



OPENING NIGHT CONCERT

7pm, Friday 27 May 2022

Aurora Percussion Duo | Delia Stevens & Le Yu

Trio Per Uno (*arranged for duo – ‘Duo Per Uno’, 1995/9*) **Nebojsa Zivkovic** arr. Stevens
iii Molto energico (*drums*)

Prelude (*arr. 2 marimbas*) from English Suite No.2 in A minor, BWV 807 (c. 1715) **J.S. Bach**

Xi Yu (*hang and toy chimes, 2018*) **Andy Scott***

Wind in the Bamboo Grove (*2 marimbas, 1984*) **Keiko Abe**

Plato's Cave (*body percussion/floor, 2011*) **Casey Cangelos**

Khamsin (*2 marimbas and castanets, 2018*) **Emmanuel Séjourné**

Interval

Tango Suite for Guitar Duo: I Deciso (*2 marimbas, 1984*) **Ástor Piazzolla** arr. Aurora

Sync (*Kalimba (thumb piano), steel snare drum, marble, glass, chopsticks, wire brush, glass bowl, 2018*) Soloist : Delia Stevens **Gene Koshinski**

Variations on Porgy and Bess (*marimba*) **George Gershwin** arr. Sammut
Soloist: Yu Le

Clapping Music (*2 performers, 1972*) **Steve Reich**

Tamacun (*2 marimbas and multi-percussion, 2006*) **Rodrigo y Gabriela**

Trio Per Uno (*arranged for duo – ‘Duo Per Uno’, 1995/9*) **Nebojsa Zivkovic** arr. Stevens
i Meccanico (*bass drum, 2 bongos, 4 Chinese gongs*)

*Commissioned by Aurora Percussion Duo

Programme Notes

Trio Per Uno consists of three movements by Serbian composer and internationally renowned percussionist, Nebojsa Jovan Zivkovic. It was originally written for three players but Delia has arranged it for the Aurora Percussion Duo. The edge-movements have some similarities in manner and appear as if they would present a perfection of wildness in an archaic ritual cult. The second movement has its own special lyric and contemplative mood.

The opening movement requires a bass drum (lying flat) played with timbale sticks and pairs of bongos and china-gongs are used by each player. The claim for playing on the same instrument makes in the music interesting effects of strict unison performed parts which are “abrupt” by the contrasting sounds of other participating instruments. Not to count the brilliant view-effect for the audience in the public performing. The second movement features mesmerising vibraphone patterns, twisting and turning over themselves to create a contrasting calm atmosphere and the third movement features the intense power of drums in combination with voice.

The English Suite in A minor is the second of a series of six English Suites that comprise the first group of J.S. Bach’s keyboard suites, written most likely in 1715. These were followed by the French Suites, the Partitas and the Overture in French Style.

The English Suites are not particularly English in nature: while Bach was influenced by both Italian and French music, the same cannot be said for English music, and it is likely that the English Suites did not receive their title from him. They may have been written during the composer's time at Weimar, ca. 1715. Bach's sons later claimed that the suites were written for an Englishman of some standing, but there is no other evidence of the existence of this mysterious patron, except the note by Johann Christian Bach on his copy of the suites "fait pour les Anglois".

Xi Yu was commissioned especially for the Aurora Percussion Duo by the Swaledale Festival at the top of the Yorkshire Dales. Xiyu (The Western Regions) was a historical name specified in the Chinese chronicles between the 3rd century BC to the 8th century AD. Because of its strategic location astride the Silk Road, the Western Regions have been historically significant since at least the 3rd century BC, connecting the East to the West, reflective of the mixed heritage and aims of the Aurora Percussion Duo. The piece is written for hang, a drum invented in 2001 in Switzerland, a convex steel drum specifically tuned in various modes and played with the hands and a toy chime bars.

Keiko Abe is really the grandmother of marimba, being the first pioneer to transform the instrument into a sophisticated 5-8ve Western instrument. **Wind in the Bamboo Grove** belongs to a collection of improvisations based on the nature of Japanese landscapes. Abe composed the piece from the memory of feelings and sensations she felt when she visited a bamboo forest. The feelings and emotions behind a composition are of utmost importance to Japanese culture.

“Come see and experience a bamboo grove and see the cherry blossoms, experience it with all your senses: touch, smell ... a bamboo forest in the early morning is a very quiet place imbued with a “mysterious feeling.” Every section has a different meaning and is tied to a memory of an experience at the grove.

‘Plato’s Cave’ is written for 2 performers sitting cross-legged and side-by-side on the stage floor. The performers use wooden sticks to strike the floor and use their hands to clap, make finger snaps, hand motions, and gesture symbols. The work makes for an extraordinary experience for the performers as well as the audience.

Casey Cangelosi writes: *‘Plato’s Cave, also known as the Allegory of the Cave, is a story found in Plato’s larger work, The Republic. The story of The Cave is an allegory for human perception and understanding. Inside the cave, prisoners have been chained and held immobile since childhood, not only are their bodies fixed in place, but more importantly their heads are immobile and can only take view of the flat cave wall in front of them. Imagine also in the cave is a large fire behind the prisoners, between this fire and the prisoners, is a large walkway in which people across. On the cave wall in front of the prisoners, which is all they’ve seen since birth, are only the shadows projected from the people passing by on the walkway. These prisoners do not realize that what they see are mere shadows, but rather, because this is their only knowledge of reality, think the 2-dimensional shadows are real people and in face everything making up the real world.*

I’ve not intended for the performers to represent the prisoners, but rather be the musicians who must perform under different sensory perceptual setting. I find that the Plato’s Allegory makes a beautiful statement about our perception and vision of what might be “our world” as we know it.’

