



New World Symphony

America's Orchestral Academy Michael Tilson Thomas, Artistic Director



## New Work

Friday, April 20, 2012 at 7:30 PM, New World Center

Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor Joshua Gersen, conductor David Herbert, timpani Malachi Black, poet James Nares, filmmaker

**AMY BETH KIRSTEN** 

Little Alice for String Quartet (2012; world premiere)

(b. 1972) Ode to Edward H. Snow White Sleep

Drink Me

Ko Sugiyama, violin Jennifer Chang, violin Roberto Papi, viola Maaike Harding, cello

**MALACHI BLACK** 

Selected Poems

(b. 1982)

**ALEX ORFALY** Divertissement No. 2 for Solo Timpani and Ensemble

(b. 1974) (2012; world premiere)

Mr. Gersen Mr. Herbert

INTERMISSION

**MARCOS BALTER** 

(b. 1974)

On Floating Bodies for Wind Octet (2012; world premiere)

Round Shoaling

Seth Morris, flute/piccolo

Joseph Peters, oboe/English horn
Brad Whitfield, clarinet/bass clarinet

Thomas Schneider, bassoon/contrabassoon

Colin Sutliff, horn

Travis Peterson, trumpet

Douglas Rosenthal, trombone

Joshua Lee, tuba

**JAMES NARES** 

(b. 1953)

Excerpt from Street (2011)

SAMUEL CARL ADAMS

(b. 1985)

Drift and Providence for Orchestra (2012; world premiere)

Embarcadero

(Spanish, from embarcar – to embark;

the northeastern waterfront in San Francisco)

Drift

Divisadero

(Spanish, from divisor – to look upon from a distance; a latitudinal thoroughfare that divides

the northern half of San Francisco)

Drift II Providence

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### **New Work**

# AMY BETH KIRSTEN Little Alice for String Quartet (2012; world premiere)



Amy Beth Kirsten, one of this year's Guggenheim Fellows in music composition, is currently composing a 45-minute chamber opera-without singers-for the 2012 Grammywinning ensemble Eighth Blackbird. The work, about a diabolical and murderous Harlequin, will be choreographed and directed by Martha Clarke for its 2013 premiere. Ms. Kirsten's music has been recognized by the American Composers Orchestra, The MAP Fund, ASCAP, the Fromm Foundation at Harvard University, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the State of Connecticut, where she now lives. Before moving to the East Coast in 2004 to study composition with Nicholas Maw at the Peabody Conservatory, Ms. Kirsten was a singer-

songwriter in the Chicago area and played at many of the city's smallest, but mightiest, nightclubs. Since then, she has composed music for orchestra, opera, chamber ensemble and soloists. She currently teaches composition at the HighSCORE summer music festival in Pavia, Italy. Upcoming projects include a new work for cello commissioned by Jeffrey Zeigler of the Kronos Quartet. Ms. Kirsten is honored to be a part of tonight's celebration of new music at the New World Symphony.

Ms. Kirsten wrote the following about *Little Alice*:

Art and literature that magnify the dark side of the human spirit have always fascinated me. Investigating the root of that fascination led me to revisit favorite childhood stories. Preferred were the ones that most frightened me: *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Snow White,* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Each movement of *Little Alice* is dedicated to the story that inspired the music. At the heart of each story is poison. And at the heart of the music is melody—one that melts in and out of ruptured noise, that is haunted by the refrain of whispered text, and that eventually collapses like a telescope. The structure of the piece echoes the transformation of the melody, as each of the three movements gets proportionally shorter—shrinking like Lewis Carroll's Alice did. (*Little Alice* is a newly expanded version of my chamber orchestra piece *Drink Me*, which was premiered in 2010 by Alarm Will Sound.)

#### MALACHI BLACK Selected Poems

Malachi Black is the author of the chapbooks *Echolocation* (Float Press limited edition, 2010) and *Quarantine* (Argos Books, 2012). His work has appeared or is forthcoming in journals including *Poetry, Boston Review, The Iowa Review,* and *Blackbird*, among others, as well as in several recent and forthcoming anthologies.

