

Lecture – History of North American Solo Marimba Music
by Matthew Coley
Internationale Schlagzeugwoche Stuttgart - October 2, 2015

Performance: Jeffrey Holmes'
Nereus - I. Fantasy, Adagio sostenuto

Topic 1: Claire Musser, Vida Chenoweth, and repertoire from 1940-1975

- I. Before 1940
 - A. Marimba literature was influenced by Latin American music, as well as vaudeville, **Red Norvo (mainly vibraphone, but wrote *Dance of the Octopus* for marimba and piano, and indicated sticking patterns)**, and George H. Green and Harry Bruer (xylophone).
 1. The Hurtado and Bethancourt families are the most famous marimba families from Guatemala.
 - a) Members of these families moved to Chicago where the Leedy and Deagan factories were located.
 - b) John Deagan - musician and instrument manufacturer - in 1880 began developing and improving on glockenspiels found in American orchestras.
 - (1) 1913 - incorporated his company as J.C. Deagan Musical Bells, Inc.
 - (2) Later he developed the xylophone, organ chimes, aluminum chimes, aluminum harp, Swiss handbells, vibraharp, and orchestra bells.
 - (3) He developed the marimba, which was considered a novelty from Central America, into an accepted musical instrument.
 - c) The Leedy Drum Company - began by Ulysses G. Leedy in 1898 - started with developing and selling higher quality snare drums and stands, and later xylophones, orchestra bells, and drums. By 1920 it was selling every kind of percussion instrument, except cymbals, and manufacturing it all.
 2. **Repertoire Example: *Four Central American Folk Tunes*, arranged for solo marimba by V. Chenoweth, and published by Honeyrock Publications**
- II. After 1940 to 1970s
 - A. Claire Musser - 1901-1998 - was a marimba virtuoso, conductor and promoter of marimba orchestras, composer, teacher, designer of keyboard percussion instruments, inventor, and an engineer for Hughes Aircraft.
 1. First project with the J.C. Deagan Company was designing a marimba-celeste - the instrument combined a marimba and a vibraphone, with a built-in amplification system for the lower marimba keys. Musser toured with this instrument between 1927 and 1930. Officially joined as Manager of the Mallet Instrument Division in 1930.
 - a) Left Deagan in 1948 and founded Musser Marimbas.
 - b) Musser's design work, from the bars to the frame, helped to refine and standardize the marimba.
 - c) Keiko Abe - In the late 1960s and 1970s, Yamaha Corporation worked with her to develop their sound concept for their new marimbas, and at her urging, the range of the new marimba was stretched from four to five octaves.
 2. Marimba orchestras
 - a) 25 marimbas - first all-female orchestra for a Paramount pictures event in Chicago.
 - b) 100 marimbas - 1933, Century of Progress International Exhibition, Chicago
 - c) 300 marimbas - 1950, Chicago Railroad Fair, Soldier's Field
 - d) Musser always selected the players, arranged or wrote the music, rehearsed and conducted the ensemble, and designed a special model of marimba for each orchestra event; i.e. "Century of Progress Model" or "King George Model."
 3. **Repertoire**
 - a) 1942-52 - Musser taught at Northwestern University as Director of Marimba Music Education. Vida Chenoweth was a student.

- b) Much of Musser's compositions, that span his lifetime, have been lost. As of 1941 he had published 53 works, including piano solos, sacred music, and arrangements for marimba and vibraphone. The only Musser compositions that survive today are:
 - (1) Etude in Ab, Op.6, No.2
 - (2) Etude, Op.6, No.8 ("Nature Boy"/"Whole Tone")
 - (3) Etude, Op.6, No.9 (B Major)
 - (4) Etude in C Major, Op.6, No.10
 - (5) Prelude, Op.11, No.3 (G Major)
 - (6) Etude, Op.11, No.4 (C Major)
 - (7) Prelude, Op.11, No.7 (D Major)
- B. Vida Chenoweth - b. 1929 - the first professional solo classical marimbist, an ethnomusicologist and linguist.
- 1. Active as a soloist from 1956-63.
 - 2. Wrote the historical anthology, "Marimbas of Guatemala."
 - 3. **Repertoire:**
 - a) Alfred Fissinger - *Suite for Marimba* ("First major piece." -Gordon Stout)
 - b) Premiered Robert Kurka's *Concerto for Marimba* in 1959. (Visit YouTube to watch the premiere with Orchestra of America:
www.youtube.com/watch?t=22&v=Wia8VPKW4cM) [+]
 - c) Lorraine Irvine - *Octave Etude*
 - d) Eugene Ulrich - *Suite No. 1* (1962)
- C. **More Repertoire**
- 1. **Concertos**
 - a) Paul Creston - 1940 - *Concertino for Marimba*, premiered by Ruth Stuber Jeanne and Orchestrette Classique
 - b) Darius Milhaud - 1948 - *Concerto for Marimba and Vibraphone*, premiered by Jack Conner and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra
 - c) Basta, James - 1955 - *Concerto for Marimba*
 - d) Sarmientos, Jorge - 1958 - *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra*, premiered by Vida Chenoweth
 - 2. **Solos**
 - a) Many (pedagogical) works by Earl Hatch and Mitchell Peters from the 1960-70s.
 - b) Women composers writing for marimba include Emma Lou Diemer and Karen Irvine.
 - c) Art Jolliff wrote/published 3 volumes of marimba solos in the late 1940s.

