Williams College Department of Music

WiPE
Williams Percussion Ensemble
Matthew Gold, director

LAND ELECTRIC

Noah Poll ’24
Yamaha (2021)
for drumline

The EphLine

John Cage
Amores (1943)

I. Solo: Prepared Piano
II. Trio: Nine Tom Toms, Pod Rattle

Francesca Hellerman ’23, prepared piano

Emma O’Halloran
SHELL (2019)
for reverb-drenched marimba quartet

Steven Snowden
Tacoma Narrows (2012)
for percussion ensemble

I. morbid curiosity
II. 42 mph
III. Engulfed

Molly Joyce
Less is More (2017)
for percussion, piano, and light

John Cage
Amores (1943)

III. Trio: Seven Woodblocks
IV. Solo: Prepared Piano
In programs featuring cutting-edge new music and forward-looking works of the past, the Williams Percussion Ensemble (WiPE) surveys a vast terrain of sound and rhythm. The ensemble employs all manner of percussion instruments, found sounds, and electronics to create music that resonates across boundaries of genre and discipline. WiPE is especially dedicated to programming that presents new voices, fresh perspectives, and novel approaches to creating music, acting as an important vehicle for new music in the Williams community. Beyond its regular performance schedule in the Williams College Department of Music, WiPE appears frequently at venues including The Clark, the ’62 Center for Theatre & Dance, Bennington College, EMPAC (Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute), and is featured on the annual I/O Festival of New Music. WiPE strives to offer creative programs, visceral performances, innovative presentation, and immersive experiences for adventurous listeners.
ABOUT THE PROGRAM

John Cage: Amores (1943)

I decided that what was wrong was not me but the piano. I decided to change it.

—John Cage

In 1943, as World War II raged on, John Cage wrote, “Logically I thought that anything that is small and intimate, and has some love in it, is beautiful. Therefore I wrote a piece for prepared piano, which is very quiet. It is called Amores, and it is about my conviction that love is something that we can consider beautiful. But then shortly I discovered that I was being divorced . . . So what is beautiful? So what's art?” Amores premiered on February 7, 1943, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. After attending a performance of Amores in 1944, Lou Harrison wrote, “Cage's music strikes perhaps the last note in the romantic era; it reaches a maximum of personalization in every one of its elements. He has mastered a curious and convincing form of rhapsodic rhythm, intimate and free; what might be called baroque rhythm.” Movements I and IV are scored for prepared piano, in which the performer places objects in the strings, resulting in a sound similar to a percussion ensemble of gongs, woodblocks, and rattles. Movement II calls for nine tom-toms and a pod rattle, while movement III is for seven blocks of wood.

—Garry Kvistad

Emma O’Halloran: SHELL (2019)

SHELL was inspired by the work of photojournalist Seph Lawless who has traveled across the United States capturing images of abandoned shopping malls. There’s a certain feeling evoked from places that should be full of people but are now empty and decaying. Before online shopping, these were vibrant communal places, now the emptiness is amplified.

Every so often, I listen to a version of Toto’s “Africa” that has been remixed to sound like it’s playing in an empty mall. In this increasingly virtual world, it conjures up a scenario that is strangely comforting, something to hold on to when we feel like we’re losing parts of ourselves. For this piece, I wanted to recreate that feeling, to project a moment of warmth and nostalgia into the void. SHELL is about remembering these ghostly spaces in their former glory, full of life and laughter.

—Emma O’Halloran
Steven Snowden: *Tacoma Narrows* (2012)

*Tacoma Narrows* was inspired by the collapse of the Tacoma Narrows suspension bridge on November 07, 1940. Crowds gathered as “Galloping Gerti” wobbled uncontrollably due to a steady 42 mph wind. This speed coincided with the structure’s natural resonance and produced a self-reinforcing motion that would eventually send the bridge crashing into the Strait of Puget Sound.

—Steven Snowden

Molly Joyce: *Less is More* (2017)

With this work, I wanted to engage in perhaps two artistic “guilty” pleasures of mine: pulse and light, and thus I also composed a lighting part for the piece which I aimed to have equal importance to that of the live performers. I wanted to observe what would happen musically, visually, and overall aesthetically if I lay my two “guilty” pleasures out in the open, with minimal tactile material yet perhaps maximal capacity for interaction and synergy. I therefore hope that through exploring such a minimal yet boundless interaction, I am able to truly uncover what is less and what is more.

—Molly Joyce


*Land Electric* was inspired by various road trips that I took across the United States. Coming from a small country like Ireland, I had never seen anything like the endless skies of the desert regions that I drove through. This piece tries to capture the expanse of the landscape, the stillness and isolation of the desert, and the storms that roll in from the distance.

—Emma O’Halloran

Acknowledgements