

Focus Day: Percussion & Movement

By Karlyn Viña, Alexandros Fragiskatos, and Mika Godbole

The PAS New Music/Research Committee is delighted to present “Percussion & Movement” at PASIC50, a series of concerts and a panel discussion exploring relationships between music and movement. The first two concerts will feature solo and chamber Percussion Theatre works incorporating movement alongside other elements including acting, characterization, and vocalization into cohesive and holistic works of performance art. A mid-day panel discussion will delve deeper into the collaborative process between Percussion and Dance, featuring panelists with unique perspectives and collaborative experiences. The 1 P.M. and 3 P.M. programs will feature works with Movement as a Core Element integral to the realization of the works, including highly visual works, some with prescribed choreography and multi-media elements. The day will conclude with a 5 P.M. program featuring collaborations with dancers and works inspired by dance.

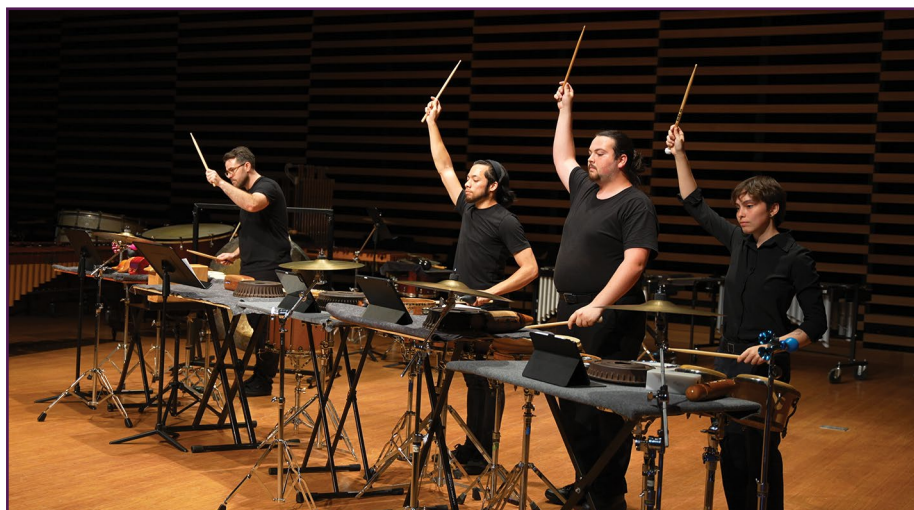
The Focus Day presentations will feature over 30 artists with diverse backgrounds and relationships to movement, and at different stages in their careers, as part of New Music/Research Presents at PASIC50. All events will take place on Thursday, Nov. 13, in room 120 (concerts) and room 209 (panel discussion).

PERCUSSION THEATRE – PART 1

The 9:00 A.M. concert showcases music with a strong emphasis on the interplay between sound and theatricality. Kevin von Kampen and the University of South Florida Percussion Ensemble open with Carl Schimmel’s “POPET” (2018) for percussion quartet. This theatrical piece incorporates spoken word and choreography, exploring the idea of one player’s actions being accompanied by another’s sounds, creating a “puppet show” effect. The work uses Middle English text to emphasize musicality and theatricality over narrative clarity.

Next, I-Jen Fang performs Christopher

Deane’s 2002 work “The Bones of Chuang Tzu (Prelude No. 5 for Timpani).” This piece, premiered by Fang in 2003, is a multi-art-form experience combining music, dance, poem, and recitation. Inspired by Chinese literature and Fang’s own heritage and eurythmics background, the performance features Fang reading a Chinese poem while dancing and playing a combination of Western and Eastern percussion instruments, centered around timpani. The work highlights the performer’s ability to move gracefully across the stage while simultaneously utilizing extended techniques to produce a variety of “bone sounds” one might not expect to hear on timpani.



University of South Florida Percussion Ensemble

Alexandrea Richard then performs Thierry De Mey's "Silence Must Be!" (2002), a piece that uses the body as the primary instrument. The work begins with a series of precisely timed hand motions and conducting gestures, which create complex polyrhythms through their spatial relationships. These movements are first performed in silence and then with a pre-recorded track of Richard's own mouth sounds, creating a deeply personal and bodily experience. "Silence Must Be!" ultimately explores how the body can drive rhythm and convey a rich, multifaceted narrative.

