

Wednesdays @ 7

Palimpsest

Conducted by Steven Schick

part of the Transplanted Roots Research Symposium 2022

Wednesday, May 18, 2022 - 7:00 p.m.

Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Iannis Xenakis | *Komboï*

Ashely Zhang and Rebecca Lloyd-Jones

Edgard Varese | *Density 21.5*

Wilfrido Terrazas

Chou Wen-chung | *Echoes from the Gorge*

red fish blue fish

Steven Schick, Michael Jones, Mitchell Carlstrom, and Yongyun Zhang

Intermission

Erin Graham | *Shape of Silence**

UC San Diego Palimpsest ensemble

Soloists Yongyun Zhang and Rebecca Lloyd-Jones

**world premiere*

The Palimpsest Ensemble

Yongyun Zhang and Rebecca Lloyd-Jones, percussion

Alexander Ishov, flute

Juliana Gaona-Villamizar, oboe

Grace Talaski, clarinet (doubling bass clarinet in Bb)

Varun Rangaswamy, bassoon

Rachel Allen, trumpet

Jane Zwerneman, horn

Berk Schneider, bass trombone

Tasha Smith Godinez, harp

Myra Hinrichs and Ilana Waniuk, violin

Alexander Taylor, viola

Peter Ko and Robert Bui, cello

Matthew Henson and Matthew Kline, bass

Steven Schick, conductor

Program Notes:

Komboï

The duo combination of harpsichord and percussion is not often heard; it appears to have practically been invented for the peculiar but powerful imagination of Greek composer, Iannis Xenakis. Given his ongoing relationship with harpsichordist Elisabeth Chojnacka (he composed *Khoai* for her in 1976) and percussionist Sylvio Gualda (he composed *Psappha* for him in 1975), both close friends of the composer, this duo combination seems to have been preordained. *Komboï* was written in 1981 and is a lengthy, elaborate work exploring a number of timbral and textural combinations over its seventeen minute duration.

Both harpsichord and percussion are capable aggressors, particularly when the harpsichord is amplified as required for this piece (and all of Xenakis' harpsichord music). But *Komboï* instead seeks to explore the more delicate and refined colors of these instruments. The title means "knots," and Xenakis uses this metaphor to interweave characters, personalities, materials and patterns. It is a tribute both to the dedicatees and to their instruments.

The piece is built from five large sections, with interludes and variations occurring within each. For example, the opening sets up an ostinato rhythm on bongos which is varied by changing patterns of accents. The harpsichord plays a series of rising chordal patterns against this, introducing specific pitch material that will be used at other points in the piece. The relationship between the "ordered" sounds of percussion instruments and the scales of pitched notes is one of the "knots" Xenakis explores here. The second section, marked "crystalline," is scored for the remarkable combination of harpsichord and vibraphone. The sonorities fuse in a way that is utterly magical and the composer explores the combination through fluctuating clouds of notes that pass the spotlight back and forth between the two. Eventually the percussion switches to wood-blocks, then — after a lengthy harpsichord solo — changes to the novel sonority of ceramic flower-pots. The delicate, ringing tone of the flower-pots blends extremely well with the needle-like tone of the harpsichord. It makes for wonderful theater to watch the percussionist playing them, of course, but the incorporation of this sound is a stroke of genius. Set against the flower-pots, Xenakis introduces a randomized ostinato for the harpsichord built from just seven chords. It is another "knot," matching the limited collection of five sonorities in the percussion with a limited collection of sonorities in the keyboard. It is the rhythmic and timbral interplay that carries the focus and Xenakis would make much use of similar passages in later pieces. *Komboï*, in any case, is an evocative, engaging work that highlights a gentler side of this iconoclastic composer.

Edgard Varèse's *Density 21.5*, composed for unaccompanied flute, was initially composed in 1936 and reworked in 1946 and undoubtedly claims canonic status: it now stands, alongside Claude Debussy's *Syrinx* (1913) and Luciano Berio's *Sequenza* (1958), at the very heart of the modern flute repertoire.

