

Two Graduate Percussion Recitals

By

Sean C. Millman

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THESIS PERFORMANCES IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF
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TWO GRADUATE PERCUSSION RECITALS

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Chair: Kenneth Broadway
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On April 15, 2012, Mr. Millman's first graduate recital explored many elements of percussion less often seen in academic recital situations. This event featured, in performance order, B. Michael Williams's work for Djembe entitled Tiriba Kan, Glann Kotche's eclectic vibraphone work Fantasy on a Shona Theme, and two masterworks in the percussion repertoire: the multi-percussion solo Rebonds by Iannis Xenakis, and Joseph Schwantner's massive contribution to the marimba repertoire, Velocities. This recital was closed by a performance of the traditional fife-and-drum tune, The Downfall of Paris. While marimba and multi-percussion solos are nothing new at academic recitals, hand drumming, traditional rudimental snare drumming, and African music performed on vibraphone represent a decided turn toward the exotic.

On February 28, 2013, Mr. Millman performed a recital of percussion repertoire standards, crossing divides of genre, style, and culture. This program consisted of, in performance order, *Bonham*, a tribute to Rock and Roll drumming by Christopher Rouse; *Losa*, a marimba and vibraphone duet inspired by Flamenco music by Eckhard Kopetzki, *The Invisible*

Proverb, Russell Hartenberger's programmatic epic for keyboard ensemble, Emmanuel Sejourne's marimba solo *Three Variations for Solo Dancer*, and the concerto, *Prometheus Rapture: Seven Legends for Snare Drum*, by Sean Beeson. These works represent not only diverse styles of percussion playing, but also diverse styles of music from four different musical cultures.

Tiriba Kan	B. Michael Williams (b. 1954)
Fantasy on a Shona Theme	Glenn Kotche
Rebonds	Iannis Xenakis (1922-2001)
Velocities	Joseph Schwantner (b.1943)
The Downfall of Paris	Traditional

B. Michael Williams is Professor of Music and Director of Percussion Studies at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina. He holds the B.M. degree from Furman University, M.M. from Northwestern University, and Ph.D. from Michigan State University. Active as a performer and clinician in both symphonic and world music, Williams has performed with the Charlotte (NC) Symphony, Lansing (MI) Symphony, Brevard Music Center Festival Orchestra, and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, and has appeared at several Percussive Arts Society International Conventions. He has written articles for *Accent Magazine*, *South Carolina Musician*, and *Percussive Notes*, and has made scholarly presentations on the music of John Cage and on African music at meetings of the College Music Society and Percussive Arts Society. In 2004, Dr. Williams received the Winthrop University Distinguished Professor Award, the highest honor given to a Winthrop faculty member.

Bio from bmichaelwilliams.com

This seven-minute djembe solo draws its inspiration from the traditional tiriba rhythm from Guinea, West Africa. Written in 12/8, it opens with a rubato section that mimics the opening rhythmic "call" of a lead drummer. Tempo is soon established and the material seeks to replicate the complex syncopation and cross rhythms found in an entire drum ensemble. Several sections allow the player to interpret the notation and inject some personal improvisation into the piece. At 120 bpm, the sixteenth-note and sextuplet rhythms require solid technique and familiarity with the many djembe strokes and sounds.

Terry O'Mahoney, April 2006 ed. of *Percussive Notes*

Fantasy on a Shona Theme by **Glenn Kotche** originated from a mbira melody transposed to vibraphone. The opening right-hand melody emulates the cyclical, rolling feel of Shona mbira music. A metrically ambiguous feel is retained by using melodic lines that interlock, weave, and constantly evolve.

Heralded by The Chicago Tribune for his "unfailing taste, technique and discipline," Glenn Kotche's eclectic performances and original compositions have explored the creative use of rhythm and space through various projects in percussion the past 18 years. Born in 1970 in

Roselle, Illinois, Glenn graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Music in music performance from the prestigious University of Kentucky Percussion Program, studying under James Campbell. Following graduation, his various stints with groups and ensembles have resulted in participation on over 80 albums to date, including three recorded solo works, the first two entitled *Introducing* and *Next*. Glenn's third solo effort of original compositions, *Mobile* was released on Nonesuch Records in 2006. *Kotche* was featured on the cover of the August 2007 issue of *Modern Drummer* magazine and can be seen performing on the 2006 *Modern Drummer Festival* DVD.

