

ORIGINS 2: forgotten percussion works, vol. 2

The Percussion Art Ensemble

Kreating Sound 18

This second album in the *ORIGINS: forgotten percussion works* series continues to unearth and present historic percussion compositions to the world for the first time on recording. The composers and their works on this volume represent the obscure to the known from the formative period of percussion music from 1934 to 1942 and two works from the re-emergence in academia, circa 1950s, due in large part to the efforts of Paul Price.

Future volumes of this series will continue to present unknown and neglected percussion compositions and composers from the Twentieth Century, as well as writings and the publication of some of these compositions.

The manuscripts of *Hell's Bells*, *Kachopi Mas*, *Lagu Delim*, and *Suite* reside in The Sousa Archives and Center for American Music, Paul Price Collection, at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Additionally, a copy of the *Suite* manuscript (score only, in diazotype or whiteprint) resides in the Edwin A. Fleisher Collection of Orchestral Music, Free Library of Philadelphia (#1015M). The *Little Fantasia* manuscript resides in the Franziska Boas collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. and is currently published by Media Press, Inc. *Tributes to Charon* is published by A-R Editions, Inc. and its manuscript resides in the Lou Harrison Music Manuscripts, MS 132, ser. I, Special Collections and Archives, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz.

—Ron Coulter

Track Listing

- Suite* (1934) for 14 percussionists & piano, 4:35
José Ardévol (1911-1981)
1. I. Allegro Moderato 1:33
 2. II. Adagio 1:07
 3. III. Fuga : allegro 1:55
4. *Kachopi Mas (Golden Zither)* (c. 1950s) for 6 percussionists, 4:02
Colin McPhee (1900-1964)
- Tributes to Charon* (1939/1982) for 3 percussionists, 6:07
Lou Harrison (1917-2003)
5. I. *Passage through Darkness* (1982) 2:55
 6. II. *Counterdance in the Spring* (1939) 3:12
7. *Lagu Delim* (c. 1950s) for 6 percussionists, 3:09
Colin McPhee (1900-1964)
8. *Little Fantasia* (c. 1940s) for 4 percussionists & piano, 3:07
Meyer Kupferman (1926-2003)
9. *Hell's Bells* (1935) for 7 percussionists & 3 pianists, 5:56
Harold G. Davidson (1893-1959)

The **Percussion Art Ensemble** (PAE) was formed in 2001 by Ron Coulter, Nathan Douds, and Craig Hill; over the years additional personnel have been added for special projects such as this recording. The PAE's eclectic repertoire encompasses a broad spectrum, from free-improvisation and electronica to pop music and the New Complexity. A majority of the ensemble's repertoire is composed or arranged by the members themselves, resulting in an inimitable collection of music reflecting each member's interests. Each PAE performance creates a unique aural experience for the listener, while the ensemble's beautiful collection of instruments, dramatic staging, and captivating presence creates an engaging visual component.

Performers : Jim Beers, Cully Bell, Ron Coulter, Derek Dadian-Smith, Eric Hendrickson, Craig Hill, Paul Transue, Yi-Chan Tsai

Producer : Ron Coulter

Recording Engineers : Brian Wagner, Kelly Caringer, Larry Burger, and Ron Coulter

Mixing and Digital Mastering : Kelly Caringer & Ron Coulter

Graphic Design and Liner Notes : Ron Coulter

Cover Art : "Enso Circle # 765" by Ron Coulter

Recorded in Carbondale, Illinois (January-July 2013) and Casper, Wyoming (June-July 2015)

Little Fantasia is published by Media Press, Inc. Used with permission from the Meyer Kupferman Estate.

Tributes to Charon by Lou Harrison is published in *Harrison: Selected Keyboard and Chamber Music, 1937–1994*, ed. by Leta E. Miller. Music of the United States of America, vol. 8/Recent Researches in American Music, vol. 31. Madison, WI: A-R Editions, Inc., 1998. Used with permission. www.areditions.com

