

## Personnel

Evan Barberis, '26, *Whitefish, MT*

Kidron Kollin, '23, *Union, NJ*

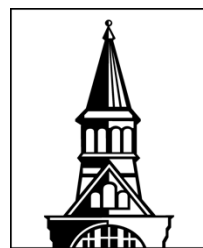
Luke Nawrocki, '24, *Andover, MA*

Michael O'Leary, '23, *Medfield, MA*

Josh Overton, '23, *Derry, NH*

Lang Robinson, '26, *Warrington, PA*

Haywood Schwartz, '24, *Andover, MA*



The University of Vermont  
School of the Arts  
Program in Music

Thursday, April 27, 2023, 7:30 p.m.  
Music Building Recital Hall

## UVM Percussion Ensemble

D. Thomas Toner, *conductor*

## Program

Estudo (1953)	Mozart Camargo Guarnieri
Dagara Welcome Song	arr. Sowah Mensah
Rondo Fantastica (2011)	Jared Spears
Guru-guru Clapping (2011)	Ito Yasuhide
Tarantella (1845)	Felix Mendelssohn/Tanner
Ayekoo (2013)	D. Thomas Toner
Study #2 from <i>Thirteen Studies for Instruments</i> (1977)	Frederic Rzewski
Septet (1975)	Dennis Griffin

**D. Thomas Toner** is a Professor in the Department of Music at the University of Vermont, where he teaches percussion and conducts the Concert Band, Percussion Ensemble, and Vermont Wind Ensemble. Dr. Toner was awarded both the Doctor of Musical Arts degree and the Performer's Certificate from the Eastman School of Music, a Master of Music degree and Artist Diploma from the Yale School of Music, and a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Massachusetts/Amherst. An active guest conductor, he has conducted wind groups at the District level throughout Vermont (he is one of the few people to have conducted the Wind Ensemble in each of Vermont's six District Music Festivals), New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, as well as the Vermont All-State Band, Vermont All-State Orchestra, and the New Hampshire All-State Percussion Ensemble (three times). He has appeared as guest conductor of the Yale Concert Band, the SUNY-Fredonia Percussion Ensemble, and the Green Mountain Mahler Festival Orchestra. As a percussionist, Dr. Toner's eclectic career has included performances with the Clifford Ball Orchestra (for the rock band Phish), before Princess Grace and Princess Caroline of Monaco, at a world music festival in Bali, Indonesia, and with a native troupe in a torrential lightning storm in Ghana, West Africa. Dr. Toner joined the Vermont Symphony Orchestra at the age of 18 and became Principal Percussionist a few years later. In addition to appearing as a soloist with the VSO, he has traveled to China three times, presenting recitals and masterclasses at the Inner Mongolian Arts College in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia. He is a featured percussionist on numerous recordings by the vocal group Counterpoint, conducted by the late Robert DeCormier. Dr. Toner is an endorser of Grover Pro Percussion, Sabian cymbals, and Vic Firth.

Please silence all electronic devices and refrain from the use of flash photography during the performance. Thank you!

## Program Notes

**Estudo** is a compositional study for percussion instruments. In addition to standard orchestral percussion instruments, the composer added an important role for the guiro, a popular instrument in his native Brazil. Mozart Camargo Guarnieri (1907-1993) was one of a group of composers who used traditional Brazilian folk instruments, rhythms, and scales in the composition of “serious” music.

The instruments we will perform on tonight are Ghanaian xylophones called the gyil, the national instrument of the Dagara people of northern Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Côte d’Ivoire. The gyil is tuned to a pentatonic (five-note) scale and uses gourd resonators to amplify the sound. The gourds traditionally have a hole in them that is covered by a spider’s membrane that give it a distinct nasal, buzzing quality. The piece has three parts: a melody, a “harmonic” melody that involves playing two notes at once, and a bass part (with variations). Once each part has entered the first melody part include improvisation. **Dagara Welcome Song** is arranged by Sowah Mensah, a Master Drummer of Ghana and one of the original “class” of UVM Marsh Professors. Sowah came to campus every semester during his six-year appointment, teaching classes, performing with UVM ensembles, and creating a legacy that endures to this day.

**Rondo Fantastica** is written for both melodic percussion (bells, chimes, vibes, xylophone, marimba, and timpani) and non-pitched percussion (drums and cymbals). In addition to using the non-pitched percussion to create rhythmic melodies, the piece features frequent shifts of meter as well as contemporary melodic and harmonic material with large leaps and some dissonance.

**Guru-guru clapping** is the second piece we’ve performed from the book *Guru-guru Percussion*. My colleague Prof. Yutaka Kono told me that in Japan “Guru-guru” refers to something that is rotating or turning round and round. In this case the initial eighth-note pattern is broken up among the players and rests are introduced that rotate around the group. Like several of the pieces on this program, only a basic skeleton is notated – the performers developed the overall form you’ll hear tonight.

Felix Mendelssohn’s **Tarantella**, an Italian folk dance, is a piano piece from his eighth book of *Songs Without Words*. This marimba ensemble arrangement was written by one of the pioneers in this field: Peter Tanner, Professor Emeritus of Percussion at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst. Tanner was a member of the Eastman Marimba Masters when they achieved national fame in the 1950's through appearances on television and radio.

**Ayekoo (“Welcome”)** is one of several pieces I've written that I refer to as "controlled improvisation". These pieces all have a fairly loose structure, few specific rhythms, options for instruments themselves, and space for solos. In our performance tonight we are using four drums of the Ewe people of Ghana: one set of four is played with the hands and the other set is struck with traditional sticks. **Ayekoo** is dedicated to my dear friend Sowah Mensah.

The American composer Frederic Rzewski wrote his *Thirteen Studies for Instruments* for a group of unspecified instruments. Like *Ayekoo*, the *Studies* can be described as “controlled improvisation” since Rzewski writes structures and instructions that encourage improvisation. In **Study No. 2** the twelve phrases may be played in any octave, at any speed, and in no particular order. The composer writes that the effect of the piece "should be something like calls being answered, or echoed, from a great distance."

In **Septet No. 2**, the composer combines elements of popular music with compositional techniques found in 20<sup>th</sup> Century classical music. For example, he uses instruments commonly found in popular music (guiro, timbales, and cowbell) as well as instruments common to classical music (snare drum, timpani, and bass drum). The suspended cymbal belongs to both worlds: it is used both as an accentuation of a single note, in a classical style, and to imitate the ride cymbal pattern typical of jazz. In addition to blurring the distinction between divisions of three and divisions of two, the composer uses another 20<sup>th</sup> Century compositional technique: metric modulation. In this case, the transition in and out of the slower speed of the 12/8 meter is achieved by changing the groupings of eighth notes from two to three (to slow down) and then three to two (to speed up). Both speeds occur at the same time near the end of the piece, where half the ensemble plays in 4/4 time with a division of two eighth notes, while the rest play in 6/4 with a division of three eighth notes.

- DTT