

**Student Recital**  
**Devon Autry, *Percussion***

Saturday, May 2  
6:00 p.m.  
Kirmser Hall

“To better understand me as a musician, you have to understand me beneath the surface.”

*Aquatic* (2022) .....Russell Wharton (b.1990)

*Murmurations* (2022).....Adam Bruce (b.1985)

Javi Garza, Bass drum & snare drum  
Mark McKinley, Bass drum & snare drum

*Twenty-One* (2021).....Andrew Wray (b.1998)

*Distractions* (2023).....Jensen Thomassie (b.2001)

*The Fool* (2023).....Russell Wharton (b.1990)

*Ends to a Mend* (2022).....JaRon Brown (b.2001)

Video By Devon Autry and Jasper Vallad

# Program Notes

## Aquatic

**Overview:** This piece has a wide range of expressiveness that reflects the diversity and the fragility of the Earth's oceans. Almost the whole piece is based on arpeggio figures that are always changing to different rhythms. Wharton says that these rhythms should be played with "approximated swing", so this leaves a lot of interpretation to the performer on how to evolve this piece further than just the written rhythms. When these rhythms are getting faster and then slower, it is a lot like jellyfish opening and closing, and is reflected in the short film. Wharton states that it was not only inspired by his love for underwater life but also his dream to score a nature documentary. He also wanted to raise awareness for this life that a lot of people don't think about.

**Composer:** Russel Wharton is a percussion educator, performer, arranger and composer based in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. His main passion is writing original music; he uses this passion as a way of self-expression. His music has been performed in countries all over the world. Russel is also very well known for his marching band arrangements. He writes for numerous BOA-level high schools. He also worked with the Cavaliers percussion staff, Rhythm X, as an adjunct professor at Middle Tennessee State University.

**Personal tie:** This piece reminds me a lot of my childhood. There are playful sections that remind me of how carefree childhood is, and how my neighborhood buddies and I would just ride our bikes around and find random things to do. Some sections are a bit darker in nature, and I think a big part of my childhood, or anyone's, is figuring out some harsh reality. The film is very similar to just being a child and finding all kinds of things, good or bad. To me, the whales represent watching my older family members playing their instruments and their big influence in my percussion career when I was very young. The climax of this piece represents me finding out what I wanted to do for my career and really finding that music was my calling.

## Murmurations

**Overview:** Murmurations is a piece written for a percussion trio that is made to mimic patterns made by flocking birds called starlings. Bruce does this by having figures that overlap, which is very similar to the controlled chaos that the starlings have when flocking in the sky. He also does this by changing what implements you use. In the middle of the piece, he gives the percussionist an opportunity to improvise with brushes with a movie of the starlings creating their formations.

**Composer:** Adam Bruce resides in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and is an active composer, clinician and performer. His works have been performed internationally as well as at PASIC, Midwest band and orchestra clinic, BOA nationals, and many more venues. Adam serves as the percussion director for Jenks Public Schools, where he assists with marching and concert bands. Adam has performed with the Oklahoma City Philharmonic, Tulsa Symphony Orchestra, Colts, Bluecoats, and Cavaliers.

**Personal tie:** In high school, I had lots of things going on at once with all the sports I was involved in and all the music I wanted to learn. It was essentially controlled chaos, especially with a part-time job on top of all this. This controlled chaos reminded me a lot of murmurations. There were people there to keep me in between the lines and point me to the right friends. High school is the place where I think a lot of people start associating themselves with the wrong people. I am glad that I didn't fall victim to peer pressure and I'm happy I had my flock to help me through this chaos.

## Twenty one

**Overview:** Twenty-one is a fun, challenging, musical piece that involves lots of improvisation. The improvisation is sketched out by section and it is intended for each section to have an element of groove that is improvised. As we get closer to the climax of the piece, the soloist can be freer with solo ideas. The last half of the piece is a challenging yet rewarding section with odd meters and off-kilter grooves.

**Composer:** Andrew Wray is a composer and drummer from Kansas City, KS. He studied with Dr. Dave Hall at the University of Nebraska. He currently teaches at the Culture House in Olathe, KS, and performs around Kansas City. He was also a member of the Santa Clara Vanguard, Cadets in 2018. He performed frequently throughout Omaha and Lincoln during his time in school, but now enjoys the thriving creative music scene of Kansas City.

**Personal tie:** When I was an underclassman here at K-State, I didn't really hang out with people my age; most of my friends were the upperclassmen who were already 21. They would always tell me that when I turn 21, it would be very underwhelming, and man, they were right. In the video I portray what I have witnessed with people who turn 21 and don't know how to act and take every advantage of turning 21.

