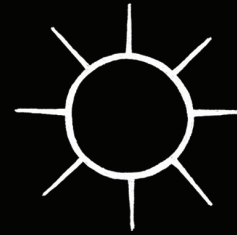
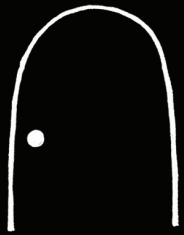


& places
& times



BALJINDER SEKHON



1. **Passageways** 9:31

Dave Gerhart, steel pan soloist
Los Angeles Percussion Quartet: Matt Cook, Justin DeHart, Cory Hills, Nick Terry
with guest performer David Johnson



2. **Musica Casera** 12:14

Dieter Hennings, guitar soloist
McCormick Percussion Group: Robert McCormick, director
Percussionists: Michael Carp, Daniel Dau, Sherry Donataggio, Sean Hamilton,
Christopher Herman, Kevin von Kampen, Kyle Kinsey



Death Is an Adviser

Eunmi Ko, piano soloist
McCormick Percussion Group: Robert McCormick, director
Percussionists: Rod Alnord, Karlyn Barbur, William Brown, Nicholas Faivre,
Michael Giunta, Anandpall Rehsi, Nicolas Remy, David Ruth, Michael Skillern

3. **I. any time. any place.** 2:24

4. **II. maybe today. maybe tomorrow.** 3:28

5. **III. touched. not felt.** 2:55

6. **IV. a worthy opponent.** 2:27

7. **V. now or later.** 3:31

8. **VI. dream come true.** 5:55



9. **Sun** 9:30

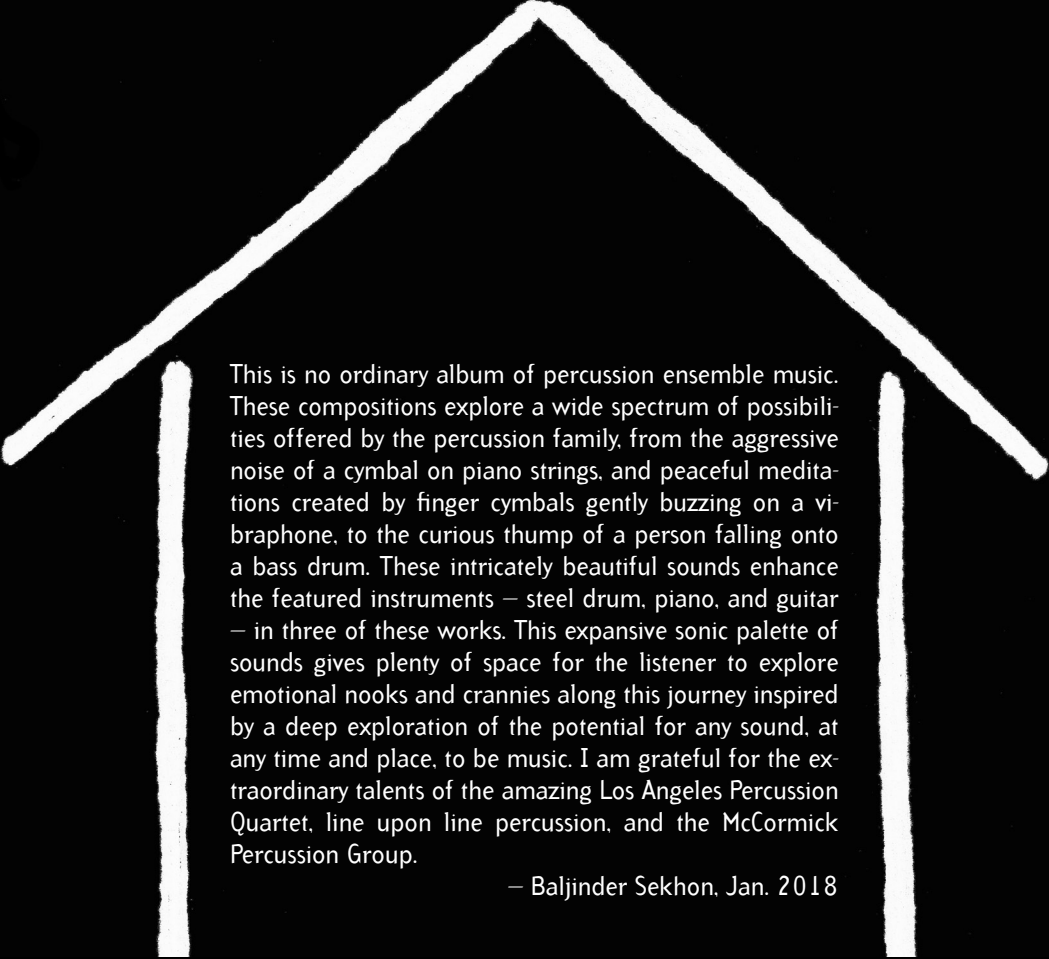
line upon line percussion: Adam Bedell, Cullen Faulk, Matthew Teodori



