

University of Missouri School of Music

Master's Recital • 2023-2024 Series

Mary Emmons, percussion

Saturday, October 28 • 2:00 PM • Sheryl Crow Hall

Program

**Denotes recommended earplug use.*

**Monkey Chant (2003)* Glenn Kotche

***Depictions of violence*

Particle Wave (2020) Kirsten Volness

- I. *Illumination*
- II. *Smolder & Glow*

**Non-Prophets (2020)* Caleb Pickering

***Audience advisory: religious content and adult language*

See Ya Thursday (1993) Steven Mackey

**Spine (2015)* Michael Laurello

Miles Bohlman, percussion
Sarah Hasekamp, percussion
Olivia Sletteland, piano

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music degree in percussion performance. Mary Emmons is a student of Dr. Megan Arns and Dr. Julia Gaines.

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Program Notes

Monkey Chant (2003) Glenn Kotche

Monkey Chant was written in 2003 by experimental composer and Wilco drummer Glenn Kotche. Kotche was inspired to write this work after hearing Balinese field recordings from the Nonesuch Explorer Series. Taking inspiration from the rhythms of Balinese Kecak (chant representing the monkey army of the Ramayana epic) and the colotomic structure of Balinese Gamelan, Kotche was able to translate these styles to the drum kit. In addition to the drum kit, various gongs, an amplified kalimba, crotales, a loop pedal, and an amplified prepared snare drum are used. The prepared snare drum features a head with holes drilled into it to house large springs, small springs (ala doorstop), wires, a wooden dowel, and friction sticks to create unique sounds to aid in the storytelling.

The composer writes:

“This is a loose retelling, through percussion, of the Monkey Army’s battle from the Hindu epic *Ramayana* tale. This version follows the narrative of this story, often attempting a literal representation of certain parts such as some character interactions. At other times liberties are taken, metaphorically representing events like the final battle between Rama and Ravana. Specific sounds or voices from parts of the drum kit play the roles of the main characters.”

The Ramayana, dating back to ca. 200 B.C.E., tells the story of Prince Rama and his quest to rescue his wife Sita from her kidnapper, demon-king Ravana. The events of the epic suggested by this percussive retelling include:

1. Exchange between Ravana and Sita
2. Battle begins between the Monkey Army and Indrajit with Ravana’s Army...
3. ...devastation on both sides
4. Battle continues. Monkey Army is overwhelmed by poison arrows.
5. Ravana’s invisible demons attack Monkey Army and kill thousands.
6. To prevent retreat, Hanuman decries “Victory to Rama!” Hanuman smashes the skull of every visible enemy and challenges the demons.
7. Monkey Army rallies behind Hanuman; more monkeys join forces.
8. Aggressive exchange between Monkey Army and the invisible Indrajit
9. Rama’s shock and helplessness
10. Ravana tells Hanuman that the battle has been lost.
11. Hanuman flies to Kailasa Mountain to retrieve healing herbs.
12. Rama embraces Hanuman for his devotion.
13. Hanuman- “Victory to Rama!”
14. Rama and Hanuman kill Indrajit
15. Ravana and Rama battle, Rama answers each of Ravana’s attacks
16. Rama kneels to pray to the sun, feels his strength return, and is joyous.
17. The final battle. Ravana charges Rama, Rama kills Ravana.
18. Sita’s anticipation for Rama, his love and sorrow for her,
19. Rama, with mixed emotions, declares “We shall return home to Ayodhya.”

The following lists the main characters and the sounds by which they are represented:

Rama

- The seventh incarnation of the Hindu God Vishnu (protagonist)
- Wires and friction stick on the prepared drum head and all of the drums in the final section

Sita

- Rama’s wife and the heroine
- Friction stick on the prepared drum head

Hanuman

- Monkey general and ally of Rama
- Large pull-springs on the prepared drum head

Ravana

- Ten-headed king of the Rakshasa (demons) from Lanka (antagonist)
- Small spring clusters on prepared drum head

Indrajit

- Son of Ravana
- Hi-hit when struck

Monkey Army

- Represented by drums (both the chanting ostinato and rhythmic melodies)

Particle Wave (2020)Kirsten Volness
 (birth-death)

- I. *Illumination*
- II. *Smolder & Glow*

Kirsten Volness is an internationally known composer specializing in electro-acoustic music and known for creating music that is “sublimely intimate and emotive soundscapes that inspire immersive listening.”

Particle Wave was commissioned for the Electronic Integration Project by Jordan T. Walsh and the consortium members. The piece utilizes both live and fixed electronics. Microphones are used for *Illumination* to feed the sounds of the vibraphone into MaxXP. The Max patch is controlled by a foot pedal that triggers delay and reverb effects. *Smolder & Glow* uses a fixed track that the performer plays along with in an approximate manner.

The composer writes:

“*Particle Wave* is an invocation celebrating light and the particle-wave duality that characterizes photons. It was written during a particularly dark time of isolation in the pandemic, overdue social unrest related to the Black Lives Matter movement, the rise of facism around the world, and the unprecedented wildfires that destroyed nearby communities and made the air unsafe to breathe for weeks here in Portland, OR. A lot depends on what you observe when and how, and there is always a flipside.”

Non-Prophets (2020)..... Caleb Pickering

*Audience advisory: religious content and adult language

Caleb Pickering is percussionist, composer, and educator based in Corpus Christi, TX. Known for his use of electronic tapes and technical, virtuosic compositions, Pickering's work for snare drum and tape, *Non-Prophets*, is no exception.

