TO THE EARTH (1985)
BY FREDERIC RZEWSKI (B.1938)
TEXT: HOMERIC HYMN
Performed by Bonnie Whiting Smith
Availability: http://icking-music-archive.org/ByComposer/Rzewski.php

“To the Earth” was written in 1985 at the request of the percussionist Jan Williams. Williams asked for a piece using small percussion instruments that could be easily transported. I decided to use four flower pots. Not only do they have a beautiful sound but they don’t have to be carried around at all: in every place where one plays the piece, they can be bought for a total cost of about one dollar.

The text, recited by the percussionist, is that of the pseudo-homeric hymn “To The Earth Mother of All,” probably written in the seventh century B.C. This simple poem is a prayer to Gaia—goddess of the Earth. The Earth is a myth, both ancient and modern. For us today as well, it appears increasingly as something fragile. Because of its humanly altered metabolism, it is rapidly becoming a symbol of the precarious human condition. In this piece the flower pots are intended to convey this sense of fragility.

The writing of this piece was triggered by reading an article on newly discovered properties of clay, the substance of which pots and golems are made. Among these properties are its capacity to store energy for long periods of time and its complex molecular structure. This idea for clay as something half-alive, a kind of transitional medium between organic and inorganic materials, led me to look at flower pots. I found, in fact, that some pots are “alive” while others are “dead”: some emit a disappointing “thunk” when you tap them while others seem to burst into resonant song at the slightest touch.

META-MARIMBA
BY MIKE PERDUE
Performed by She-e Wu

“Meta-Marimba” is an ever-changing work for solo marimba, premiered as an improvisation by the composer, and reimagined as a graphically notated score. The score allows the interpreter extensive flexibility, but requires an unbridled creative spirit and masterful four-mallet marimba technique. Vast experience and knowledge of the marimba literature of the late 20th and early 21st century is also important for a performer to successfully interpret this work. The performer should use the included audio recording, which is of the premiere, as a guide in forming his or her interpretation. One may wish to copy and quote the composer’s performance nearly verbatim, stray from it completely, or borrow only bits and pieces. Time markings included in the score refer to the recording, but do not serve as strict durations for the performance of the piece. The audience need not know whether the performer is improvising or following a score. Consonance and functional harmonic implications should be eschewed in favor of thorny dissonance and sonorities resulting from gesture. Pseudo-accidentals are marked in the score as a reminder to create a “mix” of white and black keys. One may approach the piece as a work for untuned percussion, applied to the marimba, utilizing the full range of four-mallet techniques and permutations. Again, the audience need not know whether the performer is improvising or following a score. The interpretation of very non-traditional elements in the score (i.e. text descriptions, graphic symbols, misuse of traditional notation, erratic rhythm and other vague indications) is left totally to the performer, though the recording can always serve as a guide. The piece was premiered on a five-octave instrument, but a marimba of any size is acceptable. The original performance of “Meta-Marimba” was on March 22, 2010 in New York, and the first realization of the score was later that year in Indianapolis on November 10, by She-e Wu, to whom the work is lovingly dedicated.

Mike Perdue is an improvising percussionist and composer, currently studying at the Manhattan School of Music in New York. Perdue is a second-year student in MSM’s Contemporary Performance Program, where he studies percussion with Jeffrey Milarsky and John Ferrari, and attends masterclasses with Christopher S. Lamb and She-e Wu. “Meta-Marimba” takes form as a non-traditionally notated score, available for free download. An audio recording of the composer’s premiere performance, which serves as a guide to the score, is available for purchase at http://mikeperdue.bandcamp.com. Enjoy!
“Rimbarimba” was composed as part of the project ‘Far from silence’ with percussionist Robert Esler. Throughout various sessions in England and the USA the piece evolved into its final form which consists of a score and an optional Max/Msp patch in order to trigger the required stereo sound files from the computer. The creation of recognisable links between different media is one of the main concerns in “Rimbarimba.” The integration of rhythmic and spectral materials from the live instrument and the electroacoustic part are therefore central to the piece. “Rimbarimba” can be considered as a mix between artificially generated sound worlds, layers of recorded sound related to the marimba and a human element that works as a “bridge” between multiple musical levels. I wanted this piece to be more of a process of exploration than a pre-planned set of musical rules. Decisions were constantly taken in order to emphasize some of the elements that emerged throughout the compositional process. “Rimbarimba” was commissioned with funds from the USA-Mexico fund for culture in 2001 and created at the composer’s studio in London.