The recipient of a 2009 Ruth Lilly Fellowship, he has also received recent fellowships and awards from the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, The MacDowell Colony, and the University of Texas at Austin's Michener Center for Writers, where he earned his MFA. A current Vice Presidential Fellow at the University of Utah, he was the subject of an Emerging Poet profile by Mark Jarman in the Fall 2011 issue of the Academy of American Poets' *American Poet* magazine.

Mr. Black's participation in this evening's event is a collaboration with O, Miami, a biennial poetry festival created by the University of Wynwood and founding sponsor The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The mission of O, Miami is for every single person in Miami-Dade County to encounter a poem during the month of April. The first month-long festival took place in 2011; the next will occur in April 2013. For more, visit www.omiami.org.

Mr. Black's current appearance in Miami for National Poetry Month is made possible by the philanthropy, arts and culture program at The Betsy Hotel and by the new Writer's Room at The Betsy Hotel, in partnership with the University of Wynwood Visiting Poetry Series and with special support from the PG Family Foundation and The Betsy Community Fund at The Miami Foundation. For more information, visit www.thebetsyhotel.com.

**ALEX ORFALY** 

#### **Divertissement No. 2 for Solo Timpani and Ensemble** (2012; world premiere)

Alex Orfaly, a freelance percussionist and composer in the Boston area, is a New World Symphony alumnus, where he was a Timpani Fellow from 2002 to 2006. He has performed with orchestras worldwide, including the Tuscon Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic and Palau de Les Arts in Spain, and currently serves as timpanist for the Sun Valley Summer Symphony in Idaho. Mr. Orfaly has a growing body of percussion pieces to his credit, including his Concerto for Brass and Percussion, premiered in 2004 by the New World Symphony. His first Divertissement, written in 2001 for Solo Timpani and Percussion Ensemble, won second prize in the Percussive Arts Society composition competition, and his Rhapsody No. 2 for Solo Timpani won first prize in 2006. Mr. Orfaly's highly entertaining *Mean Man's March*, based on the human and canine social complexities of the dog park, was premiered in 2011 by the Sun Valley Summer Symphony, which in August will also premiere his latest work, *Cowboy Bill* for orchestra with narrator.

Jon Kochavi wrote the following note about Mr. Orfaly's Divertissement No. 2:

Divertissement No. 2 is an abbreviated concerto for timpani and mixed ensemble (consisting of a large array of percussion, saxophones, clarinets, contrabassoon, trombones, and electric bass). In addition to the standard six-timpani setup, the soloist plays nine smaller kettledrums, known as "tenor timpani," which serve to extend the range of the timpani up about a sixth and allow for types of passagework that would be impossible on the traditional instrument. About ten years ago, David Herbert worked with instrument makers to construct the first of these tenor timpani, enticing composer William Kraft to compose a concerto for the instrument. Herbert premiered the piece and the instrument in 2005 with the San Francisco Symphony, and the tenor timpani have been growing in popularity ever since. Discussions

between Herbert and Orfaly beginning in 2007 led to the creation of tonight's piece, which was co-commissioned by NWS and the San Francisco Symphony.

Unlike standard kettledrums, which have pedals allowing for pitch adjustment during performance, the nine tenor timpani must be tuned to particular pitches for the duration of a piece. For Divertissement No. 2, Orfaly has the tenor timpani tuned to an octatonic scale in which consecutive notes alternate whole and half steps. The octatonic was used extensively by Stravinsky and Bartók among others, and here is used to create a sense of exoticism in the melody.

Divertissement No. 2 runs continuously as a single movement, but is broken into seven sections, four in Part 1 and three in Part 2. Interspersed among these divisions are three cadenzas. Creating a sectional work provides Orfaly with the opportunity to explore a myriad of possibilities offered by the new instrument.