Allen Otte performs Mark Applebaum's "Composition Machine No. 1" (2014),

which explores the relationship between performer and sound object. This work unfolds in four parts, with the first two comprising an interpretive performance of a graphic score followed by the score's destruction and use, along with other objects, as a sound source. In the third part, the arrangement of these objects is traced to create a new graphic score, which Otte

interprets as a "dance" with a frame drum in the final part.

The concert concludes with Fabio Oliveira and the Rowan University Percussion Ensemble performing Mauricio Kagel's "Pas de Cinq" (1965). This rarely performed quintet, part of Kagel's *Journal de Théâtre* series, makes unusual demands on the percussionist-actors. Instruments are placed at distant points on the stage, requiring performers to walk across imaginary paths with different surface materials to play their parts. The resulting sounds are a byproduct of these movements, creating the type of absurd ballet-musical experience characteristic of Kagel's style.

PERCUSSION THEATRE – PART 2

The 11 A.M. concert will continue to delve into the relationship between percussion and movement as applied in works for theatrical percussion. To open, Francis Favis and Less Than 10 Music will perform "I Delayed People's Flights In Narrow Hallways" by Mayke Nas and Wouter Snoei. In this work, four performers rhythmically write on blackboards, mimicking the repetitive writing of lines of text as punishment. The premise of the piece was inspired by the famous play *Self-Accusation* (1966) by Peter Handke.



I-Jen Fang



Allen Otte



Alexandrea Richard



Fabio Oliveira



Francis Favis

The program continues with Elizabeth Soflin performing “By Language Embellished, I” by Stuart Saunders Smith. Written in 1984, the piece challenges the performer’s characterization through both gesture and spoken word. As in many works for percussion theatre, the use of the soloist’s own voice and body alongside percussion playing results in a deeply personal interpretation of the work.

The program continues with Grounding Trio (Taryn Marks, Rose Martin, and Melissa Wang) performing “Your Past Self (is Dead)” composed for three or more performers by Melissa Wang. The work utilizes text and choreography inspired by both “healthy” and “unhealthy” coping mechanisms, including meditation, grounding techniques, and alcohol or pills as methods for letting go of conflicting or intrusive thought patterns.

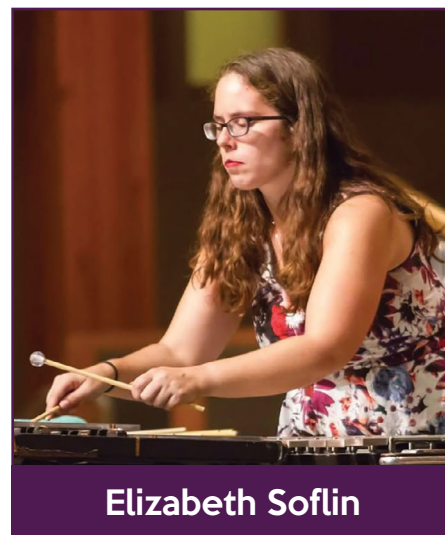
Next, Bonnie Whiting will perform “Stages” for singing, speaking, and moving percussionist, composed by Wang Lu with and for Bonnie Whiting. The piece transcends different stages of consciousness in an exploration of percussive sounds, movements, and vocalizations. The inspiration for these scenes is rooted in personal experiences from both Wang’s and Whiting’s pasts, including marching snare drum as a Communist Young Pioneer and navigating tension between family and religious extremism.

The program will conclude with members of the High Point University Percussion Ensemble performing “Fugue for Bells, Beans, and Bugs” by Constantin Basica, a theatrical trio with multi-media elements. In this work, the performers clap, speak, and move through a musical series in canon, retrograde, and rhythmic augmentation and diminution. The performers then drop handfuls of bells, beans, and bugs and move through the space picking them up in tandem with the same actions taking place in an accompanying video.

PANEL DISCUSSION

The noon hour features a panel discussion titled “Percussion and Dance: A Cross Section of Possibilities.” Moderated

by Alexandros Fragiskatos on behalf of the New Music/Research Committee, the discussion will explore the relationship between percussion and dance. The four panelists — William Labossiere, Andy Miller, and Drew Tucker — each have a deep and unique connection to dance and will bring their own perspective to a conversation highlighting historical and modern applications, including practical collaborative techniques, creative compositional approaches, and diverse career pathways for percussionists in the dance world.