Performance: Jeffrey Holmes'

Nereus - II. Variations, Allegro non troppo

Topic 2: Marimba compositions 1975-1995

I. Leigh H. Stevens' commissioning efforts

- A. **Raymond Helble wrote many works for LHS. He utilizes a strong neoclassical/Romantic approach within most of his music. Complex technical control with contrapuntal independence is required. Some of his marimba works include:**
 - 1. *Preludes for Marimba, Nos. I-XV* (1977-2000s) (See Coley's YouTube Channel for recordings of *Preludes Nos. IV, VI* [+], *VII, IX, XI, and XII.*)
 - 2. *Grand Fantasy* (1977)
 - 3. *Toccata Fantasy* (1980)
 - 4. *The Well-Tempered Marimbist, Books I and II*
 - 5. *Concerto for Marimba*
- B. **David Maslanka**
 - 1. *Variations on Lost Love* (1977)
 - 2. *My Lady White* (1992)
 - 3. Maslanka has since written other solos and concertos for marimba.
- C. **John Serry**
 - 1. *Night Rhapsody* (c. 1980)

2. *West Side Suite* (unpublished)
 3. Serry's new solo, *Groundlines*, was written in 2009.
- II. 1985 Commissioning Project with Stevens, Stout, Moersch, Percussive Arts Society, and National Endowment for the Arts
 - A. *Merlin* by Andrew Thomas (later composed *Loving Mad Tom*, *Concerto for Marimba* and *Wind* for 6-mallet marimba)
 - B. *Velocities* by Joseph Schwantner
 - C. *Reflections on the Nature of Water* by Daniel Druckman
 - D. These works began a trend of large, virtuosic pieces for solo marimba, capitalizing on the idiomatic aspects of four-mallet playing, combined with a contemporary, yet accessible language.
 - III. Gordon Stout's compositions
 - A. Over 30 compositions for solo marimba dating back to 1969, including: *Reverie* (1969); *Etudes for Marimba, Book I* (1973); *Two Mexican Dances* (1974); and *Four Episodes* (1994-95) [See Gordon's website.]
 - IV. Other commissioning projects:
 - A. Consortiums that included LHS, W. Moersch, G. Stout, N. Zeltsman, R. van Sice, Meet-the-Composer/Reader's Digest Commissioning Program, Percussive Arts Society, and/or National Endowment for the Arts:
 1. Gunther Schuller's *Marimbology* (1993)
 2. Steven Mackey's *See Ya Thursday* (1992)
 3. Roger Reynolds' *Islands from Archipelago II: Autumn Island* (1986)
 - B. William Moersch
 1. *Suite for Marimba* (1980) by Irwin Bazelon
 2. Richard R. Bennett's *After Syrinx II* (1984)
 3. Eric Ewazen's *Northern Lights* (1989)
 - V. Additional notable repertoire:
 - A. *Beaten Paths* by Milton Babbitt (1988)
 - B. *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra* by Bradley Bodine (1993)
 - C. Lynn Glasscock and Richard Gipson wrote several great pedagogical pieces, including: *Lydeka* (1988) and *Monograph IV* (1977) respectively.
 - D. *Of Wind and Water* by Dave Hollinden (1994)
 - E. Marta Ptaszynska's *Concerto for Marimba* (1985) and *Graffito* for solo marimba (1988)
 - F. Christopher Deane's *Etude for a Quiet Hall* (1982) and *The Process of Invention* (1996) [+]

Performance: Jeffrey Holmes'
Nereus - III. Fugue, Adagio sostenuto

Topic 3: Current trends, 1995-present

- I. The performer-composer
 - A. **Michael Burritt**
 1. Many solo pieces from strong pedagogical compositions to exciting concert pieces.
 2. Some of his works include: *Four Movements for Marimba* (1988), *Caritas* (1996), *October Night* (1987), *Azure*, *Fermo*, etc.
 - B. **Mark Ford**
 1. Several works of great pedagogical merit and audience pleasing, entertaining compositional language.
 2. Examples of concert pieces: *Polaris* (1996) and *Motion Beyond* (1999)
 3. Visit Ford's website for a comprehensive database of the "new wave" of marimba repertoire from 2004-2014: www.markfordmusic.com/new-marimba-music-survey/
 - C. **Kevin Bobo**
 1. Many works with neoclassical influences, rooted in the tradition of LHS.
 - D. **Christopher Norton**
 1. Jazz influences
 - a) *November Evening* (1995)
 - b) *Forsythian Spring* (1997)
- II. Pop music influences. "Easy-listening" for solo marimba.

