

WILLIAMS PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE & I/O New Music

Friday, April 18, 2025 7:30 PM, Chapin Hall

BELLOWS

Julia Wolfe: *Dark Full Ride*, part 1 (2002)

When Talujon Percussion Quartet asked me to write a piece for 4 percussionists I immediately thought of the drums. I am a long time fan of drummers and their ability to play simultaneously with both hands and feet, so I thought why not four of them? I went to David Cossin's studio to try ideas out. When we got to the hi-hat I became mesmerized. It's an amazing instrument – 2 cymbals crashing together by means of a foot pedal and struck from above. It produces an enormous range of shimmering colors. Just opening and closing the cymbals allow for symphonic possibilities. You can play the cymbals on the edge, play on the bell (top), roll, attack, be delicate, and my favorite – make the hi-hat roar. The first 7 minutes of the piece are entirely on hi-hats. Then I add in cymbals. That's where the title of the piece comes from – it was printed on the back of one of the ride cymbals. – *Julia Wolfe*

Finola Merivale: *Ihvustú I* (2021)

Ihvustú I is a percussion quartet for pitched and unpitched percussion, and it is the first part of a longer cycle. It was composed between November 2020 and January 2021. The title is taken from the Irish phrase “i bhfostú” which means “stuck”. *Ihvustú I* reflects on the newest wave of the pandemic: the superspreading new strain, the exploding numbers, new lockdowns, and therefore being stuck in one place.

I have dedicated *Ihvustú I* to Chris Lesapo, an old friend and talented musician from South Africa, who passed away on January 8th, just days before I finished the piece. We spent six weeks making music together in Boston in 2009. Chris was always so dedicated to music and education. I think he would have liked *Ihvustú I*, and everything that the Everybody Hits Consortium stands for.

I am very grateful to Adam Groh for organizing this wonderful consortium, and to all of the generous commissioners involved. – *Finola Merivale*

Jacob Fanto '25: *Seaforms* (2025)

Inspired by the vibrance and fluidity of Dale Chihuly's glass sculptures, *Seaforms* – titled after Chihuly's collection – explores the interplay of light, movement, and organic, aquatic forms. Scored for flute, clarinet, trumpet, vibraphone, piano, violin, viola, cello, and bass, *Seaforms*

moves in waves, unfolding through flowing melodic fragments, shimmering textures, and interwoven lines. The ensemble acts as a prism, refracting gestures into shifting sonic colors, sometimes fragile and delicate, other times radiant and surging with energy. *Seaforms'* structure is also prismatic: the bright, piano-led opening gives way to a slower, undulating middle section before returning to the initial material.

Like Chihuly's dynamic sculptures, which bend and twist into abstract, yet cohesive seashell-like forms, the music embraces both fluidity and structure. Independent voices emerge and dissolve, melding into a whole that is constantly shifting yet always interconnected. In this way, *Seaforms* aims to capture a sense of perpetual motion where sound, like glass and water, shifts between transient states. – *Jacob Fanto*

James Díaz: *In her dream song* (2018)

What do we really mean when we refer to music as being “psychedelic”? In his analysis of psych rock, the musicologist Michael Hicks identifies three primary features of the psychotropic experience that map onto music categorized as such: depersonalization, dechronicization, and dynamization. These alternate modes of sensory perception work to dissolve the normative boundaries of the self, shift the linearity of time, and make fluid the fixity of static, material objects. Insofar as music can form our perceptual relationship with the passage of time and our embodied location in a space, music that is psychedelic works to dis-orient and re-orient, to undo and refashion our acoustic and temporal realities. James Díaz, a composer who consistently cites psychedelic rock as a major aesthetic influence, derives from it not only a sound world for this work, but also frameworks for form, structure and playing approaches.

The score of *In her dream song* includes section subheadings that correlate to conventional pop-song structures (e.g., outro, bridge I, chorus I, pre-chorus) without following their standard order. Cyclical repetition is confined within sections, tethering us to the present moment rather than triangulating our position within the work's broader timeline. Díaz requests that the piano pedal be depressed at all times, creating a chasmal acoustic environment that also enables the violin and cello to animate sympathetic resonance in the piano. Dividing lines between each instrument are intentionally blurred, and Díaz's *sempre senza vibrato* stipulation also rejects a type of embellishment that traditionally serves to individuate the player's voice. In this way, *In Her Dream Song* manages to achieve a sort of depersonalized euphoria drawn from the collective resonant capabilities of cello, piano and violin. – *Pala García*

Steve Reich: *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices, and Organ* (1973)

While working on *Six Pianos* I also began work on another piece that seemed to grow very spontaneously from one simple marimba pattern to many patterns played by different instruments. *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ* was completed in May 1973, and deals with two simultaneous interrelated rhythmic processes.

The first is that of constructing, beat by beat, a duplicate of a pre-existing repeating musical pattern with the second being one or more beats out of phase with the first, exactly as in *Six Pianos*. This then triggers the second process of augmentation of another simultaneous but different repeating musical pattern. The first process of rhythmic construction is performed by marimbas against marimbas and glockenspiel against glockenspiel. These rhythmic constructions, which have the effect of creating more fast moving activities in the mallet instruments, then trigger the two voices and organ into doubling, quadrupling, and further elongation the duration of the notes they sing and play.

When the marimbas and glockenspiels have built up to maximum activity, causing the voices and organ to elongate to maximum length and slowness, then a third voice doubles some of the short melodic patterns resulting from the combination of the four marimba players, using their voice to precisely imitate the sound of these instruments (exactly as in part two of *Drumming*). During the rhythmic constructions in the marimbas and glockenspiels, the metallophone plays long ringing tones for the same duration as the voices and organ. When the voices and organ get longer, so do the tones of the metallophone. However, a bar of steel over an aluminium resonator tube rings for just so long and then decays into inaudibility so that when the voices and organ have reached their maximum length the metallophone then begins playing rippling sixteenth notes, moving as fast or faster than all the other mallet instruments in combination.

After these sections where the voices and organ have reached their maximum length (based on the length of continuous tone a single breath can sustain), the marimbas and glockenspiels begin, one at a time, to abruptly move into unison with each other, thus allowing the voices, organ, and metallophone to begin reducing the length of their sustained tones. This paired process of rhythmic construction-augmentation followed by rhythmic unison-diminution occurs four times in sections marked off by changes in key and meter. The first section is in F dorian 3/4, the second in A-flat dorian 2/4, the third in B-flat natural minor 3/4, and the fourth is an A-flat dominant 11th chord 3/4. – *Steve Reich*