



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Presents

Nathan Grissett, Percussion

March 4, 2024

7:00 PM

Van Cliburn Concert Hall at TCU

Program

Pillar I (2021)

Andy Akiho (b.1979)

Anthony Chmielewski, Joe Donohue, Joshua Santana, percussion

Profiles (2017)

Steven Snowden (b. 1981)

mvt. 4: "The Brute"

Heath Bain, French horn

Asanga (1997)

Kevin Volans (b. 1949)

Rosanna (1982)

David Paich (b. 1954)

Marimba Concerto (1997)

Kevin Puts (b. 1972)

Syuzanna Kaszo, piano

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's Degree in Percussion Performance. Nathan Grissett is a student of Dr. Brian West, Mr. Joey Carter, and Mr. Jeff Hodge.

The use of recording equipment or taking photographs is prohibited.

Please silence all electronic devices including watches, pagers, and phones.

Program Notes
Nathan Grissett
MM Percussion Recital

7 pm

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***Pillar I* (2021) – Andy Akiho (b.1979)**

Pillar I is the first of the “*Seven Pillars*,” composed by Andy Akiho for Sandbox Percussion. Also included in this large-scale work are four solo movements – one for each member of Sandbox Percussion. Akiho and Sandbox Percussion collaborated for eight years in the composition of *Seven Pillars* through multiple extended residencies at Avaloch Farm Music Institute in New Hampshire. Each piece within *Seven Pillars* has an original film to accompany it, each by a different video artist. *Seven Pillars* received two nominations at the 2022 GRAMMY Awards and was a finalist for the 2022 Pulitzer Prize for music.

Pillar I’s instrumentation includes many unconventional instruments, such as baking pans, wood sheets, hanging metal pipes, and glass bottles, as well as unconventional techniques, such as striking a wood sheet with a large rubber band, hitting the shell of a concert bass drum, and hitting a concert bass drum with a pedal.

Joe, Anthony, and Josh are all great percussionists, and it is a pleasure to be able to share the stage with them tonight to present *Pillar I*.

- Notes by performer

“Pillar I unapologetically throws us into the world of “Seven Pillars.” The building blocks of the piece are flying around like shrapnel, colliding and combining with each other to eventually congeal into a cohesive whole. The timbral color of this movement is equally elemental, offering the starkest palate of unpitched, articulate and raw sounds.”

- Notes by composer

***Profiles* mvt. 4: “The Brute” (2017) – Steven Snowden (b.1981)**

Profiles was inspired by the composer’s viewing of old mugshots. There is not much information one can receive from a mugshot alone; the crime that was committed is not shown by the criminal’s mugshot. The titles of each movement of *Profiles* come from the composer’s imagination of what could describe the pictured criminal, based on the limited information of their mugshot: “The Wheelman,” “The Thief,” “The Grifter,” and “The Brute.” *Profiles* gets its name from two definitions of the word “profile.” The first definition is the side of one’s face, which a mugshot captures. The second definition is a brief description of a person, which we see in the titles of each movement of *Profiles*. “The Brute” makes use of a percussive technique in the horn in which the player blows through the instrument without buzzing. Pairing a horn player using this technique with a percussionist makes for a very percussive-sounding duet.

- Notes by performer

“I’ve always had a bit of a fascination with old portrait photographs. Whether I find them in a library archive, museum, or at a thrift store, I like to wonder what the lives of these people were like. I imagine their careers, their hobbies, their temperament, or even what they might have eaten for breakfast that morning. One specific category of portraits that I find particularly intriguing is old mugshots. These are some of the only photos that come in pairs, one showing the subject face-forward, and one in profile. The original purpose of this was to provide the police or witnesses with a better understanding how this person would look from different angles. However, extraneous information, such as clothing, posture, and setting are intentionally placed out of frame. Without those clues, these pictures become more of a blank slate for my imagination.

I was recently looking through a set of mugshots from the early 1920’s and found myself thinking mostly of character types found in old dime store crime novels. While the main hero and villain are often portrayed with a lot of detail and depth, secondary characters tend to be quite one dimensional. Petty thieves, con men, and getaway drivers simply serve to further the plot of the protagonist and are often just a short-lived caricature of their profession. Though not ontologically related, that made me think of the more common modern usage of the word profile. At its most basic level, this is the act of reducing a complex human being down to basic stereotypes. Profiling is certainly a heated and complicated topic to approach for any artist and I felt that it wasn’t something that I wanted to tackle in this piece. Rather, I decided to go in the opposite direction by writing a set of character pieces based upon four types of criminals often found old crime novels. Sometimes poignant, sometimes comical, each one was written with that character’s perspective in mind.”

