

Robert Moran Ensemble

Dan Moore, musical director



Robert Moran Ensemble is much like the iconic American Composer himself—difficult to classify and even harder to resist. Built around a core of percussionists and often featuring a cast of itinerate singers, dancers, pianists, organists, a chandelier, and an old electric popcorn popper.

Music critic Robert Carl writes; “This is Robert Moran (b.1937), a stylistic polymath who’s been associated more with experimental and Minimalist musics than others, but who still tends to elude categories. I have heard his co-composition of *The Juniper Tree* with Philip Glass, and his charming *Divertissement No. 1* for chamber ensemble reading a “score” of flying kernels from a corn-popper. He’s also in the history books for having written works performed by entire cities (more in Europe and in the 60s, when such things were more possible).”



Some of Moran’s most significant musical excursions—both early in his career and increasingly more during the last twenty years—centered on composing for percussion. His composition for percussion ensemble *Bombardments No. 2* was premiered in 1965 by the Manhattan Percussion Ensemble under the direction of Professor Paul Price. It is a beautifully-drawn graphic notation work that can be found in many music libraries and in most percussion ensemble collections throughout the world. In fact, it was his creative graphic scores that introduced many classically trained musicians to the art of improvisation. Moran once noted

that “percussionists are always eager to try new things which makes them more fun to work with.”

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In much the same way that John Cage taught us to listen to the “all sounds” nature of music, Robert Moran teaches us to find and appreciate the humor, humility, and at times absurdity in music. His composition *Divertissement No. 1* (1967), known simply as the “Popcorn Piece,” is perhaps one of the most important concept pieces of the 20th Century after Cage’s 4:33.

Since their creation, both the *Popcorn Piece* and *Bombardments No. 2* have been performed countless times by percussion ensembles from around the world.

Works such as *Cabinet of Curiosities* (2010), *Bank of America Chandelier* (1968), and *Bats in the Belfry* (2010) for four opera singers and percussion (on a libretto by Gertrude Stein), are just a few examples of his creative writing that have pushed the bounds of percussion in subtle but important ways.

Core Ensemble:



Dan Moore explores the many creative and expressive capabilities of percussion, making music with inspiring people in an array of musical settings throughout the world. He has performed in North, Central, and South America, Asia, and Europe, as well as throughout most of the USA including Puerto Rico, Alaska, and Hawaii. As a vibes, marimba, and percussion artist, he appears on more than 30 recordings, 15 as leader or co-leader. He is a leading interpreter of the music of Robert Moran.

specializes in the creation and performance of contemporary music. He is particularly interested in combining percussion with theater, dance, and technology. Andy teaches at Settlement Music School and is an adjunct professor of percussion at Kutztown University. He is half of stb x at, a dance/percussion duo with dancer and choreographer Sean Thomas Boyt. He has appeared in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Argentina, Japan, and across the Midwest at music festivals, conferences, and symposia. His research centers on seamlessly integrating technology into performance to produce collaborative, multi-media presentations with writers, dancers, actors, choreographers, and composers.

Andy Thierauf is a Philadelphia based percussionist who



Christine Augspurger is a versatile percussion performer and teacher with experience ranging from concert percussion to new music explorations using computer-based audio applications. Her doctoral thesis explores the potential for using commercial music technology in classical



music performance settings. Her first solo album *Transience* features ten compositions for solo percussionist and electronics created in collaboration with video game music composer Taylor Ambrosio Wood. She holds degrees from the Boston Conservatory and The University of Iowa.

Lucas Bernier is Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Percussion Studies at the University of Mary in Bismarck, ND. He works throughout the Midwest as a performer, adjudicator, and clinician. Lucas embraces a variety of genres and frequently performs in a diverse range of musical settings including contemporary, classical, jazz, popular, and world music. He is the Principal Percussionist with the Bismarck-Mandan Symphony Orchestra and leads a jazz combo and steel drum quintet. As an active collaborator as well as a

soloist, he enjoys performing with musicians throughout the Midwest. Bernier has also recorded contemporary percussion music for the Innova recordings label. He has written extensively about composer Robert Moran.

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The Robert Moran Ensemble proposes a PASIC focus day concert of unique repertoire that truly celebrates the creativity and self-determination of an important American composer who continues to push the bounds of percussion in subtle but important ways.



Program:

Divertissement No. 1 (1967)
for ensemble and electric popcorn popper

Cabinet of Curiosities (2010)
I. Circles in Wood
II. Ode to a Vertical Transport Vehicle
III. Stems and Roots
IV. Crocodiles on the Ceiling
V. Procession of the New Ancient Gods of Water
VI. The Hapsburg Kunstammer
for percussion quartet

Bats in the Belfry (2010)
an opera in five acts and four murders
for four solo voices and percussion
text by Gertrude Stein

Bank of America Chandelier (1968)
for percussion quartet and prepared chandelier

Silent Dance: after John Cage (2018)
for percussion ensemble