

presents the

## **UNLV Percussion Ensemble and Moving Light Lab**

The UNLV Percussion Ensemble is directed by Dean Gronemeier and Timothy Jones

The UNLV Moving Light Lab is directed by Brackley Frayer

### **PRE-CONCERT MUSIC**

#### **UNLV Steel Band** **Luc Brust, director**

Darren Dyke  
(b. 1968)

Fall From Grace (Samba Tres)

Kyle Stallons  
(b. 1985)

Motherly Melody

Victor Wooten  
(b. 1964)

Sex in a Pan

George and Ira Gershwin  
(1898–1937), (1896–1983)

Someone to Watch Over Me

Traditional  
Luc Brust, Dennis Garza, Ryan Harrison, Luigi Ng,  
Caleb Pickering, Alex Tomlinson, steel pans

Baja

### **PROGRAM**

Russell Peck  
(b. 1945)

Lift Off!

Kyle Bissantz, Alex Tomlinson, Eddie Yervinyan, percussion

John Psathas  
(b. 1966)

Kyoto

Kyle Bissantz, Chris Dye, Manny Gamazo,  
Luigi Ng, Eddie Yervinyan, percussion

A Great Big World and Christina Aguilera  
Elizabeth Kline, lighting design

Say Something

Jim Casella  
(b. 1970)

Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe

Kyle Bissantz, marimba soloist  
Michale Burt, Chris Dye, Sam Friend, Ryan Harrison, Luigi Ng,  
Caleb Pickering, Adam Steff, Eddie Yervinyan, percussion  
Manuel Ramirez Guevara, lighting design

## INTERMISSION

Caleb Pickering  
(b. 1990)

Dream of Leaves

Luc Brust, Chris Dye, Gabe Domino, Michael Hoffman,  
Nick Mastroluca, Shaquille Regis, Aidan Seidman, percussion  
Cara Froelich, conductor

A Great Big World and Christina Aguilera  
Manuel Ramirez Guevara, lighting design

Say Something

Steve Reich  
(b. 1936)

Sextet

Dejan Daskalov, Ryan Kelly, piano  
Luc Brust, Ryan Harrison, Caleb Pickering, Adam Steff, percussion  
Manuel Ramirez Guevara, lighting design

Friday, April 25, 2014  
Saturday, April 26, 2014

7:30 p.m.

Black Box Theatre  
Alta Ham Fine Arts  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

## PROGRAM NOTES

### ***Lift-Off!* - Russell Peck**

Premiered at the University of Michigan in 1966, Peck's "Lift-Off!" for three percussionists each playing three drums, including one low bass drum, a medium drum, and a high drum, has earned the status of a "classic" in the percussion ensemble repertoire. The 8-minute work is cast in two sections. The first features rhythms with conflicting accent patterns and metric modulation; in the second section, the three percussionists play unison sixteenth notes, eventually beginning a general crescendo that drives the music to a hair-raising finale. – John R. Raush

### ***Kyoto* - John Psathas**

A departure from Psathas' earlier aggressive, physically complex percussion works such as *Drum Dances* and *Etude* from *One Study One Summary*, *Kyoto* is stylistically similar to his marimba concerto *Djinn*. A constant rhythmic semiquaver pulse sustains momentum through varying time signatures, with brief moments of silence giving way to shifts in harmonic content. Two contrasting ideas alternate throughout - the rhythmically driven melodic lines, and arpeggios heard in the vibraphone - before coming together at the climax of the work.

The title of the work refers to a 1976 improvisation by pianist Keith Jarrett which was recorded in Kyoto. Acknowledging the influence of this recording, the composer writes: "This improvisation of Jarrett's is, more than anything, the piece that woke the composer in me, and set me on this journey of creating my own music for others."

*Kyoto* was commissioned by the Ju Percussion Group for the 2011 Taipei International Percussion Convention. The premiere performance took place at the opening concert of the convention in Taiwan City, Taiwan on May 20, 2011. *Kyoto* is dedicated to the Ju Percussion Group in celebration of its 25th anniversary in 2011. – John Psathas

### ***Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe* - Jim Casella**

*Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe* is based on the idea that our brief time on this earth can have any number of outcomes depending on the relationships we build, how present we are, and the decisions we make. As our stories evolve, infinite possibilities are created. The result is an adventure filled with both uncertainty and wonder.

This episodic journey is constructed in three movements featuring a solo marimbist and eight percussionists. Each movement has its own identity, though their melodic and harmonic DNA keep them rooted in the same story. Harmonically, the countless decisions of a lifetime are represented as restated ideas in mediant relations. The consistency of Self is maintained through these harmonic twists by thematic familiarity.

The first movement uses a rhythmic pattern of fifteen beats, revealed clearly when the syncopated bass ostinato enters after the enigmatic introduction. The main theme is then introduced by the soloist, which is restated by the ensemble in fuller orchestration. The movement culminates in a whirlwind fight for survival through the virtuosic acrobatics by the soloist.