Density 21.5 directly refers to the Density of platinum, which is 21.5 g/cm³. Varèse's music uses the entire range of the flute, using dramatic contrast in dynamics and extended techniques such as percussive key clicks. This short four-minute work incorporates one of the highest notes on the flute (D4), which is then repeated nine times throughout the work. Varèse utilizes defined and deliberate rhythms throughout the piece, challenging the flutists' capabilities of rhythmic precision, dynamic contrast, and the extremes of the flute range and tone colors.

Shape of Silence is the inaugural Chou Commission, written to celebrate Chou Wen-chung's legacy and inspired by Chou's collection of percussion instruments that are housed at UC San Diego. I am very lucky to have written the work - a double percussion concerto - for Yongyun Zhang and Rebecca Lloyd-Jones, who are both exceptional musicians and two close friends. Over the course of writing the piece, Yongyun and I regularly experimented with and made recordings of the instruments in hopes of discerning their personalities and contemplating their role in Chou's creative process.

Throughout this process of becoming familiar with these instruments and trying to imagine and reflect on sources of inspiration that were important to Chou, I'm extremely grateful to Yongyun and to my advisor, Lei Liang for providing context regarding Chinese scholar painting (literati) and the particular influence it had on Chou's work. While studying many of these paintings, I was really struck by the role of negative space as well as by the concept of motion in viewing the works.

I am also incredibly grateful to Luyen Chou for sharing personal anecdotes about Chou Wen-chung and his own relationship to the instruments as Chou's son, and for allowing me to use these stories as points of inspiration throughout the piece. One of the most powerful and moving stories that Luyen Chou shared was the role of the largest tam-tam in Chou's collection in announcing family members' passage into another realm. Chou Wen-chung sounded this tam-tam to commemorate his wife, and Luyen Chou sounded this tam-tam to commemorate his father Chou Wen-chung. In hopes of honoring this tradition, I've featured the tam-tam in the last movement in hopes of evoking Chou's presence. The title, *Shape of Silence*, comes from my attempt to add tangibility to negative sonic space within the work, allowing the resonance of Chou's instruments to speak. Many thanks to Luyen Chou, Lei Liang, Steven Schick, Yongyun Zhang, Rebecca Lloyd-Jones, and to Palimpsest.

-Erin Graham

Echoes from the Gorge is the magnum opus of Chou: It represents a summation of all the concepts, East and West, acquired throughout his career. This work deploys vast timbral resources, yet is unprecedented in the thoroughness with which it codifies certain Western percussion practices according to timbres, sticks with regards to articulation, and contact location on the instruments. Such extensive codification results in a vast network of intrinsic structures comparable to Chinese ideograms.

The concept of calligraphy, in which, according to Chou, "the desired contour and texture of a character are achieved by the flow of ink through a coordination of pressure, direction, speed and viscosity," is also at work. The predetermined form in this piece emerges as the spontaneous manifestation of a continual directional change, as in the movement of a brush under the calligrapher's control. *And The Fallen Petals*, the orchestral work employing this same principle, prompts historian H.H. Stuckenschmidt to call Chou a "musical calligrapher." The yin-yang concept of interaction controls the way the instruments relate to one another. The four parts, each with its own distinct rhythm derived from a single source, along with such elements as timbre and register, interact continually to create a totality in motion.

Rather than assuming a Western form, this work employs an elaborate design derived from "the preeminent musical form in East Asia, wherein all sections of a composition are elaborations or reductions of one and the same nuclear idea," Chou explains. *Echoes from the Gorge* contains an introduction followed by twelve sections, each subtitled with an evocative imagery as in ch'in music, including "echoes from the gorge," "clear moon," and "falling rocks and flying spray."

As with Varèse's *Ionisation*, *Echoes from the Gorge* explores the structural value of musical elements beyond pitch. Perhaps it is more than a coincidence that Chou regards *Ionisation* as the most representative work of Varèse, wherein all the composer's concepts are revealed. Without any conscious intention by Chou, his piece is a fitting tribute to Varèse.