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Suite (Suite, para 30 instrumentos de percusion, fricción, y silbido) (1934) was completed on April 13, 1934 in Havana, Cuba. It requires 14 percussionists and one pianist, and has very similar instrumentation to Ardévol's *Study in the Form of Prelude and Fugue* (1933). A copy of the manuscript (score only, in diazotype or whiteprint) resides in the Edwin A. Fleisher Collection of Orchestral Music, Free Library of Philadelphia (#1015M) and a manuscript resides in the The Sousa Archives and Center for American Music, Paul Price Collection, at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Suite was premiered on July 18, 1940 at Mills College, Lisser Hall as part of the Bennington School of the Dance's first residency hosted at the fourteenth annual summer session at Mills College (Oakland, CA). The concert was organized by John Cage and Lou Harrison and included themselves as performers alongside William Russell, Xenia Cage, Doris Dennison, Margaret Jansen, and others (17 in total). The concert included a multi-level stage, various suspended artworks and rope ladders designed by Bauhaus artists, and choreographed lighting by Gordon Webber. The concert also presented the world premiers of Russell's *Chicago Sketches* (1940) and Harrison's *Canticle No. 1* (1940). Additional works on the concert included Henry Cowell's *Pulse* (1939), Cage's *2nd Construction* [sic] (1940), and Amadeo Roldán's *Ritmicas V and VI* (1930). After the concert on August 8, 1940, Cage wrote to Cowell stating: "I was particularly glad to have been able to present the Ardevol Suite. In the perf. [sic] the first two movements were played excellently. Unfortunately the third, the fugue, went completely wrong. I was very sorry but cannot change that. The rest of the concert was played well, and three encores were given."¹

Kachopi Mas (Golden Zither) and ***Lagu Delim***² are arrangements of traditional Gamelan melodies from the Balinese Wayang (shadow puppet theater) adapted for Western percussion instruments by Colin McPhee. Both works are scored for percussion sextet. The undated scores reside in the Sousa Archives and Center for American Music, Paul Price Collection, at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. It is likely that these two works were written for Paul Price in the 1950s, as this was the time when Price was beginning his university teaching career and actively searching out compositions (old *and* new) for his student percussion ensemble and his publishing company, Music for Percussion, started in the Spring of 1953.³ It should also be noted that the decade of the 1950s was McPhee's most active and successful period as a composer. McPhee's use of transcribed melodies is illustrated here:

Lagu délem, a piece from the *géndér wayang* repertory, illustrates McPhee's varied Approaches to the transcription process. At least eight different versions of this

¹ Letter, Cage to Cowell, 8 August 1940 (New York Public Library, Henry Cowell Papers, Box 2, Folder 19).

² It should be noted that McPhee's handwriting in the manuscripts is very difficult to decipher, therefore there may be discrepancies in the titles, for example: Delius, Delim, Delem. Also of note: *Lagu* translates to melody and *Delem* is a "clown servant" of the Rakasa Kingdom.

³ Letter Price to Cowell, 21 September 1953 (New York Public Library, New Music Papers, folder 277). Price signed the letter, "Paul Price, Ass't [sic] Professor in Music, Percussion Instructor," and he discusses his "publishing venture" and pursuing the rights to works by Amadeo Roldán and Johanna Beyer, as well as asking for permission to use excerpts of William Russell's *Fugue* (1931-1932) in his percussion techniques book.

composition are extant at UCLA...These various arrangements were prepared over the course of thirty years...⁴

It should also be noted that a sketch titled *Kochapi Mas* and dated October 12, 1955 also resides in the Colin McPhee Collection at UCLA; no instrumentation is indicated.

Tributes to Charon for percussion trio was conceived in 1939, however only the second movement was completed in that year. It was some 43 years later, in 1982 that Harrison completed the first movement of the work. Manuscripts of the score and parts are located in the Lou Harrison Music Manuscripts. MS 132, ser. I. Special Collections and Archives, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz. The title of the work comes from Greek mythology. Charon is the Greek mythological ferryman of Hades (the underworld) that transported souls of the dead across the river Styx from the world of the living to the world of the dead.⁵

II. COUNTERDANCE IN THE SPRING was completed March 29, 1939 at the request of John Cage for his second percussion concert at the Cornish School (Seattle, WA) on May 19, 1939.⁶ This was part of Cage's broader solicitation of composers across the United States for percussion Compositions at that time. In April 1939, Cage wrote to Harrison stating: "Your COUNTERDANCE is excellent."⁷ Cage performed the work on a number of concerts over the years, including his February 7, 1943 concert at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City, which was the occasion where the dancer, Jean Erdman created her choreography, *Creature on a Journey*, for it. Unique to *COUNTERDANCE IN THE SPRING* is Harrison's use of polymeter (3/8, 4/8, and 5/8 occurring simultaneously) in three sections of the movement. This is the first and only percussion composition of the era (1930s and 1940s) to utilize this compositional concept or technique.

