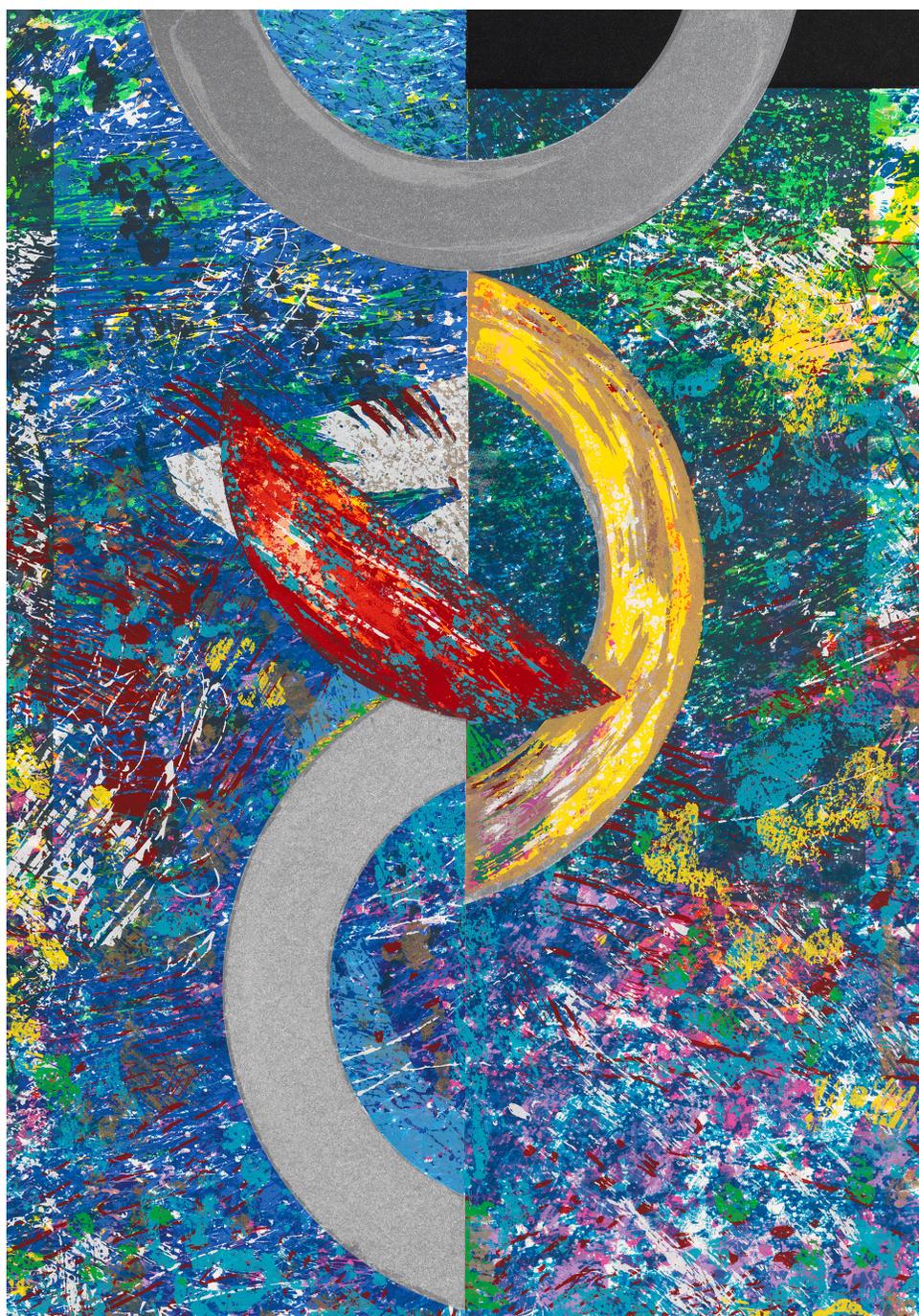


77TH SEASON OF

CONCERTS

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART | FEBRUARY 10, 2019



PROGRAM



Photo by Evan Monroe Chapman

Sō Percussion

Eric Cha-Beach

Josh Quillen

Adam Sliwinski

Jason Treuting

The Keyboard Re-imagined

February 10, 2019 | 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court

Elliot Cole (b. 1984)

Selections from *Postludes for Bowed Vibraphone* (2012)

Vijay Iyer (b. 1971)

TORQUE (2018)

Dan Trueman (b. 1968)

Selections from *Nostalgic Synchronic*, for prepared digital piano (2017)

I. Sinking Song

II. Sister Song

III. Summoning Song

IV. Seizing Song

V. Sad Song

Jason Treuting (b. 1977)

Nine Numbers 4 (2017)

Suzanne Farrin (b. 1976)

a diamond in the square (2019)

Caroline Shaw (b. 1982)

Taxidermy (2012)

Donnacha Dennehy (b.1970)

Broken Unison (2017)

THE MUSICIANS

“With innovative multi-genre original productions, sensational interpretations of modern classics, and an exhilarating blend of precision and anarchy, rigor and bedlam” (*New Yorker*), Sō Percussion has redefined the scope and vital role of the modern percussion ensemble.

