UNLV
Department of Music
Department of Theatre
College of Fine Arts
presents

UNLV Percussion Ensemble
Moving Light Lab

featuring
Wei-Wei Le, violin
Gary Cook, conductor
Ronnie Vannucci, composer/percussionist

PROGRAM
Nebojša Jovan Zivkovic
(b. 1962)
A.J. Merlino, marimba/percussion
Kyle Bissantz  Charlie Gott  Timothy Jones, percussion
Nathan Daughtrey
(b. 1975)
Holly Giron  Timothy Jones  Cameron Knowles
Michael Leary  Luigi Ng, percussion

Josh Wroblewski

John Gibson
(b. 1946)
Sonne Bustos  Chris Dye  Max Feld  Manny Gamazo
Luigi Ng  Bronson Purdy  Jadin Tredup, percussion

Ronnie Vannucci
(b. 1976)
Elisabeth Bedrosian  Dmytro Nehrych  Marlo Zemetis, violins
Dominique Jackson, cello  Justin Bland, trumpet  Mariko Kitada, bass
Paul Munger  Noe Otani, trombones
Kyle Bissantz  Chris Dye  Max Feld  Manny Gamazo  Holly Giron
Timothy Jones  Cameron Knowles  Michael Leary  A.J. Merlino
Luigi Ng  Bronson Purdy  Jadin Tredup  Ronnie Vannucci, percussion

Kurt Jung

Lou Harrison
(1917-2003)

Wei-Wei Le, violin
Gary Cook, guest conductor
Brandon Bell  Charlie Gott  A.J. Merlino
Mike Smith  Chris Tusa, percussion

TAKNARA

Sizzle!

Lighting Design Feature

Preachers, Thieves and Acrobats

In Toronto

INTERMISSION

Lighting Design Feature

Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra
I. Allegro maestoso, Allegro vivace
II. Largo, cantabile
III. Allegro vigoroso, poco presto
Ronnie Vannucci
(b. 1976)

Program Notes

TAKNARA – Nebojsa Jovan Zivkovic

“At the beginning of 2009, I got a call from Spanish “TUOPALI DUO” from Tenerife, who asked me if I could compose two pieces: one for percussion duo and another for percussion quartet. A couple of months later, our conversation resulted in a commission of those two works by Auditorio de Tenerife. “During the summer of 09, I have started writing sketches, collecting various ideas, and thinking of possible concepts of the pieces, and already had some pages written down. I was very concerned about quartet especially, being informed that TAKNARA actually is a student ensemble, while I usually write for professional groups and orchestras. My concerns immediately disappeared after I have heard four young players from TAKNARA in September in Italy, where they have accompanied me in one of my pieces. Even more, their enthusiasm, their desire to professionally study and present every piece of music they work on, has enormously inspired me. So, my initial skepticism turned into euphoric enthusiasm, and desire to compose music that is really connected with that particular group. The name “TAKNARA” has been essential for the compositional process.

“After learning that this is considered to be an old Name for TENERIFE, I have studied all available online resources about the Canary Islands, their geological history, volcanic eruptions that have led to building the islands, etc. Interesting “myths” (like one that Canarias are rests of Atlantis) were also inspiring for my composing process. And last but not least, the name itself “tak-na-ra” served as a rhythmic motif for the second part of the piece.

“The composition itself is about 11 minutes long and consists of two parts. I would like to see it as a percussive homage to the Canarias (first part) and particularly Tenerife (second part). The music has descriptive character, especially the first (slow) movement. After the thundering opener (sinking of the Atlantis into the sea) I keep the tranquil and ocean-deep atmospheres, using contrast between low and deep marimba sound and ocean drum on one side, and metal and glass instruments on the other side (deep ocean and reflection of the water in the moon nights?). Into this mixture, I have built-in sounds of Canarias (some folk rhythms, whistle language of Gomera) and also undersea volcano eruptions (most notable with the use of bass drum). After six symbolic flashing cymbal-sounds (representing genesis of six Canary Islands), the final movement is dedicated solely to the seventh and largest island TENERIFE. This movement is based on simple rhythmical motif of only three notes. I also decided to use voice in the piece, hoping to support the percussion instruments with the most intensive human instrument. It is my hope that it is possible to listen and understand this music without having to know the story behind it”; then the music speaks for itself.”

