UNLV Percussion Ensemble and Moving Light Lab

Featuring
Ted Atkatz, Artist-in-Residence
James Bailey, Artist-in-Residence
Gary Cook, Artist-in-Residence

PROGRAM

Ted Atkatz
Turn Key Hotel
Ted Atkatz and Timothy Jones, percussion
Josh Wroblewski, lighting design

Nolan Stolz
(b. 1981)
Ghost Town Miners
Chris Dye, Max Feld, Holly Giron,
Cameron Knowles, Tom Schaefer, Bronson Purdy,
and Alex Tomlinson, percussion
Josh Lentner, lighting design
Timothy Jones, conductor

Stephen Gryc
(b. 1949)
Two Portraits for Bass Drum (8 hands)
Ryan Harrison, Cameron Knowles, Tom Schaefer,
and Alex Tomlinson, percussion
Josh Lentner, lighting design

Istvan Marta
(b. 1952)
(Babahazi tortenet) Doll's House Story
Chris Dye, Max Feld, Manny Gamazo,
Luigi Ng, and Bronson Purdy, percussion
Josh Lentner, lighting design
James Bailey, conductor

INTERMISSION
David Lang
(b. 1957)
The So Called Laws of Nature
Kyle Bissantz, James Doyle, Ryan Harrison,
and AJ Merlino, percussion
Josh Wroblewski, lighting design

Bob Becker
(b. 1947)
Away Without Leave
Ted Atkatz, James Bailey, Gary Cook,
Dean Gronemeier, and Timothy Jones, percussion
Josh Wroblewski, lighting design

We would like to thank the following companies for donating equipment to our Moving Light Lab this year:

Super Summer Theatre
Sublime Lighting
Morpheus lighting
Vari-Lite
Advanced Entertainment Services

Friday, April 26, 2013
Saturday, April 27, 2013
7:30 p.m.

Black Box Theatre
Alta Ham Fine Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Program Notes

Turn Key Hotel – Ted Atkatz

*Turn Key Hotel* was written in 2011. The piece is written in A-B-A form. After an introduction, which is in free time, a groove is slowly developed between the two players. Like a lot of music of Steve Reich, the rhythms imply several meters: 3/4, 6/4 and 4/4. The players each have different types of tuplets, making the groove feel like a covered wagon that is missing a wheel or two. Once this groove is established (each figure is repeated 4x), it begins to be interrupted by a unison wood block passage, which also begins to play with time and feel. The B section is a faster section in which both players improvise using elements of rock, jazz and fusion, interspersed with notey unison “licks.” The A section groove returns, this time faster. The rhythms of the A section groove are then transferred to the marimba and vibraphone before returning to the coda, which reintroduces the initial groove interspersed with the unison wood block passage. – Ted Atkatz

Ghost Town Miners – Nolan Stolz

I began composing *Ghost Town Miners* for percussion ensemble during an October 2012 residency at Goldwell Open Air Museum in the ghost towns of Bullfrog and Rhyolite. Situated in the Bullfrog Mining District near the Nevada-California border, Bullfrog and Rhyolite are rich with items left by their residents over 100 years ago: particularly glass bottles and pieces of wood and metal. The piece begins with many small rocks dumped onto a large bass drum (to represent the land) and a rhythmic theme played on pieces of metal (to represent a miner hard at work). As the theme continues, another performer plays the theme in canon, but at a slightly faster tempo, as if the miner is working on a similar task, yet independently. After another “miner” begins the theme at an even faster tempo, two more “miners” enter playing rhythmic motifs on pieces of wood at tempi of their own choosing. The polytempo creates rhythmic complexity out of simple rhythmic material. In a section near the end of the piece, the “miners” choose their own tempo and decide how many times to repeat their motifs. Because of this element of indeterminacy, they reach the penultimate section at different times, and as a result, perform the music written in rhythmic unison as a six-part canon. Here, the bottle players are at the original tempo, but the other three are at faster tempi. Any remaining metal and wood players cease when a bass drum hit signals the final section, during which the remaining bottle players complete their parts. *Ghost Town Miners* was completed in November 2012 during a residency at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts – Nolan Stolz

