

# August Siefkes Sophomore Recital

Saturday, April 26, 2025

10:00 AM

All Faiths Chapel, Kansas State University

## PROGRAM

*Etude Opus 6, No. 9 in B Major* (1976).....Clair Omar Musser (1901-1988)

*The Offering* (2001).....Michael Burritt (b. 1962)

*Meditation for Marimba and Organ* (1940).....Paul Creston (1906-1985)  
\*David Pickering, organ

*Etude No. 1 for Marimba* (1980).....Paul Smadbeck (b. 1955)

*Rumba Prelude* (2017).....Joachim Horsley (b. 1977)  
Devon Autry, Jasper Vallad, Jessie Whelan, *percussion*

*Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565* (1703).....J. S. Bach (1685-1750)  
Jasper Vallad, *drumset*

\*indicates K-State MTD Faculty

**KANSAS STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

School of Music,  
Theatre, and Dance

## Program Notes

### Etude

Written in 1976, Opus 6, No. 9, or, as I like to call it, “Etude in B” is a fiery piece of rapid block chords. These chords outline the relationship between the dominant and tonic of B major: F sharp and B, respectively. While many of the chords are played in chromatic succession, this dominant-tonic relationship persists. The beginning and end of the piece, or exposition and recap, both hands play the full chords in a unison triplet rhythm. In the middle section, however, the hands alternate to form a sextuplet rhythm. The right hand maintains a diad while the left hand has a single mallet playing a scalar line. While harmonically simple in nature, the chromatic chord shifts creates a challenge: subtle shifts in each mallet over upper and lower manuals at a high rate of change. Thus, as stated by Mostly Marimba, a source of percussion music, “The study and mastery of Clair Omar Musser’s Etudes is considered by teachers and performers to be a type of ‘right of passage’ into technical competence.”

Clair Omar Musser (1901-1998) is a well-known figure in percussion history, especially as a revolutionary pioneer for the marimba. According to the Percussive Arts Society (PAS), “Musser’s influence on playing, teaching, composition, and manufacture has been pervasive.” His arrangements, transcriptions, and original compositions are well known in both solo and ensemble literature, in part due to his internationally acclaimed marimba orchestras, which boasted 100 players. As an educator, Musser was the head of the Northwestern University Marimba Department from 1942 to 1952. His teaching legacy is furthered by his innovations in mallet grip and technique. Musser designed various mallets and custom instruments and eventually founded the Musser company, now a division of Conn-Selmer.

### The Offering

In sharp contrast to the previous piece, *The Offering* is “A short, yet solemn work. This piece offers a perfect opportunity for the player to experiment with tone color and rubato while showing-off the resonance of the instrument.” (Mostly Marimba). *The Offering* was written in 2001 and dedicated to the composer’s grandparents.

Michael Burritt (b. 1962) is a renowned percussion composer and performer, being described as “one of his generation’s leading percussionists,” according to his biography on the Eastman School of Music website. His works for marimba are especially influential: many are standard repertoire and required pieces in international competitions. Burritt has performed nationally and internationally, both individually and as a soloist for a large ensemble. From 1995 to 2008, he developed a powerhouse percussion program at Northwestern University. Burritt is currently professor of percussion at Eastman and chair of the Winds, Brass, and Percussion department.

## Meditation for Marimba and Organ

*Meditation for Marimba and Organ* is taken from a larger work, *Concertino for Marimba and Orchestra*, Op. 21 of which it is the second movement. According to an article published in the April 1996 edition of *Percussive Notes* by Sarah Smith, the concerto was “commissioned by Frederique Petrides, the conductor of the all-female orchestra, Orchestrette Classique, in New York City. Ruth Stuber, timpanist in the orchestra, premiered the marimba concerto on April 29, 1940 in New York’s Carnegie Chamber Music Hall.” This piece was Creston’s only work for solo marimba and the first marimba concerto ever written. Smith’s article states, “Creston wrote for different instruments that were suffering from a shortage of solo or concerto pieces, including saxophone, harp, trombone and accordion, all of which have become classics in their respective media.” Creston’s composition process involved lots of collaboration with Stuber. She would play through manuscripts Creston sent her and return them with her suggestions. “Creston’s compositional techniques for writing the concerto included playing at the organ with his feet acting as the mallets” (Smith). Published in 1986, Creston adapted the accompaniment of the concerto’s second movement for the organ, creating the lush, calming, and meditative piece known as *Meditation*.

Paul Creston (1906-1985) was the son of two Italian immigrants. Baptized as Giuseppe Guttovoggio, his parents helped foster his love of music. In 1925, Creston began taking organ lessons with Pietro Yon at the request of a fellow parishioner at St. Malachy’s Church. He studied for a year and a half before gigging at various theaters, learning to improvise. Before 1934, Creston was the organist at St. Catherine of Sienna Church before being appointed organist at St. Malachy’s Church from 1934-67. Married in 1927, Creston’s wife, Louise Gotto, introduced him to dance, igniting his passion for rhythm. Creston decided to become a composer, having his first premiere in June of 1933 at the Westchester County Center. After his second premiere at the New School of Social Research, Henry Cowell, the editor of *New Music Quarterly*, said Creston “showed promise as an individualistic and innovative composer.” From this point on, Creston continued to thrive as a composer of mostly chamber and solo music, all while advocating for music education. In 1940, he was appointed at the Cummington School of the Arts in Massachusetts and maintained private composition and piano students during the summer. During this time, he began associating with the “neglected instruments,” writing *Sonata for Saxophone and Piano* and *Concertino for Marimba and Orchestra*. From 1956-60, Creston served as president of the National Association of American Composers and Conductors. He concurrently composed music for various television series and documentaries. Until 1984, Creston continued to teach, lecture, compose, and conduct until his health worsened. After he died in 1985, some friends wrote, “We have lost a friend. The music world has lost a great artist. But history has gained an illustrious name and has enshrined it in its pantheon.”

