

LYNN VARTAN & SHALINI VIJAYAN: VIOLIN/MARIMBA DUO



Project Muse Guide - January 2009

This presentation will focus on music for the unique instrument combination of marimba and violin. Percussionist Lynn Vartan and Violinist Shalini Vijayan perform works from composers Joan Huang, Lera Auerbach, and Thea Musgrave.

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ABOUT LYNN VARTAN & SHALINI VIJAYAN



Lynn Vartan and Shalini Vijayan, together known as 61/4, have been performing together since 2002. Lynn Vartan, percussion, is an active performer and educator who is an advocate for diversity in music. She specializes in commissioning and performing new music. Lynn performed with the Tambuco Percussion Ensemble on Southwest Chamber Music's *Complete Chamber Works of Carlos Chávez, Volume 3*, which was nominated as Best Classical Album for the 2005 GRAMMY Awards. Lynn is currently the

Director of Percussion at Southern Utah University. Shalini Vijayan, violin, is a prominent performer and collaborator in music ranging from the Baroque period to the present. Currently Shalini is a full-time member of the Pacific Symphony Orchestra as well as Principal Second Violin of the Opera Pacific Orchestra. She is also an advocate of modern music and fulfills this role as Principal Second Violin of the New York based Absolute Ensemble, which she helped found.

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ABOUT SOUTHWEST CHAMBER MUSIC

GRAMMY® Award-winning Southwest Chamber Music has been bringing *PROJECT MUSE* in-school performances to schools throughout Los Angeles County since 1994 with music that reflects the vast diversity of art music from around the world. We perform throughout the year at the Armory Center for the Arts, Boston Court, Norton Simon Museum, Colburn School of Performing Arts, and a summer festival at The Huntington Library. To find out more about Southwest Chamber Music and our other programs, visit our website at www.swmusic.org.



FEATURED COMPOSERS



Joan Huang (1957-)

The Legend of Chang-e is based on an ancient Chinese story which tells about the goddess of the moon, Chang-e, who swallowed an elixir of immortality and floated to the moon, where she lives to this day. Her husband, Hou Yi, attempted to follow her, but failed and lived out his days on the sun.

Today, every family in China celebrates the Mid-autumn Festival each year; tasting moon cakes, watching the bright full moon, and thinking of Chang-e.

In this composition, Joan Huang conveys the quality of Chinese music with articulation and dynamics, a constant change of instrumental colors, diverse kinds of tone inflections, asymmetrical rhythmic patterns and other characteristics of Chinese traditional music. The beautiful and delicate Chang-e is represented by the violin, and the heroic and robust Hou Yi is represented by the marimba.



Joan Huang grew up in Shanghai, China during the tumultuous Cultural Revolution. Ms. Huang came to the U.S. in the 1980s, and continues to compose music with an interest in creating a style that combines Chinese traditional music with Western contemporary compositional techniques.



Lera Auerbach (1973-)

Lonely Suite, Op. 70 "Ballet for a Lonely Violinist," for solo violin, is described as an exploration on the themes of loneliness and fragmentation through six short movements. Each movement expresses a mood or situation, from "Boredom" and "No Escape" to "Worrisome Thought."

Lera Auerbach is a composer, pianist, and author. Originally from Russia, Ms. Auerbach defected from the Soviet Union to attend The Julliard School, where she earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Ms. Auerbach's music is characterized by stylistic freedom and juxtaposition of tonal and atonal musical language.



Thea Musgrave (1928-)

"From Spring to Spring," for solo marimba, is based on a series of haiku which represent an emotional journey through the four seasons. Each season is announced by a "peal" on wind chimes-bamboo for spring, wood for summer, metal for autumn and glass for winter. The Haiku chosen for each of the seasons provide a setting and an 'event.' For example, the summer grasses (fast rhythmic figurations) have buried the glorious dreams of ancient warriors (a slow dotted march theme played in octaves).

Born in Scotland, Thea Musgrave has had a successful career as a composer and conductor at a time when these were still rather uncommon professions for women. Ms. Musgrave's compositions focus on the lyric and dramatic potential of music, and she has composed several large-scale operas.

ABOUT THE MARIMBA AND CLASSICAL MUSIC

The marimba originated in Africa and has an early history in Latin America. It was brought to the United States in the early 1900s by Guatemalan Marimba bands. Through the 20th century, improvements to the marimba have made it even more beautiful-sounding, with a richer and warmer tone and a lower, more expansive range. This evolution has made the instrument more accepted as a soloist in the classical world, and an exciting option for composers.