Elizabeth Soflin



Melissa Wang, Rose Martin, and Taryn Marks



Bonnie Whiting



High Point University
Percussion Ensemble



Alexandros Fragiskatos

MOVEMENT AS CORE ELEMENT – PART 1

Focusing on works with movement as a core element, the 1:00 P.M. concert begins with a performance of “Pièce de gestes” by Thierry De Mey, performed by Andrew Bliss and the University of Tennessee Percussion Ensemble. While you may be familiar with “Musique de Table,” in which three performers use their hands and gesture to create musical sounds on a table-top, in “Pièce de gestes,” the element of sound production is removed, creating a work that is purely visual.

The next piece will be “Black and White” from *Frolic* by Fish Yu, performed by the Kōng Duo (Bevis Ng and Hoi Tong

Keung). *Frolic* was commissioned by the Kōng Duo to highlight their shared identity as Hong Kongers and utilizes Hong Kong children’s games as musical inspiration. The movements in “Black and White” are inspired by a clapping children’s game of the same name that is popular in Hong Kong.

The program continues with “Ceci n’est pas une balle” (“This is not a ball”), composed by Compagnie Kahlua and performed by Benjamin Charles with members of the Tarleton State Percussion Ensemble. This is a choreographed work for a trio of performers with a prerecorded audio track that includes many recognizable musical quotes ranging from Han-



William Labossiere



Drew Tucker



Kōng Duo



Andy Miller



Andrew Bliss



Benjamin Charles

del to Rage Against the Machine. “Ceci n’est pas une balle” is centered around an imaginary ball, which is manipulated by the performers throughout the work.

Next, Triolet (Kristie Ibrahim, Gina Ryan, and Victoria Sparks) will interpret “The Flower Episode (after Toshi Maki-hara)” by Jessie Marino. The hand movements in the piece are evocative of those in Thierry De Mey’s “Musique de Table” except that the gestures are performed in a circular formation on top of a timpani rather than on a table.

Abby Fisher will then perform “Kon-trol” by João Pedro Oliveira — a gesture-based, choreographed work that

aligns with a pre-recorded track. In “Kon-trol,” movements align with sounds that represent invisible percussion instruments; in short, the performer visually represents production of the percussive sounds heard in the track.

Finally, Casey Cangelosi and Aaron Trumbore will perform “Blink” by Cangelosi. “Blink” utilizes traditional jing cymbals and choreography that align with a track of sampled camera sounds: zooms, beeps, snaps, clicks, and button presses. “Blink” was commissioned by the Taiwanese Ministry of Culture and Drumily Percussion Group and premiered in November 2024 in Taipei.

**MOVEMENT AS CORE ELEMENT
– PART 2**

Movement as Core Element continues at the 3:00 P.M. concert with a second hour of compelling works, starting off with the Sam Houston Percussion Group, under the guidance of Dr. John Lane, performing “Piece for the Middle Seat of an Airplane” by Jessie Marino. This 2017 work, originally commissioned for and premiered by line upon line percussion, consists of a set of instructions along with structural delineations from the composer for the performers to craft “a piece of musical choreography that you can perform during the quiet hours of a red-eye flight...all from



Triolet



Abby Fisher



Casey Cangelosi



Sam Houston Percussion Group

the position of the middle seat of the exit row.”

Dr. Frank Kumor, Director of Percussion at Kutztown University, takes the stage next to perform Jennifer Stasack’s 1987 “Six Elegies Dancing” for marimba and kick drum. Dr. Kumor wrote about this piece in his doctoral dissertation, *Interpreting the Relationship Between Movement and Music in Selected Twentieth Century Percussion Music*, highlighting the importance of movement and gesture.

Ancel Neeley is joined by projections of himself as he presents Michael Beil’s “Key Jack.” Premiered in 2017 and written for a pianist (or any skilled performer),

live video, and tape, with no instrument present for the performance, Beil captures the audience by deconstructing any association with the physical instrument, relying solely on the movement of the performer(s) as projections disappear and reappear. The use of a Max/MSP patch processes the live video feed, which is accelerated and decelerated as it is projected back on the stage as accompaniment.

