

**Beats & Beethoven** 

January 25, 2025 - 7:30pm

#### **Program**

Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 7:30pm Mary W. Sommervold Hall, Washington Pavilion

South Dakota Symphony Orchestra Delta David Gier, conductor Elissa Cassini, violin Camilla Tassi, projection designer

Leo Taylor, Aaron Ragsdale, Leigh Wilson, & Ed Zaryky percussionists

> **Viet Cuong** (b. 1990)

Re(new)al: Percussion Quartet Concerto

I. Hydro II. Wind

III. Solar

(b. 1958)

Theodore Wiprud Violin Concerto No. 2: On The Brink (World Premiere)

I. Prologue

II. Vicious Circles

III. Mourning and Renewal

IV. Virtuous Circles

V. Epilogue

#### INTERMISSION

Sy Bordeaux Anxiety

> (Music Composition Academy student) (b. 2008)

Kili Cole Unfinished

(b. 2010) (Music Composition Academy student)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Symphony No. 4

I. Adagio - Allegro vivace

II. Adagio

III. Allegro vivace

IV. Allegro ma non troppo





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Concerto for Violin No. 2 "on the brink" by Theodore Wiprud was commissioned by The Climate Music Project.

Learn more about The Climate Music Project HERE.

### This concert is generously sponsored by Bob & Rita Elmen Family Foundation



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#### **Program Notes**

#### Re(new)al: Percussion Quartet Concerto

Viet Cuong

#### **Born**

1990

#### Instrumentation

flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon, soprano saxophone, baritone saxophone, french horn, trumpet, trombone, piano, two violins, two violas, cello, percussion quartet

#### **Duration**

16 minutes

### Program Notes Written by composer

I have tremendous respect for renewable energy initiatives and the commitment to creating a new, better reality for us all. Re(new)al is a percussion quartet concerto that is similarly devoted to finding unexpected ways to breathe new life into traditional ideas, and the solo quartet therefore performs on several "found" instruments, including crystal glasses and compressed air cans. And while the piece also features more traditional instruments, such as snare drum and vibraphone, I looked for ways to either alter their sounds or find new ways to play them. For instance, a single snare drum is played by all

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four members of the quartet, and certain notes of the vibraphone are prepared with aluminum foil to recreated sounds found in electronic music. The entire piece was conceived in this way, and even the accompaniment was written with these ideas in mind.

Cooperation and synergy are also core themes of the piece, as I believe we all have to work together to move forward. All of the music played by the solo quartet is comprised of single musical ideas that are evenly distributed between the four soloists (for those interested, the fancy musical term for this is a hocket). The music would therefore by dysfunctional without the presence and dedication of all four members. For example, the quartet divvies up lightning-fast drum set beats in the second movement and then shares one glockenspiel in the last movement. But perhaps my favorite example of synergy in the piece is in the very opening, where the four soloists toast crystal glasses. We always toast glasses in the presence of others, and oftentimes to celebrate new beginnings. This is my simple way of celebrating everyone who is working together to create a cleaner, more efficient world.

Re(new)al is constructed of three continuous movements, each inspired by the power of hydro, wind, and solar energies. The hydro movement transforms tuned crystal glasses into ringing hand bells as the wind ensemble slowly submerges the soloists in their sound. The second movement turns each member of the quartet into a blade of a dizzying wind turbine, playing seemingly-impossible 90s-inspired drum and bass patterns. The closing movement simulates a sunrise and evokes the brilliance of sunlight with metallic percussion instruments. This piece was originally written with a sinfonietta accompaniment, and in its original form was commissioned for the 2017 American Music Festival by David Alan Miller and the Albany Symphony's Dogs of Desire in partnership with GE Renewable Energy. A full orchestra version was commissioned in 2018 by the Albany Symphony, and this final version for wind ensemble was commissioned by a consortium of universities and community ensembles. Heartfelt thanks to everyone who has been involved in any of the three version of this piece.

#### Concerto for Violin No. 2, on the brink

Theodore Wiprud

Born

1958

#### Instrumentation

flute, piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, violin, viola, cello, string bass



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**Duration**36 minutes

### Program Notes Written by the composer

We know that the climate crisis threatens all life on Earth with dislocation and destruction. How can an individual or a community cope with such knowledge? How can we summon the will to constructive action at this late date? My second violin concerto, composed for Elissa Cassini, explores climate grief and despair, but also reason for hope and a call to climate action.