-Notes by composer

***Asanga* (1997) – Kevin Volans (b. 1949)**

Kevin Volans' *Asanga* is a swirl of notes around six drums, until toward the end when two high-pitched drums are added to the swirl. This piece goes from calm and pensive to blisteringly fast-paced in a moment's notice, great for captivating an audience for its entire 8-minute duration. Because Volans did not focus on any one specific technique while writing this piece, the rhythmic motifs are very diverse throughout the piece. The motifs are composed in a way that sounds melodic, as if they could be transferred to a pitched instrument and the motifs would still sound natural. The piece was premiered on September 30, 1998 by Robyn Schulkowsky in Stockholm, Sweden.

The piece starts to make a lot of sense when one reads the composer's notes for the piece. This piece was written on the occasion of Schulkowsky's father's death. This piece does not have many dynamic markings, which allowed Schulkowsky to have free reign on the way she expressed her feelings on her father's death through her performance. The middle section includes figures that repeat a lot but with different accent patterns, which could represent different stages of grief. The very end section consists mostly of sparse accented notes on two drums at a time, which allows for easy expression of anger.

- Notes by performer

"The Sanskrit title *Asanga* means "freedom from attachment". I wrote the piece as a gift for Robyn Schulkowsky on the death of her father. It was written with no conscious techniques or concept. The first performance was in Stockholm in 1998."

- Notes by composer

***Rosanna* (1982) – David Paich (b. 1954)**

The *Rosanna* shuffle, which is a combination of the Bernard Purdie shuffle, John Bonham's beat from Led Zeppelin's "Fool in the Rain," and the Bo Diddley beat, remains one of the most iconic and notoriously difficult drum beats. Porcaro has cited Steely Dan's "Home at Last," in which the Purdie shuffle can be heard, as an influence for this drum beat. The drum beat requires that the drummer plays swung eighth notes on the hi-hats, places ghost notes between each pair of swung eighth notes, and plays a melodic bass drum pattern at the same time.

David Paich wrote the song about numerous girls he had known, one of who was actually named "Rosanna," who had been dating Toto keyboard player Steve Porcaro. Her full name is Rosanna Arquette, and she has joked that the song is about her coming to Toto's recording sessions and bringing the members drinks. *Rosanna* won the GRAMMY Award for Record of the Year in 1983. It stayed at number two on the *Billboard* Hot 100 for five consecutive weeks. It has earned a Platinum certification in the United States due to one million copies of the song being sold. The song was brought back into the mainstream in 2018 when rock band Weezer released a cover of the song.

- Notes by performer

As this is a popular tune and not a classical piece, the composer did not leave any program notes.

***Marimba Concerto* (1997) – Kevin Puts (b.1972)**

Kevin Puts' *Marimba Concerto* is heavily inspired by Mozart's piano concertos. This is evident in the melodic and harmonic content of the concerto and the soloist trading melodic and supportive roles with the orchestra, making the relationship between the soloist and the orchestra one of equality. The subtitles of each movement come from poetry written by Puts' aunt. Movement I's subtitle is "...terrific sun on the brink," movement II's is "...into the quick of losses," and movement III's is "...logarithms, exponents, and the damnedest of metaphors." *Marimba Concerto* was premiered by Japanese marimbist Makoto Nakura with the Vermont Symphony in October 1997. This piece is great to play as a marimbist because of the large ground it covers. From fast inner-mallet runs to lyrical roll sections to permutation-based melodies, the solo marimbist must be proficient at many different techniques in order to play this concerto well.

Puts wrote this concerto during his DMA study at Eastman School of Music. His composition career has flourished since then. In 2012, he won the Pulitzer Prize for his opera *Silent Night*. In 2023 he won the GRAMMY Award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition for *Contact*, a triple concerto for two violins, bass, and orchestra.

- Notes by performer

Marimba Concerto reflects my love of Mozart's piano concertos, works with instrumentation similar to that of this concerto, i.e. a keyboard instrument with chamber orchestra. I decided to write a piece which is lyrical throughout and to feature the marimba in both melodic and ornamental roles. The influence of Mozart lies mainly in the relationship between the soloist and orchestra, one of near equality in which the marimba continually interacts with the instruments of the orchestra.

The work is comprised of three movements - fast, slow, fast - like a Mozart concerto, and each movement bears a subtitle taken from the poetry of my aunt, Fleda Brown. They are: I. "...terrific sun on the brink" (Flowing); II. "...into the quick of losses" (Broad and Deliberate); and III. "...logarithms, exponents, the damnedest of metaphors" (Presto non troppo). The overriding message is one of optimism and exuberance.

Marimba Concerto was commissioned by the Vermont Symphony and Ensemble Kobe (Japan) for marimbist Makoto Nakura, and it was premiered in October 1997 by Mr. Nakura and the Vermont Symphony with Kate Tamarkin conducting.

- Notes by composer

