

Sō Percussion

TUESDAY | JULY 12

2:30 PM & 6 PM

GREAT FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE



With special thanks to the **Newport Historical Society**.

Josh Quillen | Adam Sliwinski | Jason Treuting | Eric Cha-Beach

JULIA WOLFE *Dark Full Ride, Part 1*

(Approximate duration 8 minutes)

VIET CUONG *Water, Wine, Brandy, Brine*

(Approximate duration 13 minutes)

NATHALIE JOACHIM *Note to Self*

(Approximate duration 6 minutes)

BRYCE DESSNER *Music for Wood and Strings*

(Approximate duration 35 minutes)

Julia Wolfe (b. 1958): *Dark Full Ride*

When Talujon Percussion Quartet asked me to write a piece for 4 percussionists I immediately thought of the drums. I am a longtime 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. From there the piece spreads out to the drums, eventually leading to a cacophony of conflicting pounding speeds on the whole drum set. Towards the end of *Dark Full Ride* the four players are playing beats at different tempos while speeding up and slowing down relative to each other. - Julia Wolfe

Viet Cuong (b. 1990): *Water, Wine, Brandy, Brine*

In 1641 a Jesuit scholar and priest named Athanasius Kircher published *Magnes* (*Magnets*), a work that discussed various forms of attraction and, unsurprisingly, magnetism. One chapter, titled "the magnetism of music," details an experiment in which he fills four wine glasses with liquids of various densities: aqua vitae (later referred to as brandy by Benjamin Franklin's time), wine, pure water, and a coarse liquid such as

saltwater or oil. Kircher observed that each solution reacted differently when played, and conclusively associated each with one of the four Greco-Roman humors. *Water, Wine, Brandy, Brine* explores the various sounds that can be produced from playing crystal glasses as musical instruments, from the bell-like sounds of “toasting” the glasses, to the theremin-like singing produced when the rims are played. This work was composed for Sō Percussion and premiered at Princeton University on May 18, 2015. Heartfelt thanks to Sō. – Viet Cuong

Nathalie Joachim (b. 1983): *Note to Self*

Though I’ve spent much of my life trying to quiet my inner voice, for this work, I chose to focus on and explore the thoughts that occupy my headspace as a result of my chronic anxiety.

Note to Self, for percussion quartet and recorded samples of my voice, takes the listener through different phases of cyclical thoughts and states of being that I experience regularly. Composed in three short movements - *Much More, Maybe*, and *Motivated* - this work examines the notion of having my inner voice embodied elsewhere, in an attempt to create new space for processing emotion. It also plays with repetition as an opportunity to bring new meaning, understanding, and perhaps some levity, to the language itself. Each movement is a reimagining of vocal incantations that, driven by imaginative, virtuosic, and whimsical percussion scoring, re-center, and re-purpose my voice as a tool for healing.
–Nathalie Joachim

Bryce Dessner (b. 1976): *Music for Wood and Strings*

For several years I have been experimenting with simple chorales in my music that utilize triadic chord inversions that are aligned in complex rhythm patterns to create a kaleidoscopic effect of harmony. These feature heavily in my work for orchestra and two guitars, *St. Carolyn by the Sea* (2011), and the writing for my song cycle, *The Long Count* (2009).

While I have used this technique on guitars and strings, I have not had the opportunity to apply it to percussion instruments. For this new So Percussion piece I have been working with instrument builder Aron Sanchez (Blue Man Group, Buke and Gase) to design four dulcimer-like instruments to be played by the quartet. These are simply designed double course string instruments which are played like a dulcimer, but which are specifically built and tuned to implement a more evolved hybrid of the chorale hoquet. Each instrument is amplified using piezo pickups and will have 8 double-course strings tuned to two harmonies. With the use of dulcimer mallets, the quartet players can easily sound either harmony, or play individual strings, melodies, and drone tremolos. There are alto, two tenors and a bass instrument which can play fretted chromatic bass lines. With these elements as well as a few pieces of auxiliary percussion - bass drum, wood block - the work is about 30 minutes long. This work was commissioned by Carnegie Hall.
–Bryce Dessner

Sō Percussion

For twenty years and counting, Sō Percussion has redefined chamber music for the 21st century through an “exhilarating blend of precision and anarchy, rigor and bedlam” (*The New Yorker*).

Recent highlights have included performances at the Elbphilharmonie, Big Ears 2022 - where they performed *Amid the Noise*, premiered a new work by Angélica Negrón with the Kronos Quartet, and performed their Nonesuch album with Caroline Shaw, *Let the Soil*

Play Its Simple Part – and a return to Carnegie Hall where they performed new collaborations with Nathalie Joachim, and Dominic Shodekeh Talifero. Their Nonesuch recording, *Narrow Sea*, with Caroline Shaw, Dawn Upshaw, and Gilbert Kalish, won the 2022 Grammy for Best Composition. Other albums include *A Record Of* on Brassland Music with Buke and Gase, and an acclaimed version of Julius Eastman’s *Stay On It* on new imprint Sō Percussion Editions. This adds to a catalogue of more than twenty-five albums featuring landmark recordings of works by David Lang, Steve Reich, Steve Mackey, and others.

In Fall 2022, Sō Percussion begins its ninth year as the Edward T. Cone performers-in-residence at Princeton University. Rooted in the belief that music is an elemental form of human communication, and galvanized by forces for social change in recent years, Sō enthusiastically pursues a range of social and community outreach through their nonprofit organization, including partnerships with local ensembles including Pan in Motion and Castle of Our Skins; their Brooklyn Bound concert series; a studio residency program in Brooklyn; and the Sō Percussion Summer Institute, an intensive two-week chamber music seminar for percussionists and composers.