The concerto is rooted in climate science, thanks to the participation of ClimateMusic Project, a nonprofit dedicated to connecting people to climate science and action through the emotional power of music. CMP connected Elissa and me with climate scientists who helped us understand the cascades of phenomena that lead to planetary warming and its consequences, as well as cascades of technological and behavioral change that push back against the current. The image of cascades appealed to my musical imagination, and the related ideas of vicious circles and virtuous circles came to inspire the form of the work.

Learning about climate grief convinced me that human psychology is key to our survival: the resilience to face the unimaginable. In this concerto, the soloist is a protagonist witnessing and participating in the vicious circles of climate change; processing existential fear; and renewing her spirit and partaking in the virtuous circles that may yet stave off the worst. In a sense, the entire drama unfolds in the mind and heart of the protagonist.

The five movements proceed without a break. The **Prologue** features percussion illustrating the increasing levels of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, followed by the dazzling appearance of the sun, source of all energy on earth. The soloist salutes the sun, which will reappear throughout the work. In **Vicious Circles**, the inexorable presence of fossil fuels begins successive, accelerating cycles of reinforcing phenomena: combustion, accumulation of greenhouse gases, rising ocean temperatures, acidification of the oceans, melting ice sheets, rising sea level, and finally, supercharged storms. The music's tempo gradually increases as the images crowd in. The soloist expresses growing alarm and is finally overwhelmed.

**Mourning and Renewal** begins with the soloist in a psychic flatline, with a few orchestra strings playing out of tune. She mourns all that is being lost. A turning point comes when

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woodwinds invoke the beauty of what remains. In the cadenza that follows, the soloist renewed motivation to protect what she can, while still plagued by doubts. Virtuous Circles is an extended rondo form with a cascading figure as a recurring idea, gathering speed with each iteration. In between are episodes inspired by the pace of technological innovation we see today, with musical cells interlocking into increasingly energetic structures. The bane of particulate airborne pollution, suggested by grinding strings and buzzing winds, gradually disappears with reduced combustion. At the climax, the sun makes its final appearance, offering unfailing vitality to power renewable energy. In the Epilogue, fossil fuels and greenhouse gasses remain with us, but so too does an upwardswelling vision of hope. We arrive finally at the brink - of doom, or of decisive action. The choice is ours, in how we respond to what is happening around us.

My Violin Concerto No. 2 on the brink was commissioned by Elizabeth and Justus Schlichting and composed for Elissa Cassini. I deeply appreciate their faith in this project. I dedicate the concerto, in hope, to humanity's best qualities, our ingenuity and compassion for each other and for our one planet home.

#### Symphony No. 4 in B-flat, Opus 60

Ludwig van Beethoven

Written by Anna Vorhes

#### Born

Baptized December 17, 1770, Bonn

#### Died

March 26, 1827, Vienna

#### Instrumentation

flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings

#### **Duration**

35 minutes

#### Composed

1806 summer and fall

#### **World Premiere**

privately in the home of Beethoven's patron Prince Lobkowitz in March 1807; publicly April 13, 1808, Vienna



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#### Something to listen for

This symphony harks back to Beethoven's classical roots and the time when Haydn was his mentor. As a result, it is shorter than the Eroica, and the movements are relatively predictable. The first movement borrows a Haydn technique, opening in a slow tempo and a different key than the movement. Listen as Beethoven begins in B-flat minor while the work will be in B-flat major. For a moment of innovation, Beethoven will briefly consider the unusual key of B major but does resolve to the Bflat major for the Allegro. The movement is the usual exposition, development and recapitulation of sonata form. The timpani will signal the recapitulation as the work moves to a close. A 22-measure drum roll builds to the exciting return of the first melody. The second movement includes a sense of heartbeat supporting the melodies. The clarinet will offer a poignant second theme. The third movement is a scherzo with a sense of rondo as the trio returns creating an ABABA format. (A more complete explanation is below.) Listen for the end of the final scherzo where the horns interrupt a full repetition of the first section. The final movement keeps the energy high, scampering through the movement. When you hear the first theme at an unusually slow tempo, you'll know the symphony is almost done.

#### **Program Notes**

The Eroica Symphony, Beethoven's Third, was not a complete success. Music lovers recognized something different, but as with many innovations, acceptance was not complete. Beethoven began work on what would become the stunning Fifth Symphony. He also continued to expand his social circle.

