



surge

The University of Houston Percussion Ensemble

BLAKE WILKINS, *DIRECTOR*

NEW WORKS BY

Rob Smith
Donald Grantham
Blake Wilkins
Bruce Hamilton
Kevin Erickson

Albany
classical

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE**



JUSTIN AHLGREN | JAY DAVIS | TRAVIS ELROD

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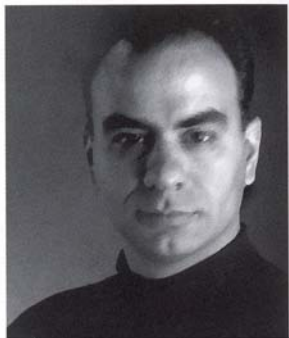
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MARSHALL THOMAS | TREY THOMAS | SHAUN TILBURG

BLAKE WILKINS, director

Blake Wilkins, Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Percussion Studies at the Moores School of Music, joined the University of Houston faculty in August 1997. Prior to this appointment, he served as percussionist and substitute principal timpanist with the Oklahoma City Philharmonic from 1993-97. He is a strong advocate for the performance of new music, and in addition to performing regularly with the University of Southern California's Contemporary Music Ensemble and the University of Oklahoma's New Century Ensemble, he co-founded El Dos, an experimental improvisation duo, with bassist Michael Lee. He is also a member of the improvisational Moment Trio, whose compact disc *Constructions One* was released in fall 2005. Dr. Wilkins

completed a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Percussion Performance at the University of Oklahoma. He also received Bachelor's degrees from OU in both percussion performance and composition, and a Master's degree in composition from the University of Southern California. Equally active as a composer, Dr. Wilkins studied composition with Robert Moore, James Hopkins, and Michael Hennagin amongst others. His earlier works for large percussion ensemble — *Twilight Offering Music* (1986) and *Compendium* (1994) — are published by the OU Percussion Press and have been recorded by the University of Oklahoma Percussion Ensemble on the compact disc, *Twilight Offering Music*, distributed by Albany Records (TROY 214). *Twilight Offering Music* was a prizewinner in the 1988 Percussive Arts Society International Composition Competition. Dr. Wilkins is an artist endorser of Innovative Percussion and Sabian cymbals.



BLAKE WILKINS

upcoming Society of New Music compact disc. In 1997, as the recipient of a Fulbright Grant to Australia, he collaborated with many different Australian ensembles and musicians, which led to a teaching position at the University of Woolongong in 1998. He holds a Bachelor of Music Degree from Potsdam College and both the Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts Degrees in music composition from The University of Texas at Austin. Currently, he teaches at the University of Houston's Moores School of Music where he is Assistant Professor of Music Composition and director of the AURA Contemporary Ensemble. In addition, he serves as one of the artistic directors of Musiqa, a contemporary music ensemble in Houston. Boosey & Hawkes, Carl Fischer, Southern Music Company, C. Alan Publications, and Skitter Music Publications publish his music.

HOUSTON STROKES

Houston Strokes was commissioned by the Percussion Ensemble of the Moores School of Music of the University of Houston, Blake Wilkins, director. Professor Wilkins desired a challenging and demanding work for his very large ensemble, and I responded with a four-movement composition containing fast and fiery outer movements, a reflective and lyric second movement, and a third movement that is a gentle nocturne. In all the movements, the emphasis is on the keyboard percussion instruments.

— Donald Grantham



DONALD GRANTHAM

suggested itself to me and seems quite apt. *Melos* was commissioned by the University of Oklahoma Percussion Orchestra and is dedicated to my teacher and dear friend, Richard Gipson.

— Blake Wilkins

FANTASIA ON A THEME BY THOMAS TALLIS

Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* has indisputably emerged over time as one of the most popular of his works. Composed in 1910 for the Three Choirs Festival and twice revised (in 1913 and 1919), the work is scored entirely for strings, divided into three groups: a more or less standard string orchestra (designated as "Orchestra I" and functioning as a general choir); a smaller group of nine players (designated as "Orchestra II"); and a string quartet. The very nature of the monochromaticism of the string orchestra makes the *Fantasia* a suitable candidate for treatment by the keyboard percussion ensemble: despite the timbral variances between the marimbas and vibraphone, the keyboard percussion ensemble is characterized by a fairly uniform timbral quality. Transcribed and arranged in January 2002 for The Moores School Percussion Ensemble, this arrangement is scored for eleven percussionists — nine playing marimbas (8 players share four instruments while another player is alone on a fifth marimba) and two playing vibraphones. This arrangement is not a complete transcription of the work but is instead an arrangement of the beginning and ending material; the extended development section is excluded in the current version.

— Blake Wilkins

RAPTURES OF UNDREAM

Raptures of Undream was written for the Indiana University Percussion Ensemble, Wilber T. England, director. The piece is scored for six players, armed each with a drum (floor tom) and a cymbal. Overall, the work is divided into four sections delineated by tempo. Rhythmic (and melodic) motives are presented and developed through a series of divergent textures and rhythmic guises.

AT THE DAWN OF WAR

The idea for this piece began to manifest itself early in the fall of 2000, with the original sketches following soon thereafter. I had intended to create a work that would depict different episodes in a day of war. By spring of 2001, the project had been moved to the back burner, with no definite plan for completion. The following fall, I was able to revisit my sketches. Work had resumed for only a couple of weeks when our nation was struck with the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The flood of emotions that followed fueled my desire to see this project come to fruition. Focusing the direction of the project became increasingly difficult as the piece began to morph into something completely different than what had been originally intended. I had considered changing the title to *An Act of War* and, subsequently, new sketches were composed to depict the actual events of 9/11. As I grew increasingly frustrated with the progress of the work, I found that I did not want to glorify the attack on our homeland. I then looked back at the original ideas for the piece, realizing that the images in my head were of American offensive efforts in war. This could be any war, be it the retaliatory efforts following 9/11 or otherwise for that matter. With this in mind, I opted not to make the work programmatic in the traditional sense (yet here you sit reading program notes, go figure) but rather to let listeners conjure up images based on their own experiences. This work is dedicated to the heroic men and women who gave wholly of themselves for their country on 11 September 2001. Let us never forget their sacrifice. *At the Dawn of War* premiered by the University of Houston Percussion Ensemble, Dr. Blake M. Wilkins, director, on October 28, 2002 and was performed by the ensemble at the 2003 Percussive Arts Society International Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

— Kevin Erickson



KEVIN ERICKSON

These performances of the University of Houston Percussion Ensemble were recorded on May 20-22, 2004 in the Moores Opera House, University of Houston Moores School of Music. The extraordinary sonics of these sessions were captured in 24 bit sound on an Alesis HD24XR recorder fed by 4 Schoeps Colette Series microphones via Millennia and True Systems preamplifiers with analog to digital conversion via Apogee and Lavry converters.

Surge, **Houston Strokes**, and **At the Dawn of War** are available through C. Alan Publications.

Melos and this arrangement of **Fantasia** are available through The OU Percussion Press.

Raptures of Undream is available through Non Sequitur Music.

Producer: Blake Wilkins

Associate Producer: Richard C. Gipson

Recording Engineer: James D. Wayne, Silverdisc Productions, White Plains, NY

Digital Mastering: Toby Mountain, Northeastern Digital, Southboro, MA

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