10. **Refuge** 8:50

McCormick Percussion Group: Robert McCormick, director
Percussionists: Tyler Carr, Michael Garcia, Nick Gigante, Sean Hamilton,
Nicolas Remy, Daniel Rodriguez, Kyle Spence

–60:47–



This is no ordinary album of percussion ensemble music. These compositions explore a wide spectrum of possibilities offered by the percussion family, from the aggressive noise of a cymbal on piano strings, and peaceful meditations created by finger cymbals gently buzzing on a vibraphone, to the curious thump of a person falling onto a bass drum. These intricately beautiful sounds enhance the featured instruments – steel drum, piano, and guitar – in three of these works. This expansive sonic palette of sounds gives plenty of space for the listener to explore emotional nooks and crannies along this journey inspired by a deep exploration of the potential for any sound, at any time and place, to be music. I am grateful for the extraordinary talents of the amazing Los Angeles Percussion Quartet, line upon line percussion, and the McCormick Percussion Group.

– Baljinder Sekhon, Jan. 2018

Passageways is scored for solo steel pan and percussion ensemble. In this work, each section is a process-oriented progression of rhythm, pitch, and timbre. The segments of this work can be heard as a string of transitions where each section leads to the next. In essence, this work is a collection of passageways that lead to seemingly static states of being that quickly develop a pattern and momentum that generates the next event.

Passageways was made possible by a consortium commission organized by Dave Gerhart. The world premiere of this work was presented on March 28, 2015 by the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra Percussion Ensemble and soloist Dave Gerhart at the Logan Center for the Arts in Chicago, IL.



Scored for classical guitar and seven pitched percussion instruments, **Musica Casera** explores the timbral boundaries between guitar and keyboard percussion. Through the use of harmonics, bowed percussion, pitch bending, natural resonance, percussive striking, and fast strumming passages, this work highlights the similarities between these instruments. The title translates to “Homemade Music” and refers to the compositional process of experimenting with musical ingredients. While the guitar is a solo voice throughout the work, the entire ensemble contributes equally to a single sonic experience full of color and motivic development.



Death Is an Adviser is scored for solo piano and nine percussionists. This work is a continuation of two of my compositional interests: it is the eighth work in a series of pieces for solo instrument with percussion, and the third in a series of works modeled after the shamanistic philosophies described by anthropologist Carlos Castaneda in

his writings about being an apprentice to the sorcerer Don Juan Matus in the 1960s.

I have been heavily influenced by the teachings of Don Juan, specifically those found in the book *Journey to Ixtlan*. “Death Is an Adviser” is a chapter from the book that deals with the awareness of death and how such awareness advises our decision-making in life. The movement titles each have double meanings, which reflect both the philosophy that inspired the piece and the compositional process. I am interested in finding ways for my creative work as a composer and other life activities to intersect and become the same. For this piece, in an effort to work and spend time with my family at once, my daughters and wife drew numbers from a hat to determine pitch orderings, durations, and contour. After selecting numbers for pitch and duration, and combining them, we’d run to the piano to play it and hear how it turned out – we made a game out of it. While I believe the relationship between the movement titles and the philosophy of “Death Is an Advisor” is obvious, here is a summary of how they relate to the compositional process.

I. any time. any place. – This movement uses a series of pitches and durations with a randomly selected ordering. The events in this movement could occur at any time, depending on the duration selected, and any place (in pitch space), depending on the pitch class selected. Although the score is fixed, the compositional process was dependent on an open process that could have yielded any number of pitch/duration combinations.

II. maybe today. maybe tomorrow. – This movement works in cycles that I conceived of as days passing. The movements alternates between fast knocking sounds from the piano and improvisatory musical developments. Either of these alternating segments could be interpreted as day or night, dreaming or living. The pitches are derived from a cycle of hexachords from a serial matrix and a corresponding magic square matrix.

III. touched. not felt. – This movement includes the depression of piano keys in such a way that the hammers don't touch the strings. In these moments the pianist touches the keys but the felt does not touch the strings. Instead, a clave is used to excite the touched strings. While composing this work, I was thinking about Don Juan's description of death always lurking to your left.

IV. a worthy opponent. – This movement title is actually a different chapter title from *Journey to Ixtlan*. In essence, the philosophy of "A Worthy Opponent" deals with conquering your own obstacles and competing with yourself. The pitches and rhythms in this work abstractly exist in two related pitch networks that work together in an effort to find harmony and balance. They fail to do so.

V. now or later. – This movement explores a fleeting harmonic and timbral language, through the use of a constantly transforming harmonic sequence and bending of pitches. The sequence is designed to obscure any sense of tonal cadence. The resting point could come at any moment or it could come later. The pitch bending, which is another unsettling component of the movement, is explored through a triangle being used to bend pitches in the piano, and extended bending techniques in the vibraphone, marimba, timpani, and a porcelain bowl.