Count Lichnowsky began paying Beethoven a stipend that would ensure the composer at least a passable living without worrying about shelter and food. He also introduced the composer to many of his own circle, including Silesian Count Oppersdorff who had an estate in what is now Poland. While Beethoven was visiting the estate, the Count's chamber orchestra performed his Second Symphony. The composer was charmed, and was happy to accept a commission from Oppersdorff. Sketches for his Fifth Symphony exist, dated before work began on the Fourth Symphony. The new work goes back to older patterns, not as innovative as the Third or the Fifth Symphonies. It still is easily identifiable as Beethoven's work, however.

This is the smallest orchestra Beethoven requested. Only one flute instead of the usual two, and no trombones (which he will introduce in the Fifth Symphony). The structure is compact after the hour long Eroica. This work is only thirty-five minutes. He wrote it quickly, perhaps because he was using the older tools that were so familiar, or perhaps because he was clear



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about how to please Oppersdorff who was so delighted with the Second Symphony. Whatever the reason, the resulting symphony is a gem in the group of only nine symphonies. Writing for the BBC Proms, Lindsay Kemp says,

"But it is a thoroughly Beethovenian work nevertheless, taut with muscular strength, propelled with unstoppable momentum and shot through with its composer's unmistakable stylistic fingerprints."

The slow introduction gives a sense of premonition of the serious slow announcements of the Ninth Symphony. Leonard Bernstein, talking about the Fourth Symphony, claims this introduction leads to the greatest surprise of Beethoven's writing: a symphony full of fun and joy! When we finally arrive at the allegro tempo of the first movement, the mood changes to one of delight which never leaves through the remaining movements.

The Second movement is a tender adagio with some interruptions. The pace is not slow, nor is it fast. There is a pulsing heartbeat in the way Beethoven presents the movement. The clarinet has our attention as the second melody is introduced. The third movement is an expected scherzo with a twist in form and syncopation to keep the whole movement upbeat. The form is similar to a minuet or other dance form, but Beethoven offers us plenty of time to hear what he created. While the usual organization of a dance movement is section A (with small sections aabba with each letter representing a melodic variation) followed by a section B in a different character (this time with small sections bbccb). Then A returns, but since we've heard it the melodic variations aren't repeated (now aba). In this third movement we have the A as above, followed by the B, then we repeat the A again, followed by the B again, and finally back to A one more time. This time Beethoven allows the horns to be impatient and interrupt the final repetition, but we have by now got the structure of the movement clearly embedded in our ears!

The last movement feels like a perpetual motion machine with continual sixteenth notes through the movement. The effect is full of energy without being overwhelming. Indeed, at one point toward the end the bassoons are given an especially tricky passage which is then marked dolce (sweetly) by the composer. Getting beyond the notes to create something both rapid and sweet requires virtuosic musicians! Do listen for the first melody of the movement to return at a slower tempo. That will tell you the end is in sight.

Reactions to the work have been varied. Carl Maria von Weber was not a fan. After hearing a rehearsal he imagined the bass players saying, "I have been made to caper about like a wild goat, and to turn myself into a mere fiddle to execute the no-





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ideas of Mr. Composer."

On the other hand, Robert Schumann was a fan. He did recognize that the Third Symphony and the Fifth Symphony both offered more meat, but this work could hold its own in Schumann's opinion. He described it as "a slender Greek maiden between two Nordic giants".



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#### **Guest Artists**



Elissa Cassini

#### violin

A "Truly communicative" (New York Times) and "impeccable and powerful soloist" (Neue Musik Zeitung), Franco-American violinist Elissa Cassini explores the full expressive range of the violin through her captivating tone and charismatic performances. Her concerto appearances include the celebrated favorites by Bach, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Bruch, Beethoven, Schumann and Sibelius. She also recently performed Philip Glass's concerto, the *American Four Seasons* with the Orchestre, Symphonique de Bretagne in Rennes under the baton of Laura Jackson.

Expanding on the traditional repertoire, Cassini's passion for new music was sparked when Pierre Boulez invited her as concertmaster to the Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra in



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2009. She has since collaborated with internationally acclaimed composers such as Beat Furrer, Georg Friedrich Haas, Alexandre Lunsqui, Philippe Leroux, Tristan Murail and Jaija Saariaho. Cassini's premieres include Jerome Combier's concerto *Conditions de Lumière*, performed with the Argento New Music Project and the Cairn Ensemble in New York and the NEM in Montreal under Guillaume Gourgogne, Anders Eliasson's Concerto for Violin and Strings, wit the Arcos Chamber Orchestra a the Berlin Konzerthaus, and Nicolas Bacri's Concerto Op. 116, wit the Orchestre de Massy in France.

