

Spring 4-22-2001

## Eric Sheffler, Percussion

Pittsburg State University

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**PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY**

Pittsburg, Kansas  
Department of Music

***Graduate Recital***

ERIC SHEFFLER, Percussion

assisted by

Will Demings, Bass Guitar

Jeremiah Nichol, Audio

James Romig, Vibraphone

Aimee Sheffler, Piano

Breana Sheffler, Vocal

Sunday, April 22, 2001

McCray Recital Hall

3:00 p.m.

**Menuet No. 2 from Partita No. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006** (1720).....J. S. Bach  
(transcribed Eric Sheffler) (1685 – 1750)

Baroque composer J.S. Bach is not commonly associated with percussion except through transcriptions of his vast library of literature. This work, originally written for solo violin, is a classic example of a Menuet: a slow graceful dance in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. The marimba is the percussion instrument of choice for this transcription because of its 4-mallet melodic and harmonic capability. An interesting technique used in this piece, the “mandolin roll,” enables the performer to sustain long tones underneath moving melodic lines. This technique requires 2 mallets in the same hand to play on both the top and bottom of the end of a bar in a quick, alternating manner.

**Two Mexican Dances for Marimba** (1974).....Gordon Stout  
(b. 1952)

I. Allegro

Born in Wichita, Kansas, Gordon Stout received both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the Eastman School of Music. This work, dedicated to former teacher Warren Benson, tied for third place in the 1975 Percussive Arts Society Composition Contest. The performer must establish a consistent rhythmic foundation with the left-hand mallets while allowing the right-hand mallets the freedom to play against this rhythm in an open, melodic style without a specified time signature. Although the title conjures up images of Mexico, neither movement contains any ethnically based folksongs or styles. The *Allegro* is the first of the two dances.

**American Suite: For Unaccompanied Snare Drum (1989).....Guy G. Gauthreaux II**  
(b. 1956)

- I.
- III.
- IV.

Serving as principal timpanist and percussion section leader in the United States Navy Band, Guy G. Gauthreaux is also an accomplished freelance musician in the Washington, D.C. area. *American Suite* was premiered in 1989 at the Percussive Arts Society's International Convention after placing first in its Composition Contest that same year. This five-movement work is based primarily on a short rhythmic motive. This motive, presented in the opening four measures, is continuously manipulated throughout all five movements, utilizing augmentation, diminution, fragmentation, and other techniques. The first movement requires solid hand-to-hand independence. The third movement utilizes brushes while being cool, light, and casual. Movement four, written in a Latin style, uses numerous playing areas and techniques.

**Eight Pieces for Four Timpani (one player) (1960, 1968).....Elliott Carter**  
(b. 1908)

- IV. Recitative
- VIII. March
- V. Improvisation

Elliott Carter wrote six etudes for timpani in 1950 with two goals in mind: one being a set of compositional studies in "tempo (or metric) modulation," the other as a way of manipulating four-note chords he was using at the time as a means of harmonic organization. After hearing the etudes played by New York percussionists, he was not pleased with the way they sounded so only two (*Recitative* and *Improvisation*) of the original six were published in 1960. Carter developed a relationship with percussionist Jan Williams in the mid-sixties and together they revised the other four pieces. To show his appreciation, Carter wrote the final two etudes and dedicated them to Williams for his friendship and collaboration.

Each of the eight pieces presents a specific rhythmic and timbral problem and each requires various extended performance techniques. An interesting aspect of Carter's compositional style in both *Recitative* and *Improvisation* is that specific instructions are given to the performer regarding dampening of the timpani heads. Within the rhythmic structure of the works, Carter notates where he wants the timpanist to dampen the heads, thus producing additional colors, sounds, and rhythms.

*Recitative*, dedicated to Morris Lang, is marked Adagio drammatico and contrasts three independent ideas: a dramatic tremolo, a bolero rhythm, and an irregular heart-murmur pulse. The tuning used serves to define harmonic motion even with four unchanging pitches.

*March*, dedicated to Saul Goodman, creates a humorous scenario much like you would expect to hear in a piece by Carter's good friend, Charles Ives. There are two marches going on concurrently, each at its own speed: one played with the heads of the sticks, the other with the butts. The shape of the piece suggests a hypothetical situation of two drummers on the march in a parade approaching each other at different speeds. They

confront one another and challenge each other through imitation while trying to out-perform the other. The player is required to be a “twirler” as well because of the stick-flipping required to produce the change of timbre that Carter requires in this etude.