Sizzle! – Nathan Daughtrey

Sizzle! features 3 families of percussion instruments: membranes (bongos, djembe, conga, tumbadora), metals (cymbals, gongs, crashers, factory metal cross), and woods (cajon, log drums, tongue drum). A 4th family is created with the players voices whispering intensely various syllables from the word “Sizzle.” The piece is set primarily in 4/4 with a section of 6/8. However, the occasional 5/8 and 7/8 bar creeps up just to keep the audience on their toes.

Preachers, Thieves and Acrobats – John Gibson

Preachers, Thieves, and Acrobats is a unique percussion ensemble, in seven movements, for seven percussionists— one who serves as a spoken narrator (assigned to a different performer in each movement). The movements are entitled: "Monique (The Acrobat)"; "Wesley (The Watchmaker)"; "Watkins (The Soldier)"; "Gordon (The Thief)"; "Lydia (The Secret Dancer)"; "Phillip (The Preacher)"; "William (The Painter)". This work is multi-faceted in that it combines the spoken English word with conventional percussion ensemble sounds. Gibson's combination of the human voice with the selected percussion timbres is masterful. A pre-recorded tape of a Baroque organ fugue is melded briefly into the end of the second movement. This ensemble is both educational and entertaining, demonstrating what filmmakers have known for decades. That effectual storytelling can be enhanced by the clever combination of percussion timbres.
Toronto and Siren – Ronnie Vannucci
Las Vegas native Ronnie Vannucci began drumming in public at age 6; drummed for his junior high school’s jazz ensemble and played percussion at both Clark and Western high schools. After performing with many local bands and honing his skills, he began studies in classical percussion at UNLV. From 2000-2002, Vannucci was studying percussion, riding pedicabs at the Desert Passage, working as a photographer at the Little Chapel of the Flowers and playing with several Vegas bands when he joined a new group “The Killers.” They would practice IN Vannucci’s garage and in the UNLV band room after hours in 2002 and 2003. When their 2004 debut album Hot Fuss sold millions of records world-wide, rock ‘n’ roll became his serious and lucrative career path. Vannucci plays drums for The Killers, but also contributes to the songwriting for many Killers hits including "Believe Me Natalie," "Spaceman," "Bones," "Somebody Told Me," "Glamorous Indie Rock & Roll," "When You Were Young," and "Human" to name but a few.

The Killers have sold over 18 million records worldwide! 2004 - Hot Fuss #1 in 3 countries – top 10 in 7 countries, 2006 - Sam’s Town #1 in 4 countries – top 10 in 7 countries, Day & Age #1 in 2 countries – top 10 in 7 countries, 2009 - Live From the Royal Albert Hall – DVD, platinum in 3 countries. Their fourth studio album is due to be released in late 2012. The Killers music has been featured in the Movies Twilight, The Holiday, Spiderman 3, Control, Matador, Southland Tales, Rocky Balboa, Expelled and more... on TV for the Nike Olympic commercial, Jericho, The OC, Smallville, The Hills, ER, 90210, Fringe, Melrose Place, Saturday Night Live, Carrier, American Idol, and more... and in the video games Guitar Hero, Rock Band, Rock Revolution and Singstar Amped. The Killers have won four NME Awards; have been nominated for seven Grammy Awards; won the BRIT Award for Best International Band and best album (Sam’s Town), are inductees of the Nevada Entertainer Hall of Fame plus many other awards. They also performed for the 4th of July celebrations at the White House for Barack Obama, 2010!

Vannucci was featured on the cover of Rhythm Magazine in 2006 (where he was dubbed "pop's dynanic showman") and again in 2008. He has also been featured in Modern Drummer Magazine in 2009, and in Drumhead Magazine in 2006 and again in 2008. Vannucci won awards in the 2006 and 2007 Modern Drummers Reader Polls. Vannucci teamed up with members of Mumford and Sons, Keane, and Noah and the Whale to record tracks on an album under the name Mt. Desolation released in 2010, and, in 2011 recorded his solo album Big Talk during The Killers hiatus. Big Talk was released on Vannucci’s own label, Little Oil, which he founded in 2011. And, Zildjian has produced the Ronnie Vannucci Artist Series Drumstick in recognition of his work as a musician to further drumming. Ronnie Vannucci is a graduate of the UNLV Department of Music and has recently begun work on his Masters degree in music at UNLV.

