

# THIRD COAST PERCUSSION

with Notre Dame Vocale, Carmen-Helena Téllez, director

PRESENTING SERIES

**TEDDY EBERSOL PERFORMANCE SERIES**

**SUN, JAN 26 AT 2 P.M.**

LEIGHTON CONCERT HALL

DeBartolo Performing Arts Center

University of Notre Dame

Notre Dame, Indiana

## AUSTERITY MEASURES

Concert Program

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Mark Applebaum (b. 1967)

*Wristwatch: Geology* (2005) (5')

Marc Mellits (b. 1966)

*Gravity* (2012) (11')

Thierry De Mey (b. 1956)

*Musique de Tables* (1987) (8')

Steve Reich (b. 1936)

*Proverb* (1995) (14')

## INTERMISSION

Timo Andres (b. 1985)

*Austerity Measures* (2014) (25')

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*Austerity Measures* was commissioned by the University of Notre Dame's DeBartolo Performing Arts Center and Sidney K. Robinson.

This commission made possible by the Teddy Ebersol Endowment for Excellence in the Performing Arts.

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## PROGRAM NOTES:

**Mark Applebaum** is a composer, performer, improviser, electro-acoustic instrument builder, jazz pianist, and Associate Professor of Composition and Theory at Stanford University. In his TED Talk, "Mark Applebaum, the Mad Scientist of Music," he describes how his boredom with every familiar aspect of music has driven him to evolve as an artist, re-imagining the act of performing one element at a time, and disregarding the question, "is it music?" in favor of "is it interesting?"

**Wristwatch: Geology** is scored for any number of people striking rocks together. The "musical score" that tells the performers what to play is a watch face with triangles, squares, circles and squiggles. First choose whether you are a "red" or "blue" player. When the second hand reaches a circle, strike the rocks together once. For a triangle, strike 3 times. For a square, strike for times. For a squiggle, rub the rocks together. When the second hand is between brackets { } improvise.

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Composer **Marc Mellits** is one of the leading American composers of his generation, enjoying hundreds of performances throughout the world every year. From Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center, to prestigious music festivals in Europe and the US, Mellits' music is a constant mainstay on programs throughout the world. His unique musical style is an eclectic combination of driving rhythms, soaring lyricism, and colorful orchestrations that all combine to communicate directly with the listener. Mellits' music is often described as being visceral, making a deep connection with the audience. "This was music as sensual as it was intelligent; I saw audience members swaying, nodding, making little motions with their hands" (New York Press). He started composing very early, and was writing piano music long before he started formal piano lessons at age 6. He went on to study at the Eastman School of Music, Yale School of Music, Cornell University, and Tanglewood.

While writing **Gravity** I found myself thinking about how musical notes and lines can become attracted to each other and follow one another. The opening of the work begins on a single pitch, D. Then, one by one, and with each instrument following each other, new notes are built into the pulsating sound. With a musical gravitational force, the lines follow each other then bounce back and forth. The overall rhythm and tempo also shifts in a 'gravitational' way. The music continually gets faster and faster, always picking up speed as it falls, spiraling into a new tempo at each musical shift in texture. The music is written for a combination of marimbas and vibraphones, and the mixture of sound that these different materials make provide a spring board for the musical lines to intersect, bounce, and play off each other, always getting faster, always falling from the sky.

*Gravity* was commissioned by an international consortium of percussion groups around the globe, including Third Coast Percussion. The performance you are hearing today is part of the world-premiere cycle of performances. - Marc Mellits

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**Thierry De Mey** is a musician and filmmaker from Belgium. After studying film at the Institute des Arts de Diffusion, De Mey studied music composition at IRCAM and contemporary dance after with Fernand Schirren, for whose works he has written original incidental music. He is the founder of the contemporary music ensemble Maximalist!, and he has collaborated with notable artists including the Ictus Ensemble, for whom he has composed several works. He was composer-in-residence at the Conservatory of Strasbourg and the Musica Festival in 2001 and 2002. Since 2005 he has been one of four directors of Charleroi / Danses, coordinating the multidisciplinary activities at this center for choreography.

