



# Interlochen

ARTS ACADEMY

Interlochen, Michigan  
69th Program of the 62nd Year

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## INTERLOCHEN PERCUSSION DAY RECITAL

**Featuring Guest Artist**  
Matthew Duvall

Saturday, October 28, 2023

2:00pm, Music Center 1010

### *Whisper*

- Vexations ..... Erik Satie (1866-1925)
- Broken Drum ..... Matthew Burtner (b. 1970)
- Wail ..... John Luther Adams (b. 1953)
- Reflections on the Nature of Water ..... Jacob Druckman  
II. Fleet (1928-1996)
- Lilac Streams..... Christa Duggan
- Reflections on the Nature of Water ..... Jacob Druckman  
I. Crystalline
- Wed ..... David Lang (b. 1957)
- Karakurenai..... Andy Akiho (b. 1979)
- Composition As Explanation, 5 ..... David Lang

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### **Instrument Days at Interlochen Arts Academy**

For Guest Artist bios and information about Instrument Days at Interlochen Arts Academy, please visit our website at [interlochen.org/music/academy/instrument-days](http://interlochen.org/music/academy/instrument-days) or scan the QR code with your phone's camera.



## PROGRAM NOTES

Quiet music is distinctive. In experience. In the perception of time passing. Perhaps quiet music is more meaningful given a reference. Music created by percussion is also distinctive. A medium so diverse it effectively isn't anything in particular. Almost anything can be manipulated to musical affect. Artists like Cage, Rauschenberg, Cunningham, and Warhol successfully made the case that by holding the observer accountable anything can be conceptualized artistically.

The trajectory of this program isn't an arc. It's a descent from constructed to found, and from overwhelming to ephemeral.

### Prologue

#### **Vexations (1893-1894)**

**Erik Satie**

Satie is an enormous influence to those who redefined art in the 20th century. He made people consider art differently. In *Vexations*, he instructs the performer to play two alternating phrases nested upon a cycling bass line a total of 840 times. It takes ~28hrs to perform at a properly slow tempo. Please imagine that I've been sitting here for the full duration and marking each pass by dropping a sheet to the floor. The concert hasn't really started yet. Talk amongst yourselves. The experience of playing *Vexations* is deeply hypnotic, and it is intended to lull you deceptively into believing this will be a predictable program of quiet music. It is called *Whisper*, after all.

#### **Broken Drum (2003)**

**Matthew Burtner**

The concert begins with *Broken Drum*, the top of the mountain, a bait-n-switch from quiet music, and from an instrument which essentially defines the classical tradition to an object (instrument?) from a scrap yard, though still very much manufactured to exacting specifications.

#### **Wail (2002)**

**John Luther Adams**

*Wail* is excerpted from the multi-movement work "The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies," taking us from loud angular jarring sound to loud sustained encompassing sound. Our object/instrument is an air raid siren. Rather than the disjunct phrases of *Broken Drum*, here we have phrases of long arcs.

#### **Reflections on the Nature of Water (1986)**

**Jacob Druckman**

##### **II. Fleet**

Moving on to another manufactured object, though now from an organic material. I think this is one of the most beautiful pieces written for the marimba, so evocative and imaginative. *Reflections on the Nature of Water* has six movements. I'm performing two of them today, and not in the order they were written.

A program isn't a collection of random selections (or, it shouldn't be). It is a complete experience. There's a flow (\*clever water allusion) that leads from each moment to the next and at the conclusion of a program (or an album, or an art exhibition, or a multi-course menu) the experience should feel like a single thing, not a smattering of disparate parts.

Have you ever wondered what percussion is? A friend, Sam Solomon, once said that "percussionists choose sounds." I love that definition of a percussionist. I also love the

way a marimba sounds. I also love changing the way a marimba sounds into another kind of way a marimba can sound. You have creative freedom, and I hope you embrace it.

### **Lilac Streams (2020)**

**Christa Duggan**

I had already programmed a couple of movements from Reflections on the Nature of Water when your very own Keith Aleo suggested we perform something together. What a wonderful idea :) But, not a random thing. Something that can be a part of this larger cohesive whole. So, we found a lovely duo that also references water and elides musically with the Druckman. It feels like good programming as well as feeling good to get to play some music with someone I consider to be one of my very closest friends.

### **Reflections on the Nature of Water (1986) I. Crystalline**

**Jacob Druckman**

A little more Druckman.

### **Wed (1992)**

**David Lang**

David Lang is a master of whittling away everything except the essential, at which point everything really, really matters. His music is stripped of anything that is not absolutely crucial. What remains is devastatingly fragile, so deceptively simple on the page. The story behind Wed is that a friend in a relationship of many years was diagnosed with terminal illness. In her final days, the couple decided to get married in the hospital and David was asked to be their witness.

I think that in his heart David is a percussionist, and that no matter what instruments he is composing for, really, he is always writing percussion music. So, back to the piano. But is it really a piano? When I hear this composition, I don't hear piano; I hear little overlapping gongs all chiming at different rates of speed, somehow independently creating a greater whole. I'm pretty sure David does too.

### **Karakurenai (2013)**

**Andy Akiho**

Andy is a synesthete and virtuoso. Karakurenai is a playful composition that allows the players to make fun decisions. The pitches and rhythms are notated, and a tempo range is recommended though not required. Otherwise, every aspect of music making is up to the player(s), including how many play the composition.

It's a bit of a math game. There are two layers happening: We start with a 31-note pattern which continues throughout. Then we also play some slowly pulsing repeating melodies and depending on how many notes are in the little melodies, the two ideas line up occasionally after a certain number of concurrent repetitions and a new section starts. Or you can not worry about all that and just bop along.

One more note: I mentioned above that Andy is a synesthete. He sees colors when he hears music. Karakurenai means "crimson" in Japanese, which is the color Andy saw when he composed it.

### **Composition As Explanation, 5 (2017/2022)**

**David Lang**

featuring text by Gertrude Stein

Let's take a few minutes to consider composition, the act of composition, and the experience of art.

*Composition as Explanation* is a lecture on art written by Gertrude Stein. As a performance piece it's attributed to David because it's part of a theater production he created for Eighth Blackbird also titled *Composition as Explanation*. David just said to do something when reciting the text. I never do it the same way twice, and am curious what this version will be like. It's way more interesting to not know what's going to happen in a performance. Btw, from one performance to the next, none of us ever does things the same way twice...not really. Let's delight in that rather than worrying about it.

Gertrude Stein wrote this excerpted text. It's an absurdist conversation about how art is created, except that it's really not so absurdist. It's mostly very true.

At this point we've traveled from sophisticated and manufactured objects/instruments making incredibly loud sounds to materials/instruments from the natural world making incredibly soft sounds. I find the simple contrast between loud sound and soft sounds to be enormously striking (pun intended). The power of soft music is that it forces the listener to, well, listen, with concerted effort. Soft music requires so much more commitment, and effort, to both listen to and to perform, than loud music does.

And here, in this epilogue, I've included a little nod to John Cage (did you catch it?). Can a typewriter be an instrument? Can a cactus?

"Let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories, or expression of human sentiments." —John Cage

Or as Gertrude Stein put it:  
"It likes it, as it is."

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Thank you for your cooperation.

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