Lou Harrison’s Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra (Koncerto porIa violono kun perkuta orkestro) 1940-59
For violin soloist and percussion ensemble in three movements (1) Allegro maestoso, Allegro vivace (2) Largo, cantabile (3) Allegro vigoroso, poco presto. The composition was begun in 1940 as Concerto #5 for Violin; completed in 1959 and revised 1974. The world premiere was November 19, 1959 at Carnegie Hall, New York, with Paul Price as conductor.

This work, though it is more immediately a romantic one and was noticeably inspired by the Berg Violin Concerto, nonetheless finds its solid groundwork and foundation in world music. It is among many of my compositions which follow the pattern of having a single melodic part accompanied (or enhanced) by rhythmic percussion, whether with or without additional drone. The model is, of course, world-wide. This is the standard usage in India, in Islam, in Sinitic folk (if not in the cultivated) music of Africa - and where not else?

The use of a modern European instrument as soloist, the mixture of "junk" instruments with standard ones in the percussion section, and the employment of romantic concerto form constitute the only novelties, from the world point of view. Quite full sketches of this Koncherto (the international language form approved by UNESCO) were made in 1940. In 1959 my friend Anahid Ajemian offered to premiere a completed version and I succeeded in readying it for her concert of that year. Subsequently the work has had multiple performances by Eudice Shapiro. For those who share my how-to-do-it interests, allow me to explain the most interesting feature of the solo part. From the beginning to the end of the composition, the violin plays only three melodic intervals: the minor second, the major third, and the major sixth - even the beginnings of phrases are connected to their predecessors by one of these intervals. From any tone, then, the compositional choice was one out of six possible ones. This method of "interval controls" I first conceived in the middle 1930s and have used in many works. It is, of course, a good way, other than Schoenberg's "12-tone System" with which to compose predominantly chromatic music. – Lou Harrison

Form and stricture of the concerto:

I. Allegro maestoso, Allegro vivace

Modified Sonata Form: ABC A‘B’Cadenza Coda

II. Largo, cantabile

ABC Three-Part Form: with repeated variation A’B’C’ and elaboration

III. Allegro vigoroso, poco presto

Quasi Rondo Form: ABA’C Cadenza A’’ Coda
Lou Harrison was one of the great composers of the twentieth century—a pioneer in the use of alternate tunings, world music influences, and new instruments. Born in 1917 in Portland Oregon, he spent much of his youth moving around Northern California before settling in San Francisco. There he studied with the modernist pioneer of American Music, Henry Cowell, and, while still in his twenties, composed extensively for dance and percussion. He befriended another of Cowell’s students, John Cage, and the two of them established the first concert series devoted to new music for percussion. They composed extensively for these concerts, including their still popular collaboration Double Music. In 1942, Harrison moved to Los Angeles to study with the famous Arnold Schoenberg at UCLA. Steepled in the atonal avant garde of Schoenberg’s school, he moved to New York the following year, where he made a name for himself not only as a composer, but also as a critic under the tutelage of composer/writer Virgil Thomson. Harrison also worked at editing the scores of American composer Charles Ives and conducted the first performance of Ives’s Third Symphony (which won Ives the Pulitzer Prize). Harrison also published a study of the music of atonal composer Carl Ruggles, and influences of Ruggles and Schoenberg come through in works such as Harrison’s Symphony on G and his opera Rapunzel. However, the stress and noise of New York led to a nervous breakdown in 1947. To help his friend recover, Cage recommended him to Black Mountain College in rural North Carolina, where the quiet and idyllic setting proved conducive to studies in Harrison’s new interests, Asian music and tuning. In 1953, he moved back to California and (then) rural Aptos, where he resided for the rest of his life. Despite his relative isolation from the music world, in the 1950s Harrison completed a remarkable set of works exploring new tunings and approaches to tonality, including his Strict Songs for just intonation orchestra and chorus. In 1961, he was invited to the East-West Music Encounter, a conference in Tokyo, which proved a leaping-off point for extensive studies of Asian music, first in Seoul, then in Taiwan. In the 1960s he created some of his best known works incorporating these influences, including Pacifica Rondo and Young Coesar. In the last, an elaborate puppet opera, he used for the first time instruments designed and built by his new life-partner, Bill Colvig.

