms, 2 bongos, and a bass drum, this piece tests percussionists' abilities to split rhythms. Two players perform the piece facing each
other, sharing instruments just as they share in playing almost every rhythm in the piece. The listener is engaged aurally and visually as both performers sound like one in an exciting and captivating percussive showcase. Written in 2007 for George Clements' senior recital at the Eastman School of Music, the piece's unique name comes from unique experience. **Robert Marino** played 3rd bass drum for the Cadets Drum and Bugle Corps eighth DCI World Championship in 2000, and George played 2nd bass drum in the Cadets for their ninth DCI World Championship in 2005. The piece was written with the goal of combining drum corps elements into a formal recital piece that would challenge any percussionist, regardless of his or her level of experience.

There are three compositions by **Toru Takemitsu** on the subject of the Rain Tree. *Rain Tree Sketch* (1982) and *Rain Tree Sketch II* (1992, in memoriam Olivier Messiaen) are among Takemitsu’s most often performed piano works. The origin of the *Rain Tree Sketches* can be traced back to Takemitsu’s percussion trio *Rain Tree* (1981). *Rain Tree* is used as a metaphor of water circulating in the cosmos, and Takemitsu employed Messiaen’s modes of limited transposition in order to construct the pitch collections evocative of cosmic imagery. Takemitsu’s goal as an artist was to expand the possibilities of music, and to express himself through creation of a universal language. The title was suggested by a passage from the novel *Atama no ii, Ame no Ki* by Kenzaburo Oe: “It has been named the ‘rain tree,’ for its abundant foliage continues to let fall rain drops collected from last night’s shower until well after the following midday. Its hundreds of thousands of tiny leaves – finger-like – store up moisture while other trees dry up at once. What an ingenious tree, isn’t it?”

**Song and Dance by Gene Koshinski** is scored for percussion duo in two movements: I. Song of the Metals; II. Dance of the Drums. The second movement features very primal drumming. Interlocking groove-oriented patterns permeate the movement while a conch shell is used as a single-pitch melodic instrument. Both movements are dances, however two very different aesthetics