

Rebonds a and b – Iannis Xenakis (1987-1989)

Multiple percussion

“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.”
Iannis Xenakis

Written for and premiered by Sylvio Gualda, *Rebonds* has become one of the classic contemporary works for solo percussionist. In *Conversations with Iannis Xenakis*, Xenakis states that he intends all of his pieces “to be played as written, at the written tempos, with all the written notes”. This encourages performers to try any and all approaches to the score in an effort to realise what is notated, despite the fact that some sections of this music lie on the edge of technical possibility. One of the delights in working on this piece lies in attempting to be true to the score through experimentation with instrument, stick and mallet choice, setup configuration and score interpretation, knowing that each person who performs *Rebonds* will approach these things differently.

Special thanks to Steven Schick for having me here - for the lessons, performances, suggestions and advice.

For tonight: thanks to Bonnie Whiting Smith, Dustin Donohue, Kjell Nordeson and Steven Solook for their mad ensemble skills, to Clint Davis for calmly recording all of those Reich tracks, to Jessica Flores, Nick Patin and Brady Baker for super production support, to Paul Hembree for video, to Bonnie for sharing her mallet instruments and Dustin for providing the Rain Tree lights.

For winter/spring 2012: thanks to redfishbluefish, onefishtwofish and all at UCSD for making me welcome and listening tonight. All of this has been really great!

Thanks Luke for listening, advising and schlepping gear – I love you.

Louise Devenish presents

Percussion Hits of the 80s!

D.M.A. Recital

**5pm, Wednesday 30 May 2012
Concert Hall, Conrad Prebys Music Centre**

Okho – Iannis Xenakis (1989)

Djembes and dun dun

With Kjell Nordeson and Steve Solook

Written for the bicentenary of the French Revolution and premiered by *Trio Le Cercle* in 1989, this is Xenakis' smallest work for percussion ensemble. *Okho* uses a combination of contemporary and traditional djembe techniques and rhythms. Seven sounds found in traditional djembe technique are used alongside non-traditional stick techniques and sound effects such as knuckle rolls. The juxtaposition of traditional and non-traditional can also be found in the rhythmic ideas of the piece, where constant semiquavers and syncopated patterns are followed by complex polyrhythmic motifs. The title *Okho* was created by Xenakis to reflect some of the sounds performers can produce on the djembe with their hands.

Temazcal – Javier Alvarez (1984)

Maracas and tape

A temazcal is a ritualistic vapour bath used in South American regions to help heal the sick and directly translates to "burning water". In this case, the title *Temazcal* serves to reference the region that influenced the composition of the piece. Essentially a guided improvisation based on the *llanero*, or Colombian-Venezuelan style of maraca playing, the performer is encouraged to use authentic Venezuelan maracas. Each of a slightly different pitch, these maracas are made of a round gourd filled with seeds, stones and plastic to produce a clear and articulate sound. The tape and maracas are equally balanced elements in this work. Using harp, bass pizzicato, manipulated samples of bamboo rods and maracas, the tape part has the dual purpose of accompanying the maracas and enabling listeners to identify the musical traditions that inspired the composition (e.g. a Cuban guaguanco, a folk-like harp melody, Venezuelan maraca patterns).

Rain Tree – Toru Takemitsu (1983)

Vibraphone, marimbas, and crotales

With Bonnie Whiting Smith and Dustin Donohue

"It has been named the "rain tree" for its abundant foliage continues to let fall rain drops collected from last night's shower until well after the following midday. Its hundreds of thousands of tiny leaves – finger like – store up moisture while other trees dry up all at once. What an ingenious tree, isn't it?"
Kenzuburu Oe.

Many of Takemitsu's later works related to the sea or to water and *Rain Tree* is no exception. The opening crotales notes fall from the air like drops of water within pools of light activated by each performer. The sense of space created by this beautiful opening

is maintained throughout the work. Takemitsu was the first Japanese composer fully embraced by Western contemporary musicians, and his contact with Western composers had some influence on his work. Brief examples of this can be found in *Rain Tree*, for example, in the short moments when each performer improvises in imitation of rain falling from the tree.

Rain Tree was prelude by *Cross Hatch*, composed in 1982 for marimba and vibraphone duo. *Cross Hatch* contains less than two minutes of melodic material which became the basis for *Rain Tree* in 1983.

Child of Tree – John Cage (1975)

Amplified cactus, leaves, dry grasses, paperbark, eucalyptus bark, onion skin, seedpod, pine cones, wooden bowls and wooden box.....potentially.

Child of Tree is one of John Cage's explorations of chance methods, which Cage chose to use in this work "because the improvisation can't be based on taste and memory since one doesn't know the instruments" (1982 interview). Chance methods are used to determine instrument choice and structure of the performance, which is fundamentally a composed improvisation. The performer is called upon to select 10 instruments made of plant material, and to use the Chinese *Book of Changes* to determine which of these instruments and for how long they will be played in any given performance. The *Child of Tree* manuscript is one of Cage's least legible handwritten scores – messy, out of order, covered in crossed-out instructions and full of superscripts. It has been supposed by a number of musicians that "the difficulty of reading the words and the ambiguity of what is and what is not crossed out adds an element of chance to the construction." (Samuel Solomon)

Branches, composed in 1976, is an ensemble version of *Child of Tree*.

Electric Counterpoint – Steve Reich (1987)

Marimba, vibraphone and tape

arranged L. Devenish 2012

Tape parts recorded by Clint Davis 2012

Though Reich has composed many works for percussion ensemble that are embraced worldwide, he is yet to create any works for solo percussionist. In the meantime, works by Reich for guitar, clarinet and cello are being transcribed by percussionists for drumset, marimba, vibraphone, tuned gongs, steel pan and electronic percussion. Written for Pat Metheny in 1987, the 13 guitars in the original version of *Electric Counterpoint* tonight become 18 marimbas and 10 vibraphones.