Rodrigo Sigal (Mexico City - 1971). Holds a PhD in Electroacoustic composition from City University in London, a BA in composition from the Musical Studies and Research Center (CIELM) in Mexico City, and was part of the composition workshop directed by Prof. Mario Lavista. He also studied with Denis Smalley, Javier Alvarez, Franco Donatoni, Judith Weird, Michael Jareau, Alejandro Velasco and Juan Trigos among others. He finished a postdoctorate at the National School of Music in Mexico and he is the director of the Mexican Center for Music and Sonic Arts (www.cmamas.org). He holds a diploma on Cultural Management (BID/UAM) and does artistic and academic activities in Mexico and many countries.

He has received awards from the Mexican National Fund for Culture and the Arts (FONCA), The CIELM, The Banff Centre for the Arts in Canada, ORS and The Sidney Perry Foundation in England and the LEM Studios and The Ministry of Culture in Spain, the 1st. Prize (Cycles, 1999), honorary mentions (Tolerance, 2000 and Twilight, 2001) at the Luigi Russolo Composition Prize and finalist at Bourges 2002 (Twilight). “Friction of things in other places” won the 3rd place at the JTTJP prize in 2003 by the CoC (Canada) and the SAN (UK). His work is available in more than 14 compact discs, and his solo CDs “Manifesto”, “Space within” and “B Blind C Ciego” had received excellent reviews and radio broadcast in Mexico and abroad. His music is presented in different countries and he performs his laptop multimedia projects “Oreja Digital” and “Luminico” with flutist Alejandro Escuer constantly. Since 1991 he has been working as composer, sound and recording engineer in his private studio in Mexico, London and Santiago, composing chamber music, electroacoustic music and works for dance, cinema and other media. He coordinated the Computer Music Lab at CIEM from 1994 until 1998. Since 2004 he is a member of the board of the Latin-American Sonic Arts Network (www.redasla.org). The CDs and more information are available from www.rodrigosigal.com.

PURE BLACK
BY MIN-CHING CHIU
Performed by She-e Wu

In this piece, I try to depict the devil in everybody’s mind: sneaky, greedy, irresponsible, and selfish. This piece also provides an opportunity for me, the performer, and the audience to re-examine how we behave and what we can do to make a change. —Min-ching Chiu

Min-ching Chiu is currently a composition major DMA student at the University of Illinois. His music has been played in the United States as well as other countries such as Taiwan, Indonesia, and Japan. Prizes Ming-ching won include PASIC Composition Contest, IronWork Percussion Duo composition Competition Contest, Literature-Art Composition Award by Ministry of Education in Taiwan, Scholarship of Studying Abroad by Ministry of Education in Taiwan. Ming-ching’s works were also selected to perform in major festivals/conferences such as SEAMUS, Midwest Composer Symposium, PASIC, etc. Min-ching’s music range from solo pieces for different instruments, chamber music with various combinations to large ensemble works for orchestra, wind band and marching band. Besides composing acoustic music, Ming-ching is also a computer programmer and uses computer in his composition process.

PLEIADES (1978)
BY IANNIS XENAKIS
Performed by So Percussion and the Meehan/Perkins Duo

American premiere 1981 at The Oberlin Conservatory of Music by the Oberlin Percussion Group.

Iannis Xenakis is famous for his complex theories and mathematically derived compositional techniques—his monumental percussion sextet “Pleiades” is a virtuosic display of those skills. But he was also a student revolutionary during World War II, the survivor of a traumatic and disfiguring mortar blast. Xenakis wrote about the impersonal and beautiful violence of nature. In a remarkable demonstration of artistic will, he also converted his own experiences with human violence into a resource for musical expression. Although the following excerpt from his treatise Formalized Music doesn’t fully encapsulate “Pleiades,” it is an inspiring glimpse into Xenakis’ aesthetic world, at once both abstract and deeply personal:

