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SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

2016

12-6

# UW Modern Music Ensemble

Cristina L. Valdés, Director

presents

## Steve Reich

### An 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration

with special guests

UW Percussion Ensemble  
Bonnie Whiting, Director

Tuesday, December 6, 2016  
7:30 PM, Meany Theater

UW MUSIC  
2016-17 SEASON

NONCIRC CDS # 17,611-17,612

CD1-#17,613

PROGRAM

1 *remarks, Valdes*

2 PENDULUM MUSIC (1968, revised 1973) *5:41*  
Vijay Chalasani, Natalie Ham, Hexin Qiao, Alexander Tu  
Doug Niemela, technical director

3 DRUMMING, Part I (1971) *18:27*  
University of Washington Percussion Ensemble  
David Gaskey, Aidan Gold, David Norgaard, Emerson Wahl  
Bonnie Whiting, director

4 TRIPLE QUARTET (1998) *14:39*  
Erin Kelly & Halie Borrer, violins / Vijay Chalasani, viola / Isabella Kodama, cello  
Matt Stearns, sound engineer

INTERMISSION

CD2 #17,614

1 CLAPPING MUSIC (1972) *5:29*  
Vijay Chalasani, Isabella Kodama, Hexin Qiao, Alexander Tu

2 VERMONT COUNTERPOINT (1982) *9:18*  
Gemma Goday Díaz-Corrado, flute  
Matt Stearns, sound engineer

3 RADIO REWRITE (2012) *19:53*  
Erin Kelly & Halie Borrer, violins  
Vijay Chalasani, viola  
Chris Young, cello  
Natalie Ham, flute  
Alexander Tu, clarinet  
Emerson Wahl & Aidan Gold, vibraphones  
Hexin Qiao & Yimo Zhang, piano  
Tony Lefave, electric bass  
Mario Alejandro Torres, conductor

The University of Washington Modern Music Ensemble is excited to present an all-Steve Reich concert in celebration of the iconic 20th century composer's 80th birthday. Along with Philip Glass and Terry Riley, Reich's unique musical style and compositional voice helped shape the minimalistic movement. His techniques of phasing, tape loops, and rhythmic pulsing integrated into a static harmony creating a world of visceral thought that invites the mind to follow the process of unfolding music. Reich's influence spreads across genres and generations, from composers such as John Adams, Nico Muhly, and Michael Gordon, to pop-culture icons including David Bowie and Björk, to music producer Brian Eno, and to techno artists such as Carsten Nicolai, Richie Hawtin, and Nobukazu Takemura. As John Adams explained, "For him, pulsation and tonality were not just cultural artifacts. They were the lifeblood of the musical experience, natural laws. It was his triumph to find a way to embrace these fundamental principles and still create a music that felt genuine and new. He didn't reinvent the wheel so much as he showed us a new way to ride" (1997).

-Natalie Ham

STEVE REICH (b. 1936) is one of the first masters of what was later branded 'minimalism,' a style of repetitive music that emerged out of New York in the mid-1960s. Born in New York and raised there and in California, Reich graduated with honors in philosophy from Cornell University in 1957. Over the course of his college years, he studied composition with such notable composers as Hall Overton, William Bergsma, Vincent Persichetti, Luciano Berio, and Darius Milhaud. During the summer of 1970, with the help of a grant from the Institute for International Education, Reich studied drumming at the Institute for African Studies at the University of Ghana in Accra. In 1973 and 1974 he studied Balinese Gamelan Semar Pegulingan and Gamelan Gambang at the American Society for Eastern Arts in Seattle and Berkeley, California. From 1976 to 1977 he studied the traditional forms of cantillation (chanting) of the Hebrew scriptures in New York and Jerusalem.

While in California, Reich made the discovery that two machines playing identical loops of recorded speech would slowly move out of synchrony with each other, an element he later called 'phasing.' This not only led to his first acknowledged piece, *It's Gonna Rain* (1965), but also laid the foundation upon which his music would be based. Reich's career path has embraced not only aspects of Western Classical music, but the structures, harmonies, and rhythms of non-Western and American vernacular music, particularly jazz. He is also renowned for using recorded speech as an integral part of his music, specifically as "speech melody," a technique in which Reich notated short excerpts of speech into melodies and wove them in amongst the pre-recorded speech.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC, by Steve Reich (except where noted)

### PENDULUM MUSIC

In many ways you could describe PENDULUM MUSIC as audible sculpture. The objects involved are the swinging microphones and the loudspeakers. I always set them up quite clearly as sculpture. It was important that the speakers be laid flat on the floor, which is obviously not usual in concerts. You could also call PENDULUM MUSIC a kind of performance art. It can be performed best on small, inexpensive loudspeakers where you get a series of 'bird calls' and I much prefer that to hi-fi shriek. PENDULUM MUSIC should be short and amusing.

