



School of Music  
University of Missouri

2020-2021 Series | Student Ensemble

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# University Percussion Ensemble

Connor Stevens, director

March 3, 2021 | 7:00pm  
Online Event

## Program

*Refrakt* (2019) ..... **Andrea Venet**

*Table Top Indie Schlock* (2019) ..... **Niko D. Schroeder**

*Marimba Quartet* (2020) ..... **Brant Blackard**

I. The Apples are Dead

II. Rain

III. Winter Light

*Okho* (1989) ..... **Iannis Xenakis**

*Joy Boy* (1974) ..... **Julius Eastman**

Transcribed by Justin Lamb

## Program Notes

### ***Refrakt (2019)***

Often inspired by elements of nature that involve motion and color, such as water and light, I draw parallels between these elements on how I perceive and write music. The word refract refers to the change of direction of a ray of light when it enters at an angle through things like water, air, or glass. In the marimba quartet, performers share registral and harmonic roles, while motives are passed around the ensemble within a homogenous texture and similar range. Despite moments of specific, maintained musical color, spatial motion is generated, as if light is bouncing off a surface and abruptly changes direction, yet remains contained in a perceivable way to the listener. In other instances, musical lines are presented and then repeated with a different character by another player, with more distinct soloistic focus.

In many ways I also relate elements of the piece to water based on harmony and rhythmic motion. While *Refrakt* is not exclusively a programmatic piece about the ocean or light, water is a conductor of light reflection and refraction and facilitates motion. My favorite example as it associates with this concept is the concluding musical section in *Refrakt*. After reaching a harmonic modulation to a major key using the minor-key motivic material from the beginning of the work, the tempo drives forward relentlessly, as if something in the depths of the dark ocean is quickly ascending through increasing brightness as it strives to touch daylight at the surface.

- Andrea Venet

### ***Table Top Indie Schlock (2019)***

*Table Top Indie Schlock* was written to get to the bottom of two simple questions. First, how do the stereotypes of recent indie music fit onto the unpitched percussion table. Second, just how expressively can the folks in *So Percussion* play glass bottles?

- Niko Schroeder

### ***Marimba Quartet (2020)***

I began writing this marimba quartet while temporarily teaching at Virginia Tech University in the Fall of 2019. While living away from family and friends, I spent my spare time binge-watching movies. Consequently, each movement title has a cinematic association for me. The first movement was inspired by 1973's *The Wicker Man*, directed by Robin Hardy; *Rain* is inspired by the films of Akira Kurosawa and his frequent use of rain to depict specific emotional states; the third movement is inspired by the 1963 Ingmar Bergman film of the same name.

- Brant Blackard

### ***Okho (1989)***

*Okho* was composed in 1989 and is dedicated to the French percussion ensemble *Trio le Cercle*. According to Xenakis, he wrote the piece for 3 djembes and a large bass drum after visiting the trio in their studio, where he was introduced to the instrument. The piece was commissioned with the support of the French government for the celebration of the bicentenary of the French Revolution. Some scholars have suggested that the use of instruments from western Africa is an ironic reference to or even a criticism of French colonialism, though Xenakis did not state such intentions explicitly.

The piece calls for players to create the 3 fundamental tones on djembe (bass, open, and slap tones) that are played open (resonating) and closed (muted). One section of the piece calls for players to use sticks, a departure from the traditional techniques of the instrument, and for other sections to be played at the edge of the drum head. As well, Xenakis indicates specific dynamic intensities that appropriately match each tone. In this way, the characteristics and traditional techniques of the djembe are extremely important. *Okho* is as much a result of the djembe as it is of Xenakis.

- Connor Stevens

### ***Joy Boy* (1974)**

Downtown composer Julius Eastman's works are receiving a much-deserved resurgence in modern canonical repertoires. Eastman's brilliantly transgressive pieces challenge not only the notion of a composer-performer boundary, but also conceptions of fixed styles and genres. Commissioned by the Composers' Forum in Albany, New York, Eastman's *Joy Boy* was premiered on November 6th, 1974 by contemporary classical music group S.E.M. Ensemble. Notably, this release occurred during one of Eastman's most compositionally active years (1974), in which he would also release two other large-scale works, *Feminine* and *Masculine*. Written for four treble voices, *Joy Boy* is similar to Eastman's other compositions during this period in that much of the piece contains improvisatory sections in which the musicians become part of the compositional process. The potential for interplay between each treble part creates a vast variety of textural and timbral choices for performers within the sonic space. The musicians create an ever-evolving sound environment that is subject to change during every performance of the piece. In this way, no two performances of *Joy Boy* are ever alike, or experienced by audiences in exactly the same manner. Indeed, the experience of both performing and listening to *Joy Boy* provides a picture of an artist who consistently pushed the boundaries of shaping and creating improvisatory structures of sound.

- Destiny Meadows

## **Personnel**

Riley Berens  
Justin Cupps  
Zachary Davis  
Liz Fetzer  
Chris Fusco  
Will Garstang  
Emory Garten  
Jeremiah Ingram  
Stephen Landy  
Mac McPike  
Emily Miclon  
Jordan Murray  
Jordan Nielsen  
Savannah Wittman