The first section of Part 1 uses a somewhat foreboding ostinato patter in the piano, xylophone and glockenspiel, contrasted with sustained notes in the winds, brass and bowed vibraphone. This eerie backdrop provides a canvas to introduce the soloist in fragmentary gestures based on a wide-ranging subject introduced by the bass clarinet. These kernels slowly coalesce and culminate in the first cadenza. Whereas the ostinato in the first section consisted of quick repetitions of two notes (and octave variants) one-half step apart, the second tutti section uses an ostinato in the piano, marimba and bass clarinet that spans large melodic intervasls—like the previous bass clarinet melody—in a lively 7/8 meter. Orfaly alters the melodic contour and metric placement of this figure as the section progresses, creating a vibrant rhythmic backdrop for snippets of the octatonic scale that emerge from various instruments of the orchestra as well as the soloist.

For the third section (marked "Odd and Pompous"), Orfaly replaces the ostinato structure with a passacaglia, an eight-bar exchange between the marimba and low octaves in the piano (eventually joined by clarinets) repeating several times. The soloist and orchestral percussion (including synthesizer) engage in their own conversation over this humorously paced march. At the midpoint here, the music briefly gives way to a second cadenza, itself punctuated by sustained orchestral chords, inspired by Puccini's Turandot. Part 1 of the piece ends with an exchange between the soloist's tenor and low timpani over shimmering synthesizer arpeggios.

Part 2 begins with a crisp, jazz-infused section that seems to channel Leonard Bernstein, featuring an expressive melody in the alto saxophone. A quick transition using elements of the ostinatos from Part 1 brings the piece to its third cadenza, played over a bed of sound in the orchestral percussion. A craggily moto perpetuo (to be played "furioso") in the piano and marimba bursts out at the end of the cadenza, marking the beginning of the final two sections of the piece, which run together. Orfaly gradually deconstructs this energetic melody, presenting it in different instrumental combinations, with varying contrapuntal and rhythmic accompaniment, and in highly fragmented transformations. The line is eventually transformed into a fourbar ostinato pattern in 7/8 meter, harkening back to the second tutti of Part 1. The music builds to a poly-metric, climactic finish, ending with what might be called a tutti rock out.

## MARCOS BALTER On Floating Bodies for Wind Octet (2012; world premiere)

Praised by the Chicago Tribune as "minutely crafted" and "utterly lovely," and by The New York Times as "whimsical" and "surreal," the music of composer Marcos Balter has been featured worldwide by institutions such as the Chicago Symphony, International Contemporary Ensemble, Lockenhaus Kammermusikfestival. French Academy at Villa Medici and others. Mr. Balter's past honors include commissions from Meet the Composer. Chamber Music America, the Fromm Music Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation and the Art Institute of Chicago; fellowships from the Tanglewood Music Center and Civitella Ranieri Foundation; and first prizes in several national and international



composition competitions. Mr. Balter lives in Chicago where he directs the music composition program at Columbia College. For more information, please visit www. marcosbalter.com.

Mr. Balter wrote the following about *On Floating Bodies*:

Having grown up in a coastal city not too different from Miami, much of my music has a direct connection to water and seascapes. *On Floating Bodies* borrows its title from the two-volume treatise on liquid displacement and equilibrium by Archimedes, whose theories were often illustrated by maritime-themed anecdotes. "Round," based on Archimedes's observations on floating ships, is a music canon based on a theme in which the solfège syllables are an anagram of "Miami Florida," a hidden homage to the city. The second movement, "Shoaling," is inspired by images of crashing waves, with musical gestures that start small and quietly, gradually speeding up toward unsustainable climaxes. The work is a musical tribute to those who risked and lost their lives while reaching for safer shores.

#### JAMES NARES Excerpt from Street (2011)

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James Nares was born in London in 1953 and moved to New York in 1974. He has worked in various media over the years, but has focused primarily on painting since the early 1980s. Before that time he was known as a filmmaker, particularly in his association with the NO WAVE movement in New York. He continues to work in both arenas.

Mr. Nares's films pursue a variety of interests, from the brooding study of an enormous pendulum swinging in the deserted streets of Tribeca in 1976, to travelogue, portraiture, time and motion study—and, notoriously, a Roman costume drama that featured the streets of New York City as its backdrop. His films and videos have been screened around the world and included in numerous festivals. A complete retrospective was presented at Anthology Film Archives in New York in 2008.