Iannis Xenakis was born to Greek parents living in Romania, and his early interests included music and mathematics. While enrolled at Athens Polytechnic to study engineering, Xenakis began to pursue music in earnest. These complementary interests – engineering and music – led to an encounter (and later employment) in Paris with the architect Le Corbusier, who introduced him to two leading members of the musical avant-garde, Varèse and Messiaen. In Xenakis' break-through work, *Metastaseis*, the composer unified architectural space (itself a manifestation of mathematics) and music. His music also reflects an interest in both electronic music and in Greek culture, especially folk culture and ancient Greek drama. Xenakis composed the solo percussion work *Rebonds* in 1987-89, and dedicated it to percussionist Sylvio Gualda. The composer has written the following note:

“*Rebonds* is in two parts, **a** and **b**. The order of play is not fixed: either **ab** or **ba**, without a break. The metronomic indications are approximate. Part **a** only uses skins: two bongos, three tom-toms, two bass drums. Part **b** uses two bongos, one tumba, one tom-tom, bass drums, and a set of five wood blocks. The tuning of the skins and the wood blocks should extend over a very wide range.”

Bio from laphil.com

Known for his dramatic and unique style and as a gifted orchestral colorist, **Joseph Schwantner** is one of the most prominent American composers today. He received his musical and academic training at the Chicago Conservatory and Northwestern University and has served on the faculties of The Juilliard School, Eastman School of Music, and the Yale School of Music, simultaneously establishing himself as a sought after composition instructor. Schwantner's compositional career has been marked by many awards, grants, and fellowships, including the Pulitzer Prize in 1979 for his orchestral composition *Aftertones of Infinity* and several Grammy nominations. Among his many commissions is his Percussion Concerto, which was commissioned for the 150th anniversary season of the New York Philharmonic and is one of the most performed concert works of the past decade. Schwantner is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Bio from www.schwantner.net

Velocities (1990) is a marimba solo commissioned for Gordon Stout, William Moersch, and Leigh Howard Stevens, and is considered one of the most difficult works in the repertoire. The

work is in three major sections in a loose rounded binary form, and uses pitch-set relationships rather than common-practice tonality. *Velocities* is subtitled *Moto Perpetuo*, extremely accurate given that the entire work is straight 16th notes, excepting 8 bars late in the second section which use 32nd note ornaments. Despite this, there is great opportunity for musical expression through contrast between technical motives, metrical treatment and grouping of the constant 16th notes, explicit dynamics, as well as the many highly descriptive expressive terms Schwantner uses, including “organ-like,” “relentlessly,” and “brutale.”

The *Downfall of Paris* is a standard of fife-and-drum repertoire as well as common practice material for rudimental drummers. The work has something of a violent history, coming out of the military march tradition of the 18th century. It developed from “*Ah, Ca Ira*,” an optimistic tune associated with the early, peaceful part of the French Revolution, until it became part of the martial rep for Napoleon’s army. The tune was subsequently stolen by their British enemies, intended as an insult to play an army’s own music while fighting them. The title of “*Downfall of Paris*” was added as British soldiers associated it with their eventual goal, and it is reported to have actually been played as the army eventually entered Paris in both 1814, until Wellington himself forbade it during the second invasion in 1815. The victorious British continued to use the tune after the conflict, and it has since spread to its current popularity.

Damm, Robert, J. *Rudimental Classics: “The Downfall of Paris.”* Percussive Notes, January 2011.

Bonham

Christopher Rouse (b. 1949)

Colin Aebli, Nic Cabiness, Patrick Gulick, Caitlin Jones,
Patrick Montgomery, Rickie Santiago, Ivan Trac

Losa

Emmanuel Sejourne (b. 1961)

Patrick Montgomery

The Invisible Proverb

Russell Hartenberger (b. 1944)

Okarche
Drumtalker
Darkwater
Sky Ghost

Caitlin Jones, Patrick Montgomery, Rickie Santiago, Ivan Trac

Three Variations for Solo Dancer

Eckhard Kopetzki (b. 1956)

Mysterious Love
Dance on a Shattered Mirror
Memory of a Mystery

Prometheus Rapture

Sean Beeson (b. 1985)

Theft of Fire
Golden Metropolis
Vulcan's Forge
Pandora Opens Her Gift
Vulture on the Morrow
Wrath of Zeus
Hope from Hercules

Tane' Dekrey

Much in the drumming community is owed to John Henry Bonham (1948-1980), the famed Led Zeppelin drummer. Christopher Rouse pays tribute and homage to his legacy with this work for eight percussionists, but by no means is the work limited only to excerpts of Bonham's playing. The drumset player holds the work together, primarily with the same groove Bonham used in "When the Levee Breaks" from *Led Zeppelin IV*, yet the work as a whole bears more of a resemblance to Moby Dick, first recorded on *Led Zeppelin II* and featuring an extended drum solo, known to go for up to thirty minutes in live performances. The battery of percussion instruments used includes a massive variety of nonpitched percussion, as well as timpani – many

of which are the same accessory instruments commonly found on Bonham's touring and recording kits. Rouse did not simply transcribe solos and write for multiple players however; many of the macro-rhythms the piece creates are essentially impossible for a single drummer to create. The work features two major accelerandos at the opening and closing, as well as multiple solos, both by ensemble players, and a true drum solo right before the final climax.