### Etude No. 1 for Marimba

*Etude No. 1 for Marimba* features quirky melodic lines with fun underlying rhythmic grooves. French for study, an etude a “learning piece,” helping the performer establish key pedagogical skills. This Smadbeck etude serves as an exercise in interval rotation, especially the smallest interval of a second.

A native of New York City, Paul Smadbeck (b. 1955) studied percussion informally before receiving his Bachelor’s and Master’s in percussion performance at Ithaca College. Smadbeck became a nationally touring classical marimbist and soon began composing. As stated in his biography on Mostly Marimba, “his collection of etudes and other works quickly became performance favorites and have earned a permanent place in the percussion repertoire worldwide.”

### Rumba Prelude

Written in 2017, *Rumba Prelude* is based on Bach’s *Prelude in C*, BMV 846 from “The Well Tempered Clavier” book 1, #1. The piece begins traditionally but soon becomes much more like a rumba. The addition of Afro-Cuban percussion certainly helps accentuate that feeling. I would like to extend my gratitude to my “Rumba Crew” - Devon, Jasper, and Jessie. You guys rock!

Joachim Horsely (1977) is an outstanding American pianist, composer, and arranger. He has created film scores for *Gordita Chronicles*, *Batman: Soul of the Dragon* and *Big City Greens*. According to his biography posted on his website, “Horsely continues to score a story from his own imagination: a tale where the great composers of classical music infused their works with Afro-Caribbean rhythms. This is a way to meet old friends in a fresh context, giving audiences a new take and a renewed appreciation for both the Classical world and the Caribbean Cultures.” Horsely’s passion for this genre fusion began while he was studying music in Cuba in 2015. Since then, he has produced two albums: *Via Havana* and *Caribbean Nocturnes*. Horsely’s goal is “that his merging of these two worlds opens minds, expands audiences and encourages exploration.”

## Tocatta Fugue

When asking someone about the organ, the first piece that comes to mind is most likely Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor*. As stated in the program notes for a Madison Symphony Orchestra's Overture Concert Organ Series concert in 2021, "Most biographers have assumed that this bravura work was one of the showy pieces a very young Bach wrote for his first important professional position, as church organist in Arnstadt, 1703-06." There's some debate, however, that the piece was even composed by Bach. Some historians claim technical aspects of the piece are not up to Bach's usual standard in pieces that are undeniably his. Thus, it could be assumed that the piece "was an organ arrangement of a violin work" (Madison Symphony Orchestra). On the other hand, "Biographers such as Christoph Wolff have countered that some of the unusual features in the work may in fact have been ingenious adaptations to the limitations of the organ Bach used at Arnstadt" (Madison Symphony Orchestra). The earliest manuscript is not even in Bach's own handwriting: perhaps it was a hand-written copy of Bach's student's student. This, however, was not unusual. "Most of Bach's keyboard music survives only in copies by his sons or other musicians" (Madison Symphony Orchestra). The piece neared extinction until the "original" manuscript was published in 1833, almost five decades after Bach's death. The piece was popularized by big name composers: Mendelssohn, Liszt, and Schumann. Further infamy was gained when Leopold Stokowski's orchestral arrangement of *Tocatta and Fugue* was used in Disney's *Fantasia*.

The toccata serves as a prelude and displays virtuosity with a dramatic flair. "The fugue begins with a complex and spiky subject. This is developed in intense counterpoint until the end, where there is a dramatic return to the texture of the toccata" (Madison Symphony Orchestra). The addition of the drum set was inspired by Orlando Ribar & Rudolf Lutz's performance recorded in 2012 for Ribar's DVD "Performance is Rhythm." A huge thank you to Jasper for his diligent drumming. You're awesome!

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was a prolific German composer whose name has become synonymous with Baroque music. In his day, Bach was one of the greatest organists of his time, both as a performer and composer. Of his approximately 1,100 total works, five to six percent were for the organ. The Newburyport Chamber Music Festival offers notes that elaborate on Bach's relationship with the organ. "Mozart called the organ 'the king of instruments' and it was by far the most complex invention to predate the industrial revolution. Bach, as one of the great virtuoso organists of his day, developed a fierce reputation as a mercenary 'test driver' to take new instruments out for a spin and see where they needed some tweaking before the builder could be paid for his work. His son, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, also a famous composer, wrote: 'He said in jest, "Above all I must know whether the organ has a good lung," and to establish this, he pulled out all the stops and played with as many registers as possible. This often caused organ builders to go quite pale with shock.'" The *Tocatta and Fugue* is an excellent example of the organ's full power, making it an excellent partner for the forcefulness of the drumset.