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Mr. Nares's paintings are made in a single-brush stroke, recording a gestural passage of time and motion across the canvas. They seek to capture the very moment of their own creation. Using brushes of his own design, he repeatedly creates and erases his strokes, over and over again, until he feels he has made one that represents a precision of balance between intent and improvisation. His paintings are included in a number of public and private collections, including New York's Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of Art and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

The New World Symphony gratefully acknowledges the Paul Kasmin Gallery for its kind assistance in organizing this week's screenings of Mr. Nares's film *Street*.

# SAMUEL CARL ADAMS Drift and Providence for Orchestra (2012; world premiere)

California-born, Brooklyn-based composer Samuel Carl Adams is a dynamic creator of acoustic and electro-acoustic music whose works equally embrace tradition and the non-vernacular. His music draws from his experiences in a wide array of fields, including jazz, electronic music, micro-sound, noise, programming and phonography. He has been commissioned by the Paul Dresher Ensemble Electro-Acoustic Band, ACJW (The Academy, a program of Carnegie Hall, Juilliard and The Weill Institute of Music), MATA (Music at the Anthology), Lisa Moore, TwoSense, the San Francisco Symphony, The Living Earth Show and Carnegie Hall.

Mr. Adams is currently engaged in a wide range of activities, including a recording of his *Tension Studies* with San Francisco-based chamber ensemble The Living Earth Show, the development of a fixed-media work to be premiered at the Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism (ARAS), and a commission for the Academy (ACJW) that will receive performances both at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall and at Skidmore College in Saratoga, New York. In April and May of 2012, Mr. Adams will be an artist-in-residence at the Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York. During this time, he will be engaged in developing the music for a dramatic work that will enjoy two performances towards the end of his term. In the spring of 2013, Mr. Adams will present his *Tension Studies* alongside the works of Tyondai Braxton, Ted Hearne and Matt Marks as part of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Brooklyn Festival. Tonight's piece *Drift and Providence*, will have both its West Coast and New York premieres with the San Francisco Symphony under the direction of Michael Tilson Thomas in the spring of 2013.

Outside of composing, Mr. Adams maintains an active international career as a contrabassist. He regularly performs with FOUNDRY, a post-classical chamber ensemble based in New York City. They recently embarked on their first overseas tour in Taiwan and look forward to performances on the Millennium Stage at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. in the spring of 2012.

When not writing, playing or thinking about music (a rare occurrence), Mr. Adams can be found training on his bicycle in Prospect Park or developing his culinary skills in his New York kitchenette. He currently lives in Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

Mr. Adams wrote the following about *Drift and Providence*:

This is a work about leaving from and returning to one's home.

I was asked to compose a work for the New World Symphony in the fall of 2010. This was a period in my life when it was becoming clear to me that I wanted to dedicate my energy to writing about my home, the far western United States. It was also during a period when my music started to, perhaps haphazardly, explore new ways of utilizing tonality—or, more specifically, a kind of music whose structure is based on a hierarchy of pitches, one of which acts as a center. I chose the title because I felt it very clearly addressed both of these developments in my life. *Drift and Providence* is looking at my home, the west, from within and from afar; *Drift and Providence* is looking at what it means to embark from and arrive at the acoustically familiar.

The work is organized into five movements that are played without pause. The odd-numbered movements are intended to be music about harmonic and psychological stasis. The even-numbered movements, both entitled Drift, deal with locomotion and involve gradual movements in harmony and texture.

The music of *Drift and Providence* functions in a similar fashion as most tonal music in that a core fundamental frequency holds a particular weight and significance; the rest of the material is then contextualized acoustically in relation to that foundational element. In this work, however, what highlights the distinction between the fundamental and everything else is the separation that exists between them on levels other than pitch and harmony. More specifically, it is the percussive noise that provides this center (*Providence*). The orchestra, on the contrary, is what moves to and from this anchor (*Drift*). Assigning strong and polarized tonal weight to the unkempt, industrial percussion instruments allows the orchestra to be free in its harmonic character. Particularly in the odd-numbered movements, pairing these two opposing forces allows the music to sound both familiar and foreign at once.

