

Program

"From War Drum to Concert Stardom: The Evolution of the Timpani" $\,$

A Lecture-Recital by Courtney Wolfe, timpani

Variations for King George	William Kraft
	(b. 1923)
Groovin' Timps	Arnold Riedhammer
•	(b. 1947)
Eight Pieces For Four Timpani	Elliott Carter
8. March	(b. 1908)

Program Notes

Variations for King George

As one of today's leading composers for percussion, William Kraft writes for the serious performer. He studied with two great concert timpanists, Morris Goldenberg and Saul Goodman. He performed as a percussionist, timpanist and also served as an assistant conductor with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. As a composer, Kraft has explored various kinds of music; his works from the 1960s and 70s were serial. During the 1980s, his style moved towards rhythmic elements derived from jazz and impressionistic harmonies. Although Kraft is known for his percussion works, from 1966 to 1998 he devoted a fair amount of compositional energy to his first opera, *Red Azalea*.

Variations for King George is a 1980 timpani composition that was dedicated to Kraft's good friend, George Gaber. Gaber was a professor of music at Indiana University and was closely associated with the music products industry. The piece consists of a main theme, presented in the opening three lines, with five distinct variations. Each section features a different tempo marking, with the exception of the third and fourth variations. The third variation flows right into the fourth variation, so the tempo is the same, creating a seamless transition.

The piece features glissandos, the use of wooden mallets, the use of four marimba mallets at once, and playing on the edge of the timpani. Because four mallets are used at once, the player can produce harmony, not normally found in solo timpani works. In this instance, we will hear a chord built from two minor thirds stacked on each other. Kraft marked certain notes to be played at the edge of the drum. This creates an echo effect that is very transparent and light.

Groovin' Timps

Although a relative newcomer to the compositional scene, Arnold Riedhammer has already made his mark as a percussionist and composer. Despite his birth in the United States, his parents were German-American, and he tends now to call Germany his home. After studying at the Richard Strauss Conservatory in Munich, his early career focused on performances in Nuremberg and Bonn, Germany. It was more recently that he began publishing works for percussion, such as *Good Vibe-brations, Drums for Fun*, and, of course, *Groovin' Timps*. Since 1974, he has been the solo percussionist with the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra. He is also the teacher of percussion and head of department at the Academy of Music in Munich. In 1981, he won the National Sponsorship Award, marking the first time ever a percussionist had received this award.

Groovin' Timps was written in 1994 and features the use of wood and felt mallets played simultaneously, as well as several instances of cross-sticking. To show the player when to cross sticks, the composer marks an X next to the note head that is to be crossed. The form of the piece follows an alternation pattern, with the A sections characterized by the syncopated "groove" theme and the B sections characterized by a steady sixteenth-note pattern.

"March" from Eight Pieces for Four Timpani

Elliott Carter is a significant American composer who has written for many types of ensembles, but he is especially celebrated for his works for percussion. Carter was born in New York, but spent most of his childhood in Europe where his parents provided piano lessons. At age 14, he entered Horace Mann School where he developed an interest in modern music. At age 24, he completed his master's degree in music composition at Harvard. Carter recently celebrated his 102nd birthday!

"March" is the closing number in a series of movements entitled *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani*. Each piece is dedicated to a particular performer; the "March" honors Saul Goodman. Six of the movements had been composed as early as 1949; these are studies in controlled, interrelated, and complex changes of speed, called metric modulation. The remaining two, including the March, were composed in 1966.

"March" features two rhythms of different speeds that are superimposed. One of the rhythms is played with the butts of the sticks, while the other uses the heads. The musical ideas produced by the rhythms featured in the beginning are expanded in the middle section. Another interesting feature is the use of mutes on the drums, which produces a duller sound and prevents the sound from resonating, thus avoiding distortion. Using mutes also creates more challenges for the player: there is one instance where the left hand must mute two drums while the right hand is playing, all in one measure.

Acknowledgements

Mom, Dad, Sissy, Family, and Friends – Thank you all so much for your constant support throughout my entire college experience. All your words of wisdom have truly made me a better person and musician. I love you all so much.

Dr. McLamore – Words cannot express just how much your help means to me. From the first time I stepped foot in Research and Writing, to the last time I turned in a final draft of my program notes, you've inspired me to be the best student I can be. All the hard work you put into your lectures is appreciated by each and every one of your students. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for all that you have done. And most importantly, I will never forget the difference between "it's" and "its".

Ross Sears – You have been an incredible teacher and friend. I have taken every single piece of advice you have given me and put it into my playing. I thank you for everything you have done.

Bill "J" Johnson – It is an honor to be able to graduate the same time you retire. I have to admit, you were the reason I decided to attend Cal Poly. Of all my college adjudicators, you showed the most interest in me and it gave me the boost I needed to want to play music. Your enthusiasm and dedication to this program is unprecedented. Congratulations on your accomplishment!

Emma Levine and Scott Charvet – The two of you have been my best friends here at Cal Poly. You are both incredible musicians and extraordinary people. Your support in this entire process has been essential to my success. I love you both.

Fellow Percussion Majors – Each of you have had an influence on my performances. You are all so talented. Don't ever stop playing! And try not to give Ross a hard time...

Music Faculty and Staff – Whether it was being in your class, playing music for you, or just seeing you in the building; each and every one of you have inspired me to be a better musician. I appreciate everything you have done for this department.

My Music Major Friends – I will miss all of you dearly. You are all so incredible at your craft and I hope you all continue doing what you love. I want to thank you all in person, so watch out!