Everyone has observed the sonic phenomena of a political crowd of dozens or hundreds of thousands of people. The human river shouts a slogan in a uniform rhythm. Then another slogan springs from the head of the demonstration; it spreads towards the tail, replacing the first. A wave of transition thus passes from the head to the tail. The clamor fills the city, and the inhibiting force of voice and rhythm reaches a climax. It is an event of great power and beauty in its ferocity. Then the impact between the demonstrators and the enemy occurs. The perfect rhythm of the last slogan breaks up in a huge cluster of chaotic shouts, which also spreads to the tail. Imagine, in addition, the reports of dozens of machine guns and the whistle of bullets adding their punctuations to this total disorder. The crowd is then rapidly dispersed and after sonic and visual hell follows a detonating calm, full of despair, dust, and death. The statistical laws of these events, separated from their political or moral context, are the same as those of the cicadas or the rain. They are the laws of the passage from complete order to total disorder in a continuous or explosive manner. They are stochastic laws. —Adam Sliwinski

EARTH MODALITY (CONCERT A)
WABASH BALLROOM

REBANA LOOPS
BY DAVID PYE
Performed by Defying Gravity
Publisher: Rhythmscape Publishing Australia (www.rhythmscape.com.au)
Duration: 16 minutes

West Australian composer David Pye wrote the percussion quartet “Rebana Loops” in 2004, and the work reflects Pye’s driving passions and interests: the natural ecosystems of Western Australia, and the cultural and musical environment of the Indian Ocean rim. Pye’s love of Indonesian music and culture is clear in his notes for “Rebana Loops.”

“Rebana Loops” had its inception in various aspects of Indonesian music, particularly the technical aspects of Javanese ‘rebana’ players. ‘Rebana’ are small, exceedingly simple hand drums found in a number of Javanese folk percussion traditions. Whilst not a solo instrument, when combined in groups of usually three or four (or occasionally many more), the ‘rebana’ reveals in creating music of great excitement and interest through the use of short interlocking patterns, rapidly changing and contrasted dynamics and tonal contrasts in the playing techniques used. Rhythmically, each player performs relatively simple patterns at great speed which interlock, often canonically at the interval of an 8th or 16th note. The result is a high-energy music that I find exhilarating...
The “Drums of Winter” is one of three drum quartets drawn from “Earth and
Material.” Performed by university of kentucky Percussion Group, James Campbell,
By John Luther Adams (b. 1953)

Material. The Six Quintets set up elemental systems of tension that point
changes we create reflect back onto our species’ behavior, psyche and
nature dialects. As humans affect and control the natural environment, the
environmental, physical, mental and spiritual complexities of human-

The Six Quintets for percussion quintet express elemental human
expression, scientific information and social/political commentary to present
an interactive, multi-dimensional experience that embodies relevant complex
global climate change from a northern
genre to shatter into a thousand pieces on the sidewalk. —Matthew Thomas

“Floes” was awarded second place in the PAS Percussion Composition
Contest in 2004. This piece was inspired by images of ice, yet the music itself
is not static. The suspended harmonies and free flowing meter seem to depict
water in a state of transition; freezing, melting, and “floeing.” Listening to the
piece may evoke the image of a sheet of ice breaking loose from a glacier and
slowly sliding into the freezing water of the Arctic Ocean. At another moment,
one might think of droplets of water melting from a chain of icicles, forming a
series of perfect rings in the water below, or a solitary block of ice dislodged
from the gutter on the fringe of building, dropping silently through the air only
to shatter into a thousand pieces on the sidewalk. —Matthew Thomas

“Wood” and “Skin” from the Ecoacoustic Telematic Opera
“Auksalaq” by Matthew Burtner

“Auksalaq,” the Inupiat word for “melting snow/ice,” is a telematic,
multimedia work that explores global climate change from a northern
generically and cultural perspective. Using telematic technology, live music,
voice, dance, movement, visual arts and commentary, the work creates a
counterpoint of media linking great distances. “Auksalaq” integrates artistic
expression, scientific information and social/political commentary to present
an interactive, multi-dimensional experience that embodies relevant complex
cultural and environmental processes. The piece employs scientific analysis
as well as cultural and political issues surrounding global climate change. This
performance for PASIC 2010 features movements from one of the five systems
from the opera: Six Quintets.

