

A note for further reading:

The three percussion pieces that you will hear intermingled between Beethoven sonatas were composed in a period of seven years between 1959 and 1966 and are among the very first piece ever composed for solo percussionist. They were each born out of the modernist spirit of critique and progress, seemingly each reaching higher towards the renewed ideal of absolute music. Looking back this way, it seems apparent that Stockhausen's *Zyklus* caused a paradigm shift in the new music world, a shift so radical that the subsequent pieces for solo multi-percussionist would devote at least part of there aim to showing a resistance to his approach.

Zyklus, with its athleticism, its obsession with attacks, was openly critiqued by American composer Morton Feldman through his solo *The King of Denmark*, which he described as a “silent resistance” to Stockhausen’s “expressivity”, and as a work that, by taking away the percussionist’s mallets, takes away the “strong aspect” of *Zyklus*—the attacks—and leaves only the decays. He even went on to say that he considers it to be “America’s answer to *Zyklus*”.

Lachenmann’s practice is about subverting the conventions of the classical music tradition by treating old instrument in new ways for the aim of creating a new mode of listening. Lachenmann criticised Stockhausen’s reliance on an inherited listening practice in his writing for percussion, remarking, for example, that Stockhausen’s use of almglocken in *Gruppen* (1955-57) is just as Mahler had done a half century before, complete with “pastoral aura”. Lachenmann went on to compose his solo in 1966 for almost the exact set up as *Zyklus*—I suppose to subvert a newly forming tradition.

When I started this project some months ago, my goal was to reflect on the traditions of my practice and specifically the origins of the percussion soloist. The origin story I had always been told is that these three pieces in addition to John Cage’s solo composed in 1956 *are* the story. Four pieces composed across ten years. And this is something I never really questioned.

But as I prepared for this concert I started to dig around, to look into the nooks and crannies of history, and I found to my perhaps naive surprise, that there were in fact *several* more pieces for percussion soloist composed in this period of time, even one predating Cage’s by five years. With each discovery I came to realise just what a failure this origins project of mine truly is. It slowly revealed that this is not a concert about origins at all, that despite my best intentions, this was just a celebration of the hegemonic canon.

Now, we shouldn’t feel too hurt by this idea that something or someone, i.e. me, has failed - for I believe it’s through the experience of failure that something interesting might develop. Once we admit that origin stories are simply that: stories, myths—complete with a suspiciously clean narrative—we can then start searching the edges for a necessary nuance.

Last fall, I discovered for the first time the American composer Lucia Dlugoszewski. She was a student of Varèse, a poet, an interdisciplinary collaborator, and an inventor of 100 percussion instruments that she also played. When I discovered her I was completely shocked. How could it be that I’d never heard of her? This composer who seemed to be all but forgotten was actually right in the thick of the New York scene together with all the biggest names we can muster. In 1964, the same year as *The King of Denmark*, she composed her first percussion solo, *Geography of Noon*, a score we’ve sadly now lost. The reasons for *why* we lost this score are manifold, but as I’ve read more about her, I have no doubt that her gender is part of it.

I recently felt inspired by the concept of margins after I stumbled across (the work of bell hooks, but also) Lachenmann's beautiful idea that marginalia are the moments in a musical work that are not necessarily structured by the composer but that arise out of the intensity of a situation, such as the handling of pauses and fermati. These moments, in his words, transfer the attention to hidden or neglected details that usually remain at the periphery of the musical process as mere marginalia, glossed over by perception.

In the score to *Interieur I*, Lachenmann specifically asks that the stick changes be done as unnoticeably as possible, perhaps recognising that these actions coming out of hiding might disturb the aesthetic experience for the audience, that they couldn't simply be glossed over unless executed with precision.

Moments of marginalia arise in pieces, but also in performances. And it is these moments where we, perhaps, have the opportunity to touch on the periphery wherein lie the marginalised. One attempt at this is the short text about Dlugoszewski that you will find in the spaces-between of your program, complete with just enough crumbs to lead you to Youtube, where you will find just enough music to fill the gaps of her lost percussion score with your own imagination. There is much more work to be done.

The birth of the solo percussionist did not spring forth from the earth like some slow-moving geyser shooting upwards towards the modernist ideal of absolute music. It was more like a bubbling up over a long time: a piece here, a piece there, a piece or two that are lost to history, possibly gems, possibly not, but each with their own expressions and intentions.

Of course, one could argue, the reason we submit to the canon is because it claims to do the work of sifting out the great pieces from the masses. But we also know that the canon is not some anonymous benevolent force. It's the outcome of a process of repetition and acknowledgement performed by a few individuals, be they presenters, performers, or funders. And these people and entities are as governed by circumstance and cultural norms as anyone else.