Cassini performed her Carnegie Weill Hall debut recital as a recipient of the "Artists International" prize, the same year she received her Masters degree from the Juilliard School. New York audiences have since heard her perform at Zankel and Merkin Halls, Miller Theater, the Park Avenue Armory and Le Poisson Rouge. An avid chamber musician, Cassini was invited as artistic director of the 2016 "Musique dans les Vignes" festival in Anjou, France, performing with cellist Gary Hoffman. She has also performed at international chamber music festivals such as Ravinia, Yellow Barn, Prussia Cove, Coincidences, Stift Festival and Musique a Marsac.

Cassini has created Duplexity Concerts, an international series of virtuoso instrumental duos transcending the traditional recital format. Since its launch in 2015, Duplexity has presented programs such as *Ravel Un-Ravel-ed* with Ashley Bathgate (Bang On A Can-New York), *Re-inventing Bach* with flutist Roy Amotz (Meitar Ensemble-Tel Aviv) and *Bar Talk* with Daniel Rowland (Brodsky Quartet-London). Duplexity's forays into dance, drama and new media offer innovative musical contexts for the violin and promote an evlolving dialogue between artists and their audiences.



Camilla Tassi

projection designer

Born in Florence, Italy and now New York City based, Camilla Tassi studied computer science and music after moving to the US. It's at the intersection of technology and live performance



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that she fell in love with projection design and storytelling (plays, operas, musicals, dance, and everything in between).

Her work as a projection designer includes SEACHANGE (Miami City Ballet), Falling Out of Time (Carnegie Hall), SANDRA (TheaterWorks Hartford), Elijah Reimagined (Kennedy Center), American Railroad (Rhiannon Giddens & Silkroad Ensemble Tour), King Arthur (Lincoln Center, Juilliard415), Adoration (Beth Morrison Projects), Iphigenie en Tauride (Boston Baroque), L'Orfeo (Cal Performances & UMS Michigan), Fires in the Mirror (Baltimore Center Stage), Malhaar (Walt Disney Concert Hall, LA Master Chorale), Conspirare Christmas (Long Center), Mozar Magic Flute (Berlin Opera Academy, Handel's Alcina (Yale Opera), The Extinctionist (Heartbeat Opera), Tesor's Fun Home (Yale School of Drama), as well as recitals, chamber music, and theater at Curtis, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, IU opera, Repertorio Español, PROTOTYPE Festival, Mass MoCA, and others, including Associate video, Illinoise on Broadway.

Tassi has produced and directed musical works, including Song from the Uproar (CT), Talk to Me Like the Rain (NH), La Resurrezione (IN), If This is a Man: music, science, and humanity (IN), an interdisciplinary project and tribute to Italian chemist and author Primo Levi - which included the US Premiere of Ennio Morricone's Se questo è un uomo for chamber orchestra, soprano, and reciting voice, and Giacomo Carissimi's music, Pen e tormenti (NH).

As an Italian coach and translator, she has created program translations for Carnegie Hall (*L 'Arpeggiat*a), *Apollo's Fire*, and coached diction for recitals and performances.

As a classical vocalist, she sang the roles of Cunégonde in Candide, Celia in As You Like It, and Drusilla in L'Incoronazione di Poppea. Chorally, she sang with the Yale Schola Cantorum and NY Philharmonic, and she has instrumental proficiency in piano, organ and harpsichord.

Tassi holds a BS in Computer Science and a BA in Music (with a Minor in Italian Studies) from the University of Notre Dame and a MA in Digital Musics at Dartmouth College. She was a Research Fellow in Projection Design at the David Geffen School of Drama at Yale, where she completed her MFA.

#### **SDSO Percussionists**



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Leo Taylor

#### Principal

Leo Taylor began his position as Principal Percussionist of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra in the 2021-2022 season. Additionally, he serves as Principal Timpanist with the West Michigan Symphony, appointed in 2019. He is an instructor of percussion with Augustana University and the University of Sioux Falls.

Prior to these positions, Taylor was a percussionist with the Battle Creek Symphony Orchestra from 2019-2021. He was an Associate Timpanist with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago from 2018-2020 as well as an Associate Percussionist for the 2017-2018 season.

He has served as an extra timpanist/percussionist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Omaha Symphony, and the Sioux City Symphony, among others.

He has shared the stage with Yo-Yo Ma, Jamey Haddad, Cyro Baptista, Michael Ward-Bergeman, Mark O'Connor, Zakir Hussain, Nadja Solerno-Sonnenberg, Aldo Lopez-Gavilan, Tessa lark, and Bryon Stripling.

