**Piece Title: Oriental**  
**Composer:** Lou Harrison  
**Performer:** Youngstown Percussion Collective

*Oriental* is a percussion trio believed to have been composed in 1940 by Lou Silver Harrison (b. 14 May 1917; d. 2 Feb. 2003) to accompany a movement of a dance suite by the noted dancer and choreographer, Lester Horton.

Both Harrison and Horton were on the faculty of the 1940 Mills College summer dance program, during which Horton created the dance work, *Something to Please Everybody* – a suite of dances that varied widely in style. Harrison composed the music for *Something to Please Everybody* which included the movements: *Inebria, Aesthetic Ecstacy, Occult, Dithyrambos, and Orientale*. As the manuscripts exist in the Library of Congress, *Lester Horton Collection*, all of the movements were initially scored for piano. Harrison appears to have rewritten the *Orientale* movement for percussion trio and altered the title to *Oriental*.

The *Lester Horton Collection* manuscript includes a complete score and set of parts. The score is in Harrison’s distinctive handwriting and interestingly shows a list of what appears to be “dance counts” on the final page. Additionally, the score is heavily edited with many measures marked out and some repeats added, presumably to accommodate ongoing changes in the choreography.

While this is Harrison’s shortest work for percussion, lasting just under two minutes, it is arguably one of his most sublime in terms of orchestration and economy of material. – Ron Coulter

**Piece Title: Changing Tensions**  
**Composer:** Franziska Boas  
**Performer:** Youngstown Percussion Collective

*Changing Tensions* was composed, or at least committed to paper in a fixed form, in 1939 by Franziska Marie Boas (b. 8 Jan. 1902; d. 22 Dec. 1988). *Changing Tensions* is scored for four percussionists in two movements with a total duration of approximately three-and-a-half minutes. Both movements, *I. Moderately Fast* and *II. Slow*, have relatively simple tripartite forms comprised primarily of layered ostinati.

Boas was an American dancer, educator, and an improviser, composer, and performer of percussion music. She is credited as a pioneer of dance therapy and with founding the first interracial school of dance. She was the daughter of renowned anthropologist Franz Boas and was a highly regarded disciple of the German dancers, Mary Wigman and Hanya Holm.

Boas developed a unique improvisation-based dance style and pedagogy influenced by cultures beyond Europe. Percussion playing was integrated in Boas’ dance practice,
primarily through improvisation based on predetermined musical motives related to the particular movement being explored, including an exercise titled *Changing Tensions*. She improvised, performed, and composed percussion music for her own choreography and for others, along with teaching and performing at the Bennington School of Dance in Vermont during the summers of 1937 and 1938. In 1939 the Bennington School of Dance was in residence at Mills College in Oakland, CA for the summer alongside members of the Cage Percussion Players: John and Xenia Cage, Margaret Jansen, and Doris Dennison.

On July 27, 1939 the Cage Percussion Players presented a concert at Mills College entitled, *Modern American Percussion Music*, which included Franziska Boas’ *Changing Tensions*, alongside works by Cage, William Russell, Lou Harrison, and Johanna M. Beyer. It is surmised that *Changing Tensions* was first notated as a fixed composition by Boas for this concert with the Cage Percussion Players. Boas’ daughter, Gertrud Michelson, wrote in an email to the author: “Franziska’s music was really meant to be improvised with and could go on and on, it wasn’t completely written out.” This is supported by the fact that Boas’ other eight titled percussion works all exist as incomplete sketches, suggesting that each is a set of motives to launch an improvisation in a certain direction with certain instruments.

The only complete score for *Changing Tensions* resides in the Northwestern University Music Library, *John Cage Collection, Series II. Notations Project, 1884–1978*. The score is in Boas’ handwriting on blue graph paper and additionally includes various individual parts in Boas’ hand. Also included is a complete set of parts in Cage’s hand. The Franziska Boas Collection at the Library of Congress contains an incomplete score and various parts in Boas’ hand. –Ron Coulter