The second movement begins with a series of anxious flourishes built on less stable chords using diminished seconds and augmented fifths. A distant and reflective period follows as the soloist arpeggiates the left hand ostinato while the right hand sustains melancholy one-handed rolls. These build from lonely isolation into ferocious layers of conviction, and eventually achieve a new intense clarity through a pulsating, accelerating unison.

Unlike the first two movements' fifteen-beat motive, the meter in the third switches to a more stable 12/8. The melody is based on the same DNA as before, but proceeds with a newfound sense of conviction. This adventure moves through blazing displays of technique from the soloist and culminates in a courageous and confident march into the new unknown. – Jim Casella

### ***Dream of Leaves* - Caleb Pickering**

To see brown or withered leaves in your dream signifies fallen hopes, despair, sadness, and the unexpected end of major parts of your life. Written between spring of 2013 to spring of 2014, *Dream of Leaves* is a rhythmically driven tone poem that reflects on these emotions and how they shape you into the person you presently are.

Based around a one measure theme, *Dream of Leaves* uses a wide array of techniques such as hocketing, hemiola, mixed meters, polyrhythmic figures, complex rhythmic ideas, and percussion instruments used in both traditional and non-traditional ways, to create a driving rhythmic lament throughout. – Caleb Pickering

### **Sextet - Steve Reich**

*Sextet* was commissioned by Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians and by the French Government for the Nexus Percussion Ensemble. The first performance under the title *Music for percussion and Keyboards* was given at the Centre Pompidou in Paris on 19 December 1984 by Nexus with guest artists playing keyboards. The last movement was then revised in January 1985 and the title shortened to *Sextet*. The American premiere was presented by Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians at Brooklyn Academy of Music's New Wave Festival on 31 October 1985 as the music for Ms. Dean's *Impact*. The American concert premiere by Steve Reich and Musicians was performed on the Great performers Series at Avery Fisher Hall on 20 January 1986. *Sextet* (1985) for 4 percussionists and 2 keyboard players is score for 3 marimbas, 2 vibraphones, 2 bass drums, crotales, sticks, tam-tam, 2 pianos and 2 synthesizers. The duration is about 28 minutes.

The work is in five movements played without pause. The relationship of the five movements is that of an arch form A-B-C-B-A. The first and last movements are fast, the second and fourth moderate and the third, slow. Changes of tempo are made abruptly at the beginning of new movements by metric modulation to either get slower or faster. Movements are also organised harmonically with the chord cycle for the first and fifth, another for the second and fourth, and yet another for the third. The harmonies used are largely dominant chords with added tones creating a somewhat darker, chromatic and more varied harmonic language were suggested by *The Desert Music* (1984).

Percussion instruments mostly produce sounds of relatively short duration. In this piece I was interested in overcoming that limitation. The use of the bowed vibraphone, not merely as a passing effect, but as a basic instrumental voice in the second movement, was one means of getting long continuous sounds not possible with piano. The mallet instruments (marimba, vibraphone etc) are basically instruments of high and middle register without a low range. To overcome this limit the bass drum was used doubling the piano or synthesizer played in their lower register, particularly in the second, third and fourth movements.

Compositional techniques used include some introduced in my music as early as *Drumming* in 1971. In particular the substitution of beats for rests to "build-up" a canon between two or more identical instruments playing the same repeating pattern is used extensively in the first and last movements. Sudden change of rhythmic position (or phase) of one voice in an overall repeating contrapuntal web first occurs in my *Six Pianos* of 1973 and occurs throughout this work. Double canons, where one canon moves slowly (the bowed vibraphones) and the second moves quickly (the pianos), first appear in my music in *Octet* of 1979. Techniques influenced by African music, where the basic ambiguity in meters of 12 beats is between 3 groups of 4 and 4 groups of 3, appear in the third and fifth movements. A rhythmically ambiguous pattern is played by vibraphones in the third movement, but at a much faster tempo. The result is to change the perception of what is in fact not changing. Another related, more recent techniques appearing near the end of the fourth movement is to gradually remove the melodic material in the synthesizers leaving the accompaniment of the 2 vibraphones to become the new melodic focus. Similarly the accompaniment in the piano in the second movement becomes the melody for the synthesizer in the fourth movement. The ambiguity here is between which is melody and which is accompaniment. In music which uses a great deal of repetition I believe it is precisely these kinds of ambiguities that give vitality and life. — Steve Reich

Thank you to Mykola Suk and Timothy Hoft for helping identify pianists for this project and for guidance with the music itself. A special thank you also to Green Valley High School and Cara Froelich for their enthusiasm to collaborate and integrate high school and university percussion students in these performances.

Thanks to Rob Goodale and his team for coordinating the move of two grand pianos for this concert.

We would also like to thank the following companies for donating equipment to our Moving Light Lab this year:

PRG

Sublime Lighting

Morpheus lighting

Vari-Lite