



BELMONT UNIVERSITY

School of Music

presents



GRADUATE RECITAL
MCAFEE CONCERT HALL

JUNE 30, 2021

10:00 A.M.

Kramer Sell

Percussion

“Improvisation” from *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani*

E. Carter
(1908-2012)

Prelude for Timpani and Percussion

S. Carullo
(b. 1997)

4/2/1965

J. Spearman
(b. 1995)

Frog’s Magnum Opus

K. Sell
(b. 1993)

Wind in the Bamboo Grove

K. Abe
(b. 1937)

To Varèse

J. Tompkins
(b. 1970)

As One

G. Koshinski
(b. 1980)

Support Musicians

Joseph Spearman, percussion

Grace Sell, narration

Kramer Sell is a student of Dr. Christopher Norton.
This recital is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Music in Instrumental Performance.



Program Notes

Elliott Carter's *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani* is for many percussionists the most heralded and acclaimed solo timpani composition. The *Pieces* explore the vast spectrum of timpani techniques and colors. The fifth solo in the collection, "**Improvisation**" (1949), is dedicated to esteemed percussionist Paul Price and incorporates Carter's trademark metric modulations, complex rhythms, dramatic dynamics, and different playing areas on the head (edge, normal, and center). The explosive opening phrase furnishes material for numerous motivic variations and iconic metric modulations. Carter, one of the most respected composers of the second half of the twentieth century, "blended the achievements of European modernism and American 'ultra-modernism' into a unique style of surging rhythmic vitality, intense dramatic contrast, and innovative facture," remarks Grove Music scholars Schiff and Porcaro.

Prelude for Timpani and Percussion (2019), by Sam Carullo, features bongos, bass drum, timpani, crotales, and wood blocks. Carullo, "looking to write music that is audience-engaging but challenging for the performer," composed this solo to add to the surprisingly short list of advanced, recital-appropriate solo timpani works. Carullo, formerly my classmate at Belmont University, now attends Peabody Conservatory as a Master's candidate in percussion; with published works to his credit, he is constantly considering his next composition.

4/2/1965 (2021), a duet for vibraphone and multi-percussion by Belmont alumnus Joseph Spearman, realizes a boyhood poem by Joseph's father, Robert "Bob" Spearman. Joseph Spearman explains, "each musical section reflects a couplet within the actual poem. I generated the material within the vibraphone part from my Dad's name, the date of the poem's composition, and ideas from improvisations and timbral exploration." Spearman is currently a Graduate Teaching Associate in Music Theory and Aural Skills at The Ohio State University; as a DMA candidate in Percussion, he also serves as an Assistant Director of the OSU Percussion Ensemble. Spearman's current interests include commissioning and composing works for percussion which involve stories in their processes or performance. Mr. Spearman will accompany this duet.

*Night is full of pretty strange things
Unlike the day when the big bell rings
When big ghosts come out and say "BOO!"
You might hear an owl say "WHOOO!"
But not in the day when you see all sorts of things
When these things sing and ring
In the night when the bullfrogs dive
The bees that we own do not stir in the hive
Night is full of pretty strange things
Unlike the day when the big bell rings*

"Dear Toad, I am glad that you are my best friend. Your best friend, Frog." "The Letter" from *Frog and Toad Are Friends*, written and illustrated by Arnold Lobel, inspired me to compose **Frog's Magnum Opus** (2020) for former Belmont University colleague Joseph Spearman to play at elementary school performances in Ohio. Composed in four movements, my wife Grace Sell, a first-grade teacher, will read the story while I accompany on snare drum and wooden frog (notched

guiro). The percussion accompaniment musically represents Frog's and Toad's emotional responses throughout the narrative. The percussion writing incorporates a variety of implements (sticks, brushes, guiro stick) and embodies jazz, orchestral, commercial, and rudimental styles.

Wind in the Bamboo Grove (1984), by Keiko Abe, is distinguished as one of Abe's earliest marimba solos and was ultimately published as part of her *Works for Marimba*. Born in Tokyo in 1937, Abe's compositional style contains elements from Western and Japanese traditions. The solo reflects feelings and sensations Abe experienced when visiting a bamboo forest. In the field of percussion, Keiko Abe is regarded as one of the most important and influential marimba performers in history, and her contributions as a marimbist, commissioner of new works, composer, instrument design consultant, and educator are immense and far-reaching.

Joseph Tompkins questioned, "why not combine French and American rudiments in one setting?" Tompkins' **To Varèse** (2013) is a quintessential example of his juxtaposition of French and American rudimental styles. He cites, "obviously, this piece is inspired by Edgard Varèse's *Ionisation*, specifically built on a variation of the main snare drum motif from that seminal work." Distinctively, although based upon the snare drum source material, it functions as a multi-percussion solo because of its instrumentation of bass drum, floor tom, snare drum, tambourin, foot cabasa, foot tambourine, and optional siren.

As One (2007), by Gene Koshinski, casts two multi-percussionists in mirrored set-ups of marimba, bongos, congas, toms, bass drum, and splash cymbals. The visual design is highlighted by the closely hocketed rhythms throughout the piece. The composer states: "Both performers have identical set-ups and work 'as one' by complementing each other." The Percussive Arts Society's review acclaims: "Jaw-dropping virtuosity and a flair for the unexpected is why Gene Koshinski has delighted audiences worldwide with his dynamic performances and creative programming."