Sō’s repertoire ranges from “classics” of the twentieth century, by such composers as John Cage, Steve Reich, and Iannis Xenakis, to commissioning and advocating works by contemporary composers such as Caroline Shaw, David Lang, Steve Mackey, and Paul Lansky, to distinctively modern collaborations with artists who work outside the classical concert hall, including vocalist Shara Nova, electronic duo Matmos, groundbreaking Dan Deacon, legendary drummer Bobby Previte, jam-band kings Medeski, Martin, and Wood, Wilco’s Glenn Kotche, choreographer Shen Wei, and composer and leader of the rock band National, Bryce Dessner.

Sō Percussion musicians also compose and perform their own works, ranging from standard concert pieces to immersive, multi-genre programs, including *Imaginary City*, *Where (we) Live*, and *A Gun Show*, which was presented in a multi-performance presentation as part of BAM’s 2016 Next Wave Festival. In these concert-length programs, Sō employs a distinctively twenty-first-century synthesis of original music, artistic collaboration, visual art, and theatrical production values in a powerful exploration of their own unique and personal creative experiences.

In the current season, Sō performs the New York premiere of David Lang’s *man made* with Louis Langrée and the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra; tours a new work by Caroline Shaw with Dawn Upshaw and Gil Kalish; returns to Carnegie Hall with the JACK Quartet in a program of new works by Donnacha Dennehy and Dan Trueman; and tours the United Kingdom with its original *From Out a Darker Sea*, which explores the community and culture of English coal-mining country.

The group’s recent highlights include an acclaimed “Trilogy” portrait at the Lincoln Center Festival; appearances at Bonnaroo, the Eaux Claires Festival, Mass MoCA, and TED 2016; international tours to Poland and Ireland; performances of *man made* with Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic; Bryce Dessner’s *Music for Wood and Strings* at the Barbican in London; and an original score for a live performance and broadcast of WNYC’s Radiolab with Jad Abumrad and Robert Krulwich at BAM.

Rooted in the belief that music is an essential facet of human life, a social bond, and an effective tool in creating agency and citizenship, Sō Percussion enthusiastically pursues social and community outreach. Examples include their Brooklyn Bound presentations of younger composers; commitments to purchasing offsets to compensate for carbon-heavy activities such as touring travel; and leading their Sō Percussion Summer Institute (SōSI) students in an annual food-packing drive, providing as many as 25,000 meals for the Crisis Center of Mercer County.

Sō Percussion is the Edward T. Cone Ensemble-in-Residence at Princeton University, where the group offers educational work and annual concert series. The ensemble also codirects the percussion department at the Bard College-Conservatory of Music and runs SōSI, which provides college-age composers and percussionists immersive exposure to collaboration and project development. In 2018, SōSI celebrated its tenth anniversary.

PROGRAM NOTES

Postludes for Bowed Vibraphone

Postludes is a book of eight pieces for a familiar instrument played in a new way. Four players, with eight double-bass bows, play interlocking lines on a single vibraphone. The interplay of bows and hands tapping, muting, and touching harmonics, weaves an intimate and intricate counterpoint that is as beautiful to watch as it is to hear—fragile, tender, and haunting. *Program note by the composer Elliot Cole*

TORQUE

At the piano, I listen for how the contortions of the hand can suggest the surges of a body in motion. In my trio music, I'm often evolving rhythmic shapes, shaping gestural patterns with an embodied resonance, and striving to evoke specific qualities of movement with our performed rhythms. Someone once compared us to the Flying Karamazov Brothers, with their coordinated, cyclical, antiphonal actions. I see the work of the rhythm section as a ritual of collective synchrony, aiming above all to generate a dance impulse for everybody in the room.