Another important element of this work is the use of electronics in creating its sound world. I knew immediately when asked to write a work that would have its premiere in the new campus designed by Frank Gehry that I wanted to interface the orchestra with its hall in a different way, while not pushing my re-imagination of the ensemble to the point that the music is no longer essentially "orchestral" in its nature. I did this by creating a supplemental world of harmony made by a live-processed spectrum of acoustic white noise and sine waves. The sounds from decaying sizzle cymbals, scraped metal and wire brushes on snare drums create a robust harmonic spectrum, and from this acoustic richness I am able to select particular harmonies—a B minor chord, for instance—and project it through the overhead speakers in the hall. Together with the idiomatic orchestral playing, this sound world is warm and ambient yet maintains an intense and volatile energy.

All electronic processing was written using Max/MSP (Cycling '74). The live sound design is performed by me and controlled by a CNTRL-R (Livid Instruments), an Analog Experience Factory (Arturia Instruments), and a MacBook Pro (Apple).

The piece is dedicated to Ingram Marshall, a close friend whose vision of the West has made (and will continue to make) an indelible mark on my musical personality. It was co-commissioned by the New World Symphony and the San Francisco Symphony, and was funded in part by the Composer Assistance Program of New Music USA.

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Michael Tilson Thomas is Founder and Artistic Director of the New World Symphony, America's Orchestral Academy; Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony; and Principal Guest Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. In addition to these posts, he maintains an active presence guest conducting with the major orchestras of Europe and the United States.

Mr. Tilson Thomas began his formal studies at the University of Southern California where he studied piano with John Crown and conducting and composition with Ingolf Dahl. At age nineteen he was named Music Director of the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra. He worked with Stravinsky, Boulez, Stockhausen and Copland on premieres of their compositions at Los Angeles' Monday Evening Concerts. During this same period he was the pianist and conductor for Gregor Piatigorsky and Jascha Heifetz.

In 1969, after winning the Koussevitzky Prize at Tanglewood, he was appointed Assistant Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. That year he also made his New York debut with the Boston Symphony and gained international recognition after replacing Music Director William Steinberg in mid-concert. He was later appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra where he remained until 1974. He was Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic from 1971 to 1979 and a Principal Guest Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic from 1981 to 1985. He was Principal Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra from 1987 to 1995.

His recorded repertoire of more than 120 discs includes works by composers such as Bach, Beethoven, Mahler, Prokofiev and Stravinsky as well as his pioneering work with the music of Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles, Steve Reich, John Cage, Ingolf Dahl, Morton Feldman, George Gershwin, John McLaughlin and Elvis Costello, He recently completed recording the complete orchestral works of Gustav Mahler with the San Francisco Symphony.

Mr. Tilson Thomas' extensive television work includes a series with the London Symphony Orchestra for BBC Television, the television broadcasts of the New York Philharmonic Young People's Concerts from 1971 to 1977 and numerous productions on PBS Great Performances. In 2004 Mr. Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony embarked on a multi-tiered media project - Keeping Score - which includes television, web sites, radio programs and programs in the schools, all designed to make classical music more accessible to a new audience.

In 1991 Mr. Tilson Thomas and the New World Symphony were presented in a series of benefit concerts for UNICEF in the United States, featuring Audrey Hepburn as narrator of From the Diary of Anne Frank, composed by Mr. Tilson Thomas and commissioned by UNICEF. This piece has since been translated and performed in many languages worldwide. In August 1995 he led the Pacific Music Festival Orchestra in the premiere of his composition Showa/Shoah, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. Thomas Hampson premiered his settings of poetry by Walt Whitman, Renée Fleming premiered his settings of the poetry of Emily Dickinson and the San Francisco Symphony premiered his concerto for contrabassoon entitled Urban Legend. As a Carnegie Hall Perspectives Artist from 2003 to 2005, he had an evening devoted to his own compositions which included *Island Music* (for four marimbas and percussion), *Notturno* (for solo flute and strings) and a new setting of poems by Rainer Maria Rilke.

