Elective Recital: Christopher Demetriou, percussion

Christopher Demetriou

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Elective Recital:
Christopher Demetriou, percussion

Steve Schirripa, percussion
Blaise Bryski, piano

Nabenhauer Recital Room
Wednesday, April 18, 2012
9:00 p.m.
Program

Temazcal (1984)  
Javier Alvarez

miracle ear (1996)  
David Lang

Wood That Sings (2002)  
Gordon Stout

Come Here Often? (2003)  
Geil Vleggaar

*Steve Schirripa, percussion*

Intermission

Having Never Written a Note for Percussion (1971)  
James Tenney

Snowblind (2002)  
Joe Duddell

*Blaise Bryski, piano*

"Percussion music is revolution." - John Cage
Notes

Temazcal
"Temazcal" is scored for Venezuelan maracas and tape.

From the composer:
The title of this work comes from the Nahuatl (ancient Aztec) word literally meaning “water that burns.” The maraca material throughout Temazcal is drawn from traditional rhythmic patterns found in most Latin-American musics, namely those from the Caribbean region, southeastern Mexico, Cuba, Central America and the flatlands of Columbia, and Venezuela. In these musics in general, the maracas are used in a purely accompanimental manner as part of small instrumental ensembles. The only exception in, perhaps, that of the Venezuelan flatlands, where the role of the maracas surpasses that of mere cadence and accent punctuation to become a soloistic instrument in its own right. It was from this instance that I imagined a piece where the player would have to master short patterns and combine them with great virtuosity to construct larger and complex rhythmic structures which would be juxtaposed, superimposed, and set against similar passages on tape, thus creating a dense polyrhythmic web. This would eventually disintegrate, clearing way for a traditional accompaniment style of playing in a sound world reminiscent of the maracas’ more usual environment.

miracle ear
"miracle ear" is scored for toy piano and metal pipes.

From the composer:
miracle ear is the name of a brand of hearing aid that advertises on late-night TV.

I wanted to write a piece that was an appropriate gift for my father - something about the passage of time but not too morbid. Then I remembered a discussion I had had with him about hearing aids. My father now wears hearing aids in both ears and apparently they can create as many listening problems as they solve. In particular, hearing aids may not make listening to music any easier because they tend to boost the background noises and sounds associated with making music - breathing, attack, room noise, etc. - more than the music itself. Through the hearing aid, notes that were too soft to hear unaided become drowned out by all the other louder noises. In miracle ear, gentle and subtle rhythms in the toy piano are accompanied by the sharp attacks of metal pipes. This makes the music very difficult to hear.


Come Here Often?

"Come Here Often?" is scored for 2 percussionists and soundtrack.

From the composer:
A cheesy script, role reversal, sexual intrigue--the perfect ingredients for a B-rated movie. Giel Vleggaar's tongue-in-cheek piece about the pitfalls and stereotypes of the dating scene pits two percussionists against an onslaught of aggressive would-be women seducers. Vleggaar admits that the slapstick comedy of the piece works because somewhere inside, men have the idea that with the right line, a woman will just melt in their hands. It is the role reversal which nails home the point that it is only a fantasy, and that sarcasm is perhaps the only response to a really pathetic come-on line. And indeed, there is no mistaking the sarcasm in the women's voices, just as there is no choice but for the percussionists to accept their domination.

Having Never Written a Note for Percussion

Percussionist Steven Schick writes:
James Tenney’s Having Never Written a Note for Percussion is scored for a single solo percussion instrument…[and] is a single crescendo and decrescendo… If any piece of music were the unadulterated celebration of percussion sound, this would be it. Tenney’s piece, however, is much less about the purity of sound then it is about rhythm, trajectory, and shape. Like other examples of Tenney’s slow process-oriented music… incremental change in Having Never Written a Note for Percussion produces a global sense of slowly unfolding structure but a local sensation of enormous and intense activity.

A note from the performer:
For this evening’s performance, I have chosen to play this work on a suspended cymbal. The sound of a cymbal roll is something all musicians (and listeners) have heard more than a few times in their life. However, when slowed down to this great of an extent, the beautiful sounds of the cymbal’s overtones begin to dominate, and the results are both surprising and powerful. I had no idea what a cymbal sounded like until I first heard this piece. Steven Schick has called this work a “baptism in sound.” Do not be afraid to get lost in this music – if you do, the effects can be wonderful.

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