

# ALARM WILL SOUND

**CONDUCTOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR** Alan Pierson

**COMPOSER** Steve Reich

**FLUTE** Erin Lesser

**CLARINETS** Elisabeth Stimpert, Eileen Mack

**PERCUSSION** Chris P. Thompson, Matt Smallcomb, Wesley Sumpter,  
Sean Ritenauer, Haruka Fujii

**PIANO** John Orfe, Timo Andres, Vicky Chow

**VIOLIN** Courtney Orlando, Patti Kilroy

**VIOLA** Gillian Gallagher

**CELLO** Stefan Freund

**ELECTRIC BASS** Miles Brown

**VOICE** Courtney Orlando, Hai-Ting Chinn, Tiana Sorenson, Anika Kildegaard

**AUDIO ENGINEER** Daniel Neumann

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** Gavin Chuck

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ARTISTIC PLANNING** Peter Ferry

**PRODUCTION MANAGER** Jason Varvaro

**GENERAL MANAGER** Annie Toth

**DEVELOPMENT MANAGER** Tracy Mendez

**DIRECTOR OF MARKETING** Michael Clayville

**LIBRARIAN** Bill Kalinkos

**PROGRAM COORDINATOR** Uday Singh

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Zellerbach Theatre

Sunday, Apr 14 @ 7 PM

There will be an intermission.



Media support for this performance provided by WRTI 90.1 fm.

## PROGRAM

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*Vermont Counterpoint*

*Clapping Music*

*Radio Rewrite\**

### Intermission

*Music for 18 Musicians*

\*written for Alarm Will Sound

## PROGRAM NOTES BY STEVE REICH

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### ***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-recorded 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.

## **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.

## **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 folk 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 Pergolesi for his own *Pulcinella*. *Radio Rewrite*, along with *Proverb* (Perotin) and *Finishing the Hat—Two Pianos* (Sondheim), are 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.

## ***Music for 18 Musicians***

The first sketches for *Music for 18 Musicians* were made in May 1974 and it was completed in March 1976. Although its steady pulse and rhythmic energy related to many of my earlier works, its instrumentation, harmony and structure are new.

As to instrumentation, *Music for 18 Musicians* is new in the number and distribution of instruments.

There is more harmonic movement in the first five minutes of *Music for 18 Musicians* than in any other work of mine prior to 1976. The movement from chord to chord is often a re-voicing, inversion or relative minor or major of a previous chord—staying within the key signatures of three or four sharps throughout. Nevertheless, within these limits, harmonic movement plays a more important role in this 1976 piece than in any earlier work of mine. It opened the door to further harmonic development in the more than 45 years since. Rhythmically, there are basically two different kinds of time occurring simultaneously in *Music for 18 Musicians*. The first is that of a regular rhythmic pulse in the pianos and mallet instruments that continues throughout the piece. The second is the rhythm of the human breath in the voices and wind instruments. The entire opening and closing sections, plus part of all the sections in between, contain pulses by the voices and winds. They take a full breath and sing or play pulses of particular notes for as long as their breath will comfortably sustain them. The breath is the measure of the duration of their pulsing. This combination of one breath after another, gradually washing up like waves against the constant rhythm of the pianos and mallet instruments, is something I have not heard before and would like to investigate further. The structure of *Music for 18 Musicians* is based on a cycle of 11 chords played at the very beginning of the piece and repeated at the end. All the instruments and voices play or sing pulsing notes within each chord. Instruments (like the strings) that do not have to breathe nevertheless follow the rise and fall of the breath by following the breath patterns of the bass clarinet. Each chord is held for the duration of two breaths, and the next chord is gradually introduced and so on, until all 11 are played and the ensemble returns to the first chord.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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**Alarm Will Sound** is a 20-member band committed to innovative performances and recordings of today's music. They have established a reputation for performing demanding music with energetic skill. *The New York Times* says that Alarm Will Sound is "one of the most vital and original ensembles on the American music scene."

With classical skill and unlimited curiosity, Alarm Will Sound takes on music from a wide variety of styles. Its repertoire ranges from European to American works, from the arch-modernist to the pop-influenced. The group itself includes many composer-performers, which allows for an unusual degree of insight into the creation and performance of new work.

Alarm Will Sound is the resident ensemble at the Mizzou International Composers Festival. Held each July at the University of Missouri in Columbia, the festival features eight world premieres by early-career composers.

Alarm Will Sound may be heard on 18 recordings, including *For George Lewis | Autoshchediasms*, the group's most recent release featuring music of Tyshawn Sorey. The genre-bending, critically acclaimed *Acoustica* features live-performance arrangements of music by electronica guru Aphex Twin.

In 2016, Alarm Will Sound in a co-production with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, presented the world premiere of the staged version of Donnacha Dennehy's *The Hunger* at the BAM Next Wave Festival and the Touhill Performing Arts Center.