### DRUMMING, Part I

For one year, between the fall of 1970 and the fall of 1971, I worked on what turned out to be the longest piece I have ever composed. DRUMMING lasts from 55 to 75 minutes and is divided into four parts that are performed without pause. The first part, which the University of Washington Percussion Ensemble performs tonight and spans about twenty minutes, is for four pairs of tuned bongo drums, stand-mounted and played with sticks.

Part I features several process-based musical procedures you can hear (and see) unfold. The movement begins with a unison linear additive build to the basic rhythmic pattern used in all of DRUMMING. This pattern undergoes changes of phase position, pitch, and timbre, but all the performers play this pattern, or some part of it, throughout the entire piece. Soon, you will hear the first of several phases. While one percussionist keeps the initial tempo, another speeds up ever so slightly which causes the two to become out-of-sync for a moment before the musician playing the faster tempo arrives one beat ahead of their partner.

After most phases, you'll hear bursts of soloistic material from two musicians. While first playing the drums during the process of composition, I found myself sometimes singing with them, using my voice to imitate the sounds they made. This idea generated the process of performing the "resultant patterns" on a second set of drums. By exactly imitating the sound of the phased drummers and by gradually fading the patterns in and out, the musicians cause them to slowly rise to the surface of the music and then fade back into it, allowing the listener to hear these patterns, along with many others, actually sounding in the instruments.

I am often asked what influence my visit of Africa in summer of 1970 had on DRUMMING. The answer is confirmation. It confirmed my intuition that acoustic instruments could be used to produce music that was genuinely richer in sound than that produced with electronic instruments, as well as confirming my natural inclination towards percussion (I became a drummer at the age of 14).

-adapted and edited for performance of DRUMMING Part I, B. Whiting 11/2016

### TRIPLE QUARTET

TRIPLE QUARTET is for three string quartets. For Kronos (or any other single string quartet) to perform the piece they must pre-record quartets two and three and then play the quartet one part along with the pre-recorded tape. Alternatively, the piece can be played by 12 or more string players with no tape. The piece is in three movements (fast-slow-fast) and is organized harmonically on four dominant chords in minor keys a minor third apart: E minor, G minor, B<sup>b</sup> minor, C<sup>#</sup> minor, and then returning to E minor to form a cycle. The first movement goes through this harmonic cycle twice with a section about one minute long on each of the four dominant chords. The result is a kind of variation form. Rhythmically the first movement has the second and third quartet playing interlocking chords while the first quartet plays longer melodies in canon between the first violin and viola against the second violin and cello. The slow movement is more completely contrapuntal with a long slow melody in canon eventually in all 12 voices. It stays in E minor throughout. The third movement resumes the original fast tempo and maintains the harmonic chord cycle, but modulates back and forth between keys more rapidly. The final section of the movement is in the initial key of E minor, and there the piece finally cadences. TRIPLE QUARTET was commissioned by and is dedicated to the Kronos Quartet.

### CLAPPING MUSIC

Starting in 1971 my ensemble began touring Europe. We would carry 2000 pounds of loudspeakers, amplifiers, drums, marimbas, glockenspiels, electric organs, microphones, and so on. In 1972 I composed CLAPPING MUSIC to create a piece of music that would need no instruments beyond the human body. At first I thought it would be a phase piece, but this proved inappropriate since it introduced a difficulty (phasing) that seemed inconsistent with such a simple way of producing sound. The solution was to have one part remain fixed, repeating the pattern throughout, while the second moves abruptly, after a number of repeats, from unison to one beat ahead, and so on, until it is back in unison with the first. It can thus be difficult to hear that the second performer is in fact always playing the same pattern as the first, though starting in a different place.