Taylor has performed with conductors Matthias Pintscher, Marin Alsop, Emil de Cou, Rafael Payare, Ankush Kumar Bahl, Francesco Lecce-Chong, Gerard Schwarz, and Edwin Outwater. While an associate member with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, he had the opportunity to perform in an open rehearsal with Riccardo Muti conducting.

During the centennial season with the SDSO, he had the opportunity to work closely with composers John Luther Adams, David M. Gordon and Malke Jandali on their respective world premier works.

He was the thrid0place winner of the Modern Snare Drum Competition in 2017 and was the runner up in 2018.

Taylor's teachers include Vadim Karpinos, Edward Harrsion, Eric Millstein, David Herbert, Matthew Decker, John Shaw, Eric Schweikert, Jeffrey Jones, and Gerald Noble.

He earned his Master's in Orchestral Studies from Roosevelt University-Chicago College of Performing Arts, Bachelor of



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Music from DePaul University, and holds a diploma from the Interlochen Arts Academy.



**Aaron Ragsdale** 

Dr. Aaron Ragsdale is Director of Percussion at South Dakota State University where he teaches applied percussion and percussion pedagogy, conducts the SDSU Percussion Ensemble, serves as Assistant Director with the Pride of the Dakotas Marching Band, and helps direct and administrate the annual All-State Music Camp.

An active performer, he has appeared four times at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, twice at both the National Convention on Percussion Pedagogy and the National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors, and at regional conferences of the College Music Society. Ragsdale has also appeared as a soloist on PAS "Days of Percussion" in Arkansas, Oklahoma, and South Dakota, and as marimba soloist with the Rutgers University Percussion Ensemble as part of the "Great Music at St. Bart's" concert series at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City.

Ragsdale's percussion quartet, Opener for R.H. co-composed with Barrett Hipes, is published by Studio 4 Music and has been performed around the US. He is currently the composer in residence for the Harvey Dunn Collaborative, a work that merges the discrete art forms of poetry, dance, animation, film and musical composition to create a cross-artistic theatrical performance inspired by the work of South Dakota's premiere artist and illustrator, Harvey Dunn.

A native of Fayetteville, Arkansas, Ragsdale holds a DMA from Rutgers University, a Master of Music degree from the University of Arkansas, and a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education from the University of Oklahoma. His teachers include Alan Abel, Bob Becker, Richard Gipson, Chalon Ragsdale, and She-e Wu.

Ragsdale lives in Brookings, SD with his wife, Ashley, and children, Olivia and Harrison.



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**Leigh Wilson** 

Percussionist Leigh Wilson joined the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra in 2021 for its centennial season. A Massachusetts native, he began playing percussion at age thirteen under John Tanzer of the Portland Symphony and continued with Kyle Brightwell of the Boston Symphony. In college, he studied in the Harvard/New England Conservatory dual degree program, graduating with a degree in chemistry from Harvard College and a master's degree from the New England Conservatory, studying under Matthew KcKay. He has performed regularly with the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, was a fellow of the National Orchestral Institute, and is the recipient of the 2022 Rachel Mellinger Award for his contributions to the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra.



**Ed Zaryky** 

Ed Zaryky was appointed Section Percussionist with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra in 2021. He also serves as a percussionist and drummer with the USAF Heartland of America Band. Zaryky is also currently serving as Acting Principal Percussionist with the Sioux City Symphony.

In addition to these positions, Zaryky has also performed with the Omaha Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Des Moines Metro Opera, Des Moines Symphony, American Symphony, New World Symphony, Symphony in C, and the Harrisburg Symphony.

As a chamber musician, Zaryky has played with The American Brass Quintet, The Canadian Brass, Wu Han, and The New World Percussion Consort.

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He received his Masters in Percussion Performance from the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins and his undergraduate degree in music education from Rowan University. He has also held a fellowship at the Aspen Music Festival and School for two summers, and spent one summer as Principal Timpanist with the National Repertory Orchestra.

A dedicated educator, Zaryky served four years as Director of Percussion Studies at York College of PA.



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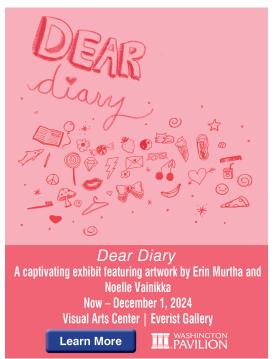


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