

# Ninkasi Percussion Group, Garrett Arney, Daniel Berg & Anders Åstrand

## NEW WORKS FOR MALLET QUARTET

### Ninkasi Percussion Group

By Oliver Molina

Over the centuries, chamber music has become a preferred idiom for composers with various standardized instrumentation configurations such as the string quartet, piano trio, wind quintet, and brass quintet. In the percussion family, marimba quartets by such composers as Christopher Deane, Rüdiger Pawassar, and Daniel Levitan have led the

way. However, other combinations of keyboard percussion instruments have evolved due to their unique timbral combinations and easier portability. For example, Steve Reich's "Mallet Quartet" for two vibraphones, featured on Third Coast Percussion's 2017 Grammy-winning album, influenced the creation of more pieces for that instrumentation.

This Daytime Showcase performance by the Ninkasi Percussion Group will highlight several recent works, including commissions and premieres. The quar-

tet consists of Gregory Lyons (Louisiana Tech), Gustavo Miranda (Nicholls State), Oliver Molina (Northwestern State), and Joe W. Moore III (UT-Arlington). Formed in 2019, the group has toured and performed throughout the United States. Members have commissioned new works for the idiom, and also composed for the group themselves.

At PASIC 2024, the group will perform selected movements of "Hymns for Ninkasi" by Brett William Dietz. Written in 2023, the quartet recorded the piece at Louisiana State University last October. Dietz wrote, "Ninkasi was the Sumerian Goddess of Beer and Brewing. She was associated with both the positive and negative consequences of the consumption of beer. The original 'Hymn to Ninkasi' was written down in c. 1800. The eight hymns can be played in entirety or separately."

Ninkasi Percussion Group will also premiere a work by Susan Powell for keyboard quartet. The composer wrote, "It's a new mallet quartet for two marimbas, vibraphone, and xylophone that's high energy and is two-mallet centric for all players."

Follow Ninkasi Percussion Group on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ninkasipercussiongroup/>.



NINKASI PERCUSSION GROUP

## “TWELVE PRELUDES FOR MARIMBA” BY JURI SEO

By Garrett Arney

“Twelve Preludes” was a collaboration between myself and composer Juri Seo with the goal of creating a new work for solo marimba combining my musical tastes, her virtuosic knowledge and ability on piano, and her compositional prowess. My only request for the work was that it harken back to piano pieces of the Romantic era, particularly the character works of Robert Schumann, namely “Papillon” and “Carnaval.” These works are comprised of multiple short movements to create a larger work and a larger shape.

Some of the movements tend to be short, even a matter of seconds, consisting of virtuosic runs, beautiful melodies, and more. One even consists of 11 double whole notes, in three groupings – four notes, then three, then four – which is of particular interest to me as an “interlude” of sorts. “Twelve Preludes,” as was my hope, brings a series of 12 short movements together in the span of less than 20 minutes. Some of the movements are a few minutes while others are less than 30 seconds, creating a beautiful musical journey. The 12 movements are arranged in a quasi-palindromic structure, with echoes, reflections, and variations throughout. They are: I.

Prologue; II. Träumerei; III. Springwinter; IV. Intermezzo I; V. Im Wunderschönen Monat Mai; VI. Intermezzo II; VII. Im Mai; VIII. Snow in August (Fugue); IX. Indian Summer (Gigue); X. Intermezzo III; XI. Der Lindenbaum; XII. Epilogue.

Juri Seo wrote, “As I grow older, the changing seasons evoke not only excitement but also a touch of apprehension, as I perceive these transitions as a cyclical journey that leads to ultimate demise. I am never interested in indulging in nihilistic melancholy, however. The cycles of rebirth that the seasons bring sweet tenderness, and the seasonal anomalies – untimely snow, unexpected warm days of autumn – inspire deep reverie, compelling us to experience non-linear time.”

An additional element of inspiration for Juri was the novel *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann. Time is one of its central themes; sickness and death, dreams, and seasons’ ambiguity are crucial throughlines, creating some of the programmatic elements of “Twelve Preludes.” Schubert’s “Der Lindenbaum” (“The Linden Tree”), a central part of the novel, is an inspiration behind a movement of Juri’s solo with the same title. Toward the end of “Twelve Preludes,” Juri’s “Der Lindenbaum” acts as a symbol of many memories of life, longing, and a place of ultimate rest.

**Garrett Arney**, co-founder of the group arx duo and self-proclaimed “collaborative percussionist,” is focused on bringing to life new percussion works in collaboration with today’s leading composers. Garrett was recently appointed Professor of Percussion at The University of Kansas.

## DANIEL BERG, MARIMBA & ANDERS ÅSTRAND, VIBRAPHONE

Daniel Berg and Anders Åstrand have collaborated on a collection of new marimba and vibraphone duos called “Framework 2” (published by Edition Svitzer). The compositions in it are notated in the style of tunes in *The Real Book*: melodies with chord symbols and some suggested bass lines. This provides performers freedom in their music making. Every song is rather short. The artists hope that you will try your own version of the songs. A couple of examples and advice about how to approach the pieces is included here. Åstrand wrote, “We really looking forward to seeing you at PASIC to show you more!”

### Performance advice for “Satisfied”

By Daniel Berg

Many years ago, I won an audition for a professor position in Sweden. I was so



GARRETT ARNEY



ANDERS ÅSTRAND & DANIEL BERG

happy and satisfied. After getting the result, I directly went to my marimba to improvise and compose a song to capture this rush of joy. It all started with the two chords in bars 1 and 2, labeled “Intro,” where I alternate the major and minor, which I love so much. When you play this Intro, feel free to repeat those bars as many times as you like. I suggest the marimbist play as it’s written in the score; the vibist could start improvising and then go to what’s written.