**Musique de Tables** clearly displays De Mey's interest in merging the visual and audio aspects of music into a performance art that engages multiple senses. *Musique de Tables* is scored for 3 amplified "table surfaces" to be constructed by the performers and notated in a manner entirely unique to this composition. De Mey instructs the performers to create sounds/motions with such colorful names as "castanets," "the stone," "wind-shield wipers," and "the fan." Motion and sound merge into one in this performance piece which is rapidly gaining popularity through performances by both percussion ensembles and new music groups such as Eighth Blackbird, Tambuco Percussion, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble and the Ojai Festival for Contemporary Music

**Steve Reich** was recently called "our greatest living composer" (*The New York Times*), "America's greatest living composer" (*The Village VOICE*), "...the most original musical thinker of our time" (*The New Yorker*) and "...among the great composers of the century" (*The New York Times*). From his early taped speech pieces *It's Gonna Rain* (1965) and *Come Out* (1966) to his and video artist Beryl Korot's digital video opera *Three Tales* (2002), Mr. Reich's 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. "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," states *The Guardian* (London). In April 2009 Steve Reich was awarded the Pulitzer prize in Music for his composition *Double Sextet*.

The idea for **Proverb** was originally suggested to me by the singer and conductor Paul Hiller. What resulted was a piece for three sopranos, two tenors, two vibraphones and two electric organs, with a short text from Ludwig Wittgenstein. Since Paul Hiller is well known as a conductor and singer of early music and since I share an interest in this period of Western music, I looked once again at the works of Perotin (Scholl of Notre Dame - 12th century) for guidance and inspiration.

The three sopranos sing the original melody of the text in canons that gradually augment or get longer. The two tenors sing duets in shorter rhythmic values against held tones from the sopranos. The two electric organs double the singers throughout (except at the very beginning when they sing a Capella) and fill in the harmonics. The piece is

in constantly changing meter groupings of twos and threes giving a rhythmically free quality to the voices. After about three minutes of voices and organ only, the vibraphones enter enunciating these interlocking shifting groups of two and three beats.

The short text, "How small a thought it takes to fill a whole life!" comes from a collection of Wittgenstein's writing entitled *Culture and Value*. Much of Wittgenstein's work is 'proverbial' in tone and in its brevity. This particular text was written in 1946. In the same paragraph from which it was taken Wittgenstein continues, "If you want to go down deep you do not have to travel far." - Steve Reich

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**Timo Andres** is a composer and pianist who grew up in rural Connecticut and now lives in Brooklyn, NY. His début album, *Shy and Mighty*, which features ten interrelated pieces for two pianos performed by himself and pianist David Kaplan, was released by Nonesuch Records in May 2010 to immediate critical acclaim. Of the disc, Alex Ross wrote in *The New Yorker* that *Shy and Mighty* "achieves an unhurried grandeur that has rarely been felt in American music since John Adams came on the scene... more mighty than shy, [Andres] sounds like himself."

Timo's new works include a piano quintet for Jonathan Biss and the Elias String Quartet, commissioned and presented by Wigmore Hall, Carnegie Hall, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam and San Francisco Performances; a solo piano work for Kirill Gerstein, commissioned by the Gilmore Foundation; a new string quartet for the Library of Congress, premiered by the Attacca Quartet; and a new piece for yMusic. Upcoming commissions include a major work for Third Coast Percussion and an ensemble song cycle to be premiered by himself, Gabriel Kahane, Becca Stevens, Ted Hearne and Nathan Koci at the Ecstatic Music Festival, and presented by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra's Liquid Music series.

Recent highlights include solo recitals at Lincoln Center, Wigmore Hall, (le) Poisson Rouge, and San Francisco Performances; a weekend of performances in Los Angeles, featuring a new work for the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and a performance of his re-composition of the Mozart "Coronation" Concerto; and performances of *Crashing Through Fences* by eighth blackbird. Collaborative projects of the past season include a duo program with Gabriel Kahane at the Library of Congress, and a world premiere performance of selected Philip Glass *Études*, alongside the composer, as part of Nico Muhly's "A Scream and An Outrage" festival at the Barbican.

My music tends to spring from harmonic ideas, but in writing a large-scale piece for percussion quartet, I realized that the idea of harmony itself was only one of several paths I could take. The quality of percussion is often more "sound" than "note," and when you get rid of notes, of course, you lose harmony. How, then, to present a coherent 25 minutes of music, freed from my faithful harmonic anchor?

I started ***Austerity Measures*** by trying to be as organized as possible. Writing for percussion is more wide-open than almost any other medium (save for electronics, perhaps), and involves conceptualizing an original setup consisting of any combination of the thousands of instruments that exist. Multiplied by four, things can get unwieldy quickly.

The four setups in *Austerity Measures*, therefore, are themselves arranged roughly like a string quartet: two highs, a medium, and a low. Contained in each of these setups are various sub-setups, spanning raw, unpitched non-instruments to the pure, tempered keyboards of glockenspiel and marimba. These are ordered and grouped in terms of material and timbre, too—metals, woods, drums, clean sounds, dirty sounds, all in gradations from high to low.

