Great Wall is a marimba work by renowned marimba performer, Leigh Howard Stevens. The entire work is based on a chord progression heard in the opening bars. It is expanded and contracted and goes through a variety of permutations. Great Wall begins quietly with a series of sustained chords. It is expanded and contracted and goes through a variety of permutations. The work ends quietly like the beginning, revealing an ABA structure. The composer calls for the performer to use a "double lateral" technique for rolling during the slow beginning and ending passages.

While Leigh Howard Stevens is known for his mastery of the marimba, he is also a composer, arranger, and innovator. He has written two works for marimba, Great Wall and Rhythmic Caprice. He has also arranged works by J.S. Bach as well as many children's songs for marimba. His book, Method of Movement, is a technical study used by percussionists around the world. Among other things, he is known for his book which outlines his "independent" four-mallet grip.

Rebonds is an extremely technical and rhythmically dense work for multi percussion. It is scored for a small group of drums in graduated pitch and a set of five woodblocks. The work consists of two movements, A and B, which can be performed in either order. Each movement takes a rhythmic idea and varies the pattern in many different ways. Movement B begins with a one bar rhythmic motif over a steady base of 16th notes, which is heard throughout most of the movement. It is constantly varied by contraction and expansion of note values for the first half of the movement. There are short developmental excursions, which begin and end abruptly and break away from the main motif. During the second half of the movement, the constant 16th note pulse begins to break apart and eventually disappears. The pattern becomes increasingly disjointed with many shifting accents. Later in the movement, the motif returns briefly on woodblocks, rather than drums, but is obscured by rolls. While, up to this point, the drums and woodblocks have been separate events, they eventually come together and are layered on top of each other, interacting in quick sporadic ways. The movement ends with the woodblocks and drums playing together in unison, then speeding up until the separation is completely blurred by simultaneous rolls on each instrument. Today's performance will be facilitated by a special set of blocks made especially for this work by University of Iowa alumnus, Lee Ferguson. The composer frequently calls for a roll to occur with one hand while the other plays something different. This unique set of woodblocks addresses the problem by providing two rows of blocks so that the performer can roll with one stick by hitting in between the rows.

Movement A, which uses only drums, is often performed following movement B because of its awesome climax. Unlike movement B, it uses a variety of rhythmic patterns at different times. These are varied not only by contraction and expansion, but also by instrument and density. At times, there are two events happening independently between high and low drums. They are sometimes separate and sometimes layered on top of each other polyrhythmically. This movement uses five levels of subdivision ranging from quarter notes to 64th notes. In addition, the composer makes frequent use of polyrhythms, starting simply with one hand playing three notes, while the other hand plays two in the same amount of time. Then it moves to more complex ratios such as 4 against 3, 5 against 6, and 5 against 7. The movement is marked forte until the last six bars when it moves between fortississimo and pianissimo. Even though the dynamics are constant, the forte is broken up by shifting accents throughout the movement. The overall volume of the movement increases naturally because of the constantly increasing density. Even though the movement employs multiple rhythmic patterns, it has the overarching idea of moving from complete order to complete disorder.

Iannis Xenakis (1922-2001) was equal parts composer, theorist, architect, and mathematician, which he combines together freely. Works such as Rebonds clearly demonstrate his revolutionary ideas on mathematic organization of music and how it relates to architecture. He utilizes many original techniques to achieve truly original sounding works that don't seem to follow from any specific tradition. He likens one of his methods of composition to the song of cicadas in a summer field. Their hundreds of isolated sounds, when observed as one, become a new sonic event. He uses stochastic (aleatory music based on mathematical formulae) composition to create these sonic events frequently in his orchestral works. He also created another specialized technique called "absorcescences", where a melodic line is broken into multiple strands, which are varied and layered upon each other. His
compositions are highly theoretical and employ various mathematical equations in addition to being rhythmically intricate, dense, and explosive in nature. While he has studied with composers such as Oliver Messiaen, his music seems to be almost completely devoid of external influences.

Prelude is a duet for two vibraphones by University of Iowa percussion professor emeritus, Thomas L. Davis. While the idea of having a two-vibraphone duet is quite unusual, the instruments are particularly well suited to the impressionistic music of Ravel. Ravel's Le Tombeau de Couperin receives beautiful treatment from Davis and its simplicity allows the musicality to shine through. The original work was composed as a piano suite to pay tribute to one of the most important 18th century French composers, François Couperin. Ravel later selected parts of the piano suite and arranged them for orchestra. Davis's arrangement is based on the orchestral version of the work.

Blue Too is a work of extreme rhythmic complexity and broad scope. It uses the drum set in a somewhat unconventional manner. Rather than using it to keep time or play a groove, with all four limbs acting independently to create polyrhythms, all four limbs work together to play a largely homorhythmic (one melodic line, as opposed to multiple lines occurring simultaneously) line that weaves throughout the staff for the duration of the work. In addition to the traditional subdivisions of a quarter note, such as 2, 3, and 4, Blue Too makes extensive use of unusual subdivisions such as 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, and 21. Even though the pulse is steady, there are implied accelerandos, decelerandos, and tempo changes, but they are carefully written out in meter using odd groupings of notes. Though the work never becomes groove oriented, Smith implies various grooves and drum set licks buried deep in the complex rhythms. He manipulates the typical jazz drum set vocabulary in such a way that it is present, but never obvious. In some ways, Blue Too can be seen as a multi percussion solo that happens to include all the elements of a traditional drum set and is played while sitting down. However, the frequent references to clichéd drum set licks show that it was indeed inspired by drum set music. Much like the music of Chopin, the work is meant to sound improvised, but is meticulously written out.

