When I began planning for my senior recital, I wanted to pick pieces that reflected my musical interests, they type of music I see myself playing in the future, and the people I’ve surrounded myself with in my time here at NIU. In my 4 years here, I’ve forged a special relationship with the percussion department and the New Music Ensemble, and these works represent that. With the exception of the Britten, all the works were written in the last 20 years and they represent emerging trends in minimalism and electroacoustic music, as well as collaboration between percussion and cello.

Benjamin Britten’s **Cello Suite No. 1, Op. 72** (1964) is a large, varied solo suite about 30 minutes in length altogether. In some spots it is reminiscent of Bach’s solo cello suites, but it also incorporates the extended techniques and shifting, hard-to-grasp tonalities that became more popular in the twentieth century. Britten utilizes some traditional forms: a Baroque-esque fugue in the *Fuga* movement with the cello constantly playing double stops and reacting to itself, a slow, operatic *Lamento* movement, and a dance-like *Serenata*. However, each of these movements, as well as the quiet but stoic *Marcia*, utilize techniques not found in the Baroque era, from completely pizzicato movements to col legno (playing with the wood of the bow), and a wide range of harmonics. They are also interspersed with three movements which Britten titles “Canto”. These movements serve as a textural break from the other more thematic movements, with slowly shifting chords building to a beautiful climax reminiscent of the choral music for which Britten is so famous. Seven of the nine movements will be presented tonight.

**Little Eye** (1999) by David Lang is both a stand-alone piece and the fifth and final movement of Lang’s “child”, a collection of pieces meant to draw upon Lang’s memories of his own childhood. In Lang’s own words,

> “child is my attempt to examine certain experiences as I remember (and misremember) them from my childhood. Each of the individual moments is in some way a memory of how I learned how to do something...I am not nostalgic for childhood, mine or anyone else's. It is not a point of child to show either how childhood is a time of great excitement of great disturbance, or that I miss it or that I suffered through it. What is most interesting to me, especially now that I have children of my own, is that childhood is the time when one learns how to think, how to feel, how to move forward”

In Little Eye, Lang recalls childhood car trips where time was spent by playing I Spy and staring out the car window at the ever-changing scenery. Like the way a landscape passes by, monotonous but ever-changing, the hypnotic cello part moves ever so gradually downwards while maintaining a consistent tempo and contour. It is accompanied by four percussion parts...
(originally specified by Lang as written for “four non-percussionists” due to the simplicity of the parts but performed tonight by four percussionists) with brake drums and otherwise open instrumentation. For tonight’s performance I chose glockenspiel, crotales and two vibraphones. Throughout the pieces the percussionists scrape the brake drums and gently hit their mallet instruments, providing a brief punctuation in the musical landscape as the cello descends downward into nothing.

*Please note that “Little Eye” will be performed in the dark.*

**Cello Counterpoint** (2003) is a 10-minute work by minimalist great Steve Reich written for cello and tape. The tape component of the piece consists of seven other pre-recorded cello parts which accompany and offset the live cellist’s part (hence the “counterpoint” aspect of the piece). The piece, originally written by Reich for the cellist Maya Beiser, is styled after his earlier guitar work Electric Counterpoint and also recalls a more recent work, Double Sextet (which I had the honor of performing at NIU in Fall 2014) in form and style. It’s laid out in three movements, all flowing into each other. The first and third are fast and loud, utilizing mixed meters to keep the listener intrigued. The second movement is slow and almost canonical, with one musical phrase repeated again and again by the solo cello which is echoed in various configurations by the other celli. As a whole, the work is fast-paced and exciting, utilizing the highest ranges of the cello and sharp, short bow strokes to make it sound percussive. The piece, while it may be minimalist in structure (with many short repeating motives) end up being quite expansive and complex.

In his composition 21 (2008), Andy Akiho expands the traditional perception of a duo by utilizing steel pan, cello, auxiliary percussion and electronics, all with only two players (and, in this case, one additional person controlling the electronic loop). In this piece the cellist is responsible for playing the cello with a variety of techniques (both arco, with the bow, and pizzicato, plucking) and playing the kick drum with a foot pedal. In the score, the cellist is also tasked with controlling the electronics (a pre-recorded loop of 9 bars recorded by the cellist and pannist ahead of time) but in tonight’s performance it will be controlled by a separate performer. The pannist plays a tenor pan with notes from C4 to E6 with both normal pan sticks and chopsticks and a small foot tambourine. As a whole, the piece is organized as a large theme and variations, with two motives introduced at the beginning of the piece which are repeated and expanded upon as the piece continues. Akiho also uses processes that are repeated throughout the piece, including rhythmic expansion, diminution and displacement, cross-rhythms and shifting tonal centers. All of these things combine to make a fun, energetic and incredibly difficult piece, which will close the concert tonight.

Enjoy!