- A. **Paul Smadbeck**
 - 1. *Rhythm Song*
 - 2. *Etudes for Solo Marimba*
 - 3. *Virginia Tate*
- B. **Rich O'Meara's Restless**
- C. **Blake Tyson**
- D. Many new performer-composers are writing for the instrument in this way.
- III. A very important addition to the repertoire in the early 2000s is **N. Zeltsman's *Intermediate Masterworks for the Marimba, Volume 1 and 2.***
- IV. **Other notable compositional contributions to the repertoire include:**
 - A. **Brett William Dietz**
 - 1. *Metamorphosis*
 - 2. *Madison's Unicorn*
 - 3. *No Screws Required*
 - B. **Paul Lansky's Three Moves**
- V. List of New Works for Keyboard Percussion (separate page provided, North American composers indicated), created in 2012 in collaboration with Eugene Koshinski, Jonathan Ovalle, and Brian Zator for the PAS International Convention, Austin, TX.

Performance: Jeffrey Holmes'
Nereus - IV. Fantasy, Adagio sostenuto

Thank you! Merci! Vielen Dank!

Commissions and Premieres by M. Coley:

- Bjorn Berkhout [USA]: *Fugue on a Chromatic Subject* (Edition Svitzer), and *Catch Your Breath* for marimba duo and *Tides and Riptides; Concerto for Marimba, Woodblocks, and Orchestra* (Heartland Marimba Festival Publications)
- Dolores White [USA]: *Fugue Odyssey* (Heartland Marimba Festival Publications)
- Andrew Ardizzoia [USA]: *Etudes and Fugues for solo marimba* (4 etudes and 4 fugues)
- Scott Price [USA]: *Which Side Are You On?* (3 movements with spoken text)
- Igor Iachimciuc [USA/Moldova]: *Through Flowers* for solo marimba* and *Rural Sketches* for marimba and eight contrabasses (Heartland Marimba Festival Publications)
- Neil Thornock [USA]: *Quantasy* and *Fanfares* (Heartland Marimba Festival Publications)
- Daniel Galay [Israel]: *Souvenir from Chisinau* (Edition Svitzer)
- Marcin Blazewicz [Poland]: *Piece for Two Marimbas* (Edition Svitzer)
- Wallace DePue [USA]: *Fugue (r)Evolution* (Heartland Marimba Festival Publications)
- Jeffrey Holmes [USA]: *Nereus* (Edition Svitzer)*
- Ghenadie Ciobanu [Moldova]: *The Breeze of South Latitudes Marimba Concerto*

*premiere only

www.hearMatthewColey.com
www.HeartlandMarimbaFestival.com

[+] Recording examples:

