

THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, THEATRE AND DANCE PRESENTS

AN EVENING OF PERCUSSION

TIMBRE

SPF
22

SALISBURY PERCUSSION
FESTIVAL 2022

DIRECTED BY ERIC SHUSTER

Thursday, April 21, 2022

7:30 p.m.

Holloway Hall Auditorium

Salisbury
UNIVERSITY
www.salisbury.edu



PROGRAM

An Evening of Percussion

TIMBRE

*When Shall We Three Meet Again** (2022).....Alexa Letourneau (b. 1998)

I. In Thunder

II. Or In Rain

III. Lightning


Lift Off (1968).....Russell Peck (1945 - 2009)

Double Music (1941)John Cage (1912 - 1992)

Lou Harrison (1917 - 2003)

Gravity (2013)Marc Mellits (b. 1966)

*Composed for the Salisbury University Percussion Ensemble

A dark background with faint, overlapping musical notation, including staves and notes, creating a textured effect.

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PERSONNEL

Salisbury University Percussion Ensemble

Eric Shuster, Director

Eric Gehl

Sophomore, Music - Education (Baltimore, MD)

Lilandra Hayes

Freshman, Theatre (Salisbury, MD)

Chris Lankford

Junior, Clarke Honors College, Music - Performance and Political Science (Milford, DE)

Donnell Robinson

Sophomore, Clarke Honors College, Music - Education (Suitland, MD)

The **Salisbury University Percussion Ensemble**, directed by Eric Shuster, presents new, classic and underperformed works for percussion in the spirit of the genre's experimental roots in 1930s and '40s America. The ensemble, made up of music majors and non-majors, has a tradition of collaborating with faculty, students and guest artists in the creation of new pieces and has been featured at the Percussive Arts Society MD/DE Day of Percussion. In addition to their semi-annual "Evening of Percussion" programs, the ensemble co-presents an annual Friday Drums concert with the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) Percussion Ensemble and appears regularly for New Music Salisbury events. The ensemble was formed in 2012 to celebrate the 100th birthday of avant-garde composer and early percussion innovator John Cage.



PROGRAM

PROGRAM NOTES

By Eric Shuster

This is a program about timbre (rhymes with amber) and serves as a compliment to tomorrow evening's program [Tambor Fantasma performs Michael Gordon's *Timber*]. As timbre relates inherently to the materials and construction of instruments, I sought to explore some of the raw materials of percussion – skin, metal, wood – and the sound worlds emanating from them. Placed at the heart of the program, *Lift Off* and *Double Music* are classic explorations in skins and metals, respectively; the latter being an unusual example of collaboration in concert music (the Dadaist “exquisite corpse” comes to mind) and a sort-of “double” on the Indonesian gamelan. Despite both pieces being orchestrated for instruments of indefinite pitch, each work demonstrates a lyrical quality that becomes apparent when homogeneous sound sources are multiplied, be it three tom-toms or five brake drums. The bookends of the program highlight timbre through contrasting means. Alexa Letourneau's *When Shall We Three Meet Again*, commissioned by and composed for the Salisbury University Percussion Ensemble, explores all these materials in combination and further illuminates each one by considering how different mallets and playing areas can provide a subtle change in texture (learn more about Letourneau and the piece below). Finally, *Gravity* is a tour-de-force for vibraphones and marimbas. Stemming from a single ‘D’ note, a moving line emerges and transforms across the metal and wooden keyboards.

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Q&A WITH COMPOSER ALEXA LETOURNEAU



Did you approach the piece with a particular goal in mind?

In writing this piece, I wanted to explore different timbres and combinations of sounds in a way that married intensity with playfulness. Writing for players who are willing to take on a technical challenge while also exploring unusual techniques and experiments is a really unique and joyful opportunity for a composer to get, so I wanted to make the most of this collaboration. I tried to really dig in and make a piece that displayed different types of virtuosity while still leaving room for personality and expression to shine through, and also being fun to play – hopefully that comes across in the music!

What have been your influences and how did you get to this point in your work?

As someone who has remained active as a performer while pursuing composition, I think my biggest influences are the pieces I'm performing. Even though I certainly don't play every instrument I've ever written for, I learn so much from digging into the works of other composers across many different time periods, ensembles and musical backgrounds. Maybe it's surprising to hear from a "new music" composer, but one of the most influential of these musical traditions for me is early music, from the Medieval, Renaissance and Early Baroque. There's so much richness and complexity to the music of these past eras, and I love expressing these qualities with



PROGRAM

the current conception of tonality and modern instruments. I think a huge part of getting to where I am with my compositions has been founded on embracing the idea that I can write music that I like, using techniques from the music that I like hearing and performing, without the expectation that every new piece has to be something 100% innovative in order to have value.


Do you see your work along a tradition?

I've thought a lot about this question, and the answer is equal parts yes and no. On one hand, I don't think my music could exist without all of the music that came before me, and in that sense, it exists as a continuation of a musical tradition. However, I think that contemporary "classical" music (emphasis on the quotes around "classical") is a genre that is undergoing a process of much needed diversification across multiple facets of its existence and my music exists within this nebulous space. I make some work to be performed on a stage in front of an audience, but I also make work that is intended to be collaborative with the consumer and work that is presented online. I draw from traditions of early music and many Western Classical composers who have come before me, such as Bach or Tchaikovsky, but I also take a great deal from pop, punk, EDM and musical traditions from around the world. Where does that leave me? It's hard to say exactly. All I know is I try to make music that feels genuine to me, the music that I enjoy and the emotions I'm trying to express.

What was this collaboration process like?

This collaboration process was really exciting, and I learned so much! Getting to work with players is really the "why" behind my compositional practice, and I couldn't be more thrilled with how this piece came to be. In working with a group of people who put so much care into preparing my music, I learned so much about writing for percussion, and this piece was truly a collaborative effort. One of the greatest gifts a composer can have is a team of performers who put their heart and soul into the music, and who are also open to telling you when something doesn't work or could be done in a more effective way. This collaborative process was a prime example of this nourishing and symbiotic relationship.

Alexa Letourneau (b. 1998) is New York-based composer currently pursuing a master's degree in music composition, studying with Missy Mazzoli at the Mannes School of Music.

A dark background featuring a faint, stylized musical score with various notes and clefs.

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UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

SPF 22 – Tambor Fantasma

Friday, April 22

Holloway Hall Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

SPF 22 – World Drum Experience

Saturday, April 23

Holloway Hall Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

Piano & Strings Recital

Friday, April 29

Holloway Hall Auditorium, 2 p.m.

Mud by María Irene Fornés

Thursday-Sunday, May 5-8*

Fulton Hall, Black Box, 7:30 p.m. & 2 p.m.*

University & Salisbury Chorales

Present Celestial Spheres

Saturday, May 7

Holloway Hall Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

Salisbury Pops Concert

Tuesday, May 10

Holloway Hall Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

Jazz Ensemble Concert

Thursday, May 12

Holloway Hall Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

Salisbury Symphony Orchestra

Presents Rhapsody in Bloom With Cellist Suren Petrosyan

Saturday, May 14

Holloway Hall Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

Salisbury Youth Orchestra

Thursday, May 19

Holloway Hall Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

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Brooke Church, *Department of Music, Theatre and Dance*
Shawn Stone, *Department of Music, Theatre and Dance*
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Department of Music, Theatre and Dance Fulton School of Liberal Arts

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