The Six Quintets for percussion quintet express elemental human
relationships with the environment through music. These pieces express
the environmental, physical, mental and spiritual complexities of human-
nature dialects. As humans affect and control the natural environment, the
changes we create reflect back onto our species’ behavior, psyche and
imagination. The Six Quintets set up elemental systems of tension that point
to this abstraction: Water (ice), Wood (pitch), Stone (sand), Metal (noise),
Air (breath), and Skin (bones). These movements progress from the outward
material that affects our behavior (melting ice) to our body and breath as
material.

DRUMS OF WINTER (1993) FROM “EARTH AND THE GREAT WEATHER”
BY JOHN LUTHER ADAMS (B. 1953)
Performed by University of Kentucky Percussion Group, James Campbell,
director

The “Drums of Winter” is one of three drum quartets drawn from “Earth and
the Great Weather,” an evening-length “sonic geography” of the Arctic. Although purely “abstract” in form, it is
my hope that they are in some small measure informed by the elemental power of natural forces in the Arctic, and
by the ecstatic power of Inupiat Eskimo drumming and dancing. —John Luther Adams

ELEMENTAL SOUNDS (CONCERT B)
WABASH BALLROOM
11:00 A.M.

NIGHT CHILL
BY CHRISTIEN LEDROIT (B. 1975)
Performed by Catherine Meunier

“Night Chill” was composed in the autumn of 2003 for marimbist Catherine Meunier. The title refers to the general
feeling of the piece and the senses that surrounded Christien Ledroit during its composition—the rustling of
leaves, bare trees and cool nights. While no direct references are made, the music has a general sense of autumn
in its textures, harmonies and rhythms. The piece is in a quasi-rondo form, with a repeated section recurring four
times.

Christien Ledroit was born in London, Ontario. He studied composition at Queen’s University in Kingston,
Ontario and completed a Master of Music degree in composition at McGill University in Montreal in 2002. He has
studied with an eclectic group of composers, including Michael Colgrass, Sean Ferguson, Jean Lesage, Alcides
Ianza, Alfred Fisher, John Burge and Marjan Mozetic. Since high school Christien has played guitar in a punk
band while still continuing to develop technique on the violin and in contemporary art music. It is precisely this
dichotomy which most influences his music today. Christien has received commissions and awards from many
sources, including two SOCAN Young Composers Competition awards. Christien now lives near Toronto with his
wife Stefanie and daughters Ramona and Chloé.

FAMILY PORTRAITS: DELBERT (GREAT-GREAT-GRANDFATHER)
BY STUART SANDERS SMITH
Performed by Bill Sallak

“Family Portraits” is an ever-growing collection of musical portraits by Stuart Sanders Smith. Each musical
portrait captures in sound something of the character and personality of that particular family member. Most
of the “Family Portraits” are for solo piano. A few are for mixed ensembles. “Family Portraits: Delbert (great-
great-grandfather)” is the only one thus far written for solo percussion. In this portrait, aspects of Delbert’s occupation
and surroundings are also part of the composition.

Delbert was a woodsman who lived his entire life in central Maine. He worked in logging camps, felling trees
for the paper mills of Maine. It was often his job to burn brush and, as an older man, he became the cook for the
camp. He worked in the woods until he was in his 80s. It is said that Delbert had a restless nature, preferring
hard work and the outdoors. Delbert also had a volatile temper. He could be extremely friendly one minute and
extremely angry the next.

The composer remembers being told as a boy never to visit Delbert alone. He describes one time when he did.
“One day I passed by Delbert’s house and went up the steps at the back. Delbert gave me a piece of popcorn, heavy with
salt and butter, and red Jell-o with bananas in it. Then Mother appeared, looking frightened, and led me out of the
house. It was rumored that Delbert was “off his rocker.” He would gather up his belongings and set them on fire
in the living room, thinking he was back in the woods burning brush.” —Sylvia Smith

LES ARBRES CÉLÈSTES
BY BRUNO PAQUET
Performed by Shawn Mativetsky
Publisher: Unpublished
Duration: 9 minutes

World premiere of newly revised version (2010)
The composer wrote this piece after surviving Montreal’s famous ice storm of 1998. The contrast between the
warmth of individual life, the coldness of cosmic space, fantastic and celestial is created by the combination of
live tabla and prerecorded tape.

