

21C Music Festival

Sō Percussion: Amid the Noise

Saturday, January 19, 2019 at 8:00pm

This is the 905th concert in Koerner Hall

Sō Percussion

Eric Cha-Beach

Josh Quillen

Adam Sliwinski

Jason Treuting

Glenn Gould School 21C Ensemble

PROGRAM

Vijay Iyer: *TORQUE* (Canadian premiere)

Caroline Shaw: *Taxidermy* (Canadian premiere)

Donnacha Dennehy: *Broken Unison* (Canadian premiere)

INTERMISSION

Jason Treuting: *amid the noise* (Canadian premiere)

Vijay Iyer

Composer

Composer-pianist Vijay Iyer was named *Downbeat* magazine's Jazz Artist of the Year for 2012, 2015, 2016, and 2018, and Artist of the Year in *Jazz Times*' Critics' Poll and Readers' Poll for 2017. He received a 2013 MacArthur Fellowship, a 2012 Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, and a 2011 Grammy Award nomination. He has released 21 albums, including *Far From Over* (ECM, 2017), with the Vijay Iyer Sextet, which topped numerous year-end critics polls and was cited by *Rolling Stone* as 2017's jazz album to beat; *A Cosmic Rhythm with Each Stroke* (ECM, 2016) in duo with legendary composer-trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith, named Best New Music by *Pitchfork*; *Break Stuff* (ECM, 2015) with the Vijay Iyer Trio, winner of the German Record Critics' Award for Album of the Year; the live score to the film *Radhe Radhe: Rites of Holi* (ECM, 2014) by filmmaker Prashant Bhargava; and *Holding it Down: The Veterans' Dreams Project* (Pi Recordings, 2013), his third politically searing collaboration with poet-performer Mike Ladd, named Album of the Year in the *Los Angeles Times*.

Iyer's compositions have been commissioned and premiered by Bang on a Can All-Stars, The Silk Road Ensemble, Ethel Brentano Quartet, Brooklyn Rider, Imani Winds, American Composers Orchestra, International Contemporary Ensemble, Chamber Orchestra Leopoldinum, Matt Haimowitz, and Jennifer Koh. Iyer is the Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of the Arts at Harvard University and the director of the Banff International Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music.

***TORQUE* (2018)**

Commissioned by Andrew W. Siegel

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 am 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, 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 them to perform transformations that twist the music's temporal flow, bringing the micro-relational art of the rhythm section to this virtuosic quartet. - Vijay Iyer

Caroline Shaw

Composer

Caroline Adelaide Shaw is a New York-based musician – vocalist, violinist, composer, and producer – who performs in solo and collaborative projects. She is the youngest recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music, for *Partita for 8 Voices*, written for the Grammy Award-winning Roomful of Teeth, of which she is a member. Recent commissions include new works for the Dover Quartet, the Calidore Quartet, the Aizuri Quartet, FLUX Quartet, Brooklyn Rider, Anne Sofie von Otter, The Crossing, Roomful of Teeth, yMusic, ACME, ICE, A Far Cry, Philharmonia Baroque, the Baltimore Symphony, and Carnegie Hall's Ensemble Connect. In the 2017–18 season, her new works were premiered by Renée Fleming with Inon Barnatan, Dawn Upshaw with Sō Percussion and Gil Kalish, the Orchestra of St. Luke's with John Lithgow, the Britten Sinfonietta, TENET with the Metropolis Ensemble, the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, and Luciana Souza with A Far Cry. Future seasons will include a new piano concerto for Jonathan Biss with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and a new work for the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Caroline Shaw's scoring of visual work includes the soundtrack for the feature film *To Keep the Light* as well as collaborations with Kanye West. She studied at Yale, Rice, and Princeton, and she has held residencies at Dumbarton Oaks, the Banff Centre, Music on Main, and the Vail Dance Festival. She loves the colour yellow, otters, Beethoven opus 74, Mozart opera, Kinhaven, the smell of rosemary, and the sound of a janky mandolin.

Taxidermy (2012)

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 "Burnt Norton" (from the *Four Quartets*), and I have used it before in other work – as a kind of whimsical existentialist mantra.

- Caroline Shaw

Donnacha Dennehy

Composer

Donnacha Dennehy's music has been featured in festivals and venues throughout the world. In addition to two operas with the playwright Enda Walsh, *The Last Hotel* and *The Second Violinist*, recent large-scale commissions include *The Hunger*, a docu-opera for Alarm Will Sound (presented by BAM and Opera Theatre St. Louis), *Broken Unison* for Sō Percussion (commissioned by Carnegie Hall), *Tessellatum* for Nadia Sirota, Liam Byrne and microtonal viol consort (commissioned by Symphony Space), and pieces for Dawn Upshaw (commissioned by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra), Third Coast Percussion (commissioned by the Met Museum in New York), Kronos Quartet, and the Doric Quartet (co-commissioned by Wigmore Hall and Carnegie Hall). This coming season includes the premieres of a choreographed version of his percussion quartet, *Surface Tension*, at BAM and a commission from the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He continues to maintain a close artistic connection with the group he founded, Crash Ensemble, and they feature in both the operas with Walsh. Portrait albums of his music have been released by

Nonesuch, Cantaloupe, NMC, and Bedroom Community. Two new recordings are forthcoming in the coming season: *The Last Hotel* (Cantaloupe) and *The Hunger* (Nonesuch). Dennehy joined the music faculty at Princeton University in 2014. His music is published by G. Schirmer, New York.

