



SENIOR RECITAL SERIES | SPRING 2024

Wednesday, May 8, 2024, 4 PM  
Taplin Auditorium, Fine Hall

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## Andrew Tao '24

### Percussion

#### Featuring:

Ian Chang '27 | marimba

Shivam Kak '26 | marimba

Elijah Shina '22 | marimba

John Wallar '25 | marimba

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*The use of photographic, video, or audio equipment is strictly prohibited. Please turn off or mute electronic devices for the duration of the performance.*

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## PROGRAM

**BOB  
BECKER**

States Medley  
Ian Chang, marimba  
Elijah Shina, marimba  
Shivam Kak, marimba  
John Wallar, marimba  
Duration: 5 minutes

**GARY  
BURTON**

Chega de Saudade  
Duration: 5 minutes

**DOUG  
BUSH**

Hymn of the Shield Maiden  
Duration: 4 minutes

**JOHANN  
SEBASTIAN  
BACH**

Violin Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004  
I. Allemande  
II. Courante  
III. Sarabande  
IV. Gigue  
V. Chaconne  
Duration: 5 - 3 - 4 - 4 - 15 minutes

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## PROGRAM NOTES

By Andrew Tao

### **Bob Becker - States Medley**

Legendary marimbist Leigh Howard Stevens once claimed that Bob Becker is “the greatest xylophonist who has ever lived”. Becker was a founding member of the internationally acclaimed percussion group Nexus, for which he was the iconic xylophone soloist. According to percussionist folklore, one day the Nexus members were all jokingly taking turns playing their rendition of the iconic Porgy and Bess xylophone excerpt, and Becker secured the soloist position by playing the full excerpt using double stop octaves.

States Medley is a fast-paced xylophone rag that highlights the melody of three popular songs from the early 20th century about US states; in order of appearance, (Back Home Again in) Indiana, Alabama Bound, and California Here I Come. The medley begins with the Indiana reference, a syncopated two-mallet section that provides a bright, joyful introduction to the piece. We then briefly descend into minor for the Alabama section, where we start with some calmer four-mallet chords followed by a blazingly fast two-mallet run. Finally, the California section wraps up the medley with an exuberant, somehow even more technically challenging, four-mallet finish. This piece is often overshadowed by the more commonly played Becker rags Girlfriend’s Medley and Bye Bye Medley, but I personally think that States Medley has a certain light-hearted charm to it that the other two lack—but maybe I just really like syncopation.

### **Gary Burton - Chega de Saudade**

Burton is an American composer, educator, and jazz vibraphone legend. Before retiring in early 2017, Burton led a wildly successful career that spanned over half a century, dozens of critically acclaimed albums, and seven Grammys. Burton was also an early champion of four-mallet playing, pioneering the revolutionary four-mallet grip that we now refer to as “Burton Grip”, which is actually the grip I’m using for this piece and the Becker xylophone rag.

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This vibraphone solo is a transcription by Errol Rackipov of one of Burton's solo performances in his Grammy Award-winning album, *Alone at Last*. The original *Chega de Saudade*, by Antônio Carlos Jobim, is a bossa nova jazz standard and is often considered the first bossa nova song ever recorded. In his arrangement of the piece, Burton takes the listener on a whirlwind of a journey through an initial statement of the tune's head, two improvised choruses, and a final statement of the head with some additional codetta material.

### **Doug Bush - Hymn of the Shield Maiden**

*Hymn of the Shield Maiden* is an advanced snare drum solo composed by Doug Bush, an international percussion performer, composer, educator, clinician, and adjudicator. Mr. Bush has had an enormous amount of influence on me, both as a person and as a musician. He was one of the first percussion educators I ever came into contact with and has had an immeasurable impact on my technique, rhythmic interpretation, affinity for snare drum, and overall approach to percussion. He is also why I can play a 7 over 3 polyrhythm.

*Hymn of the Shield Maiden* is so distinctly Bush-ian that I could not possibly imagine a world where it was written by anyone else. The piece is a hybrid of modern-day rudimental snare drumming and traditional pipe band snare drumming. It contains many gestures idiomatic from the pipe band tradition, including many of the call and response patterns in the beginning and ending sections of the piece. In contrast, the more rudimental snare drumming-inspired portions of the piece have extremely fast hertas, paradiddles, and an abundance of 5lets, 7lets, and 9lets—all extremely classic idioms of Mr. Bush's writing. My snare drum technique was, quite literally, made to play this type of music, and I can't think of a piece that does a better job of paying homage to my upbringing as a percussionist.

