

Wednesday, May 2, 2012 at 8:00PM

Taplin Auditorium in Fine Hall

The Composers Ensemble at Princeton
Barbara White and Michael Pratt, Directors

Sō Percussion II

Eric Beach – Josh Quillen – Adam Sliwinski – Jason Treuting

What Hath

Kate Neal

What Hath is heavily encoded, and although not everything you see and hear translates into literal meaning, much of it does. It is a conundrum to me whether to reveal the encryptions within the work or not. Does it enhance or impose upon the experience of the piece? Somehow, it seems a shame to undress the mystery of the unknown, so I'll just tell you two things:

1. Five consecutive flashes = 'I have a message for you'
2. *What Hath God Wrought* is the first Morse message sent by Samuel Morse in 1844.

Tangram

Wally Gunn

A *tangram* is a puzzle originating from China comprised of seven flat tiles of different geometric shapes which, when arranged in one way, form a perfect square, but which can also be arranged, with some imagination, to depict the silhouettes of animals and people in animated poses. The images delight, because though they are composed of immutable shapes, the figures seen as a whole seem to show action, movement, change. The viewer also contributes to the creation of the image through the act of "reading" the arrangement of shapes. Our mind's eye smoothes sharp corners, or connects shapes where in fact there are spaces, or adds a third dimension of depth, and all this brings the figures to life. For this piece, I made musical objects — very simple three-note chords — and these became my *tangram* tiles. Without altering their shapes, I arranged the chords in the score like tiles on a tabletop, simply shuffling them around, placing them this way or that, and noticing the interesting figures that might jump out. The composing process itself seems to be reflected in the music, which has moments of stillness, then moments of action, movement and change. And while this corresponds to the simple act of playing with the tiles, it also hints at the larger idea that we as people are like a *tangram* puzzle; comprised of immutable parts, but always striving to reassemble ourselves to become something new, something different.

Smash Division

Leila Adu-Gilmore

A song cycle of five songs

1. *Tara/Gaia*: “Within without illuminate and subjugate the nature of all harm”
— the Invocation of Enlightening Support.

I have used parts of Buddhist text as inspiration and added my own lyrics in song format. Buddha Shakyamuni chose to originally give teachings in Pali due to the poetry of the language; however, the teachings are usually translated from Pali to Sanskrit to Chinese to English — with much of the inherent layers of meaning being lost in the process. I am grateful to be given permission to use phrases from the recently translated from Pali to English by Lama Chime Shore and practitioners at the Coorain center, Bailingup, Australia from the *Three Puja Practice Text*. I also took a fragment of a sentence about Tara, the deity of nature: “Now, think of Dharmakaya, sphere of unborn clear light, pure pristine awareness, as unending forms of Tara, alive, like a net of magical formations, fit to train whoever is in need.”

2. *Inside Mind*: The beginning of this piece is a transcription of temple music from the *Ritual for (attaining the qualities of) Spiritual Adepts, The Nyingmapa Sect — The Music of Tibetan Buddhism* CD. I was initially attracted to the piece, as I was surprised to hear the Tibetan trumpets and horns play a soulful, chaotic blues scale. The rest of the piece is designed to mimic the sounds one hears in one’s body (a Buddhist concept regarding music) that for me is a mixture of body sounds, tinnitus and finally breathing.

3. *Cause and Effect*: I love improvised music and compound rhythms and during our classes in writing sketches for Sō Percussion I realized that these were performers who were welcoming of improvisation. Therefore, the middle section of the piece specifies accented rhythm, giving the performers leeway to jam out on subdivisions. The lyrics are about themes of karma.

4. *Smash Division*: I am not I. We are not we. We are in the moment, in the moment.

5. *End Game*: A love song on themes of loving detachment — with the chorus switching the object of love to: a beloved other, then to the self and then to entire world. Alternative hip-hop and African marimba patterns inform the grooves in the snare, marimba and vibraphone.