Until recently, very few classical performers specialized in the marimba. It began appearing as a solo instrument in the 1940s. With little of its own repertoire, performances consisted of mostly transcriptions of music written for other instruments. 20th century composers such as **Pierre Boulez**,

Karlheinz Stockhausen, **Olivier Messiaen** and **Steve Reich** composed for marimba in both solo and chamber works. With more of its own repertoire, the marimba gained popularity among musicians in the 1970s. Artists such as Japanese marimba player **Keiko Abe** became inspiration for younger musicians to focus on the instrument. Now the marimba is celebrated by numerous virtuosos, festivals and international competitions.

Many jazz vibraphonists have also played the marimba. Check out artists such as **Bobby Hutcherson**, **Dave Pike**, and **Gloria Parker**. Also hear the electrically amplified marimba and vibraphone in experimental rocker **Frank Zappa's *Mother's of Invention***. **Evelyn Glennie**, the first full-time solo professional percussionist in 20th century western society, is another artist to become familiar with. Glennie is profoundly deaf, and always performs barefoot in order to hear with other parts of her body.

The evolution of the modern concert marimba:



Musical Vocabulary (from the California Standards for the Arts)

DYNAMICS are various degrees of volume in the performance of music, such as loud and soft.

EXTENDED TECHNIQUES are unconventional, unorthodox or “improper” techniques of playing musical instruments, in order to expand and explore the possibilities of different instruments.

IMPROVISATION is the spontaneous creation of music.

An **INTERVAL** is the distance in pitch between two tones.

MALLETS, unwrapped or wrapped, are used on a marimba, vibraphone and other instruments with softer keys. Mallets have heads of kelon, nylon, acrylic or other medium-hard materials wrapped in softer materials like yarn, cord or latex.

MARACAS are a musical instrument consisting of two hollow containers, usually wood, filled with beans or small stones, which are shaken to provide the rhythm.

The **MARIMBA** is a musical instrument in the percussion family. Keys or bars (usually made of wood) are struck with mallets to produce musical tones. The keys are arranged as those of a piano. The modern marimba was developed by Japanese and American builders based on the Hispanic-American traditional marimba.

A **MELODY** is an organized sequence of single notes.

The **METER** is the grouping of beats by which a piece of music is measured.

The **PERCUSSION FAMILY** includes all musical instruments that are played by being struck.

PONTICELLO is a string instrument technique where one plays on the bridge of the instrument to achieve a special effect.

RHYTHM is the combination of long and short, even and uneven sounds that convey a sense of movement in time.

SCORDATURA is an alternate tuning used for the open strings of a string instrument. It is an extended technique used to allow the playing of otherwise impossible melodies, harmonies, figures, chords, or other note combinations.

A **SCORE** is the written form of the entire composition. All players have a part of the score for their instrument, unless they have memorized the notes.

SOUND PERCEPTION is how you interpret what you hear and where you hear it.

The **STRING FAMILY** (also called **Chordophones**) is the group of instruments that uses strings to produce sound. The strings are made of gut, steel, or nylon. Stringed instruments can be played with a bow- a long stick that has horsehair attached to it, or they can be played by plucking or strumming the strings with the fingers.

The **TIMBRE** is the tone color or character of sound heard.

The **TONALITY (KEY)** is the tonal center of a composition.

TREMOLO is a shaking sound which is achieved by repeating the same note extremely quickly or by playing two notes very quickly, one after the other.

TUNING is to adjust a music instrument to the desired frequency or pitch.

The **XYLOPHONE** is a musical instrument in the percussion family which probably originated in Indonesia. It consists of wooden bars of various lengths that are struck by plastic, wooden, or rubber mallets. A Xylophone is pitched an octave higher than a Marimba.

Look for Southwest Chamber Music CDs on iTunes & CD Baby!

Check out Lynn Vartan and Shalini Vijayan's performances in Volume 3 of Southwest Chamber Music's *Complete Chamber Works of Carlos Chávez*:



Continue Learning with these Internet Resources:

For more information on *Lynn Vartan and Shalini Vijayan*, visit:

www.myspace.com/sixtyonefour

www.lynnvartan.com

www.marimba1.com/artists.html

For more information on our *featured composers*, visit their websites:

www.joanhuang.com

www.leraauerbach.com

www.theamusgrave.com

For more information on *the Marimba*, we recommend these links:

www.marimba.org

www.lafi.org/magazine/articles/marimba.html

www.classicalmarimba.com

www.tambuco.org

To try to create your own composition at

www.creatingmusic.com

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Performed by Percussionist Lynn Vartan and Violinist Shalini Vijayan



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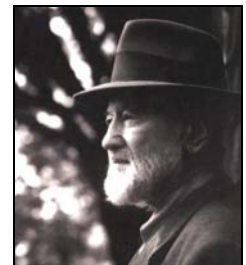
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