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## **Johann Sebastian Bach - Violin Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004**

Bach's second violin partita is a suite of five movements for unaccompanied violin, containing four dances that inevitably lead up to the magnificent Chaconne. The partita begins with the Allemande, a powerful opening that imposes the somber, lonely mood of the suite with its pensive, rich melodic content. Next, the Courante gives us a bit more energy before leading us into the slow, harmonically rich Sarabande, which rhythmically begins to hint at the Chaconne to come. Finally, the fast-paced, lively Gigue energetically leads us into the incredible Chaconne, a true monster of a movement containing 64 ground-shaking, wonderfully tragic variations on a continually repeated short descending bass line figure.

By now, you may have realized that the violin is not a percussion instrument. Fortunately, the four strings of the violin correspond extremely well to the four mallets used in modern keyboard percussion. As a result, the partita works extremely well transcribed onto the marimba, the instrument that I'm using for my performance of the piece. I'm not even remotely close to the first non-violinist with the idea of playing this piece on my instrument; in fact, the Chaconne movement of this partita is so famous that hundreds of transcriptions and arrangements of it have been made for a wide variety of instruments, including organ, piano, cello, guitar, marimba (duh), harp, and many others. The other day, I even listened to a particularly impressive rendition of the Chaconne on the accordion. However, unlike most instruments the Chaconne is performed on, the marimba has the unfortunate limitation that it cannot sustain notes for arbitrary lengths; the resonance after each strike is all the note length you get. As a result, virtually every performance on marimba (including my own) is played one octave down from the original violin range—utilizing the more resonant bars of the lower range of the marimba is crucial in preventing the powerful, spaced-out chords of the Sarabande and Chaconne from sounding too isolated or choked off. Moreover, the richer overtones from the deeper keys really help to emphasize the intricate harmonies of the piece, in a way that is not nearly as feasible in the higher octaves. Also, the lower octave just sounds way cooler.

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Many regard Bach's Violin Partita No. 2 as one of the greatest solo works ever written. Johannes Brahms once wrote that:

"On one stave, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings. If I imagined that I could have created, even conceived the piece, I am quite certain that the excess of excitement and earth-shattering experience would have driven me out of my mind."

I feel the same way, but I'm not nearly as eloquent. All I can say is that the arpeggio section in the D major portion of the Chaconne has made me cry several times, and that I have thanked God for the blessing of classical music many times because of this piece.

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## ABOUT

### **Andrew Tao**

Andrew Tao is a senior from Coppell, TX in the B.S.E Computer Science department with a certificate in Percussion Performance. His first introduction to music performance came through the piano at age 4, but he switched his primary instrument to percussion soon after joining his school's band program in 6th grade. At Princeton, Andrew has been a member of PUO for four years, and studies percussion with John Ferrari. Outside of music, Andrew is passionate about solving Rubik's cubes blindfolded and, at the time of writing, currently holds New Jersey State Records for 3x3x3 Blindfolded single and average.

### **Ian Chang**

Ian Chang is a freshman from Weston, MA who plans to major in B.S.E. Computer Science with a certificate in Music Performance. Ian started playing percussion in sixth grade and started to really enjoy it in high school. On campus, Ian performs as a percussionist in both PUO and Sinfonia.

### **Elijah Shina**

Elijah Shina is a member of the Princeton class of 2022 from Louisville, KY who majored in Mathematics with a certificate in Conducting and Percussion Performance. When Elijah was a student, he performed as a part of ensembles spanning a wide variety of genres, including PUO, Sinfonia, Glee Club, PLOrk, and EMP, among many others. This fall, he will be attending the Mannes School of Music to pursue his Master's in Percussion Performance.

### **John Wallar**

John Wallar is a junior from New York City, NY who is pursuing a degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering with a minor in Theater and Musical Theater. On campus, John performs as a part of the Princeton University Orchestra, is the Sound Designer for The Princeton Triangle Club, and is the Co-Technical Director of Princeton University Players.

### **Shivam Kak**

Shivam Kak is a sophomore from Aurora, Illinois ("outside of Chicago") who is pursuing a degree in Computer Science with intended certificates in Applied & Computational Mathematics and Robotics & Intelligent Systems. Shivam has previously played with the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra, and now, at Princeton, performs as a percussionist with the Princeton University Orchestra.

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