Khamsin is a southerly wind carrying sand from the desert of Egypt. The Khamsin gives the sky a dark orange hue. The air is charged with dust, which makes the breathing oppressive. The winds blow for several days on a regular basis.” Khamsin is written for 2 percussionists on a singular 5-octave marimba.

The Argentinian Piazzolla was steeped in the traditional tango of his native country but also studied in Paris in the 1950s and subsequently reinvented the popular dance with the influence of jazz and classical music to create the so-called tango nuevo. By 1984, the date of the **Tango Suite**, Piazzolla had fused all the disparate influences into his own individual and unmistakable style. The Tango Suite is in three movements, a stirring Allegro, a more reflective andante and a concluding allegro, notable for its changes in moods and timbres beginning with a stirring Allegro.

"SyNc" was commissioned by 42 percussionists, led by Tracy Wiggins. "SyNc" has a dual meaning - as in the synchronization of multiple musical ideas (and multiple instruments/implements) and a play on the Spanish word “cinco” meaning “five.” The significance of “five” permeates the piece as nearly all of the musical ideas found in "SyNc" are rooted in this number. This piece “syncs” the wonderful timbral possibilities of the snare drum with sounds that come to life when interacting with it.

Every classically-trained percussionist is familiar with **Porgy and Bess** by George and Ira Gershwin - or at least the first 30 seconds of the overture featuring a notoriously tricky xylophone part.

Eric Sammut's Variations on Porgy and Bess incorporates much more of the show in this virtuosic marimba solo, featuring Summertime, I Love You Porgy, It Ain't Necessarily So, and the famous Overture into a beautiful marimba arrangement which really showcases the versatility of the instrument.

“I wrote **Clapping Music** out of a desire to create a piece of music that would need no instruments at all beyond the human body. At first I thought it would be a phase piece, but this turned out to be rather inappropriate, since it introduces a difficulty in musical process (phasing) that is out of place with such a simple way of producing sound. The solution was to have one performer remain fixed, repeating the same basic pattern throughout, while the second moves abruptly, after a number of repeats, from unison to one beat ahead, and so on, until he is back in unison with the first performer.

The basic difference between these sudden changes and the gradual changes of phase in other pieces is that, when phasing, one can hear the same pattern away from itself with the down beats of both parts separating further and further apart, while the sudden changes here create the sensation of a series of variations of two different patterns with their downbeats coinciding. In Clapping Music, it can be difficult to hear that the second performer is in fact always playing the same original pattern as the first performer, although starting in different places.” — Steve Reich

Rodrigo y Gabriela are a Mexican acoustic guitar duo whose music is influenced by a number of genres including nuevo flamenco, rock, and heavy metal. The duo's recordings consist largely of instrumental duets on the flamenco guitar. Reviewing one of their gigs, The Independent noted that "Rodrigo y Gabriela's secret is maybe quite simple. They are resourceful musicians, and are open-hearted, happy entertainers. That, very often, is what people want. **Tamacun** was used for the TV programme Breaking Bad and is their top song on Spotify, with over 31 million streams.

AURORA PERCUSSION DUO

Since 2010, Delia Stevens and Le Yu have made it their mission to redefine the art of percussion. Winners of the 60th edition of the prestigious Royal Overseas League Ensemble Award in 2012 and alumni of the Park Lane Group Young Artist Scheme, Aurora have since received invitations to perform at the Wigmore Hall, Beijing's Forbidden City Concert Hall, The Bridgewater Hall, The Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room, as well as the Edinburgh Festival (live on BBC Radio 3), the Lucerne Festival and for the Royal Family. The duo has undertaken three sell-out tours of China, giving performances and masterclasses in some of the country's most prestigious concert halls and conservatoires including headlining the RNCM Day of Percussion.

Described as 'superb' by the Financial Times and 'extraordinary' by Classical Source, Aurora Percussion Duo produce adrenaline-fueled concert performances which are visually spectacular, physically demanding and presented with the artistry of dedicated chamber musicians. Aurora concert programmes present a vast repertoire of music spanning centuries from Bach to the present day, whilst exploring instruments from the five-octave marimba to the humble egg shaker.

Aurora are constantly expanding the repertoire for percussion duo and continue to commission established and upcoming composers to write for them such as Graham Fitkin, Adam Gorb and Andy Scott. They also create their own arrangements of works by more familiar composers such as Rimsky-Korsakov, Piazzolla and Bach, whilst exploring the explosive virtuosity and innovation belonging to the core percussion duo literature.

Following a sabbatical, Aurora made a return to the concert platform in March 2017 alongside pianists Kathryn Stott and Jeremy Young for a performance of the Bartok Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion at the RNCM Chamber Music Festival and have since given a 15-date tour of China and performance highlights include the Bridgewater Hall's Manchester Midday Concert Series and the Swaledale Festival.