### VERMONT COUNTERPOINT

VERMONT COUNTERPOINT (1982) was commissioned by flutist Ransom Wilson and is dedicated to Betty Freeman. It is scored for three alto flutes, three flutes, three piccolos and one solo part all pre-record on tape, plus a live solo part. The live soloist plays alto flute, flute and piccolo and participates in the ongoing counterpoint as well as more extended melodies. The piece could be performed by eleven flutists but is intended primarily as a solo with tape. The duration is approximately ten minutes. In that comparatively short time four sections in four different keys, with the third in a slower tempo, are presented. The compositional techniques used are primarily building up canons between short repeating melodic patterns by substituting notes for rests and then playing melodies that result from their combination. These resulting melodies or melodic patterns then become the basis for the following section as the other surrounding parts in the contrapuntal web fade out. Though the

techniques used include several that I discovered as early as 1967 the relatively fast rate of change (there are rarely more than three repeats of any bar), metric modulation into and out of a slower tempo, and relatively rapid changes of key may well create a more concentrated and concise impression.

## RADIO REWRITE

Over the years composers have used pre-existing music (folk or classical) as material for new pieces of their own. This was particularly notable from the beginning of the 15th to the end of the 17th century when over forty settings of the Mass using the tune *L'homme armé* as its point of departure were written by composers Dufay, Ockeghem, Josquin des Pres, and Palestrina among others. *L'homme armé* was a popular secular song, yet writing a Mass was similar in scope then to writing a symphony in the classical or romantic period. Much later in the 19th century, Brahms wrote *Variations on a Theme of Haydn* and in the 20th century we find Stravinsky reworking the music of Pergolesi's for his own *Pulcinella*. **RADIO REWRITE**, along with *Proverb* (Perotin) and *Finishing the Hat—Two Pianos* (Sondheim), is my modest contribution to this genre. Now, in the early 21st century, we live in an age of remixes where musicians take audio samples of other music and remix them into audio of their own. Being a composer who works with musical notation I chose to reference two songs from the rock group Radiohead for an ensemble of musicians playing non rock instruments. The two songs chosen were *Everything in its Right Place* and *Jigsaw Falling into Place*. The story is as follows: In September 2010 I was in Krakow for a festival of my music. One of the featured performers was Jonny Greenwood of Radiohead who had prepared all the backing tracks for my piece *Electric Counterpoint* and then played electric guitar live against those tracks in concert. It was a great performance and we began talking. I found his background as a violist and his present active role as a composer extremely interesting when added to his major role in such an important and innovative rock group. Even Festival director Filip Berkowitz suggested I listen to Radiohead. When I returned home I made it a point to go online and listen to their music and the two songs mentioned above stuck in my head. It was not my intention to make anything like 'variations' on these songs, but rather to draw on their harmonies and sometimes melodic fragments and work them into my own piece. This is what I have done. As to actually hearing the original songs, the truth is—sometimes you hear them and sometimes you don't. **RADIO REWRITE** is in five movements played without pause. The first, third and fifth are fast and based on 'Jigsaw' and the second and fourth are slow and based on 'Everything.' It was completed in August 2012.

## Director Biographies

Considered one of today's foremost interpreters of contemporary music, pianist CRISTINA VALDÉS is known for presenting innovative concerts. She has performed across four continents and in venues such as Lincoln Center, Le Poisson Rouge, Miller Theatre, Jordan Hall, and the Kennedy Center. An avid chamber musician and collaborator, Cristina has toured extensively with the Bang On a Can "All Stars", and has performed with the Seattle Chamber Players, the Mabou Mines Theater Company, the Parsons Dance Company, and Antares. She has also been a featured performer on both the Seattle Symphony's Chamber Series and [UNTITLED] concerts. Cristina has appeared as a soloist with the Seattle Symphony, Johns Hopkins Symphony Orchestra, the Binghamton Philharmonic, the Seattle Philharmonic, the Eastman BroadBand, and the Stony Brook Symphony Orchestra. Cristina holds degrees from the New England Conservatory and SUNY Stony Brook, and is currently an Artist-in-Residence at the University of Washington.

BONNIE WHITING performs and commissions new experimental music for percussion, specializing in projects involving non-traditional notation, interdisciplinary performance, improvisation, and the speaking percussionist. In 2010 Whiting joined red fish blue fish percussion group and the Bang on a Can All-Stars in a California tour of Steve Reich's landmark masterpiece Music for Eighteen Musicians. This tour culminated in a performance at Walt Disney Concert Hall as part of the LA Philharmonic's Green Umbrella Series with the composer on the sound board. For tonight's performance of DRUMMING, she's indebted to Bob Becker (an original percussionist with Steve Reich and Musicians) for his help and instruction clarifying authentic performance practice during a collaborative performance at the Banff Centre in 2009. Whiting is Chair of Percussion Studies and Artist in Residence at the University of Washington.