

# Pyroclastic Steam (2011)

## *Program Notes*

**Pyroclastic Steam** was inspired by a 2012 trip to teach percussion at Kamehameha Schools in Honolulu, Hawaii. The beauty of the islands along with their seemingly improbable and precarious location in the middle of the Pacific sparked my interest in the volcanic origin of the islands, and in volcanoes in general. The piece is composed of four parts: Eruption, Aftermath, Synthesis, and Epilogue. In the first three sections, the music depicts the violent process of the islands' formation from molten lava to rock. The ensemble represents the different physical states of matter, moving from liquid to gas to solid.

While the first three parts are set in the distant past before anyone inhabited the islands, the Epilogue is set in present day, and is based on a very specific memory I have of my time there. Before each meal the students would gather to sing the doxology in Hawaiian outside of their cafeteria (which happened to be perched on top of a mountain). As I looked out at the island and listened to the austere beauty of their music, it seemed that our surroundings (the ocean, trees, and some nearby birds) were singing along with them. Standing on rock that was once fire, I was struck by the beauty of the present moment, all made possible by some of the most violent forces of nature imaginable.

*Pyroclastic Steam* was commissioned by Russell Ratterree and the Wylie Percussion Ensemble for their showcase concert at the 2012 Percussive Arts Society International Convention.

-Dave Hall