

UNIVERSITY OF
WASHINGTON PERCUSSION
ENSEMBLE

with

CALARTS PERCUSSION
ENSEMBLE

Saturday, December 11th, 2020
7:30 pm, streaming video premiere
recorded throughout WA, CA, ID in-person and via network

UW MUSIC
2020-21 SEASON

PROGRAM

Situation III / Je, Tu, Nous (2016) _____ Anahita Abbasi

Sequoia (2019) _____ Yaz Lancaster

Continental Divide (1964) _____ David Rosenboom

Shapes for Percussion Trio (2016) _____ Elizabeth A. Baker

- I. Circles
- II. Squares
- III. Triangles

Composition 221 + 246 (1998/2000) _____ Anthony Braxton

Join us again tomorrow, Sunday, December 13th at 7 pm, for a second stream featuring an extended set of Anthony Braxton's music, hosted by the California Institute of the Arts and including University of Washington Percussion Ensemble alongside CalArts Percussion Ensemble and CalArts Improvisation Ensemble, directed by Tim Feeney:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID-pETCQr6c>

PROGRAM NOTES

Situation III / Je, Tu, Nous (2016)

Question of identity:

These instruments have at least one thing in common. They are all well-known in the repertoire for having “beautiful, pure, bright” sounds. In my opinion, everything in our daily lives consists of many layers. Any of these layers could reveal different kinds of identities/qualities. We can only perceive these different identities by changing the environment and habits of the norm. Different colors and qualities will come out and present themselves since they have been placed in an unknown situation.

In this piece, I am observing the behavior and attitude of three Individuals. By preparing the instruments, I am aiming to bring new characters, qualities and colors in front. In other words, I am changing their identities by changing the situations in which “things” happen. We can still hear that “pure” resonance, but also some “new” sounds as well:

Different shapes and colors of noises and layers.
Their reactions alone, or together as duo or as trio.
Could their quality and voice change?

It is an observation of how and if we are able to change the identities and at the same time a presentation of the idea that “anything could be beautiful & special & pleasant.” We are the ones who define everything around us, giving identities and labels. Nothing is ever fixed. Everything is changeable.

-Anahita Abbasi

website: <http://anahitaabbasi.com/>

Sequoia (2019)

This piece is about the recognition of biodiversity loss, through the specific and personal example of redwood trees. It is also about taking time to notice and appreciate nature around you, as this loss is happening.

Sequoioideae, popularly known as redwoods, are known for being the largest trees in the world. These trees can live for thousands of years. Threats include: logging, fire suppression, air pollution, and climate change. Since logging began in the 1850's, 95% of old-growth coast redwoods have been cut down.

For the performance of this piece, two of the performers (or two groups of performers) are required to first choose a spot in a natural location that they enjoy, and to record three minutes of sound in a single, continuous recording. These sounds will then be triggered at two points during the piece. If the piece is being performed outside, there is no need for the recordings at all.

-Yaz Lancaster

website: <https://www.yaz-lancaster.com/>

Continental Divide (1964)

As a youngster growing up in delicious solitude on an Illinois prairie farm, I frequently heard the colors of tritone drones flowering across the landscape. These tritones were from trains, train whistles tuned to tritones echoing from vast distances and for great stretches of time, sometimes shifting up and down with Doppler winds. But I knew Western musical literature and how in it tritones were considered burdened sonorities, their shoulders pressed down by the weight of ecumenical oppression, the diabolus in musica. It was demanded that they be quickly stamped out in urgently resolving cadences. Yet through the geometries of neatly planted, tall corn stalks, soaring with prosperity drawn from the prairie's black earth and rain, tritones from trains soared into heaven. I already knew that our inherited imperatives of harmonic progression could change when one listened to supposed dissonances for a long time. What if, I thought, we could listen to those heavenly tritones for a long, long time and slowly, slowly feel the simultaneously emerging joy of ascendancy and the repose of solidity in their resolutions. Our perceptions would change. So, I gave myself a challenge in the form of a musical koan, "How long can I take to resolve a tritone?"

