

The New Percussion Concerto proposal:

Matthew Coley, soloist

The Glass House Concerto: Fateful Inspirations

by Andrew Ardizzioia

I had the fortune of meeting Andrew and becoming familiar with his work as an artist when hearing the premiere of his composition **Some Assembly Required* in November 2010 with the Iowa State University Symphony Orchestra, Jacob Harrison, conductor. The piece immediately struck me in several exciting ways in that he was extremely clever with the use of all the elements of the modern orchestra (now incorporating numerous percussion instruments and players), the modern techniques of pseudo programmatic works (meter, ostinato, syncopation, pacing, harmony, etc.), and a masterful way of elevating a young orchestra to a resonating and fiery level.

I have had a passionate interest for some time in utilizing glass as a percussion instrument, as well as assembling many sounds from one material, whether found or manufactured, to stand along side the effect you get from a marimba or vibraphone (collections of 10+ woodblocks, 10 temple blocks, and metal objects that don't exhibit any of the traditional timbre we associate with finely tempered percussion instruments [ie. gas cans from the 1950's and cracked cymbals]). I also am quite passionate about zithers, and have collected a 4-octave chromatic dulcimer, a 4.5 octave chromatic Hungarian concert cimbalom, and a 4-octave chromatic bowed psaltery.

The main impetus for this concerto, which had been forming in my mind for some time, was the collection of glass instruments I was working on acquiring for collaborations with dance (ie. glass xylophone, tuned bottle-phone, glass gongs, wind chimes, glass bells, bowls, vases, and other items made by glass blowers). Upon hearing Andrew's work performed by the ISUSO, it immediately resonated with me that this was a composer that would thrive with the request I was about to present. And the concerto was presented mainly to see what he could do using his choices from all the instruments I have mentioned.

Fatefully, it seems that it was meant to be, and I have to say that the whole connection with Philip Johnson's Glass House and the coincidence of the events has made the project even more awesomely real, serendipitous, and pertinent to my artistic beliefs.

The elemental main forces of this concerto will be the uniqueness of timbres presented by the soloist from the glass xylophone, stone xylophone, wood and metal percussion consorts, and other glass instruments added. Assisting these elements will be an incendiary combination of the connection to the architectural, design, and aesthetics of the Glass House, Andrew's compositional energy, my passion for the odder things we can make 'percussion', and the drive of a wind ensemble sound.

Iowa State University's Wind Ensemble plans to premiere this work at ISU in the spring of 2012, with Michael Golemo, conductor. We hope to see this work live in an active performance schedule throughout the US with many other university and community groups.