*Improvisation*, dedicated to Paul Price, is a study in tempo modulation and free continuity. The illusion of improvised speed change is created through six coordinated tempi. Tempo modulation is a proportional change in tempo affected by the renotation of a metronomic speed as in the instruction “new half note is equal to previous dotted quarter.” Carter first used tempo modulation in his Cello Sonata of 1948 and the majority of Carter’s work since then has focused on a stratification of musical elements by metrical and other means. Often, a series of metrical modulations – which can be seen as analogous to changes of key in a piece of tonal music – will result in a return to the original tempo.

**All of Me** (1931).....Seymour Simons and Gerald Marks  
(arr. Lennie Niehaus) (1896 – 1949) (1900 – 1997)

Will Demings, Aimee Sheffler, Breana Sheffler

Seymour and Marks made an impression in 1931 on Tin Pan Alley with this bouncy jazz tune. Usually performed at a moderate swing tempo, it was originally submitted to publishers as a ballad. The publishers repeatedly turned it down on the grounds that the lyrics were too suggestive, but relented after the popular singer Belle Baker sang it in her shows.

This arrangement is scored by the legendary Lennie Niehaus, who was the featured alto sax soloist and arranger for the famous Stan Kenton Orchestra and has numerous film scores to his credit, including *Bird*, the award-winning tribute to legendary bebop artist Charlie Parker.

*All of Me* has been recorded by hundreds of artists and remains a true classic.

## INTERMISSION

**Duet** (1979).....Daniel Levitan  
(b. 1953)

James Romig

Daniel Levitan, an award winning percussion composer, was born in Geneva, New York. *Duet*, the second of his three marimba/vibraphone compositions, is a minimalist work that requires 4-mallet skills from both players. Though the composition is written entirely in ¾ and uses no ‘black’ notes, the interest comes in the varied, accented rhythmic patterns along with the colorful blending of the instruments’ natural timbres.

**Partita: For Solo Unaccompanied Percussion (1966)**..... William L. Cahn  
(b. 1946)

- I. Bourrée
- III. Gigue

William L. Cahn composed this multiple percussion piece, inspired by the *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* by J.S. Bach, while he was a student at the Eastman School of Music. Bourrée, a seventeenth-century dance usually in quick duple time, requires ease of movement around the set-up by the performer while interchanging sticks, brushes, and using a pedal bass drum. A short cadenza leads into the recapitulation that brings the movement to a climactic finish. Gigue, a lively dance movement having compound triple rhythm and composed in a fugal style, requires four sticks with felt tips. Switching two of the sticks to wood ends during the work helps create a change of timbre and as an integral part of the composition allows new colors to be used and manipulated.

**The Recital Piece (1976)**..... William L. Cahn  
(b. 1946)

Jeremiah Nichol

This work, subtitled “A Drama for Solo Xylophonist,” is dedicated to Robin Engelman. It was composed during a period of experimentation on the nature of music making and in particular, following several compositions that experimented with “silent music.” *The Recital Piece* attempts to open up the mind of the performer to the audience and to share certain musical aspects of the composer’s thinking, albeit in a sometimes light-hearted manner. The piece deals directly with such aesthetic concerns as the interaction of words and musical sounds, the nature of musical form and content, and the nature of performance itself.

**Chromatic Fox Trot (1924)**..... George Hamilton Green, Jr.  
(ed. Randy Eyles) (1893-1970)

A piano prodigy by the age of 4, it’s not surprising that George H. Green, Jr. was being called the world’s greatest xylophonist by age 11. The next four decades of recordings and compositions provide evidence to justify the title. A 1915 review in *The United Musician* states: “He has begun where every other xylophone player left off. His touch, his attack, his technique, and his powers of interpretation in the rendition of his solos being far different than other performers’. To say his work is marvelous and wonderful would not fully express it.”

*Chromatic Fox Trot* is a fine representation of Green’s work in the novelty ragtime genre – an important part of America’s musical heritage. Green was inducted posthumously into the Percussive Arts Society’s Hall of Fame in 1983.

This recital partially fulfills requirements for the Master of Music degree  
For Mr. Eric Sheffler.