The actual music of *Austerity Measures* is quite rigidly organized: it's a theme and set of variations, a structure which lends itself to tidiness. Uncharacteristically, the theme is at the end, a goal which the music strives towards; therefore the beginning of the piece actually sounds least like it. The theme itself is a familiar one: the first of Bach's Two-Part Inventions, in C major. I chose to use a piece of familiar, preexisting music so that the overall structure would be convincing; I needed to be able to gradually reveal the theme in a way that would be audible at first hearing.

Percussionists, especially as students, often play Bach on the marimba. *Austerity Measures* makes the process of learning Bach explicit—it's almost as if the instruments themselves are figuring out how to do it. Again, this process is methodical. The first sounds heard in the piece are raw and unfinished: construction tools and other found-objects hijacked for rhythmic purpose. These rhythms are heard in subsequent variations on progressively more "finished"-sounding instruments: grinding ratchets and guiros, wooden planks and blocks, wailing sirens and flexatones eventually coalesce, first around single, stranded pitches, and finally around complete harmonies. By the time any actual Bach is heard, we realize we've been hearing it all along, just with the pitches removed.

Just as the first half of the piece focuses on Bach's rhythms, the second half focuses on melodic and harmonic aspects, often veering off-course into my own material, and even working in bits of other Bach pieces. By the end, the music "realizes" it can do everything at once, and it very quickly rewinds back to the beginning. The end result is not about evolution or progress so much as it is about protean adaptability, perhaps the defining characteristic of percussion and percussionists.

- Timo Andres

### THIRD COAST PERCUSSION

Hailed by *The New Yorker* as “vibrant” and “superb,” Third Coast Percussion explores and expands the extraordinary sonic possibilities of the percussion repertoire, delivering exciting performances for audiences of all kinds. Since its formation in 2005, Third Coast Percussion has gained international attention with concerts and recordings that meld the energy of rock music with the precision and nuance of classical chamber works.

These “hard-grooving” musicians (*New York Times*) have become known for groundbreaking collaborations across a wide range of disciplines, including concerts and residency projects with engineers at the University of Notre Dame, architects at the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, astronomers at the Adler Planetarium and more. The ensemble enhances the performances it offers with cutting-edge new media, including free iPhone and iPad apps that allow audience members to create their own musical performances and take a deeper look at the music performed by Third Coast Percussion.

Third Coast Percussion is the ensemble-in-residence at the University of Notre Dame's DeBartolo Performing Arts Center, they have the honor of being the first ensemble at the University of Notre Dame to create a permanent and progressive ensemble residency program at the center. The ensemble performs multiple recitals annually as part of the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center's Presenting Series season. Third Coast Percussion assumed the position of ensemble-in-residence at Notre Dame in 2013.

The ensemble champions the awe-inspiring music of John Cage, Steve Reich, George Crumb, Arvo Pärt, Gérard Grisey, Philippe Manoury, Wolfgang Rihm, Louis Andriessen, Toru Takemitsu and Tan Dun, among others. Third Coast has also commissioned and performed world premieres by many of today's leading composers, including Augusta Read Thomas, Timothy Andres, Glenn Kotche, David T. Little, Marcos Balter, Ted Hearne and ensemble member David Skidmore.

Third Coast's recent and upcoming concerts and residencies include the University of Chicago Presents, Atlas Performing Arts Center (Washington, D.C.), Ensemble Music Society of Indianapolis, the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Austin Chamber Music Festival, Millennium Park “Loops and Variations,” the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage, and more. Third Coast has introduced percussion to chamber music audiences in Texas, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Illinois, securing invitations to return to many of these series.

Third Coast's passion for community outreach includes a wide range of residency offerings while on tour, in addition to a long-term residency with the Davis Square Park Community Band on Chicago's South Side. In addition to its national performances, Third Coast Percussion's hometown presence includes an annual Chicago series, with

four to five concerts in locations around the city. The ensemble has collaborated in concert with acclaimed ensembles Eighth Blackbird, Signal and the Garth Newel Piano Quartet, pianists Amy Briggs and Lisa Moore, cellists Nicholas Photinos and Tobias Werner, flautist Tim Munro, vocalist Ted Hearne, and video artists Luftwerk.

The members of Third Coast Percussion—Sean Connors, Robert Dillon, Peter Martin and David Skidmore—hold degrees in music performance from Northwestern University, the Yale School of Music, the Eastman School of Music, the New England Conservatory and Rutgers University. Third Coast Percussion performs exclusively with Pearl/Adams Musical Instruments, Zildjian Cymbals, Remo Drumheads and Vic Firth sticks and mallets.