Torque, meaning a twisting force on a body, seems to appear for the listener at music's formal boundaries, when one movement type gives way to another. This piece for Sō Percussion invites the musicians to perform transformations that twist the music's temporal flow, bringing the micro-relational art of the rhythm section to this virtuosic quartet. *Program note by the composer Vijay Iyer*

Nostalgic Synchronic, for prepared digital piano

- I. Sinking Song
- II. Sister Song
- III. Summoning Song
- IV. Seizing Song
- V. Sad Song

Some of my favorite songs and tunes are terribly hard to sing. They seem tuneful but defy my efforts to sing them, leaving me in a somewhat embarrassing and inarticulate heap of grunting and muttering, with an occasional, sustained high note. I could make a list, but I trust (perhaps naively) that I am not alone in this experience, and that you all have songs that are similarly enticing and beguiling. Apart from the sense that these tunes are “melodic” in some way—even if they are hard to sing and their melodies perhaps even impossible to fully identify—they have other features that are enticing: their formal repetitions (one more chorus, please!), their singular moments (what a

great bridge!), and their surface characteristics (sheesh, I love those ornaments and blue notes, wish I could do that!).

In the process of writing this piece for possibly the most incredible contemporary music band imaginable—Sō Percussion and the JACK Quartet...*combined!*—I found myself thinking about “songs” in all of their mysterious and wonderful facets. While I think most of these pieces will be hard or impossible to sing, my hope is that they *feel* like songs in various ways, like something we might be able to sing in a parallel universe, or, more ambitiously, that they leave us wanting to sing them, even if we can't. Perhaps Yeats was on to something when, in his penultimate poem “Cuchulain Comforted,” he tells us, “Now we must sing and sing the best we can...Or driven from home and left to die in fear.” *Program note by the composer Dan Trueman*

Nine Numbers 4

Nine Numbers 4 is a mallet quartet for two marimbas and two vibraphones written for Sō Percussion. Inspired in some ways by Steve Reich's *Mallet Quartet*, this three-movement piece explores the bowed and struck sounds of these keyboard instruments. This piece is the fourth in a set of nine, which are sequenced from solo percussionist to nonet.

All of the pieces in *Nine Numbers* translate the 9-by-9 solutions of Sudoku puzzles into notes and rhythms. The number nine, with its three sets of three, contains many wonderful symmetries and fractal-like characteristics. It allows for nesting structures at the largest and smallest levels.

In the pieces for fewer players, I sometimes ask the performers to help generate the score. In the solo, duo, and trio, the performers find their own puzzle solutions, and the score is a set of instructions to translate the numbers into music. In this quartet, I present the ensemble with a finished score based on my realization of the Sudoku. Different scores will exist for different ensembles. Most of the recognizable elements of the pieces will remain fixed, but surface details can change depending on the Sudoku.

The Sudoku for Sō Percussion's version of *Nine Numbers 4*:

192 456 378

734 928 156

658 731 924

247 695 831

386 147 592

915 283 467

421 369 785

569 874 213

873 512 649

Program note by the composer Jason Treuting

a diamond in the square

The diamond in the square is a quilting pattern consisting of two objects. The inner square is rotated 45 degrees to become a diamond, while the other one forms its border. In Amish communities, the colors are usually bold and solid, giving way to intricate, nearly invisible stitching patterns that loop and connect the entire piece. The thread seems to create an invisible language, the contrasts of which are created through subtle changes in texture rather than through color or pattern. You must adjust your eyes to see them. Diamonds in the square are found all over American folk art quilting. Probably like many others, I recognized the image before I knew how to name it. And perhaps like many women, I was raised in the atmospheres of women's work—the body hunched over a piece, the collecting and discussion of fabrics, yarn, and needles, and the meditation of the mind over repetitive tasks. I loved to participate in these projects, though I did not have the same skills as other women in my family. They could mend, create, and transform objects (and people) through interwoven fibers. In this work, the fibers are given sound. A collection of strings, from yarns to lobster cord, move through the piano as if on a loom. The workers are hunched over their art and slowing separating from their physical bodies, which is exactly what I saw my grandmothers do, as they sat in the evenings with their crocheting, their knitting, and their quilting. *Program note by the composer Suzanne Farrin*

