

Dr. Christopher Lizak Faculty Recital
March 26, 2022
Program notes

In 1989, I was traveling in Baja, Mexico. Near the end of my trip, I found myself in the city of Ensenada for the evening looking for some live music. I heard several good string bands, and even a horn band (almost a municipal-type band), but not much percussion at all. Then, I came across this group that was just walking down the road looking for a spot to set up. I followed them, out of curiosity, because they had with them a drummer that caught my attention. He was carrying an old, beat-up snare drum over his shoulder that just looked awful, and I had to see what he was going to do with it. The band stopped and set-up, and I observed that the snare drum was actually permanently taped-on to the snare stand, and that the snare mechanism, which engaged and disengaged the snares, was badly broken. In addition, the drummer did not have a matched pair of sticks or mallets in his possession, but instead, seemed to have "one" of everything instead. I was expecting the worst, but to my surprise, that drummer used everything about the situation to his advantage. He turned that broken drum and those mismatched sticks into an entire trap-set with his skill & creativity. He used different beaters in different hands to create lead and accompaniment patterns, he used the broken strainer as a sound effect, and he grooved throughout in a clave-based ostinato that just amazed me. It was that moment delivered by that drummer that inspired my composition **A Minute of News**.

—Note by Eugene Novotney

In 1964, Jacques released his famous **12 Etudes for Snare Drum**. Like many of his works, these etudes are inspired by the orchestral repertoire. But contrary to the majority of the other books, Delécluse's studies are completely musical—no mindless technical patterns, no measures without artistic sense, but rather expressive dynamics, intelligent phrases, useful foundations from which to progress on the instrument, and a wonderful source for exams, auditions, and performance

repertoire. These are the reasons for the success of his works. As Jacques writes himself, "These etudes are difficult only as far as the metronomic markings, the dynamics, accents, and 'connecting tissue' are strictly observed."

—Note by Frederic Macarez

Nine French-American Rudimental Solos is, in essence, a collection of stately marches. It came about after an explorations of the French rudiments contained in Guy Lefevre's "Le Tambour-Technique Superieure". After spending time working with that book, I thought why not combine French and American rudiments in one setting? The French use of syncopated accents within groupings and combinations of quintuplets counterbalances the 'solidity' or the American rudiments nicely, providing an occasional unexpected trip in the beat. Imagine a proudly marched parade down the Champs-Elysee and you will have a clear picture of the character of these pieces—they are not classical, but not entirely rudimental in the American tradition.

—Note by Joseph Tompkins

For some years I have listened to the Pakistani singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. He was perhaps the greatest exponent of Qawwali, the music of the sufi mystics. This music in general, and Ali Khan's singing in particular, are characterized by remarkable rhythmic and melismatic subtlety.

The **Kahn Variations** are a set of 8 rhythmic variations based on a traditional theme from Qawwali music as sang by Ali Kahn. The basic pulse and 'feel' of the music has lingered in my mind ever since I first heard the recording in the early 90's. I developed each of the 8 variations -which are played as a continuous piece- exploring a different rhythmic and melodic aspect of the original theme. However, from the harmonic point of view the piece is rather static, respecting the lack of harmony -in the western sense- of the original traditional theme.

As I look at the score now, I can recognise a range of influences from Conlon Nancarrow, tango music, and my own previous pieces

for marimba. All these influences have one thing in common: the articulation of pulse, or multiple simultaneous pulses to create a dramatic musical discourse.

—Note by Alejandro Vinao

Spur was written in memory of percussionist/composer Jacques Delecluse. Delecluse was well known for his etudes for percussion instruments, particularly his snare drum studies, which are standard repertoire for collegiate and orchestral musicians worldwide. These snare drum etudes are some of my favorite things written for the percussion idiom. While other music for snare drum can be flashy, loud, and fast, Delecluse's music is subtle, thoughtful, and nuanced. It truly exposes a player's touch and sensitivity on the instrument, utilizing shading and phrasing to create an artful, beautiful experience. I wanted to compose a piece through a similar lens while simultaneously blending my own compositional language.

—Note by Ivan Trevino

The **Fragile Corridor** is my first venture into composing with electronics. I have long been intrigued by the idea of writing for acoustic instruments paired with timbres outside our typical sound world. I was taken by Pat Metheny's recording project, "Orchestrion," where he created a massive electronic orchestra as a platform to perform his compositions with. There was an energy in this that I had not found in most electronic mediums and it inspired me to consider something similar. Additionally, I was compelled by the idea of adding this element to my programming not as a replacement for works performed with live ensembles, but rather as a unique palette to pair with the existing repertoire. I composed and orchestrated the work, then collaborated with my good friend and amazing musician Matt Curlee to create the sounds heard in "The Fragile Corridor." Matt's understanding of my musical instincts and creative genius helped me bring this project come to life.

—Note by Michael Burritt

how sweet the thought of you as infinite was composed for marimba and live electronics in 2019. This year has been one of incredible change. At points in my life where everything seems in flux, I find myself trying to freeze moments in time so I don't lose them. This piece is about the longing we have for certain moments to last forever. In a way, it's a love letter to the special people in our lives.

—Note by Emma O'Halloran

Cloud Forest was inspired by my visits to Ecuador, my travels between Quito and Esmeraldas, and the Ecuadorian cloud forests. It begins with the spinning, uneven journey from the top of Ecuador to the Pacific Ocean and ends with the trip back to Quito. The work also depicts the beauty of the lush forests and the great times I had with my friends in Ecuador. When I arrived in Esmeraldas after my long journey from Quito, the marimba I had expected to perform on was not there. The only marimba available was a small traditional instrument that had been built by a local musician. The piece I had planned to perform would not fit on this marimba. Rather than give up, I took the two hours I had before the concert, came up with some ideas, and then improvised a work that I entitled *Journey to Esmeraldas*. The main themes in *Cloud Forest* come from this improvisation.

—Note by Blake Tyson

Toby Fox's hit game *Undertale* developed a huge following amongst gamers for its immersive story with multiple endings depending on decisions made within the game. Fox also composed the soundtrack for the game, influenced heavily by the tracks of games he played growing up (specifically the Super Nintendo era). Doug Perry took the title track and arranged his **Undertale Variations** for marimba, using a theme and variations form to mimic the idea of the multiple paths the player could take in the game. The result is a piece that takes

both the performer and audience on a ride through the Underground-the locale of the game-and finishes with a gentle return home.

—Note by Chris Lizak