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Concert: Ithaca College Percussion Ensemble

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Mike Truesdell

Conrad Alexander

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Ithaca College Percussion Ensemble

Mike Truesdell and Conrad Alexander, directors

Ford Hall
Wednesday, February 26th, 2020
8:15 pm



ITHACA COLLEGE

School of Music

Program

Drumming, Part 1 (1971)	Steve Reich (b. 1936)
Dark Full Ride (excerpt) (2002)	Julia Wolfe (b. 1958)
Les Moutons des Panurge (1969)	Frederic Rzewski (b. 1938)

ICPE is:

Michael Avanesian
Brian Breen
Scott Bruce
Ethan Cowburn
Ratewennio George
Ariana Gleason
Alex Hoerig
Will Hope
Peter Jensen
Colin Kelley
Giancarlo Levano
Ian Lisi
Nora Maupin
Eric Meyers
Ian Muir
Sara Ostemeier
Ethan Pinckert
Jacob Reed
Allie Ross
Greg Savino
Ellie Shanton
Jake Staffin
Sean Swenson
Anna Young

A note from Mike Truesdell

Percussion Ensemble as you see it today is roughly 100 years old. Some of the greatest living composers have expressed their craft through the medium of percussion ensemble, and through it have pushed the boundaries of notation, sound, noise and form.

At the beginning of the 20th century, when a composer wanted to add a new sound to their percussion ensemble composition, they would put another instrument into the parts. This developed into stage-fuls of xylophones, car parts, steel beams, wooden planks, helicopter blades and a variety of knick knacks from around the hardware stores and garages.

The pieces that you will hear this evening represent the contradiction to the compositional style I noted above. All of these pieces use a rigid compositional style to send the listener on a "deep dive" into the sonic and formal capabilities of the limited instruments on stage. In Steve Reich's masterpiece *Drumming, Part 1*, we explore four pair of bongos, tuned to two identical minor tetrachords. The low register of the bongos allow these pitches to be heard with more ease than the traditional high-pitched "crack" of bongos. The players are all playing the exact same rhythm for the entirety of the piece. The texture of the piece changes through one player *phasing* with the other(s) by playing slightly faster than their partner. This momentary blurry texture leads to new overlapping of rhythmic and pitch contours, which are played by players 3 and 4 (Sara and Colin, in our case). By the conclusion of the movement we are embraced with sound, and texture in a way that would be only possible with this minimal choice of instruments.

Julia Wolfe's masterpiece *Dark Full Ride* features a raucous quartet of drum sets. In our excerpt, the hi-hats and cymbals will be the sole melodic, rhythmic and harmonic voices. Wolfe expertly creates teams among the four players in the ensemble to guide the listener through the slowly developing form. Driving sixteenth notes seem to drive the piece forward rhythmically, but the long 40+ measure solo by player 1 (Scott, today) allows the listener to explore the sound of the hi-hat. We are used to hearing the hi-hat as an accompanimental instrument as a part of the drum set, but here it takes center stage, seemingly paying homage to Max Roach. As the other players interject their sixteenth-note rhythms, open and closed timbres form contrapuntal accents around the quartet, which build to a frenzied conclusion.

The concert tonight will conclude with Frederic Rzewski's *Les Moutons des Panurge*. The seemingly basic instructions for this piece pull the players and audience alike into a whirlwind of formal additive and subtractive process. Notes are added one at a time, always with a repeat back to the beginning of the line. Once the players have played the full melody, then they begin to subtract from the beginning until they hold the final note. After that, a full improvisation concludes the piece. This piece explores the additive form to its fullest and tests the limits of their abilities (and desires) to follow each other as Panurge's sheep.

We hope you enjoy tonight's program!