Stuart Saunders Smith (1948-) composes for all instruments, but considers himself a drummer at heart. He has earned a DMA in composition from the University of Illinois and has studied with Edward Miller, Salvatore Martirano, and Benjamin Johnston.

ONE⁴, commissioned in 1990 by Swiss percussionist Fritz Hauser, is a late addition to John Cage's percussion repertoire. It is a framework for improvisation and leaves the performer a great deal of freedom to create a radically different interpretation upon each performance. The score contains no actual notes. It consists entirely of blank "cells" with approximate indications of each cell's duration. There are two columns of cells, one for each hand, which contain one number that indicates which sound the performer is to use. The sounds available are numbered 1 through 10 and must be played only in cells containing the specified number. The durations are indicated in seconds, so the performer must monitor a stopwatch rather than set a traditional tempo. After six minutes and fifty-five seconds have passed, the work ends. The performer determines all rhythm, dynamics, and sound choices during the performance. The durations of cells sometimes overlap, allowing up to four cells to occur simultaneously. This leads to a complex range of options for the performer.

John Cage (1912-1992) was one of the most thought-provoking composers of the 20th century. He challenged people to find music everywhere in the world, from the song of a bird in the forest to the noise of a jackhammer in the heart of a city. He challenged people to take what some might consider ugly and find beauty in it. He challenged people to rethink their entire definition of what music really is. Cage would wonder, 'Must it be played by a traditional instrument by a musician and adhere to some definition of tonality or serialism, or could it be made by anybody, any time even without intentionally doing so?' He asked, "What is more musical? A truck driving by a factory, or a truck driving by a music school?" Cage contributed many works for a variety of instruments including those of his invention, such as the prepared piano, traditional instruments, or even found objects such as plant materials. He wrote many works for percussion, which are now classics and is, in part, responsible for shaping the future of the modern percussion ensemble. He pioneered many new methods of
composing such as chance operation, where the composer simply copies what fate has determined; and graphic notation, where pitches and rhythms are approximately notated, but ultimately determined by the performer. While he composed many works, which are precisely and traditionally notated, he also composed many works such as ONE⁴, which allow a different sonic experience with each performance.

Interplanetary Phase-Shifting Module was conceived as a combination of electronic jungle music with the live performance of drum set. The term Jungle is derived from a genre of electronic music called Drum 'n Bass. Drum 'n Bass is characterized by deep bass lines, driving drum sequences, and fast tempos ranging from 120 to more than 180 beats per minute. Jungle differs mostly in the treatment of the drums. Both use programmed drum tracks, but drum 'n bass tracks feature simpler beats with emphasis on beats 2 and 4. Jungle drum tracks feature a higher degree of complexity and randomness. Drum parts found in jungle tracks are usually highly engineered and use a wide variety of sound manipulation tools allowing the composer an infinite number of drum sounds to create unique beat patterns. The composer is attempting to recreate the sound and feel of these programmed drum tracks live, all at the same time. To facilitate this, the work is performed on a drum set featuring multiple snare drums, with tuning extending over a broad range, two bass drums, and a selection of cymbals. This allows the performer to create the effect of playing multiple drum sets at the same time.

The work is partially based on a song called Zombie Carousel by composer and performer Evan Torner. After composing the instrumental track, the synthesizer parts were recorded with an Alesis keyboard with a euro dance expansion card. From there, the waveforms for all the individual parts were edited using Bias Peak. Once the editing was done, the composer and University of Iowa percussion Professor Moore loaded all the samples into Digidesign ProTools to place them in the proper sequence. After the track was sequenced, they did some fine editing and added some digital effects to certain sounds to make them sound otherworldly. They also recorded some tracks using real instruments such as triangle, cymbals, and bells. This helped blur the line between the largely synthesized track and the acoustic drums. The bells should be easily recognizable, but the triangle and cymbal parts are very well disguised. Later, a variety of sound effects including explosions, missiles, whooshes, and various space ship sounds were added to give the work its character. The preproduction was done at the Wilson Recording Studio and most of the postproduction work was done at the University of Iowa Percussion Area Digital Recording Studio.

Smoke Gets in Your Eyes is a beautiful jazz ballad by Jerome Kern (1885-1945). It was originally composed for the Broadway musical, Roberta. After being made into a motion picture starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, it became one of Kern’s biggest hits and was popular with the swing bands of Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller. Over the years, it has been performed by artists ranging from Thelonious Monk, to Edith Piaf. Today’s rendition will be performed as a solo improvisation on the vibraphone.

Special thanks to Mark and Debbie Wilson, Professor Daniel Moore, Professor Jim Dreier, Professor L. Kevin Kastens, Ashley Jogerst, and Evan Torner, who all helped to make today’s performance possible.