



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

Sunday, March 28, 2010
7:30 pm. Walter Hall

FACULTY OF MUSIC PRESENTS

The University of Toronto Percussion Ensemble

Beverley Johnston, director

“2 x 2 x 2 in 7 for 4”

I Feel Tears Raining Down

Brian Graiser and Étienne Levesque, percussionists
Joel Cormier, marimba and coach

Yusuke Yamamoto

2 x 2 x 2 in 7 for 4

Jennifer Collins, Justin Han, Michelle Hwu, and Alejandro Céspedes Pazos, percussionists
Jamie Drake, coach

Brian Graiser

Tempestade Óssea

Jennifer Collins, Michelle Colton, Dorian Cox, Greg Harrison,
Étienne Levesque, and Alejandro Céspedes Pazos, percussionists
Mark Duggan, coach

Mario Ficarelli

One Last Bar Then Joe Can Sing

Greg Harrison, Michelle Colton, Michelle Hwu, Justin Han, Stefan Kitai, percussionists
Tim Francom and Ed Reifel, coaches

Gavin Bryars

An Idyll for the Misbegotten (Images III)

Jamie Drake, Tim Francom, Beverley Johnston, percussionists
Susan Hoepfner, flute

George Crumb



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Program Notes

YUSUKE YAMAMOTO

I Feel Tears Raining Down

I Feel Tears Raining Down is a multi-textural work for three multi-percussionists, and features intricate tonal and rhythmic interplay between all three players. Yamamoto has woven a tonal fabric permeated by the sounds of the mallet-trio, with the marimba assigned a prominent role. - *Joel Cormier*

BRIAN GRAISER

2 x 2 x 2 in 7 for 4

2 x 2 x 2 in 7 for 4 was written in the winter of 2010 for the University of Toronto Percussion Ensemble, under the direction of Beverley Johnston. When Bev first approached me about writing a piece, I jumped at the opportunity to write not only for a fine ensemble, but for my friends. This was also, I think, a bit of serendipity; for a while, I'd had a couple of rather outlandish ideas for new compositions I wanted to try out (I'll get back to you about the prepared racetrack and the performance car), and this was the perfect chance to breathe some life into one of those pipe dreams (excuse the pun). I always enjoyed seeing unusual and home-made instruments used in performances, but as someone who grew up doing wood projects with his father, it seemed negligent to me that the actual building process of these weird construction percussion instruments was never truly appreciated.

To this end, *2 x 2 x 2 in 7 for 4* is a piece that celebrates the process and not just the product, as the performers state and develop recurring rhythmic motives while actually building an instrument (which I have affectionately dubbed the boxophone), which they ultimately get to play on in the final minutes of the piece. I would like to give special thanks to my father Harlan (the engineer), my brother Adam (the industrial designer), and Jamie Drake (the ensemble coach and general construction troubleshooter) for their indispensable help in the birth of this piece. Also, I would like to thank Ian, Bob, and the rest of the incredibly helpful crew from the MacMillan Theatre Workshop, who lent time, energy, and resources without which this piece would not have happened. - *Brian Graiser*

MARIO FICARELLI

Tempestade Óssea

"Bony Tempest" is part of a group of studies in percussion composition that Mario Ficarelli has been working on since 1972 with his series *Ensaio: '72, '79 and '90*. The work employs only instruments made of wood including two xylophones, two marimbas, five temple blocks and five suspended claves, substituted here with miniature Chinese dragon mouths. It is a virtuosic piece for all six of the percussionists who must maintain a high level of concentration and perfect technical precision. Mario Ficarelli (b. 1935) has been composing since 1968 and has a catalogue of 120 pieces for varied instrumental genre. He has received several awards in composition competitions, both national and international, and in 1994 was elected as a member of the Brazilian Academy of Music. His *Symphony No. 2 "Mhatuhabh"* was premiered in 1992 by the Orchestra of the Tonhalle in Zürich. A dedicated teacher, Ficarelli recently retired from the University of São Paulo (USP), where he was also head of the Music Department for several years.

- *Mark Duggan*

GAVIN BRYARS

One Last Bar Then Joe Can Sing

One Last Bar Then Joe Can Sing, was commissioned by the Arts Council of England for the virtuoso percussion quintet Nexus. This piece is a reflection on aspects of percussion history, both personal and musical. The members of Nexus are my friends and I have known their playing for almost 20 years. The piece starts from the last bar at the end of the first part of my opera *Medea*. This one apparently innocuous bar is progressively fragmented until it is taken over, little by little, by the addition of tuned percussion instruments. Eventually two metal-tuned instruments play aria-like material with bows, occasionally joined by the xylophone, and accompanied by marimba and xylophone ostinati. The piece ends with a coda in which phrases are passed from bowed vibraphone to bowed crotales to bowed songbells (substituted in this performance by vibraphone), supported by tremolos on two marimbas. The piece is effectively a kind of homage to the great American instrument maker J.C. Deagan - the Stradivarius of the tuned percussion family. - *from the liner notes of the Gavin Bryars' CD "Farewell to Philosophy"*

GEORGE CRUMB

Idyll for the Misbegotten (Images III)

A ... human-centered view of nature is evident in ... the nine-minute *An Idyll for the Misbegotten* for amplified flute and percussion, composed in 1985. "I feel that 'misbegotten' well describes the fateful and melancholy predicament of the species homo sapiens at the present moment in time," writes the composer.

Mankind has become ever more "illegitimate" in the natural world of the plants and animals. The ancient sense of brotherhood with all life-forms (so poignantly expressed in the poetry of St. Francis of Assisi) has gradually and relentlessly eroded, and consequently we find ourselves monarchs of a dying world. We share the fervent hope that humankind will embrace anew nature's "moral imperative".

Once again, the theatrical element is paramount. Crumb suggests, "impractically," that the music be "heard from afar, over a lake, on a moonlit evening in August". The scoring, employing two of man's oldest instruments, conjures up a primitive, timeless aura; there is a brief quotation from Debussy's *Syrinx*, interpolated into a passage for the flute that also calls for the performer to speak a few lines by the eighth-century Chinese poet Ssu-K'ung Shu, while still playing the instrument ("The moon goes down. There are shivering birds and withering grasses.")

Over a pianissississimo tremolo in the bass drum, the flute intones a Pan-like song that gradually grows ever more agitated. Sensing this, the drums respond to the flute's emotional state; they burst the bonds of the tremolo to punctuate the melodic line in barely controlled outbursts and send the flute skittering along in a flight of flutter-tongued fantasy. The hysteria soon subsides, the drums recede, and at the end nothing is left but the flute, musing softly on a pair of tritones - the devil's interval. In George Crumb's universe, the black angels are never far away. - *Michael Walsh*