From a piece that requires the use of extensive live technology, the performance hour transitions to exploring the simplicity of the relationship between the performer and their instrument as an extension of the hand. Dr. Michael Jones

performs “Mani. Gonxha,” the 2011 solo by Perluigi Billone that is one in a series of percussion solos focused on hands (“mani” in Italian) — specifically, the hands of historical figures and their resultant efforts. Two Tibetan singing bowls serve as the sole source of sound while the motion of the hands dictated via Billone’s graphic notation are tied inexorably to the production of the various timbres.

To complete the second hour of Movement as Core Element, KNO Percussion, directed by Von Hansen, performs the extroverted “Strings Attached” by Eric Griswold. A central pole connects six percussionists playing snare drums with



Dr. Frank Kumor



Ancel Neeley



Dr. Michael Jones

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sticks strung to the pole or each other. Though larger physical motions manifest expectedly as visual wave forms, added visual changes in the nylon string waves caused by subtle timbral shifts further illuminate and reinforce changes that are less overt.

COLLABORATIONS WITH AND INSPIRED BY DANCE

At 5:00 P.M., New Music/Research presents a concert devoted to Collaborations with and Inspired by Dance. We are delighted to welcome dance collaborators to enliven another round of works with movement. The hour begins with a solo performance by Daniel Shiller of an arrangement of “Bagr Binne,” religious dance music from upper-northwest Ghana. Using live looping with a gyl, steel pan, and various percussion instruments, Shiller combines dance music from Ghana and Brazil into an energetic rhythmic tapestry that nods to its roots while presenting something new.

The hour moves into the realm of tap and percussion partnerships, starting with Tommy Wasiuta presenting “Tap Shoes as a Percussive Instrument.” Wasiuta, a trained tap dancer, recently released his 2024 album *Drum Shoes*, which explores tap shoes as a standalone instrument. Taking a Nate Smith drumset solo as a point of departure, Wasiuta performs his own transcription demonstrating the commonalities between the sounds of a drumset and tap shoes.

Composer, percussionist, and dancer Bri Wiegand performs “Moses Supposedly,” the second movement of an original work titled *Lyrebird*, composed by Wiegand for tap dancer and fixed media. Cleverly spliced and interlaced TV/movie clips from *Singin’ in the Rain*, *Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events*, *Beavis and Butthead*, *The Tick*, and many others create a rhythmic bed for the tap dancer to imitate. Like the Australian lyrebird known for its remarkable mimicry skills, the dancer is asked to emulate rhythms from the connected media clips.

Associate Professor of Music at the Uni-



KNO Percussion



Daniel Shiller



Bri Wiegand



Tommy Wasiuta



Angela Kepley & Cheryl Okuda

versity of Arizona Dr. Morris Palter presents the next tap-based project. “Stepping into Crazy Army” combines Steve Gadd’s famous “Crazy Army” drum solo with Bob Becker’s “Away Without Leave” and

creates a tap dance showcase featuring the Boys’ Club Dance Collective (dancers Veronica Simpson, Laura Donaldson, and Elise McGrenera). A world premiere per-



**Boys' Club Tap Dance Collective featuring
Morris Palter and Nathan Smith**



Virginia Tech Percussion Ensemble

formance developed for the 2025 New Music/Research Day, the group develops language tying rudimental drumming and tap dance using “Crazy Army” as a point of inspiration.

Percussionist Angela Kepley and dancer Cheryl Okuda present “(Manipulation)” by Brian Wach, a 2011 work that states the nature of its premise in the very title of the work. Acting as puppet master and puppet, this intimate collaboration explores control both sonically and visually. Notated for vibraphone, three wood-blocks, wooden wind chimes, and other, smaller colors, the music sets the stage for a responsive, choreographed work.

The day concludes with Dr. Annie Stevens, the Virginia Tech Percussion Ensemble, and the VT Advanced Dance Class performing an excerpt of Robert Honstein’s “An Index of Possibility.” As the result of a long-term commitment to collaborations between percussion and dance, this presentation of Honstein’s work exemplifies the thoughtfulness and vulnerability behind a joint student endeavor.

CONCLUSION

Percussion and movement are inextricably connected, as it is through gesture or movement (along with instruments and often implements) that percussionists create sound. The PAS New Music/Research Committee is pleased to present this series of concerts and a panel discussion exploring relationships between percussion and movement through dance, theatre, gesture, and more. We hope to see you on November 13! **PN**