For the recorded tape in this piece, Bruno Paquet used a process of composition through aleatoric sequences,
with elements of chance affecting the musical outcome. A setup of multiple tabla and vibraphone are played with
falling projectiles. A cloth was laid out over the vibraphone with holes cut out to expose the correct notes, which were then struck by the falling projectiles, liberated in waves; akin to the falling rain and ice he experienced in the ice storm. The musical sequences on tape were then treated and combined with live table, which provides the counterpoint. The entire tape part was created with analogue/acoustic techniques. It is only recently that the tape part has been transferred to CD.

THEIR KIND OF MOON—FOR MARIMBA, WOODBLOCKS AND FROGS
BY DAVID PYE
Performed by Louise Devenish
Publisher: Self-published by composer
Availability: nova@iinet.net.au or louise@tetrafide.com
Duration: 10 minutes, 45 seconds

“Their Kind of Moon” was commissioned in 2007 by Western Australian percussionist Louise Devenish as part of a project titled “Uno!” “Uno!” was a solo percussion project featuring new works by Perth composers. The result was seven new works for marimba and kalimba. David Pye was an obvious choice to write works for Tetrafide Percussion, and the group and composer, who is also a percussionist, share a studio. David often uses the environment in his work, and “Their Kind of Moon” is no exception. Music for marimba and woodblocks is written alongside a recording of frog calls made in Western Australia’s South West. These frog calls are looped and layered, but the pitch and rhythm remains unaltered.

“Their Kind of Moon” forms the first part of an as yet unwritten, large scale theatre-percussion work exploring percussion, madness and frogs. It was commissioned with financial assistance from the Department of Culture and the Arts, Western Australia.

IN THE FIRE OF CONFLICT
BY CHRISTOS HATZIS
Performed by TorQ Percussion Quartet

“In the Fire of Conflict” was named after the title of the theme for the 2008 Toronto Summer Music Festival. When Agnes Grossman, the Artistic Director of the festival made me aware of the theme, it felt appropriate for my state of mind at the time. I was becoming very concerned with the rise of gun violence in recent years in Toronto, my home city, but also with the constant rise of violence around the world in either organized conflicts, such as war, or spontaneous eruptions, exacerbated no doubt by food shortages, global warming and demographic explosion particularly in areas where daily survival is most difficult, and by the diminishing hope among the majority of people alive today that our current way of life can continue in its present form indefinitely.

Although my own spiritual focus has always been on the incoming Aquarian eon, expected to be an eon of peace and spiritual enlightenment, I am also aware of the fact that we are still in the closing years of the Piscean age, the age of enantiodromia or conflict according to Carl Jung; that things will get worse before they get better...much worse; that there will come a time soon when our faith in God will be the only life vest that will protect us from drowning spiritually in the vast sea of hopelessness that surrounds us already. This is the story I wanted to tell through this work, but I wanted to say it not from the vantage point of spiritual certainty, but from the impenetrable darkness of someone struggling to stay afloat amidst this sea of hopelessness. As I was trying to determine how to enter and understand this state of mind, I remembered a visitor to my MySpace site a few months earlier, an American...

Christian rap group called Poetic Disciples.
I have always been fascinated by the prosodic rhythmic discourse of hip-hop music, but certainly not by its implicit endorsement of misogyny and violence that so often encounters in hip-hop lyrics. Poetic Disciples used the same musical techniques to essentially create devotional songs and that was very inspirational to me. I contacted the leader of the group, Steve Henry, who, as it turned out, had experienced personally the “bottom of the well” by way of gang violence, loss and incarceration, and asked him if he could help me with this project. A few days later he sent me some rap tracks which he created for this specific project and I knew then that my work would be very much emanating from his specific material which has been incorporated into the accompanying audio playback component of the piece. “In the Fire of Conflict” is the first work in which I have used rap music but I am sure it will not be the last. It is in two movements following one another without interruption and the two live instruments weave constantly around the rap lyrics often drawing their melodic contours from the prosodic contours of the spoken text.

“In the Fire of Conflict” was originally composed for cello, percussion and audio. TorQ Percussion Quartet commissioned this version for percussion quartet and audio in 2008. TorQ premiered the piece in January 2009 at Walter Hall in Toronto.

REGENERATION OF A SPECIES (CONCERT C)
WABASH BALLROOM

1:00 P.M.

