

Dreams of Around the World Program Notes

Overview

This recital marks a significant transition in my life as I begin my career in ethnomusicology. Traveling around the world and learning music from all kinds of cultures has been a long-time dream of mine. Although I have never been to Brazil, Ghana, or India, I am performing music either originating from or heavily influenced by these traditions in this recital. Because of my lack of experience in these parts of the world, I do not claim to present an authentic representation of these traditions. My study and performance of these works is intended to function as a stepping stone for me to begin understanding this music in hopes that one day I will have the privilege of studying these traditions in their original, authentic contexts from native masters.

The *pandeiro* is a versatile tambourine-like frame drum used in various styles of Brazilian music such as samba, choro, and capoeira. **Marcos Suzano** (b. 1963) has been internationally renowned as one of the foremost innovators of the instrument. He revolutionized the way that the pandeiro can be played through various modern techniques, thus bringing the pandeiro to stand as an instrument capable of both accompaniment and virtuosic solos in an incredibly wide variety of styles. **“Jungle Samba”** (2017) was recorded for the Universal Pandeiro project, and showcases many of these modern techniques on pandeiro, specifically: pitch bending, finger rolls, flams, and all possible tones played with both the front and back of the hand.

Gary Burton (b. 1943), creator of the “Burton” 4-mallet grip and 7-time Grammy Award winner, is the most well known vibraphone player in the world. He has been a major proponent of the instrument as well as an innovator in jazz and music education. Burton taught at the Berklee College of Music for more than 30 years and performed since the 1950s with other world-class musicians such as Chick Corea, Stan Getz, and Pat Metheny, just to name a few. His rendition of Antônio Carlos Jobim’s **“Chega de Saudade (No More Blues)”** from the Grammy-winning album *Alone At Last* is one of the most famous solo vibraphone recordings to date. The recording and transcription serve as excellent references for Burton’s skills in improvisation, comping, reharmonization, and phrasing on the vibraphone.

Caroline Shaw (b. 1982) became the youngest person to ever win the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2013 for her groundbreaking work *Partita for 8 Voices*. She has also won several Grammy Awards and holds an honorary doctorate from Yale. **“Boris Kerner”** (2017) is a unique duet for pitched flower pots and cello, and features a number of musical attributes characteristic of Shaw’s style such as notated timbral distinctions, microtonality, and sections of improvisation. Given that each section of this work begins calmly and ends in frustration, its mood to me feels reminiscent of road rage, or the gradually increasing irritation of walking behind someone who is too slow, yet just fast enough to avoid being passed.

“Boris S. Kerner lives in Stuttgart and is the author of ‘Introduction to Modern Traffic Flow Theory’ and ‘Control: The Long Road to Three-Phase Traffic Theory.’ This piece... is another in a series of expositions on the curious phrase ‘the detail of the pattern is movement.’” - Caroline Shaw

Aurél Holló (b. 1966) is a Hungarian percussionist and composer, and original member of the legendary Amadinda Percussion Group, which has performed all around the world. He is also a passionate educator; he has taught at the Béla Bartók Conservatory, Budapest’s premiere music high school, since 1996, and has conducted numerous masterclasses across Hungary and abroad. “**Cricket Tala**” (2017) is his first and only composition for solo percussion to date.

“In Part Two, the percussionist moves to a colorful setup of drums complemented by wood, bamboo, metal, and glass instruments. Once the tape track begins, he speaks in simple *konnakol* patterns while playing rhythmic permutations over various metric cycles, (*tala* in Indian music). Cricket and cicada sounds mark the *tala* (*Khanda Chapu* 5/4, *Misra Chapu* 7/4, etc.) as the rhythmic phrases move through slower and faster iterations. After reaching a climax, there is a brief moment of rest in the musical process as the sound world transforms. Out of this hazy atmosphere, a fast dulcimer melody in the tape track signals the beginning of the final section. The pulsation of this virtuosic coda, accompanied by a variety of percussive effects and dulcimer samples, propels the music towards its ecstatic ending.” - Aurél Holló

In a conversation with Holló upon our meeting at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention in 2022, I asked him how he had learned about various musical cultures from around the world and how he integrated them into his compositions for Amadinda and for “Cricket Tala.” He explained that he had never traveled to these places to study this music, but rather listened to recordings and read about it through published ethnomusicological research or other online sources. From the recordings he created a soundworld in his mind which functioned as a color palette from which he could paint with musically.

Bernard Woma (1966-2018) of the Dagara people in the upper west region of Ghana was born with his hands clenched in fists, a sign that he was destined to become a *gyil* player. He became an internationally renowned musician as he grew older and founded both the Saakumu Dance Troupe of Ghana and the Dagara Music Center. These organizations enabled him to share his traditions with the world and teach Ghanaian and foreign students about traditional art forms in order to preserve them and promote their embedded values. More information about Bernard’s monumental impact on the world can be found at <http://www.dagaramusic.org/bernard-woma/>. The *gyil* is a Ghanaian xylophone with gourds hung loosely underneath as resonators. Due to sympathetic vibrations, these gourds produce a “buzzing” sound as the instrument is struck. Bewaa is a popular dance from the Dagara tradition, and it is still constantly evolving. Bernard arranged these Jirapa style songs specifically for foreigners beginning their study of the *gyil* because of their simple meter. Although precise translations are not available, Dr. Michael Vercelli provided interpretations of the song lyrics:

Songs

“To Me Na”

To me na, te to me na, te to me na
Te saa yir puo
To me na, te to me na, te to me na
Te saa yir puo

“Saa Be Waa Na”

Saa be waa na yee
Be waa na yee
Saa be waa yee
Be waa na te na koi

Interpretations

“That is our work in our father’s house”
Everyone must work to the best of their
abilities

“There is no rain for us to farm”
An excuse to relax and dance

Gordon Stout (b. 1952) is a Professor Emeritus at the School of Music, Ithaca College, Ithaca, N.Y., where he taught from 1980 through 2019. A composer as well as percussionist who specializes on marimba, he has studied composition with Joseph Schwantner, Samuel Adler and Warren Benson, and percussion with James Salmon and John Beck. “**Never Less the Same**” (2018) was composed for Eriko Daimo, and it was described to me like this in conversation:

“The title has something to do with the process of using the same materials somewhat consistently, putting it through all kinds of variations, so it is always different but never less the same... I sometimes describe it as like ‘Sedimental Structures’, but more complex and definitely more difficult.” - Gordon Stout

All of the themes in this piece relate in one way or another, and it ends with a sublimely satisfying resolution which, whenever I experience it, affirms for me the fact that humans are remarkable. No matter where people may be from or what their background may be, the respect that they—along with their art, music, and culture—deserve is “never less the same.”