***Broken Unison* (2017)**

Co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall and Cork Opera House

With *Broken Unison*, I took the opportunity – joyfully I might add – to re-engage with questions of abstract compositional technique after a period writing more semantically charged music for operas and kind-of-operas. The work is full to the hilt with various ways of disrupting unisons, from antiphonal interchanges through staggered chorales to a fairly dizzying use of canons of various hues, from the airily spaced to the breathily close, so close that they veer towards a kind of fractured unison at times. I became even more ambitious with some of these ferociously close canons after hearing how well the Sō Percussion players executed them while I was trying out early drafts of the piece! Paradoxically, perhaps, as the music tends more towards 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 accumulatively made up of a greater number of smaller sections (2, 3, and 4 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 semi-tonally in a manner influenced by the harmonic language of Gesualdo's later music. - *Donnacha Dennehy*

Jason Treuting

Composer

A founding member of Sō Percussion, composer/percussionist Jason Treuting has performed throughout the world, from the Barbican to Carnegie Hall to DOM Moscow, and elsewhere.

Treuting's original music has been performed by artists including Shara Nova, the JACK Quartet, TIGUE, and Susan Marshall and Company, among others. Frequent collaborators include Cenk Ergun, Grey McMurray, and Steve Mackey; their recent New Amsterdam album, *Orpheus Unsung*, has received widespread critical acclaim.

Treuting's composition *Amid the Noise*, recorded by Sō Percussion for a Cantaloupe Records release, has been performed widely at venues including the Lincoln Center Festival, the Barbican, the Walker Arts Center, National Sawdust, Fast Forward Austin, Kadence Arts Boston, and Chatterbird.

Other compositions include contributions to *Imaginary City*, *Where (we) Live*, and *A Gun Show*. Recent works consist of *Oblique Music for 4 plus (blank)*, a concerto for Sō Percussion and string orchestra for the League of Composers Orchestra; *Nine Numbers 4*, part of Treuting's "sudoku" series; and a new multi-movement sonic meditation, *go placidly with haste*.

Jason Treuting studied percussion at Eastman School of Music, Yale University, marimba with Keiko Abe in Japan, and gamelan with Pac I Nyoman Suadin in Bali.

He is co-director of the Sō Percussion Summer Institute, co-director of the percussion program at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, and a lecturer of music at Princeton University, where Sō Percussion is ensemble-in-residence. He lives in Princeton, New Jersey, with his wife, the violist Beth Meyers, and their two daughters.

***Amid the Noise* (2006)**

Amid the Noise is a set of short pieces exploring many forms of noise framed by drones and consistent yet subtly changing harmonies. They were conceived as small soundtracks for everyday moments in everyday life. It was written and recorded in 2006, but has been growing and changing ever since. - Jason Treuting

Sō Percussion

With innovative multi-genre original productions, sensational interpretations of modern classics, and an “exhilarating blend of precision and anarchy, rigor and bedlam” (*The New Yorker*), Sō Percussion has redefined the scope and role of the modern percussion ensemble, placing it at the leading edge of 21st century music.

In 2018-19, Sō Percussion premieres new percussion quartets by Vijay Iyer, Angélica Negrón, Suzanne Farrin, and by Julia Wolfe; performs at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., at UC-Berkeley, Stanford Live, and plays Steve Reich’s complete *Drumming* for the Celebrity Series of Boston. In the summer of 2018, Sō performed David Lang’s *man made* at the Chautauqua Festival and Caroline Shaw’s *Narrow Sea* with Dawn Upshaw and Gilbert Kalish at Ravinia, and celebrated the tenth season of the annual Sō Percussion Summer Institute (SōSI).

Sō has recorded more than 20 albums; appeared at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Walt Disney Hall, the Barbican, the Eaux Claires Festival, MassMoCA, and TED 2016; and collaborated with Shara Nova, Bryce Dessner, Jad Abumrad, JACK Quartet, Buke and Gase, the Mostly Mozart Orchestra and Louis Langrée, and the LA Phil and Gustavo Dudamel, among others.

Sō Percussion is the Edward T. Cone Ensemble-in-Residence at Princeton University, where it presents an annual series of concerts, collaborates closely with university faculty and students, and offers performances throughout the community.

Sō Percussion thanks Pearl/Adams Instruments, Zildjian cymbals, Vic Firth drumsticks, Remo drumheads, Black Swamp Accessories, and Estey Organs for their sponsorship.

Sō Percussion made their Royal Conservatory debut on March 2, 2012.