In 1975, Harrison met Ki K.P.H. Wasiodiningrat, familiarly known as Pak Cokro, one of the great masters of the Javanese gamelan orchestra in that century. Pak Cokro not only instructed him in the performance and theory of gamelan music, but also encouraged him to compose for the ensemble. Over the next ten years, Harrison would produce a remarkable body of nearly 50 pieces for gamelan, often in combinations with Western instruments, such as Philemon and Baukis (violin and gamelan), Main Bersamo-sama (born and Sundanese gamelan), and Babaran Robert (trumpet and gamelan). He and Colvig built various sets of gamelan instruments, including ensembles at colleges where Harrison taught at various times—Mills College, San Jose State University, and Cabrillo College. In the 1980s, with the rise of interest in the “new tonality” and world music, the world began to catch up with Lou Harrison, who by the time of his death was recorded on dozens of CDs and was the subject of many festivals and tributes. On his way to another festival in his honor in January 2003 in Ohio, Harrison suffered a heart attack and passed away at the age of 85. As a composer, artist, poet, calligraphist, peace activist, Lou Harrison dedicated his life to bringing beauty into the world, and those of us who remember his warm generosity, his integrity of spirit, and his irrepressible joyfulness, owe a great debt of gratitude that he did. -By Bill Alves

Wei-Wei Le, a native of Shanghai, graduated from Yehudi Menuhin School in England, and received her Bachelor of Music from Oberlin Conservatory of Music. After completing her bachelor degree, Le then went on and received her Masters of Music degree from Cleveland Institute of Music, and Graduate Diploma from New England Conservatory of Music. She won numerous competitions, including the Yehudi Menuhin International Violin Competition (England), the Kloster Schontal International Violin Competition (Germany), and the Starling International Violin Competition (USA). Her studies have taken her to the renowned violin pedagogues, such as Yehudi Menuhin, Donald Weilerstein, Almita and Roland Vamos, Dorothy DeLay. As a solo performer, Le has given recitals and concerts all over the world, performing with noteworthy orchestras such as the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (London), Queensland Symphony (Australia), and the Tianjin Symphony Orchestra (China). Many of her performances have been conducted by Lord Yehudi Menuhin himself, who described her as “one of the most talented young musicians he has ever seen.” As a devoted chamber musician, Le has collaborated with great musicians and quartets in North America, Europe, and Asia, including Richard Stoltzman, William Preucil, Sara Chang, and Eliot Fisk, as well as the Ying Quartet and St. Petersburg Quartet. Prior to her appointment at UNLV, Le served on the faculty at Emory University and Georgia State University in Atlanta.

Gary Cook is well known as the author of Teaching Percussion, currently in its third edition with DVDs and used world-wide. He is Professor Emeritus of Music at the University of Arizona where he founded the percussion department in 1975 and taught for thirty-three years until retiring in 2008. Prior to that he taught at Louisiana Tech University. From 1994 to 1999 he served as Director of the UA School of Music and Dance. Cook was Timpanist and Principal Percussionist with the Tucson Symphony Orchestra for over two decades and held similar posts with the Arizona Opera and other orchestras. In the summer, Cook is Principal Percussionist with the Crested Butte Music Festival in Colorado and has performed with other summer music festivals in Colorado and Nevada. He enjoys commissioning new music for percussion and chamber music and voice combinations and has premiered and recorded many commissions. His most recent CD on Albany Records features the Philip Glass Concerto Fantasy for Two Timpanists and Wind Ensemble. Cook was President of the international professional organization, the Percussive Arts Society (PAS), from 2007-2008 and received the PAS Lifetime Achievement in Education Award in 2011. He is most proud of his many former students who hold distinguished professorships in colleges and universities around the country and in Trinidad, perform professionally around the world, and are successful teachers and performers in all areas of music and the arts.

Dr. Timothy Jones is Lecturer in Percussion Studies at UNLV, Vice President of the Nevada PAS chapter and freelance percussionist. In addition to performing internationally as a soloist and contemporary artist, Dr. Jones is the author of Rock ‘n Roll Origins and Innovators, several published percussion articles, is coordinator of ZISAMP-USA (Neboja Zivkovic’s summer academy) and has performed with the Las Vegas Philharmonic, Opera Las Vegas, Andrea Bocelli, Mary Wilson, Sarah Brightman, Michael Buble, Josh Groban, Peter Cetera, David Foster, The Killers, Buddy Greco and Neboja Zivkovic. Dr. Jones is proud to endorse Vic Firth sticks and mallets, Sabian Cymbals, Grover Pro Percussion and Yamaha concert percussion.