Excerpt of premiere from R. Kurka's *Concerto for Marimba*

Excerpt of R. Helble's *Prelude No. VI*

Excerpt of C. Deane's *Process of Invention*

Excerpt of D. Morrill's *Sonata*

2012 PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION – AUSTIN, TX

NEW WORKS FOR KEYBOARD PERCUSSION

Compiled by: Brian Zator, Jonathan Ovalle, Matthew Coley and Eugene Koshinski

SOLO MARIMBA

- Alamo, Juan – *Remembrance* | Innovative Percussion Publications
- Alamo, Juan – *Song for My Mother* | Innovative Percussion Publications
- Albeniz, Isaac/Arr. Dancy, A. – *Sonata in D* | C.Alan Publications
- Anderson, Jonathan – *Charon* | Innovative Percussion Publications
- Anderson, Jonathan – *Dancing Shadows* | Innovative Percussion Publications
- Aukofer, Michael – *In the Black Hills* | Innovative Percussion Publications
- Berg, Daniel - *Fantasia and Toccata* | Edition Svitzer
- Berkhout, Bjorn - *Fugue on a Chromatic Subject* – 4 minutes | Edition Svitzer
- Bilic, Ivana - *Wild Rose* | Edition Svitzer
- Blazewicz, Marcin - *Sonata for Marimba* | Edition Svitzer
- Broström, Tobias - *Trois Tableaux* | Edition Svitzer
- Brower, Leaf Arr. by: Jason Baker – *Un Dia de Noviembre* | Tapspace
- Brunk, Jeremy - *Etude Nos. 1-8* | beginning-advanced |3-5 minutes | jbrunk@mail.millikin.edu
- Cheung, Pius - *Poetic Fantasy* | Edition Svitzer
- Coley, Matthew – *Circularity* | 6 minutes | Innovative Percussion Publications
- Coley, Matthew – *Superfluous 1 & 2* | 2-3 minutes each | Edition Svitzer
- Del Sole, Stefano - *From Drops to a Storm: 10 Progressive Solos for Marimba* | Bachovich Music Publications
- Fieldman, Gary – *Northampton* | Tapspace
- Ford, Mark – *Stealing a Moment...* | Innovative Percussion Publications
- Ford, Mark – *The Green Road* | Innovative Percussion Publications
- Galay, Daniel - *Souvenir from Chisinau* | 4 movements | 12 minutes | Edition Svitzer
- Harnsberger, Andy – *Phoenix* | difficult | 10 minutes | www.andyharnsberger.com
- Harrison, Joel - *Fear of Silence* for solo marimba | Bachovich Music Publications
- Holmes, Jeffery - *Nereus Sonata* | Edition Svitzer
- Houllif, Murray – *Festival Repertoire for Mallets* | Kendor
- Houllif, Murray & Moore, James – *Progressive Solos for 3-4 Mallets* | Kendor
- Koshinski, Gene – *Variations (after Vivaldi)* (4.3 Octave) 8 minutes | Bachovich Music Publications | two mallet solo
- Koshinski, Gene – *Prelude Nuevo* (4.3 Octave) 4 minutes | www.genekoshinski.com | two-mallet solo marimba
- Koshinski, Gene – *Afternoon in March* (5.0 Octave) 3 minutes | www.genekoshinski.com | two mallet solo marimba
- Koshinski, Gene – *Caleidoscopio* (5.0 Octave) 4 minutes | www.genekoshinski.com | two mallet solo marimba
- LaBarbera, John – *Danza Del Fuego* | Bachovich Music Pub
- Lawless, Larry – *Fandango and Fugue in A minor* | Innovative Percussion Publications
- Magin, Carrie - *Hegira* (4.3 Octave) | www.carriemagin.com
- Marjan, Csaba Zoltan - *Niflheim*, | 7-8 minutes | Edition Svitzer
- Marjan, Csaba Zoltan - *Lemuria* (solo and duo versions) | 7-8 minutes | Edition Svitzer
- Miki, Minoru/Arr. by: Brian Zator – *The Young Sprout* | Zamiki Music
- Miki, Minoru/Arr by: Brian Zator – *Skylark* | Zamiki Music
- Monkman, Jesse – *Nocturnal Dance* | Tapspace
- Morrill, Dexter - *Sonata* | 7minutes | morrilldex@yahoo.com/www.dextermorrill.com
- Nozny, Brian – *Thief* | marimba with tunes metal pipes | medium | 5 minutes | www.briannozny.com
- Ovalle, Jonathan - ... *As she sleeps, she dreams* (5.0 Octave) | marimba chorale | www.jonathanovalle.com
- Paschal, Brett – *Rosebush* | Honeyrock
- Pereira, Joseph - *Five Pieces for Solo Marimba* | Bachovich Music Pub.
- Phelps, Ben - *Night and Fugue* | very difficult | 18 minutes | www.benphelpscomposer.com
- Picard, Guillaume Le – *Zephyr* | C.Alan Publications
- Rice, Dwyane – *Sonata no. 1* | 8min | medium difficult | Dwayne Rice Music
- Sekizawa, Mayumi - *Three Songs for Solo Marimba* | Bachovich Music Publications
- Sikes, Ron – *Chorale and Dance* | JPM Music
- Smirnov, Grigory - *Mirrors of Emptiness* | Edition Svitzer
- Stuckey, Steven – *Isabelle Dances* | Theodore Presser Music
- Swist, Christopher - *Prelude for Marimba* (5.0 Octave) | 5 minutes | Edition Svitzer
- Swist, Christopher - *Impressions of Giza* (4.5 Octave) | 10 minutes | Keyboard Percussion Publications
- Szilvasi, Attila - *Individual Lemming* | marimba with tape | difficult | 8 minutes | Edition Svitzer
- Temkin, Daniel - *Expansive Horizons for solo marimba* | Bachovich Music Publications
- Traditional Taiwanese/ Arr. Irving Feng-Hsu Lee – *Miss Malan* (4.5 Octave) | 4 minutes | Bachovich Music Publications
- Vieuxtemps, Henri (Arr. Gene Koshinski) – *Capriccio for Viola Solo* (5.0 Octave) 4 minutes | Bachovich Music Publications
- Vinao, Alejandro – *Burnitt Variations*
- White, Dolores - *Fugue Odyssey* | med difficult | 4 minutes | Edition Svitzer
- Zivkovic, Nebojsa - *Magma* (5.0 Octave) | 8 minutes | Ed. Musica Europa