VI. dream come true. – This final movement is ritualistic, conceived of as a funeral, and includes segments of the previous five movements. In addition to these segments, this work presents a large-scale pitch design that governs the entire piece. This is most clearly demonstrated in a unison section where everyone performs homorhythmic music and, like a memory, experiences the previous movements in brief recapitulated passages.

In a world where death is the hunter, my friend, there is no time for regrets or doubts. There is only time for decisions. — Carlos Castaneda, *Journey to Ixtlan*



Scored for three percussionists, **Sun** explores a variety of musical energies. From tired phrases to extended climactic passages to short-lived bursts of sound, many segments of music are intertwined and overlaid in a way that creates a singular event with various “flares” of sound on its surface. These segments are often separated by silent moments that, because of their context, each express a different type of energy.

The instrumentation of the individual percussion parts are very similar; that is, each percussionist has one keyboard instrument, “skin” (containing a drum head), wood, and metal. In addition, all of the percussionists share one large cymbal that is central to the staging. At times the three percussion parts are treated as one large instrument with three performers working towards one musical character. This orchestration and interaction alternates with each performer executing their own layers of sound to create a heterophonic texture. The percussionists use a multitude of techniques to create a palette of nuanced sounds. In addition to common performance practices, they use their hands, fingers, knuckles, and fingernails to muffle, modify, and create a large spectrum of characteristics.



Refuge *n.* – any place person, action, or thing that offers or appears to offer protection, help, or relief.

Scored for seven percussionists, **Refuge** is a musical escape that employs a variety of pitched and non-pitched instruments. Each percussionist plays a pitched bell, a keyboard instrument, and a variety of skins and accessories. The seven bells create

a seven-note pitch series that informs the harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic material throughout the work. With an option of entering the performance space while carrying and playing the bell instruments, the percussionists hang their bells one at a time as they begin performing at their respective setups. This is a process-oriented work in three sections, with the most discernible processes taking place during the introduction. With one bell each, the percussionists collectively perform a seven-note motive, with a modular rotation of pitch orderings, until the pattern returns to the original ordering. At that time, one pitch is left out and a similar pattern takes place again. This continues until only one pitched bell remains (A^b). The pitch orderings that result from the patterns during the introduction generate all of the harmonic and melodic material used for the main three sections of the piece.

Throughout history, composers have created musical situations that express an ideal world or scenario that could serve as an escape from the rigors and complications of reality. Through discourse, music is often referred to as a magical art with the power to temporarily transport a listener. In an effort to confront and organize a chaotic view of life, my recent output is focused on creating works that mimic, or are modeled after, the imperfections of life. *Refuge* is a work that attempts to address both of these interests and concepts in a single piece. This piece is an organization of a disorderly environment of noise and resonate sounds, with the aim of placing them on a spectrum that makes sense of an otherwise littered environment. Rather than escaping life, as a composer or listener, by creating a fictional musical experience, my goals here are to make sense of life through composing. Through thoughtful organization, I am seeking refuge in the very conditions that cause distress.



The music of **Baljinder Sekhon** has been presented in over 500 concerts in twenty countries. From works for large ensemble to solo works to electronic music, Sekhon's demonstrate a wide range of interests and styles. Sekhon's compositions for saxophone and percussion instruments are widely recognized as pioneering works in those genres with numerous presentations, CD recordings, critical reviews, and guest lecture appearances.

Sekhon serves as Assistant Professor of Composition at the University of South Florida where he received a 2017 Outstanding Undergraduate Teacher award, and he holds the PhD and MA from the Eastman School of Music (Rochester, NY).

Los Angeles Percussion Quartet: lapq.org

line upon line percussion: lineuponlinepercussion.org

McCormick Percussion Group: mccormickpercussiongroup.com

Credits:

Produced by Baljinder Sekhon

Mastered by Greg Reiersen at Rare Form

Symbol drawings for each work: Teresa Sekhon

Photo: Gerry Szymanski

Passageways

John Baffa, engineer

Ian Stahl, assistant

Recorded at Chapman University, Orange, CA

Edited and Mixed at TvTray Studio, Ventura, CA, July 2016

Musica Casera

John Zumwalt Stephan, engineer

Recorded, Edited, and Mixed at Springs Theatre, Tampa, FL, March 2014

Death Is An Adviser

John Zumwalt Stephan, engineer

Recorded, Edited, and Mixed at Springs Theatre, Tampa, FL, April 2017

Sun

Paul Coleman, engineer

Edited and mixed by Paul Coleman in Rochester, NY

Recorded in Caldwell-Carvey Foyer at Southwestern University, Georgetown, TX,
June 2016

Refuge

John Zumwalt Stephan, engineer

Recorded, edited, and mixed at Springs Theatre, Tampa, FL, November 2014

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This album is dedicated to Teresa, Izabel, and Skyler, with love.

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Chris Campbell, operations director

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innova.mu