

School of Music

Herberger College
of Fine Arts

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

J.B. SMITH

MUSIC FOR PERCUSSION AND ELECTRONICS

FACULTY ARTIST RECITAL SERIES
KATZIN CONCERT HALL
TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 2006 • 7:30 PM



NOTES

Percussion Concerto was commissioned by, and is dedicated to, Graeme Leak who gave its first performance at the University of Western Australia in September 1987. It was devised in two versions: one for soloist with tape accompaniment and the other accompanied by orchestra. Although the tape version "mimics" the orchestral accompaniment, no attempt was made to imitate orchestral tone colours, and it stands as a work in its own right.

The solo part is designed to highlight the virtuosic dexterity required for performance on multiple percussion instruments as well as to demonstrate most of the sonorities available to a solo percussionist. Since it was devised with tape accompaniment in mind, most of the rhythmic cues derive from the accompaniment. The challenge here was to make it seem as though the soloist is leading the accompaniment even though there is no way in the world this would be possible.

Eric Richards is a NYC composer in the American Experimental tradition. He writes about *finalbells*: "When I first heard the sounds percussionist Alan Zimmerman produced by rubbing one of his three octaves of cowbells with a piece of rubber cut off from a super ball, I knew that I had to "pin" down these extraordinary harmonics, much as a butterfly collector might want to preserve some particularly rare and beautiful species. Yet as ephemeral and fleeting as were these delicate overtones, the memory of them completely haunted me and gradually became so pervasive a part of my being as I listened to them over-and-over again that, in fact, I began to be convinced that they were real entities of some kind that had somehow become imprisoned in these metal forms and were literally "crying" to be let out and be freed. I realize now that I was particularly emotionally susceptible to these kinds of thoughts at the time because so many of my friends and family were dying - or had died - but I still think, even as I am writing this now, that there is more to these pieces somehow than observing, recording - and piling up in different ways - specific harmonics from a set of cowbells. I feel somehow a *presence* of some kind that connects me with the recent dead, and that by my recognition and patterning of these presences that I've given them a chance to breathe a little bit more freely and enabled myself to communicate this experience to others."

Coping Strategy II is written for solo marimba and fixed electronic sounds. Using the additive process of canon and multi-track recording technology, four distinct layers of musical lines are gradually assembled: bass accompaniment, melody, sustained chords and a single, continuous melismatic line. After the structure is fully realized the rhythmic voices are subjected to deconstructive processes and melded into the sustaining chords. In the end, metric punctuation evaporates into a cloud of harmony.

Losing Touch for amplified vibraphone and fixed electronic sounds was written while the composer was taking a computer music course at IRCAM in Paris in 1994. It was an expansion of what he had done before, crossing the fruits of improvisation and formalized composition.

He started by constructing sample-based orchestras made from recordings and hybrids of the solo instrument. Then he invented a process for manipulating and writing the files that would generate the piece. This process led him to the creation of rhythmic, harmonic, and formal models. In *Losing Touch*, the model was of spatialized canons set on a fixed rhythmic grid.

He used rhythmic templates like cookie cutters, superimposing them on time-pointed polyphonic sequences to extract lines. This resulted in most of the pitches in a sequence being discarded, but the harmonic unfolding would remain. Each section of the piece was realized, tested, tweaked, re-made, and re-tested. Listening and verifying the results in simulation was part of the process. He was losing touch with traditional compositional techniques and training.

The architecture of *Losing Touch* enabled an eight voice canon to be collapsed into a single melodic line or expanded into a full polyphonic surround sound canon. The computer and the process dramatically influenced the outcome. Among many unexpected surprises, he found that time-scaling the canons turned them into short bursts of spatialized dust. In the end, he always went back as his own ideal listener, filtering the material for the last time.