I. PASSAGE THROUGH DARKNESS was conceived in 1939 as the companion movement to *COUNTERDANCE IN THE SPRING* but was not completed until May 6, 1982 for the occasion of Harrison's 65th birthday celebration at Mills College (Oakland, CA). It was premiered on May 10, 1982 at Mills College by an ensemble led by then graduate student, William Winant.⁸ This was also the first time that both movements were presented under the title of *Tributes to Charon*. Unique to *PASSAGE THROUGH DARKNESS* is the use of two alarm clocks and the technique of using boxes to create/control their dynamics by lowering and raising them over the alarm clocks. This is the only appearance of this instrument and technique in the percussion repertoire to date.

⁴ Carol J. Oja, *Colin McPhee, Composer in Two Worlds*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 208. UCLA is in reference to the Colin McPhee Collection, 1975.06, Ethnomusicology Archive, University of California, Los Angeles.

⁵ For more information on the work, including an edited version of the score, and the underlying Greek mythology, see: Music of the United States of America, Volume 8 (A-R Editions, 1998), "Lou Harrison: Selected Keyboard and Chamber Music 1937-1994," Leta Miller, ed.

⁶ A partial audio recording of Cage's 19 May 1939 concert is available at: <http://radiom.org/detail.php?omid=OTG.1971.03.10> This radio program, titled "Ode To Gravity: Percussion Music: From Lou Harrison's collection of 78 rpm acetate records," was created by Charles Amirkhanian and was broadcast on KPFA radio on 1 February 1970.

⁷ Letter, Cage to Harrison, postmarked 20 April, 1939 (Lou Harrison Papers: Correspondence. MS 132, Ser.3, Box I, Folder 30. Special Collections and Archives, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz).

⁸ Harrison taught at Mills College from 1980 to 1985 and previously from the Fall of 1937 through 1940.

Meyer Kupferman's originally untitled and undated work, marked "Allegro," is scored for four percussionists and one pianist. The title *Little Fantasia* was suggested by the Meyer Kupferman Estate Executor, Carson Cooman when the composition was published in 2019 by Media Press, Inc. The manuscript resides in the Franziska Boas collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. where there is a manuscript in Kupferman's handwriting and a set of parts in Boas' handwriting, suggesting that Boas had performed the work at some point. The possession of the manuscript, the parts prepared by Boas, and the instrumentation of the work suggests that it was composed for the dancer and percussionist, Franziska Boas, and thus it is likely that it was composed in the 1940s during Boas' most active period as a percussionist, which was primarily for the accompaniment for dance.

Hell's Bells for Percussion Instruments of Definite Pitch was composed in 1935 by Harold Gibson Davidson (b. Low Moor, VA 1893; d. Glendale, CA 1959) and it is scored for seven percussionists and three pianists, although the cowbell part is easily playable by any ensemble member except the xylophonist. The exquisitely handwritten manuscript (score only) of *Hell's Bells* resides in the Sousa Archives and Center for American Music, Paul Price Collection, at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Davidson submitted *Hell's Bells* to Henry Cowell and his New Music Publications on June 30, 1935 along with his other percussion ensemble work, *Auto Accident* (1935), which Cowell published in 1936 in his *New Music Orchestra Series, Collection No. 18* along with five other works for percussion by Johanna Beyer, Gerald Strang, Doris Humphrey, Ray Green, and William Russell. Davidson wrote the following about *Hell's Bells* in his June 1935 submission of the work to Cowell:

Sending *Hell's Bells*. In this work, I have taken some well-known bell patterns, quarters and other appropriate tunes and have tried to progressively infernalize them, melodically and harmonically. As to time and rhythm, I have not attempted to do anything out of the ordinary, inasmuch as peculiarities in this respect would be out of character with the subject.⁹

Four months later in October 1935, Davidson followed up in a letter to Cowell with: "Varese's 'Ionization' was the immediate stimulus for the efforts I have submitted to you."¹⁰

⁹ Letter, Davidson to Cowell, 30 June, 1935 (New York Public Library, New Music Papers, Folder 231).

¹⁰ Letter, Davidson to Cowell, 28 October, 1935 (New York Public Library, Henry Cowell Papers, Box 6, Folder 27). Here Davidson is referencing both *Auto Accident* and *Hell's Bells*.