Taxidermy

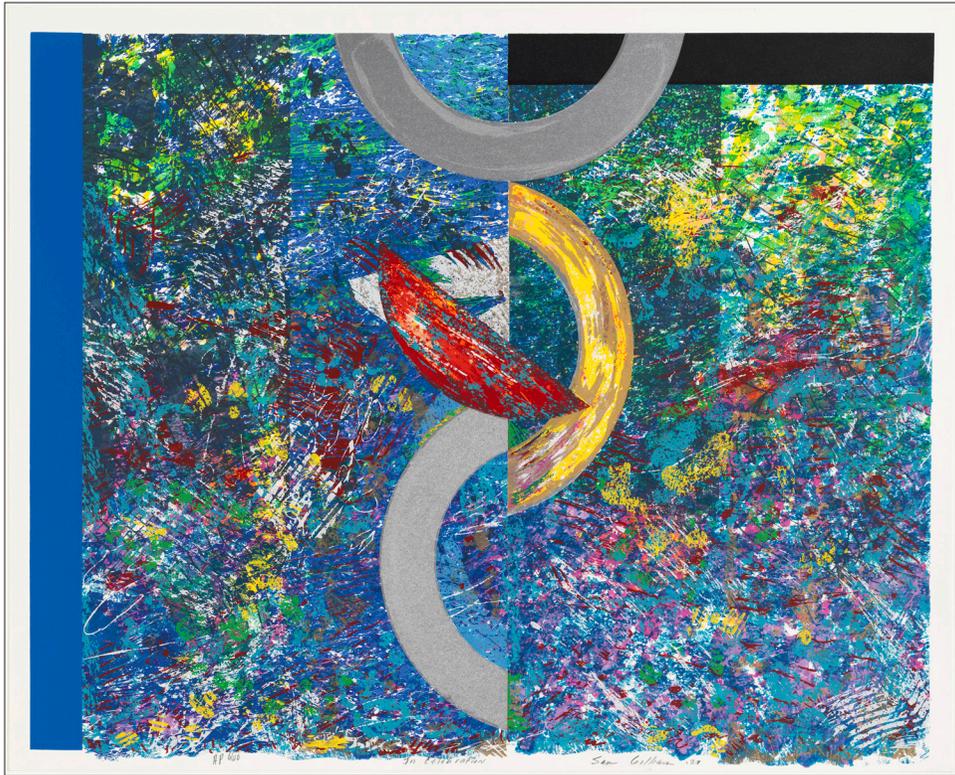
Why “Taxidermy”? I just find the word strangely compelling, and it evokes something grand, awkward, epic, silent, funny, and just a bit creepy—all characteristics of this piece, in a way. The repeated phrase toward the end—“the detail of the pattern is movement”—is a little concept I love trying (and failing) to imagine. It comes from T.S. Eliot's beautiful and perplexing poem “Burnt Norton,” and I've used it before in other work, as a kind of whimsical existentialist mantra. *Program note by the composer Caroline Shaw*

Broken Unison

With *Broken Unison*, I took the opportunity—joyfully I might add—to reengage with questions of abstract compositional technique, following a period of writing more semantically charged music for operas and “kind-of” operas. The work is full of various ways of disrupting unisons, from antiphonal interchanges through staggered chorales, to a fairly dizzying use of canons of various hues, and from the airily spaced to the breathily close, so close that at times the canons veer towards a kind of fractured unison. I became even more ambitious with some of these ferociously close canons after hearing how well the Sō Percussion players executed them during early drafts of the piece. Paradoxically, perhaps, as the music tends more toward actual unisons in its latter parts, its mood becomes progressively broken and dark. Maybe there is a semantic undertone after all.

I think of the dialogue between pattern and texture in this piece as a kind of magic realism. I limited myself strictly to equal-tempered, pitched instruments, despite the fact that much of my recent music plays with microtones to create a kind of harmony/timbre based on the overtone series. Here, instead, the very close canons transform in and out of something akin to a jingly-jangly, pulsating resonance, the overtones spilling over each other.

Strictly in nine sections, the piece really separates into three larger parts—each cumulatively made up of a greater number of smaller sections (two, three, and four, respectively—and each demarcated by the varied iteration of a type of material defined by the employment of very bright, close canons starting in C and then slipping away semitonally in a manner influenced by the harmonic language of Gesualdo's later music. *Program note by the composer Donnacha Dennehy*



Sam Gilliam, *In Celebration*, 1987, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the Smithsonian Resident Associate Program

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Seventh Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

Unless otherwise noted, concerts are held in the West Building, West Garden Court.

Lara St. John, violin

Matt Herskowitz, piano

Featuring works by Beethoven, Paranosic, Kennedy, Ravel, and Gershwin/Herskowitz
February 17, 3:30

Armonia Nova

Sound Sketches

February 22, 12:10

West Building Lecture Hall

Curtis on Tour: Curtis Opera

Theatre Vocal Quartet

Featuring *Liebeslieder Waltzes* by Brahms
February 24, 3:30

Noah Getz and Friends

Absolute Art and Jazz between the Wars

Featuring works by Webern, Bartók, and Schulhoff

March 3, 3:30

Peter Vinograde, piano

J.S. Bach's *Seven Keyboard Toccatas*

March 10, 3:30

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

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