The whole idea of the percussion soloist arose out of a transgressive, revolutionary place. It's presence on the new music scene in the 20th century meant that a new way of being and a new way of listening could emerge. The idea of music for percussion alone would bridge the boundary between music and noise, and between pitch-based music and timbre-based music —transitions that you may experience as we oscillate between Beethoven and this evening's high modernists.

But as revolutionary and transgressive as the concept of the percussion soloist once was, it is still part of the classical music tradition, and as such it is implicated in the institution of the canon. When John Cage said in 1939 that "percussion is revolution", that it would "emancipate sound from the restrictions of the 19th century", he was clearly not talking about the restrictions of the canon.

And perhaps this relatively young art form actually *needed* the canon to create a sense of legitimacy against the long and mighty history of, say, the piano.

To my great dismay, nothing you are hearing tonight is about origins. It's simply three pieces that I love very much, three pieces that are clearly talking to and critiquing one another, but whose combination on this program can only be described as a grotesque celebration of the 19th century vision of a hegemonic canon.

- Jennifer Torrence

A possible timeline of early solo multi-percussion pieces (as known on Easter, 2017)

- (1950/66: Elliot Carter, *8 Pieces for 4 Timpani*)
- 1951: Josef Anton Riedl, *Stück for Schlagzeug* 51
- 1956: John Cage, *27'10.554" for a percussionist*
- 1957: Josef Anton Riedl, *Stück for Schlagzeug* 57
- 1959: Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Zyklus*
- 1960: Reiner Bredemeyer, *Schlagstuck* 1
- 1964: Lucia Dlugoszewski, *Geography of Noon*
- 1964: Morton Feldman, *The King of Denmark*
- 1965-66: Helmut Lachenmann, *Interieur I*
- 1966: the floodgates open...



#4

Sentralen, onsdag 19. april 2017

Joachim Carr, klaver
Jennifer Torrence, slagverk

Konsertserien Periferien kombinerer klassikere fra samtidsmusikkanonen med nyere verker fra inn- og utland, presentert av kremen av Oslos utøvere.

Neste konserter

- 31.05: Ensemble neoN
Therese Ulvo (UP), Julian Skar, Malin Bång, Jan Martin Smørdal, Hannes Kerschbaumer, Lisa Streich, Oran Ambarchi
- 30.08: Ketil Haugsand, cembalo
Rameau m.fl.
Danielle Dahl, sax

Støttet av:



Program:

Lucia Dlugoszewski (1931-2000)

Born in Detroit, Michigan.

Studied composition with Varèse and Cage

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827): Klaversonate i D-dur op. 28

Early experiments with "everyday sounds"

Then began inventing instruments such as

Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007): Zyklus (1959) for solo

slagverk the "timbre piano" and an

orchestra of 100 percussion instruments,

all of which she performed with herself.

Throughout her career she collaborated

across a range of media, most

notably with choreographer Erick Hawkins.

Hawkins was reluctant to work with her

because she was "a girl" but eventually

acquiesced. They later married.

Though supported by the likes of Cage,

Tudor, Lou Harrison, Virgil Thomas, Marie

Merken, Judith Malina, Robert Motherwell,

John Ashberry, & Frank O'Hara her music

would never enter the mainstream,

likely due to her gender and rejection

of composition trends like serialism & chance...

In the 1970s she began to make chamber and orchestral music and began to be recognized.

Morton Feldman (1926-1987): King of Denmark (1964) for solo

slagverk 1971-nominated for Pulitzer Prize for

Tender Theatre Flight Nageire

1975-commissioned by Pierre Boulez & NY Phil.

Ludwig van Beethoven: Klaversonate i E-dur op. 109, 1.-2. sats

She died without a will and therefore much of

her work is lost or buried in archives at the

Helmut Lachenmann (1935-): Intérieur I (1965-66) for solo

slagverk US Library of Congress in Washington DC.

Her instruments, which she designed due to

feling that traditional percussion instruments

Ludwig van Beethoven: Klaversonate i E-dur op. 109, 3. sats

are "so masculine in the wrong sense"

are currently in storage with Percussionist

Bill Trigg. The instruments were designed

to be sculptures themselves and were

constructed to avoid "masculine aggressiveness

and violence"-very few are struck with

a mallet, but are rather shaken, rattled

or scraped. The first solo for these

instruments was Geography of Noon (1964),

for which the score is, to my knowledge, lost.

Research made possible thanks to the

work of Kevin Lewis, Kate Doyle, Bill Solomon.

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Lewis, Kevin, (2011). *"The Miracle of Unintelligibility": The Music and Invented Instruments of Lucia Dlugoszewski*. (Doctoral Dissertation)
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Lewis, Kevin and Aguilar, Gustavo. (2014). *The Modern Percussion Revolution: Journeys of the Progressive Artist*. New York: Routledge.

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