SWARMS OF LIGHT IN METAL
BY JEFF HERRIOTT
Performed by Trevor Saint

In “Swarms of Light in Metal,” the interaction between performer and electronics is intended to mirror the interdependence between different elements in an ecosystem. Individual components of ecosystems may by themselves seem simple, but the inter-relationships between them are highly complex and infinitely variable. In the same way, this piece focuses on small, subtle sounds and minute variations in timbre, both in the percussion and the electronics. The relationships between these sounds reflect our ecology, as small changes in any part of the piece affect the meaning and significance of the others. “Swarms of Light in Metal” was composed for percussionist Trevor Saint as part of his quest to commission and present fascinating modern literature for solo bells.

THE ROAD TO WARMING
BY CARL VOLLRAITH
Performed by T. Adam Blackstock
Duration: 9 minutes

I. Ice Break Up
II. The Meltdown
III. Warm Waters
IV. Infernal Dance

“The Road to Warming” is in four movements. The work depicts the gradual warming of the Earth’s waters, from ice to boiling. The first movement, “Ice Break-Up,” is a representation of glaciers beginning to crack and separate; the use of extremely hard mallets provides a harsh-brillte attack that resembles this event. The second movement, “The Meltdown,” portrays the melting of glaciers; the work begins to take on a much smoother quality. The third movement, “Warm Waters,” is a hymn-like representation of the warming, pure liquid state. The waters are becoming more powerful and unpredictable. The final movement, “Infernal Dance,” portrays the waters being out of control, as they reach immeasurable temperatures and become extraordinarily violent. The scenario that is depicted by this work is one with which we are very familiar. As they Earth becomes warmer over time, more glaciers are melting which are causing our waters to become more massive and turbulent. Although Vollraith takes the listener to the end of this scenario, we as a society, have not yet witnessed the unwelcomed, and impending event, but it is approaching rapidly.
In the fall of 2006 a dear family friend gave me a tour of his workplace—the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab). This is the home to an atomic particle accelerator where atoms are violently slammed into each other at indescribable speeds and a collision detection center takes “pictures” of the results. Among the many results recorded at Fermilab are a type of subatomic particle known as “quarks” and scientists refer to them as one of six “flavors” - top, bottom, up, down, strange, and charm. This helps the scientists at this facility and others understand the nature of matter, anti-matter, space in general, and even the most fundamental components of time itself. I was moved at this visit by how their work was so reverent in one way, but playful in another. With names like “strange,” “charm,” and the term “flavors” I was reminded of the musical giants I have come to revere who also walked this fine line between playing God and being a child.

This work is presented as a suite of six flavors of quark, with a seventh dance entitled “collision.” Accompanying the snare drum is a recording entirely made of sounds I recorded in the Collision Detection Center at Fermilab, expressly for a soundscape in this work. There are no other sounds involved, though a significant amount of liberties have been taken to present this as a technical and intellectually challenging experience, while at the same time visceral, playful and organic—not much unlike the work of Fermilab’s scientists themselves.

Musically, this work is inspired by the contributions of Masson and Delecluse, while at the same time humbly trying to give respect to the likes of Pratt and Wilcoxon. Please enjoy “The Whimsical Nature of Small Particle Physics.” —Ben Wahlund

“Walk Forward” explores the way I feel about water: it nurtures, heals, separates. The work is based on recorded private conversations that struggle with live performance. It was inspired by the third panel in “Going Forth By Day” a multi-channel work by Bill Viola. In this specific video panel, water accumulates throughout the thirty-minute cycle, and eventually, washes out an entire home, its memories, delusions, stories.

I had recorded an artist’s voice this past summer who was dealing with an entire home, its memories, delusions, stories. “Walk Forward” was commissioned by Cory Hills and premiered in August 2010 in New York City.
CHILD OF TREE
BY JOHN CAGE
Performed by Benjamin Fraley

It’s possible that during his life, John Cage had no higher influence or aesthetic than nature. The natural world influenced not only his compositions and philosophies, but also his personal life. “Child of Tree” is the combination of three things: natural plant life and materials, improvisation, and a chance procedure using the coin oracle of the I Ching. The use of plant material and the fact that this is a completely improvised piece represents Cage’s acknowledgment of nature’s potential for sound and its ability to adapt. And the use of the I Ching represents his philosophy of chance of the random occurrence that exists in nature. No matter where we are, nature, chance and our necessity to adapt to our surroundings are always around us. All are present in every environment, and none are avoidable.