PROGRAM

Percussion Concerto (1987)

Carl Vine

finalbells (2004)

Eric Richards

Coping Strategy II: Redundant Accumulation (2005) J. B. Smith

Losing Touch (1994/1997)

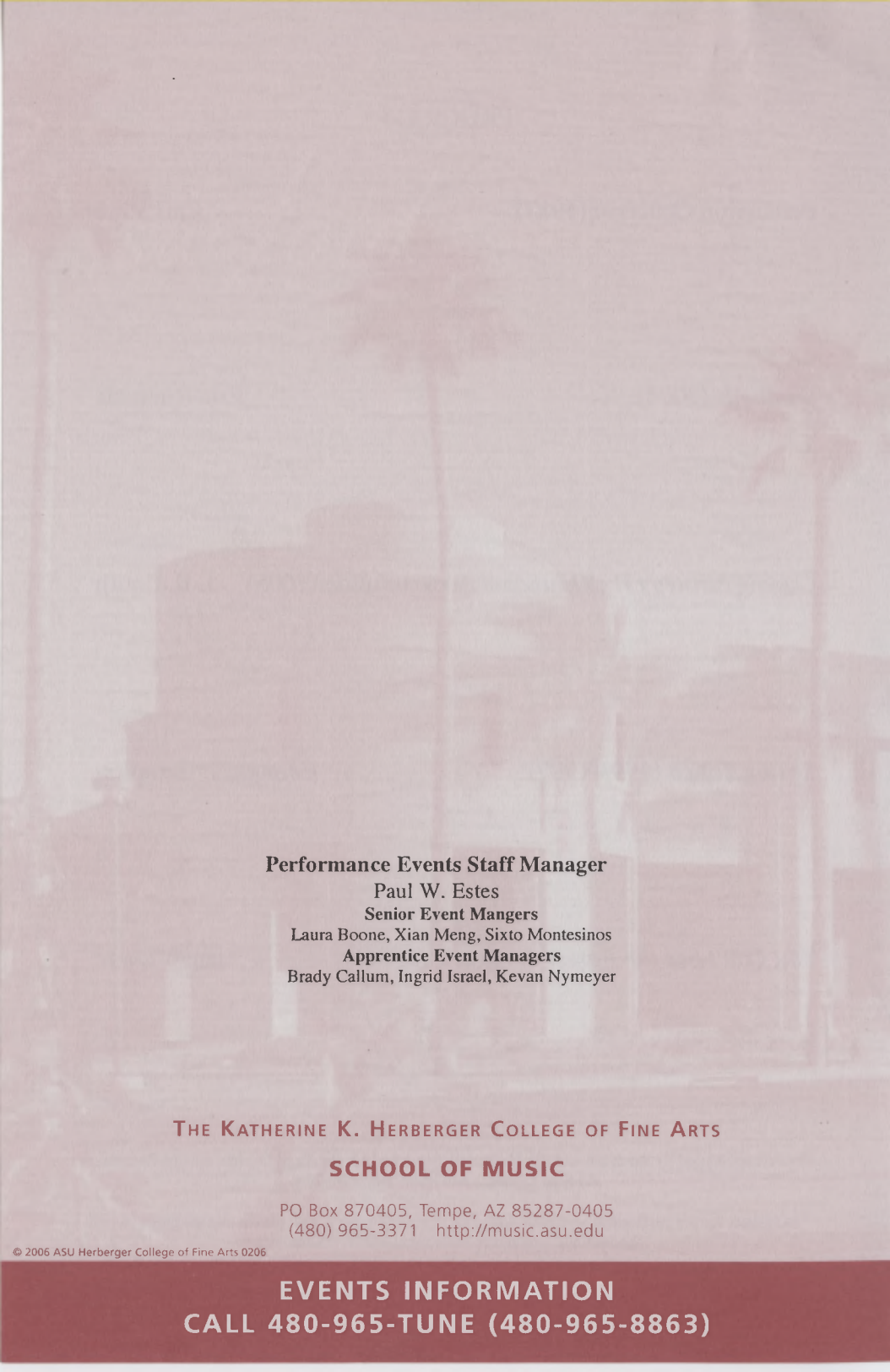
Edmund J. Campion

You Can't See the Forest . . . Music (1971)

Daniel Lentz

Concert sponsored by the Arizona State University School of Music, Pearl Drums, Adams Percussion,
Zildjian Cymbals and Mike Balter Mallets.

In respect for the performers and those audience members around you, please turn all beepers, cell
phones and watches to their silent mode. Thank you.



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**THE KATHERINE K. HERBERGER COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS
SCHOOL OF MUSIC**

PO Box 870405, Tempe, AZ 85287-0405
(480) 965-3371 <http://music.asu.edu>

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