From bar 3, the melody and a groove start, which gives the feeling of being satisfied. The harmonies now fall in ev-

ery new bar. When I composed the song, I played those bars on marimba and started to whistle a melody, and I kept that theme during most of the song. When you play the melody, you could imagine humming or whistling it.

In bar 9, I use the alternation of minor and major again until bar 15, where the unison rhythms provide the direction to happiness in bar 16. While you improvise, always play what’s written in bars 15 and 18.

I use a lot of “sharp 11s” in my chords, which could be a little tricky to get at first, but I thought it was clearer to write

“Cmaj 7,#11” rather than “Gmaj 7/C.” Listen to the album as inspiration, and try to get the right feeling of being “Satisfied.”

### Performance advice for “Soon”

By Anders Åstrand

“Soon” started as an improvisation on marimba. The ostinato in the beginning just “appeared in my hands” together with the chord progression. I recorded the ostinato and then continued seamlessly with the melody, singing and playing simultaneously. I enjoy composing this way – starting with an outline that I then embellish; it is a great way to feel free in my music making. When you play with friends who have the same approach, you share a great journey together. And if you prefer to play as it is written, go right ahead! Improvisation is optional!

If you want to try your improvisation skills, you do not need to know the chords and all of that. First, look at the melody and see how many variations you can make out of it. The next step could be to improvise on the notes in the chords. Take it bar by bar and then combine the melody and notes in the chord.

After that, try to figure out what scales you can get out of the chords. At this point, you will probably have come up with a lot of great ideas and you can start to form your own voice. Finally, try to record yourself every time you play. This is a great way to get to know yourself as a musician, and to educate yourself. You will notice how easy it is to see what you need to practice further, but also how you learn and improve your skills.

Daniel’s and my music making often stems from impromptu playing. We get together, start to play, and our ideas come out: we create “in the moment” music! This means that the pieces we play may differ a little at every rehearsal or performance. So, if we play “Soon” at PASIC, it will not sound exactly like the recording. Compare this with an experience in life: traveling from point A to B. The GPS will suggest the shortest and most efficient road to take, but you might choose the sce-

**FORM SUGGESTION**

Intro and Melody  
Vibe solo (A and B)  
Marimba solo  
Vibe solo  
Marimba solo  
Intro and Melody  
Coda

## FRAMEWORK 2

works for vibraphone and marimba

### I. SATISFIED

for vibraphone and marimba

Daniel Berg (2024)

**Intro** ♩ = 120

*rep. 4 times*

Vibraphone

Gm6 *ad lib.* Gmaj 7#11

mf

Marimba

mf

**A** Melody (and solos)

3 Cmaj 7#11 Bm Bbmaj 7#11

1. *ad lib. (feel free to improvise right hand)*

mf

6 Am F#m6 D♭

1.

2.

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nic route that is more exciting and offers surprises on the way to the destination.

We hope you will like to perform any song from “Framework 2” and invite you to make it your own journey. Use the pieces as inspiration, and feel free to add your own flavor! Thanks to Johan Svitzer, Edition Svitzer, for the great design and layout of our songs.

### AUDIO LINK

Framework 2: [https://music.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy\\_k0yoz7A-Tz39KNShTlz4D8otqLlubzmVPo](https://music.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_k0yoz7A-Tz39KNShTlz4D8otqLlubzmVPo)

Daniel Berg ([www.marimbaart.com](http://www.marimbaart.com)) and Anders Åstrand ([www.andersastrand.com](http://www.andersastrand.com)) are both noted percussionists from Sweden. **PN**

# EDUCATION SESSION

**CHELSEA LEVINE AND THOMAS CLAESEN**  
**Education Clinic**  
**Money and Marketing for Musicians: Lessons Learned from Being Self-Employed**

How do I charge more? Do I need a website? What's my next priority? Talking to our self-employed musician friends, we've realized that there are important lessons we have learned (some the hard way) that can be helpful. This session is for gigging musicians, teachers, students, directors, composers, and anyone who has bills to pay. We will focus on 10 relevant topics: money, contracts, websites, social media, time management, diversifying your revenue streams, networking, delegating, mental health, and life design. We will discuss lessons we've learned through trial and error, share success stories from the music industry, and leave the audience with resources and actionable advice. We hope our presentation empowers attendees to know their financial worth and how to best manage all the pieces of the puzzle.

Thomas Claesen and Chelsea Levine have been involved with LLCs, C-Corps, S-Corps, non-profits, and even an underground candy-bar business in elementary school. Music wise, they've taught and designed for marching ensembles all over the world. Thomas is a designer and entrepreneur. He owns Clawsun Design, whose portfolio includes websites for creatives, non-profits, and e-commerce brands, as well as branding, book design, and publishing. He is the quad tech at Rhythm X. Chelsea is the founder and CEO of Seavine and The Cymbal Scholarship, a former CMO, and consults in digital marketing and social media. She is the cymbal tech at Rhythm X. Thomas and Chelsea recently founded the tech company Teeq, which revolves around an app to give and receive video feedback. It facilitates better learning for students and teachers.

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## FRAMEWORK 2

### II. SOON

for vibraphone and marimba Anders Åstrand (2024)

Intro ♩ = 132  
*rep. these bars ad lib.*

**Vibraphone**  
*mp*

**Marimba**  
*mp*

**A** Vibraphone 1st round and Marimba 2nd round

5  
*mp*

**B** Marimba 1st round and Vibraphone 2nd round

8  
*mf*

9  
*mp*

12