### **Notre Dame Vocale and Friends**

*Sharon Harms, Soprano 1*

*Samantha Osborn, Soprano 2*

*Halle McGuire, Soprano 3*

*Brendan Barker, Tenor 1*

*Gregory Jon Geehern, Tenor 2*

**Notre Dame Vocale** is the advanced vocal ensemble of the Sacred Music program at Notre Dame. Founded by Professor Carmen-Helena Téllez in 2012, ND Vocale explores the masterpieces of sacred music repertoire of all eras, including recently created works by living composers, through recitals, recordings and professional concert tours. In its short history it has already established important collaborations with the faculty-led ensembleND and the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center. Soon after its formation, it was invited to inaugurate the Sacred Music Festival of Quito, Ecuador, and to record music of Hildegard Von Bingen for a digital representation of the saint's cosmology designed by Professor Margot Fassler. Composed of graduate-level vocalists students of Stephen Lancaster and by conducting students of Carmen-Helena Téllez, ND Vocale adapts its configuration to match the program at hand. The group for this concert includes sopranos Samantha Osborn and Halle McGuire with tenor and conductor Brendan Barker, all students in the Master of Sacred Music program at Notre Dame.

Praised as “superb” and “dramatically astute” by *The New York Times*, soprano **Sharon Harms** joins Notre Dame Vocale as a sought-after performer of new music. Sharon has performed on numerous new music projects in addition to being a guest of music and theater festivals. Sharon has worked with composers Gabriela Ortiz (with whom she is sharing a Latin Grammy nomination), Charles Wuorinen, Louis Karchin, Oliver Knussen, David Fulmer, Georg-Frideric Haas, Jesse Jones, David Dzubay and John Eaton. She has been featured with the Argento Ensemble, Ensemble Signal, Slee Sinfonietta, Alter Ego, the New Fromm Players, the Simón Bolívar Orchestra, the Pueblo Symphony and Baroque Band of Chicago, among others. She held a two-year fellowship in the Opera and Vocal Studies Program at the distinguished Tanglewood Music Center where she received praise for her performances by *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *Musical*

*America*, *New Music Box* and *The New Yorker*. Last summer she made her debut with the Contemporary Center for Opera in a performance of Louis Karchin's *Jane Eyre*, was invited to sing at the Open Studio concert at the American Academy in Rome, and performed Charles Wuorinen's *It Happens Like This* at the June in Buffalo Festival. Upcoming performances include debuts with ensembles Da Capo Chamber Players and Third Coast Percussion. In 2015, she will premiere a work written for her and Eighth Blackbird with Pacifica Quartet by composer John Eaton for the University of Chicago's 50th anniversary of *Contempo*.

An experienced ensemble singer, **Gregory Jon Geehern**, is also a rising young conductor who has earned widespread acclaim for using creativity and innovation to bring great music to a new generation of choral music lovers. While earning his doctor of music degree at Indiana University, Greg has maintained a successful professional performance career in both choral music and opera, and remains in constant demand as a professional singer and collaborative pianist. He currently teaches graduate and undergraduate students as the music director of Sylvia McNair's Opera Workshop at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, one of the nation's most prestigious in the world today. He is also a frequent collaborator with Aguavá New Music Studio and Kosmologia, both professional ensembles led by Carmen-Helena Téllez.

**Carmen-Helena Téllez** is professor of conducting, director of the Graduate Choral Conducting program and associate director for Performance of Sacred Music at Notre Dame. A multifaceted artist, she takes a co-creative approach to new music performance, devoting special attention to vocal-instrumental and staged genres involving interdisciplinary media and musical scholarship, in an approach that *The Washington Post* has called "immersing and thrilling." With a grant from the Mellon Foundation, she is now developing broadly conceived "sacred music dramas" to explore important humanistic and social topics by means of immersive and interactive performances at Notre Dame. Recent projects conducted at the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center include the Sacred Music Festival "The Musical Modes of Mary and the Cross," with a commission and world premiere of a new work by James MacMillan; Mozart's *Requiem*, with the Notre Dame Festival Chorus; and Morton Feldman's *Rothko Chapel*, with ensembleND. She will direct the first Mellon Sacred Music Drama at Notre Dame next April 4, with a performance of the cantata "Voices of Light" alongside the film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* by C.T. Dreyer. She continues to conduct and lecture nationally and internationally.

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