Among his many honors and awards Mr. Tilson Thomas is a Chevalier dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres of France, was Musical America's Musician of the Year and Conductor of the Year, Gramophone Magazine's Artist of the Year and has been profiled on CBS's 60 Minutes and ABC's Nightline. He has won ten Grammy Awards for his recordings. In 2008 he received the Peabody Award for his radio series for SFS Media, The MTT Files. In 2010 he was awarded the National Medal of Arts in a ceremony in the White House.

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JOSHUA GERSEN DAVID HERBERT



Joshua David Gersen, winner of the prestigious 2011 Aspen Conducting Prize, as well as the 2010 Robert J. Harth Conducting Prize from the Aspen Music Festival, made his conducting debut at age eleven with the Greater Bridgeport Youth Orchestra and his professional conducting debut five years later, when he led the Greater Bridgeport Symphony in a performance of his own composition, *A Symphonic Movement*. He recently graduated from Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied conducting with the esteemed Otto-Werner Mueller, and is currently the New World Symphony's John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Conducting

Fellow. In September 2012 he will become the Music Director of the New York Youth Symphony while continuing his fellowship with the New World Symphony.

While at Curtis, Mr. Gersen conducted numerous performances and rehearsals of various ensembles, including the Curtis Symphony and the 20/21 Contemporary Music Ensemble. He assisted on several opera productions, premiered works by student composers, and participated in master classes with internationally renowned conductors, including Christoph Eschenbach, Alan Gilbert, and Simon Rattle. He has covered and assisted for many orchestras in the Philadelphia area, including the Harrisburg Symphony and the Symphony in C. In 2010, he filled in at the last minute for the Savoy Opera Company, where he conducted a production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Ruddigore* without rehearsal.

For several years, Mr. Gersen studied music theory, composition, and conducting with Robert Genualdi, Music Director of the Greater Bridgeport Youth Orchestras. In 1999, at the age of 15, he was invited to study with the renowned teacher Gustav Meier, with whom he studied for the next six years. In addition to regularly attending Mr. Meier's seminars at the Peabody Conservatory of Music, Mr. Gersen has also attended numerous conducting workshops and summer festivals, most recently the Aspen Music Festival's American Academy of Conducting, where he worked with such distinguished conductors as Larry Rachleff, Hugh Wolff, and Robert Spano. As a result of winning the 2011 Aspen Conducting Prize, he will serve as the festival's assistant conductor for the 2012 summer season.

Beyond his conducting interests, Mr. Gersen composes. Both his String Quartet No. 1 and Fantasy for Chamber Orchestra have been premiered at the New England Conservatory's celebrated Jordan Hall. He has had works performed by the New Mexico Symphony, Greater Bridgeport Symphony, and GBYO. In addition to several other local awards and scholarships, he was the recipient of the Barton Weller Scholarship for his composition *America's Darkest Day*, written to commemorate September 11, 2001. In 2006, he finished his work at the New England Conservatory, from which he received his bachelor of music degree in composition, studying with Michael Gandolfi. His work as a composer has also led to an interest in conducting contemporary music. He has conducted the world premieres of several new works and collaborated with such established composers as Jennifer Higdon and his teacher Michael Gandolfi.

David Herbert is principal timpanist of the San Francisco Symphony, a title he has held since 1994. After earning a Master of Music degree from the Juilliard School, Mr. Herbert performed with the New World Symphony in addition to performing with the Pittsburgh and Saint Louis Symphony Orchestras. He is an active advocate for the advancement of solo timpani repertoire, and since his 1991 solo debut with the Saint Louis Symphony, he has appeared as timpani concerto soloist with major orchestras worldwide. With the San Francisco Symphony, Mr. Herbert has performed as a soloist on many works, including William Kraft's First and Second Timpani Concertos, of which the latter was written specifically



for him. As an active chamber musician and clinician, he continues to perform around the world and has conducted master classes throughout North America, Japan, China, and Europe. He is also a frequent featured artist at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention. Mr. Herbert was international principal percussion instructor and soloist of the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan from 2004–07 and currently teaches and performs at the San Francisco Conservatory and the Aspen Music Festival.



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