Two Portraits For Bass Drum (8 hands) – Stephen Gryc

*Two Portraits For Bass Drum* is an exploration in sound and timbre. Using one concert bass drum, the four percussionists use various implements and techniques to create a complex texture of sonorous sounds while extracting special effects to highlight the themes in each movement. The two short movements are simply titled “Portrait of a Woman” and “Portrait of a Man” invoking a contrast of sensuous and delicate sounds to bold and brutish attacks – Tim Jones

(Babahazi tortenet) Doll’s House Story – Istvan Marta

This is a high-energy work, melding the sounds of traditional percussion instruments: timpani, marimba, xylophone, gongs and various drums, with contemporary, electronically produced sounds. A Doll’s House presents a toy store revolution where, after the store closes, the toys engage in a pitched battle, leaving the toy shop devastated without any clear winners. In 1986, István Márta wrote of his composition:

A Doll’s House Story (1985) renders in music the events of a tragic revolution of a few minutes’ duration. The revolution broke out overnight in the toy department of a store. There did not seem to be
any rhyme or reason to it, and indeed, it erupted over a petty affair - it appears to be petty in hindsight anyway. The toys (plastic dolls, tin soldiers, bicycled regiments, intrepid civilians, undercover chimney sweeps, smart police officers, clowns, dwarfs and giants) engaged in pitched battle of unprecedented cruelty. The fragmentary reports that have come down to us allow the reconstruction of but a few aspects of those events albeit rather important ones. I have discovered, for instance, that the very first minute of the revolution claimed nine lives (among them that of a Pierrot, a Columbine and a heroic Harlequin). Within the next five minutes, six more deaths occurred, all victims of base instincts running amok. The appearance of a night watchman put a temporary stop to the events, but fighting continued with even more bitterness once the torchlight had been switched off. The streets were overrun by ambulances with their shrieking sirens, tanks firing shells and other military vehicles - and soon there was silence. The presence of mechanized troops did its work: the rebels and fighters withdrew into their homes. The dead silence was only occasionally disturbed by the fumbling of a doll, groping cautiously in the dark for its lost limbs or head. In the morning, the shop assistants, tired and sleepy after a short night's rest, were incredulously taking in the mess, looking in vain for signs of burglary or theft. Later, in the course of the morning, a tiny wind-up guillotine swung into action but nobody took any notice. – Istvan Marta

The So Called Laws of Nature – David Lang
Composers Note: I went to college to study science. I was expected to become a doctor, or at the very least a medical researcher, and I spent much of my undergraduate years studying math and chemistry and physics, hanging out with future scientists, going to their parties, sharing their apartments, eavesdropping on their conversations. I remember a particularly heated discussion about a quote from Wittgenstein: “At the basis of the whole modern view of the world lies the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanation of natural phenomena.” This quote rankled all us future scientists, as it implied that science can’t explain the universe but can only offer mere descriptions of things observed. Over the years it occurred to me that this could be rephrased as a musical problem.

Because music is made of proportions and numbers and formulas and patterns, I always wonder what these numbers actually mean. Do the numbers themselves generate a certain structure, creating the context and the meaning and the form, or are they just the incidental byproducts of other, deeper, more mysterious processes? My piece the so-called laws of nature tries to explore the “meaning” of various processes and formulas. The individual parts are virtually identical – the percussionists play identical patterns throughout, playing unison rhythms on subtly different instruments. Most of these instruments the performers are required to build themselves. Some of the patterns between the players are displaced in time. Some are on instruments, which have a kind of incoherence built into their sound. Does the music come out of the patterns or in spite of them? I am not sure which, but I know that this piece is as close to becoming a scientist as I will ever get – David Lang

Away Without Leave – Bob Becker (b. 1947)
"Away Without Leave" is scored for five percussionists playing military drums, tom-toms, cymbal, timbales, cowbell, concert bass drum, military bass drum and hi-hat. The piece starts with a traditional rudimental solo drummer at a soft dynamic level before the entire ensemble joins in this standard classic rudimental style of drumming. The piece bounces between a military and samba groove and provides a brief opportunity for improvisational dialogue between players 1 and 2 on tom-toms and timbales. Becker’s inspiration for this composition comes from the playing of esteemed drummer Steve Gadd and three of his famous drum solos: The Army 2/4, Duke’s Lullaby, and Crazy Army. The work is also dedicated to Gadd (who was one of Becker's classmates in the 1960s). – Bob Becker