Losa is a Marimba and Vibraphone duet, written to invoke the style of Spanish Flamenco dancing. As such, it bears some characteristics of a guitar transcription, including moments of comping as well as rhythmic patterns idiomatic to the guitar, while taking full advantage of the possibilities of the two keyboard instruments via virtuosic runs and a large range. The work is repetitive, with similarities to both the classical sonata-rondo form as well as more modern popular forms. Sejourne treats the duet in two different ways, occasionally writing each instrument separately, creating contrast between the marimba's range and the vibraphone's lyrical quality, and at other points simply giving each player the same line in harmony, creating a single unified keyboard sound.

The Invisible Proverb was written by Nexus member Russell Hartenberger for percussion quintet, using African drum styles in a Western ensemble setting. It is a programmatic work, following the journey of a young boy, Okarche, as he quests to become a true drummer; he will meet the Drumtalker, a wise old drummer who points him on the path, he will visit the Darkwater, where he will eventually meet the mythical Sky Ghost to complete his transformation. As the work progresses, it steadily uses more and more complicated rhythmic and harmonic features, as "Okarche" is written primarily in a horizontal fashion of near-minimalism, while "Drumtalker" adds rhythmic unity and establishes harmony as an important element. "Darkwater" is an unrolled chorale, and "Sky Ghost" features an extended cadenza, followed by the first true melody of the work, a rhythmic section set to the same harmonic structure, and a return to that melodic phrase to conclude the work.

Three Variations for Solo Dancer, by Eckhard Kopetzki, is one of the more idiosyncratic works in the solo marimba repertoire. Originally written for the 4 1/3 octave marimba, the work calls for the performer to play on the frame of the instrument, or in the case of the larger five octave, to mount a similar-sounding instrument over the unused bars. In addition, it uses a Bartok-like tonality, operating on a pitch rather than in a key, with perhaps the most common harmonic feature being chromatic motion in one hand against common tones in the other. "Mysterious Love" functions essentially as a chorale expanded beyond the traditional notions of four voice vocal writing, applied to the marimba. "Dance on a Shattered Mirror" is the centerpiece of the work, requiring the performer to play octave verticals in both hands for almost the entire movement, and introducing the wooden sound in the coda, simulating a tap dancer. The finale, "Memory of a Mystery," recalls ideas and gestures from the first in a more complicated rhythmic and structural form, as well as passages involving interdependence between each hand, such as the metered oscillations of the right against the melodic motion of the left that is the basis for much of the middle section.

Prometheus Rapture, Seven Legends for Solo Snare Drum, is a modern concerto for snare drum. The piece was commissioned by Evelyn Glennie, with the premiere having been recorded, and available for viewing online, with famed marching percussionist Jeff Queen. In addition to the demands placed on the performers, the work functions as a sort of *tour de force* for the instrument itself, as it contains styles appropriate to almost every function of snare drumming, including old rudimental field styles, orchestral playing, use of techniques and implements common to drumset playing, and modern marching percussion idioms. The movement titles follow Greek myth, as Prometheus steals fire, giving it to humans in defiance of Zeus; Apollo visits the forge of Vulcan to create weapons for a war on mankind; Pandora is created as part of the punishment for humans receiving fire; and she is given gifts of all evil things. Finally, the work deals with Prometheus's subjection to torment at the hands of Zeus, and his rescue at the hands of Hercules.

Mr. Millman (b.1989) is a native of Atlanta, GA, and began playing percussion at the age of 5, taught by Tony Iaquinto. Subsequent teachers have included Rick Dietrich, Bill Wilder, and Dr. Ken Broadway at the University of Florida. Mr. Millman received both the Bachelor of Music (2011) and Master of Music (2013) degrees from the University of Florida, both specializing in Percussion Performance. While at Florida, he played with the Wind Symphony and Orchestra, spent four years with the Florida Drumline, took part in multiple stagings of operas and American Musical Theatre productions, as well as the Percussion Ensemble and Sunshine Steelers Steel Pan Ensemble. In addition, in February 2013 Mr. Millman performed with the UF Wind Symphony at Carnegie Hall in New York. In the future, he hopes to earn a DMA and teach percussion at the collegiate level as well as continue performing extensively.