The composer writes:

"The tape is comprised of real televangelist and internet pastors. The piece is separated into three parts. The first section is more aggressive and rhythmically challenging, and addresses the absurd nature of televangelism. The middle section is played entirely with brushes and addresses the predatory nature of televangelists, especially their ability to trick desperate people into giving money to them with nothing in return. The third section is a return to the concept of televangelists absurdity, but now to a ludicrous level."

"*Non-Prophets* is a (not-so-subtle) pun on the non-profit status of some churches with malicious agenda, and also points out the hypocrisy of television pastors who can scam desperate people out of money, making these pastors the furthest thing from a 'prophet' in the evangelical sense."

Having grown up in the heart of the Bible Belt, I was exposed to Christianity in most all aspects of my life. I grew up going to church every Sunday and most Wednesdays with my family and prayed at the dinner table, but church also permeated my life at school, my friendships, everything. Extracurricular activities were scheduled around church events: church always came first for the majority of people. Though I attended church and grew up as a practicing Methodist, this was not the case for me. Church was important to my family, but not a priority. On a personal level, the priority could not have been lower. I disliked going to church from a very young age as I was already questioning the existence of god or a higher power of any sort. Church did not serve me, especially as I grew older and discovered my queerness; this was a very isolating feeling that has stuck with me to this very day. I also found a great deal of hypocrisy in the church. My parents believe in a Christian god but still embrace facts and science. While some may find this to be hypocritical, I found the most hypocrisy in the social systems placed in the church— serving for merit in the community rather than the good will of others or loving all but only all that are like them. Though I wasn't directly affected by the absurdity and hypocrisy of televangelists, I still find personal connection with the subject as I found myself isolated by the community I was living in for 23 years. Performing this piece is important to me as it is one of the few times in my life I've encountered something that recognizes the same absurdity that I have seen for as long as I can remember.

***See Ya Thursday* (1993) Steven Mackey**

See Ya Thursday was commissioned by New Music Marimba, Percussive Arts Society, William Moersh, Nancy Zeltsman, and Robert Van Sice. The consortium was made possible by a grant provided by the Meet the Composer/Reader's Digest Commissioning Program in partnership with the National Endowment of the Arts and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. Steven Mackey is a GRAMMY-winning American composer and guitarist. Mackey is a highly sought after composer based in Princeton, NJ and takes much influence from the music of Thelonius Monk. This such inspiration was used in writing *See Ya Thursday*— a sort of theme and variations but is ultimately through-composed.

The composer writes:

"The basic continuity line of the piece is as follows: The opening tremolo sputters, falters and splinters into fragments, notably slow, two-note left hand bass pattern. This begins as the tritone D-Ab, then

develops into an alternation of two harmonies implied by the major tenth (E-G#) and twelfth (C-G). The bulk of the piece is a series of free episodes/variations built on this pattern. Toward the end, a variation of this pattern supports an ostinato that had been suggested a few times during the course of the piece but not taken up until the end.”

“I love to tell stories. If the storyteller is good, it doesn’t really matter what the story is; it could be an emotionally neutral personal anecdote. Yet, something about the storyteller’s inflection, tone, rhythm, techniques for changing venue, techniques for quoting characters, accents, dialects, etc.-- the music of telling– makes it an experience.

I also love to listen to Thelonius Monk– what a storyteller he is! Any piece he plays more about his playing than it is about the piece. He stumbles up and down the keyboard with a kind of intelligent incompetence that reminds me a little of the way the 70s comedian Norm Crosby stumbled through the English language. Or is that a ‘fig newton’ of my imagination?

Believe it or not, I think that knowing those things about me will help prepare you to listen to *See Ya Thursday*. Another thing to keep in mind is that *See Ya Thursday* is written for a five-octave marimba. Just think, the lowest note is a piece of wood that makes the same pitch as the lowest note of the cello! The size of the instrument means that negotiating the contours of *See Ya Thursday* requires some subtle and moderately entertaining choreography from the marimbist.

You may be curious about the title. There is an anecdote that I tell (and listen to) frequently which has the phrase “see ya Thursday” as a sort of *idee fixe*. I didn’t set out to chronicle the week (Thursday to Thursday) that is celebrated in the anecdote. It is more my intention to reflect the informal charm of the telling and listening.”

***Spine* (2015) Michael Laurello**

Michael Laurello is a composer and recording engineer based in Northwest Ohio and was commissioned to write *Spine* in 2015 by the Yale Percussion Group. The same group premiered the quartet the same year at Carnegie Hall. In addition to a variety of percussion instruments, piano is used in this work. The piano is amplified to balance to the powerful drums and also uses blu-tack on select strings to create a “deadened pizzicato-type sound.”

The composer writes:

“A single line runs through most of the piece, and virtually all of the musical material is derived from it. This meta-line, performed by Percussion 1, serves as the ‘spine’ of the music, both in structural terms (backbone), but also with respect to the line’s perceived control over the direction and progression of the music (central nervous system). The material played by the supporting members of the quartet colors and punctuates the line. Over the course of the work, players drift in and out of agreement with one another, and occasionally the primary line loses its unique identity within the texture of the ensemble. I tried to impart an almost biological sense to the way the motive grows, attempting to balance intuitive, almost improvisatory, types of development with more structured patterns and processes. *Spine* is dedicated to the players of the Yale Percussion Group for their unwavering support.”