

Vanitas was composer Pierre Jodlowski's contribution to a series of works commissioned to represent nature and the "Ecotopia" through music. Jodlowski tapped into the tradition among artists' views of nature and ultimately the vanities—man is reduced to his poor little skull with the passage of time and nature continues to be there. (In this sense, the term "vanity" is being used in a sense of futility rather than conceit.) Images of the skull appear in paintings from Jacques de Gheyn in 1603 to that of Picasso in 1946. These images play a central role in the development and visual imagery of *Vanitas*. Originally composed for an acoustic quartet comprising two pianists and two percussionists, the quartet performing this evening has chosen to be fully in the digital domain. Digital pianos and sampled drum set sounds are complemented by audio samples created by the percussionists of unusual percussion effects, including bowed drum head, bowed cardboard box, plastic items such as dish scrubbers scraped against drumheads, and so on. With a dystopian view of man's relationship with nature, Jodlowski tends to achieve the intention of creating a work that is disturbing and provocative.

Released in 1984, **Omphalo Centric Lecture** was Nigel Westlake's first published work. The Australian composer, an accomplished clarinetist, is the son of two professional musicians. While the work is marked by the prevalence of *ostinato* grooves, Westlake attributes that which has become his signature sound on the musical traditions of Africa rather than minimalists such as Glass or Reich. A striking feature of *Omphalo Centric Lecture* is Westlake's use of polyrhythms that extend for many measures, obscuring and sometimes overtaking the meter of a given section. This evening, the performing quartet is playing Westlake's edition of the piece for four musicians on only two marimbas.

Postludes by Elliot Cole is a book of eight pieces for a familiar instrument played in a new way: four players, with eight double-bass bows, play interlocking lines on a single vibraphone. The interplay of bows and hands tapping, muting and touching harmonics, weaves an intimate and intricate counterpoint that is as beautiful to watch as it is to hear: fragile, tender and haunting. Cole indicates that performers may choose any number of postludes and perform them in any order. (Notes by So Percussion)

Hand Dance was released on David Friedman's 1994 album, *Air Sculpture*. On the album, Friedman tracked all of the marimba parts, which are realized by a marimba quartet this evening. In rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic terms, the cyclic nature of this piece evokes music based on the African timeline, a two-measure cell that is cycled as a foundation for counterpoint, rhythmic variation, and improvisation. Often, the rich tone color of the marimba is enhanced through the doubling of melodic figures at the octave, and there are many variations on layering of rhythms and harmonies. Notably, the piece shifts from a compound duple meter to a simple duple meter, changing the perceived intensity of sections of the piece without changing the underlying pulse, or "big beat."

Program Notes - Sticks

The concept for Christopher Deane's classic marimba quartet **Vespertine Formations** was to explore ways of creating a sense of sustain on four marimbas through extensive use of stretto and imitation. Rather than approaching an ensemble such as this in a traditional choral configuration of soprano, alto, tenor and bass, this piece focuses on keeping most of the musical activity within the same register. All four voices serve as equal members of one collective image. *Vespertine Formations* is dedicated to Harold Jones who was the professor of percussion at East Carolina University for many years. The motivation for this work comes from a phenomenon in nature. It is a common sight to see huge flocks of birds performing amazing aerial maneuvers in the evening sky over North Texas especially in the Autumn. The ornithological sky forms witnessed during one particular sunset in Fall of 2001 served as an undeniable point of inspiration during the compositional process for this piece. The wing motions of so many birds suggested the texture of constant sixteenth notes. As the brilliant orange sunset diminished to dusk, the birds settled into trees around the campus. The fantastic choreography created by this flock of birds and the natural chronology of events guided the structure and form of this piece. (Notes by Musicon Publications)

Ritual Music was written for the Chicago dance company Raizel Performances and was premiered in collaboration with that group in the spring of 2005 and became a staple of Third Coast Percussion's repertoire when the quartet was formed that same year. To this day, TCP performs this early Skidmore work regularly as part of its flagship education program, introducing students to the timbral, melodic, and rhythmic elements of percussion music. This "overture for percussion" was conceived as variations on the numbers 2 and 4; in contrast to the raw energy of the music's character in performance, the pitch content in the marimba, rhythmic motifs, and the structure of phrases were all determined numerically. (Notes by Third Coast Percussion)