Manipulating stacks of jittering glass, clay, skins, metal, and wood, *Thresher* is inspired by the whirring and crunching sounds of agricultural machinery. The piece was written for and developed in direction collaboration with Sō Percussion.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Since 1999, **Sō Percussion** has been creating music that explores all the extremes of emotion and musical possibility. It has not been an easy music to define. Called an “experimental powerhouse” by the *Village Voice*, “astonishing and entrancing” by *Billboard Magazine*, and “brilliant” by *The New York Times*, the Brooklyn based quartet’s innovative work with today’s most exciting composers and their own original music has quickly helped them forge a unique and diverse career.

Their music runs the gamut from percussion classics (Steve Reich’s *Drumming*), to new commissions (David Lang’s *the so-called laws of nature*), to original music (group member Jason Treuting’s *Amid the Noise*).

Sō Percussion has performed this music all over the United States, with concerts at the Lincoln Center Festival, Carnegie Hall, Stanford Lively Arts, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and many others. In addition, recent tours to Russia, Australia, Italy, Spain, Germany, and the Ukraine have brought them international

acclaim. The members of Sō Percussion are co-directors of a new percussion program at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, which will admit its first class in fall of 2011. They are also co-directors of the Sō Percussion Summer Institute, held each year here on the campus of Princeton University.

Sō would like to thank Pearl/Adams Instruments, Zildjian cymbals, Vic Firth drumsticks, Remo drumheads, and Estey Organs for their sponsorship.

ABOUT THE COMPOSERS

Leila Adu-Gilmore was born in London and studied music composition at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. Leila has written for theatre, dance, film, performed internationally, has recently produced her fifth album of songs and is currently a doctoral fellow at Princeton University.

Quinn Collins is a composer of rhythmically engaging acoustic and electroacoustic music who aims to combine

rigorous formal schemes and processes with rock energy, occupying a space where brains and adrenaline collide. He earned a B.M. in composition in 2005 at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music, studying with Frederic Rzewski and Michael Fiday and completed his M.M. in composition at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 2009, studying with Zack Browning, Erik Lund, and Scott Wyatt. He is currently pursuing graduate studies as a doctoral fellow at Princeton University. He is also active as a bass guitarist, improviser, and theatrical sound designer. His music has been performed by ensembles such as the orkest "de ereprijs," members of Bang on a Can, TRANSIT, the University of Illinois New Music Ensemble, Cadillac Moon Ensemble, Loadbang, the Ogni Suono Saxophone Duo, and TV Buddha. A native of Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, he currently resides in Princeton, New Jersey.

Wally Gunn is an Australian composer interested in theater, visual art and popular music, and is currently in his first year as a graduate student at Princeton University.

Kate Neal has studied and worked in Australia, The Netherlands, The UK, Finland, Italy, Belgium and the US. She has enjoyed working as an orchestrator and arranger for many pop, rock and world music bands as well as composition for feature and independent films, choreographers and dance companies. A special love is dance, movement and physical gesture.

Composer and clarinetist **Jonathan Russell** has received commissions from numerous ensembles, including the San Francisco Symphony, Emyrean Ensemble, ADORNO Ensemble, Woodstock Chamber Orchestra, Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, and Imani Winds. He is a member of the Edmund Welles bass clarinet quartet and the Sqwonk bass clarinet duo, and is co-director of the Switchboard Music Festival. He has a B.A. in Music from Harvard University and an M.M. in Music Composition from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He is currently a Ph.D. student in composition at Princeton University.

UPCOMING MUSIC AT PRINCETON EVENTS

- 5/3 Princeton University Concerts, David Daniels, Countertenor,
Martin Katz, Piano, Mark Morris, Choreographer
Richardson Auditorium in Alexander Hall, 8:00PM
Pre-concert talk by Professor Wendy Heller and Mark Morris, 7:00PM
- 5/4 Masterclass Given by Countertenor David Daniels
Taplin Auditorium in Fine Hall, 4:00PM