Initially, while on a summer trip to the Great Divide in the Rocky Mountains, I made a sequence of pitches I thought I could use to affect such a slow resolution. But what could the musical plan be? The incessant clickety-claketing rhythms of trains on railroad tracks suggested repetitive patterns. Perhaps repeating rhythms could somehow move us from tritone horns to harmonic repose and resolution. While thinking about how the Great Divide separates water into streams, heading

either toward my homeland's Mississippi or to the Pacific, an idea was born of ascending upward while growing a pattern from a two-note, G-C# tritone into a chromatic, twelve note tapestry, stopping at the top to enjoy a celebratory fanfare, and then descending, while contracting and unraveling the pattern back down to just one note in the sunlight of D-major. Continental Divide—patterns at 14,000 feet came alive. Its evolution from there has been in the hands of creative musicians. (Continental Divide has been released on the CD, Life Field, by Tzadik.)

-David Rosenboom, 2015

website: <https://davidrosenboom.com/>

Shapes for Percussion Trio (rev. 2016) by The Honourable Elizabeth A. Baker and Anthony Braxton's **Composition 221 + 246** (1998/2000) close tonight's stream. While the earlier pieces on the program were performed in slightly non-traditional ways (via outdoor performance, or with more than six feet of distance between individual musicians who play while masked, to limit the risk of COVID-19 transmission), these last two performances were recorded by musicians collaborating from different rooms, cities, and time zones. Both of these works are also linked by their fabulously intricate and innovative notations. In individual ways, each score is a hybrid of both graphic and traditional notation, balancing strict parameters with an openness that thrives in our virtual environment.

New Renaissance Artist Elizabeth A. Baker's score presents each of the three musicians an opportunity to create and realize a unique path through literal shapes comprised of numbers. First internalizing the directives corresponding to specific numbers (for example, a roll, a drone, a very specific notated rhythm, a grunt or stomp, etc.), performers are free to plot and follow a course along instructions laid out on the page in intersecting circles, squares, and triangles. While the duration of individual actions can be somewhat subjective, the challenge lies in remaining open to the sounds others make throughout their own journeys, choosing to ignore or welcome subsequent layers. Tonight's version explores these layers via video editing and audio mixing by DMA student Scott Farkas, who also created the illustrations that help to unify the movements.

Our preparation of Anthony Braxton's music was a true exercise in resiliency. More than a month passed before everyone in the ensemble was able to hear and see via our networked connection. One musician always seemed to have lawn maintenance happening outside their window at the exact moment of tracking on Tuesday afternoons. Many of us (myself included) found ourselves in quarantine away from instruments or critical pieces of technology. Some experiments and ideas lead to great sounds, while others lead to chaos, clipping, and distortion. To mitigate these struggles, students recorded and submitted realizations of some of Braxton's supplemental material, just to keep working. It's in these recordings (which you will hear, but not see; Tim Feeney is triggering them live during the set) that we have the possibility of simultaneity and Braxton's signature "layered music" strategies. Tonight's performance is grounded in a system of conduction signals and glyphs that the composer calls Language Music and is embedded in all of his work.

Braxton believes creative thinking cannot be reduced to dichotomies, but must embrace multiple perspectives. For instance, this music is not only composed or improvised, but also includes intuition. Experiencing this intuitive process together with the students and Tim, during a time in which many musicians feel disconnected due to our radically-altered present, has been the highlight of my quarter. Forgetting where and "when" I was during these sessions felt like a gift. Braxton aptly writes: "We must not only consider the past and the present, but also the future. It is not always this or that, it is often the other."

-Bonnie Whiting, December 2020

Elizabeth A. Baker website: <https://elizabethabaker.com/>

Anthony Braxton/TriCentric website: <https://tricentricfoundation.org/about>

MUSICIANS

UW Percussion Ensemble:

Connor Aksama

Ryan Baker

Aaron Michael Butler
Calib Byers
Scott Farkas
Jakob Fortiner
Cyrus Graham
Jonathan Rodriguez
Sophia Schmidt
Yolanda Yang
Yongyun Zhang

Bonnie Whiting, Director

CalArts Percussion Ensemble:

Morgan Alford
Henry Delargy
Margo Harms
Eric Lennartson

Tim Feeney, Director

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Braxton

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The University of Washington School of Music and Director JoAnn Taricani