TRIBUTES TO CHARON (1939/1982)
BY LOU HARRISON (1917–2003)
Performed by Cage Percussion Players

The following is paraphrased from an essay written by musicologist and Lou Harrison scholar Leta Miller:

The percussion trio, “Tributes to Charon,” stands as a fine example of Lou Harrison’s pioneering work with the percussion ensemble during the 1930s, and shows the genre’s continuing influence on him in later years. One movement, “Counterdance in the Spring,” was composed in 1939, prompted by a request from John Cage; the other was not written until 1982, though Harrison envisioned its form and instrumentation from the very beginning.

Harrison’s early percussion music—of which “Counterdance in the Spring” is a compelling example—features a sense of organic development lacking in much of the music of his contemporaries, a trait noted by many reviewers of the time: “There were no vital and powerful rhythms, no great contrasts, and mainly no organic growth in any of the pieces,” wrote Jacob Avshalomoff, who reviewed John Cage’s Reed College concert in February 1940, “except for Harrison’s ‘Counterdance in the Spring.’”

John Cage apparently found this work among the most convincing of Harrison’s early percussion compositions, judging from the number of times he programmed it; and choreographer Jean Erdman found its kinesthesis irresistible. When William Winant requested a new percussion piece in 1982, “Counterdance” was the work Harrison chose to revitalize (and finally finish). Among the hundreds of compositions lying partially or fully completed in his many notebooks, the potential of this short dance most attracted his attention, urging him to add the prelude he had envisioned in his youth.

VESPERTINE FORMATIONS
BY CHRISTOPHER DEANE
Performed by Bain Percussion Group

“Vespertine Formations” was composed in the Fall of 2003. It was first performed on the University of North Texas “Global Rhythms” concert on November 5, 2003. A revised version was performed at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention on November 21, 2003. Members of the ensemble for both performances were Jason Baker, I-Jen Fang, John Lane and Eric Willie.

The inspiration for “Vespertine Formations” was the chance observation of flock maneuvers performed by a huge number of birds over the UNT campus on an October evening in 2001. The wing motions of so many birds suggested the texture of constant sixteenth notes. As the brilliant orange sunset diminished to dusk, the birds settled into trees around the campus. The fantastic choreography created by this flock of birds and the natural chronology of events guided the structure and form of this piece.

PINES LONG SLEPT IN SUNSHINE
BY CHRISTOPHER ADLER
Performed by nief-norf project

This piece is not about the imitation of the sounds of the natural world, but about the capacity of mathematically-inspired constructions to evoke the complexity and richness of forms in the natural world. The piece begins with an almost didactic demonstration of this principle, as the random excitations of wind chimes are played simultaneously with a gentle peal of gongs rigorously derived from the polyphonic application of the cyclic decomposition of a single permutation to multiple musical parameters. Everything in this piece is either generated by, or subjected to transformation by, one of a family of permutations of the two-octave (24-note) scale. Complex structures emerge as the result of the interference of multiple simultaneous applications of this action of generation or transformation. In the latter half of the piece, large-scale structures are derived from the logarithmic spiral (underlying the geometry of the conch shell and pine cone, for example) and the Fibonacci series.

4' 33''
BY JOHN CAGE
Performed by Morris Palter and Robin Engelman

Robert Rauschenberg’s White Paintings that reacted to changing light and people coming and going in the rooms where they were hung inspired 4' 33''. Cage thought of 4' 33'' as a piece of music constantly in flux, subject to the ambient sounds surrounding each performance. Many people thought it ironic or a game. It was neither to Cage. Cage said, “Our inflexible attitude towards change must cease. My own experience proved to me that all I need to do is to listen to the sounds around me. They change. I always and everywhere listen to the sounds surrounding me, but if I were to feel that one of them didn’t please me or wasn’t suitable for me—if I would have preferred that it didn’t exist or hadn’t happened—then you could immediately see why such a notion of preference is in a way illegitimate, since in fact the sound did occur.” Cage was forty years old when 4' 33'' was premiered in Woodstock, New York. ‘Good people of Woodstock,’ an artist in the audience stood and proclaimed, ‘let’s drive these people out of town.’—Robin Engelman