## Distractions

**Overview:** This piece is centered around all electronic distractions that have been developed in the modern world. Thomassie has put samples from phones, computers, and apps to create the track. This piece also incorporates non-traditional implements and techniques on the snare drum. At one point you use a credit card to scrape the snare wires on the bottom of the drum. At the end of the piece, the performer puts a splash cymbal on the snare drum and this makes for a metallic "trashy" sound.

**Composer:** Jensen L. Thomassie is a percussionist, educator, and internationally performed composer based in Easley, South Carolina, where he serves as an elementary music teacher at East End Elementary School. He holds a Master's degree in Percussion Performance from the University of South Carolina and a Bachelor's degree in Percussion Performance and Music Composition from Furman University. His primary percussion teachers include Scott Herring, Omar Carmentates, and Justin Watt. His primary composition teachers include Jay Bocoock, Mark Kilstofte, and Peter B. Kay.

**Personal tie:** In this new age of phones, computers, tablets etc. it is very difficult to ignore the growing addiction that I see all around me with this technology. I personally used to struggle with this, and some of the things on social media can be pretty upsetting, I would see that stuff constantly and that would fester inside me. I see lots of younger kids that are either anti-social or depressed at such a young age due to these devices. I really hope one day we can get back to the times where my mom would tell me to get back once the street lights turn on, and my cousins and friends and I would just ride our bikes all day long.

## The Fool

**Overview:** The Fool is for distorted vibraphone and multimedia. Wharton says, "In tarot card reading, the Fool is the card that represents yourself as the main character in your life, which in the tarot is known as the 'Fool's Journey.'" The Fool is characterized as somewhat of a Don-Quixote-like figure - well-meaning and exuberant, but also naive, vain, and of course, foolish. The Fool has good intentions but stumbles through life, making many mistakes along the way." The video is meant to feel old and degraded, almost like all the mistakes that someone makes are wearing them down.

**Composer:** Russell Wharton is a percussion educator, performer, arranger, and composer based in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. His main passion is writing original music. He uses this passion as a way of self-expression. His music has been performed in countries all over the world. Russel is also very well known for his marching band arrangements. He writes for numerous BOA-level high schools. He also worked with the Cavaliers percussion staff, Rhythm X, and as an adjunct professor at Middle Tennessee State University.

**Personal tie:** These next two pieces are a reflection of all the things that I have done up until now. The fool represents the negative reflection and all the things that I could've done better. There are many times when I stumble, and I feel foolish and wish I had made better decisions. There is also a different side to this. This is also very much tied to self-doubt about playing my instrument. I started asking myself, " Am I actually doing this well, or am I trying to look like I am? There's a difference, and it's not always obvious from the inside. That's what makes The Fool hit a little deeper. It's not just a character piece; it's a mirror. Because at some point, everyone's been the fool, confident, exposed, and just a little bit behind the truth of what's really happening.

### Ends to a Mend

**Overview:** This is a multi-percussion with track that has a great deal of interplay between the track and performer that makes the piece unique in the percussion world. JaRon says "I wanted to create something that felt a little more song-like and made the player feel less like an accessory and more embedded in the piece". The pipes are pitched pipes that fit the harmonies in the track. JaRon gave the performer liberty to experiment with substitutions for the different instruments. There are some non-traditional instruments, like a wine bottle and a flower pot, that add to the uniqueness of this piece. This work has a very nostalgic feeling and is meant to make you reflect on friendships that need to be amended or that you have amended.

**Composer:** JaRon Brown is a composer with a bachelor's degree in music composition from the University of South Carolina. He has studied composition under the direction of Dr. John Fitz Rogers and Dr. David K. Garner, as well as percussion with Dr. Scott Herring and Dr. Brett Landry. While at The University of South Carolina, he has had the luxury of premiering four of his most recent works: Fragmented Shards of Crystallized Water (2015), Neurobaloo (2016), RIPEHEART (2017), and Giant Woman (2017).

**Personal tie:** This is the second reflection that I had. Through all the times that I have stumbled, I have always been blessed to have a friend, family member, or teacher to help me through these times. I know that I could go to anyone in the video (that will play on the screen during this piece) or anyone in this audience to either rant, cry, be angry, be happy, or be excited with, and there would be no judgement. I also deeply believe in amending a friendship that might not have ended on the right foot, because you never know when that person really needs you or you really need them. I hope this makes people realize that our time on earth is short and we need to amend our relationships and keep smart, good people in our circle.