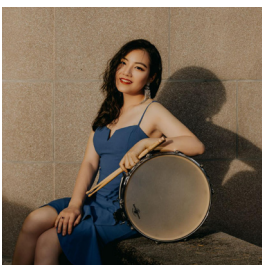
Artist Bios:



Hailed as a musician with “flair and fury,” Shaoai **Ashley Zhang** is active internationally and within the US as a concert pianist and a chamber musician. International performances include concerts in Russia, Germany, Switzerland, China, and Hong Kong. A strong advocate of contemporary music, Ashley has premiered dozens of new compositions and worked with some of the most prominent composers today such as Helmut Lachenmann, Sofia Gubaidulina, and Unsuk Chin. A passionate exponent of chamber music and collaboration, Ashley has appeared with the UC San Diego Palimpsest Ensemble, HUB New Music, Alea III, The Callithumpian Consort, and NEC Contemporary Ensemble.



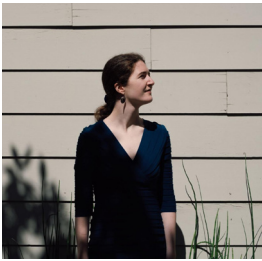
Australian born percussionist **Rebecca Lloyd-Jones** is a multiform musician, passionate about performance, research, and education. Having performed professionally across Asia, Europe, North American and Oceania, Rebecca has presented at several focus days for the Percussive Arts Society International Convention and attended the Roots and Rhizomes program at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Canada. Passionate about women’s performance practice and the percussion works of composer Lucia Dlugoszewski, Rebecca has presented at the Transplanted Roots Research Symposium and was a guest artist at the VI Semana Internacional de Improvisación and guest tutor at the Festival de Música Nueva 2019, Ensenada, Baja California. Rebecca graduated from the Victorian College of Arts with the Desma Woolcock award for academic excellence, received a Master of Music Research from the Griffith University Queensland Conservatorium, and is a Doctoral candidate at the University of California San Diego with Distinguished Professor Steven Schick and ensemble red fish blue fish. Rebecca is the incoming Head of Percussion at Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University.



Yongyun Zhang has a dedicated interest in performing and premiering works of living composers, especially pieces incorporating the spoken voice. She considers the role of Chinese language in modern percussion repertoire through her commissions, as well as through adaptations and translations of existing works. Her ongoing collaborations include new pieces with composers Yifan Guo, Philipp Henkel, Erin Graham, and Rachel C. Walker. She received a residency at the Britten-Pears Foundation for 2022, and has had recent performances across China (Shandong University, Central Conservatory) and the US (Women Composers Festival of Hartford, Chosen Vale, PASIC, etc). Yongyun studied with the members of Percussion Group Cincinnati at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (BM), receiving First Prize in the Baur Competition. She graduated with her MM from the University of Washington with Bonnie Whiting, and is pursuing a DMA with Steven Schick at the University of California San Diego.



Wilfrido Terrazas is a flutist, improviser, composer, and educator whose work explores the borderlands between improvisation, musical notation, and collective creation. He is a member of Generación Espontánea, Liminar, Filera, and the Wilfrido Terrazas Sea Quintet, and has performed more than 380 world premieres, written around 70 compositions, and recorded over 40 albums, eight of them as a soloist or leader. Wilfrido has presented his work in 21 countries in Europe and the Americas. He co-curates the Semana Internacional de Improvisación, a festival in Ensenada, his hometown, and is Assistant Professor of Music at UC San Diego since 2017.



Erin Graham (she/they) is a composer of contemporary classical music and an active percussionist. A third-year PhD student in Composition at UC San Diego, Erin has worked with highly-regarded artists such as King Britt, Stalina Villarreal, Lee Vinson, Amy Williams, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and the Houston Symphony. Erin's recent and upcoming projects include a collaboration with Lee Vinson as part of Intersection's LISTEN project as well as projects with Frozen Earth percussion duo, trombonist Berk Schneider, and in^set trio. In 2021, Erin was a composition fellow at the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra's Edward T. Cone Composition Institute, where they worked with Steven Mackey and Ludovic Morlot. Erin received Rice University's Paul and Christiane Cooper Prize in Music Composition for her orchestra piece, *Increase* in 2019. In 2015, Erin won an ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award for her chamber work, *Five Poems of Edward Lear*. Erin's composition teachers include Lei Liang, Pierre Jalbert, Karim Al-Zand, David Liptak, Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon, Robert Morris, Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez, and Patrick Long.

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