In 2013-14, Alarm Will Sound served as artists-in-residence at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. During that season, the ensemble presented four large ensemble performances at the Met, including two site-specific productions staged in museum galleries (*Twinned*, a collaboration with Dance Heginbotham and *I Was Here I Was I*, a new theatrical work by Kate Soper and Nigel Maister). In 2011, at Carnegie Hall, the group presented *1969*, a multimedia event that used music, images, text and staging to tell the compelling story of great musicians—John Lennon, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Paul McCartney, Luciano Berio, Yoko Ono and Leonard Bernstein—striving for a new music and a new world amidst the turmoil of the late 1960s.

Alarm Will Sound has been presented by Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, (le) Poisson Rouge, Miller Theatre, Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Kitchen, the Bang on a Can Marathon, Disney Hall, Kimmel Center, Library of Congress, the Walker Arts Center, Cal Performances, Stanford Lively Arts, Duke Performances and the Warhol Museum. International tours include the Holland Festival, Sacrum Profanum, Moscow's Art November, St. Petersburg's Pro Arte Festival and the Barbican. The members of the ensemble have also demonstrated a commitment to education through residency performances and activities at the Eastman School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, Princeton University, New York University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. [alarmwillsound.com](http://alarmwillsound.com)

### **Alan Pierson** (Conductor and Artistic Director)

Alan Pierson has been praised as "a dynamic conductor and musical visionary" by *The New York Times*, "a young conductor of monstrous skill" by *Newsday*, "gifted and electrifying" by the *Boston Globe* and "one of the most exciting figures in new music today" by *Fanfare*. In addition to his work as artistic director of Alarm Will Sound, he has served as Artistic Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic and guest conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra, the London Sinfonietta, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Steve Reich Ensemble, Carnegie Hall's Ensemble ACJW, the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, the New World Symphony and the Silk Road Project, among other ensembles. He is co-director of the Northwestern University Contemporary Music Ensemble and has been a visiting faculty conductor at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, the Eastman School of Music and at the Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity. Pierson has collaborated with major composers and performers, including Yo Yo Ma, Steve Reich, Dawn Upshaw, Osvaldo Golijov, John Adams, Augusta Read Thomas, David Lang, Michael Gordon, La Monte Young and choreographers Christopher Wheeldon, Akram Khan and Elliot Feld. Pierson received bachelor's degrees in physics and music from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a doctorate in conducting from the Eastman School of Music. He has recorded for Nonesuch Records, Cantaloupe Music, Sony Classical and SweetSpot DVD.

### **Steve Reich** (Composer)

Steve Reich has been called "the most original musical thinker of our time" (*The New Yorker*) and "among the great composers of the century." (*The New York Times*) Starting in the 1960s, his pieces *It's Gonna Rain*, *Drumming*, *Music for 18 Musicians*, *Tehillim*, *Different Trains* and many others helped shift the aesthetic center of musical composition worldwide away from extreme complexity and towards rethinking pulsation and tonal attraction in new ways. He continues to influence younger generations of composers and mainstream musicians and artists all over the world.

*Double Sextet* won the Pulitzer Prize in 2009 and *Different Trains*, *Music for 18 Musicians* and an album of his percussion works have all earned Grammy® Awards. He received the Praemium Imperiale in Tokyo, the Polar Music Prize in Stockholm, the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale, the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge award in Madrid, the Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall and the Gold Medal in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He has been named Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France and awarded honorary doctorates by the Royal College of Music in London, the Juilliard School in New York and the Liszt Academy in Budapest, among others.

One of the most frequently choreographed composers, several noted choreographers have created dances to his music, including Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker, Jirí Kylián, Jerome Robbins, Justin Peck, Wayne McGregor, Benjamin Millepied and Christopher Wheeldon.

Reich's documentary video opera works—*The Cave* and *Three Tales*, done in collaboration with video artist Beryl Korot—opened new directions for music theatre and have been performed on four continents. His work *Quartet*, for percussionist Colin Currie, sold out two consecutive concerts at Queen Elizabeth Hall in London shortly after tens of thousands at the Glastonbury Festival heard Jonny Greenwood (of Radiohead) perform *Electric Counterpoint*, followed by the London Sinfonietta performing his *Music for 18 Musicians*. "There's just a handful of living composers who can legitimately claim to have altered the direction of musical history, and Steve Reich is one of them." (*The Guardian*)

### **Acknowledgements**

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# UPCOMING MUSIC

**Ruth Naomi Floyd**  
*Are We Yet Somehow Alive?*  
**APR 25**

**NDR Bigband &  
Kinan Azmeh**  
*Flow*  
**MAY 10**

**Madeleine Peyroux**  
**MAY 12**

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