

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

LEIGH HOWARD STEVENS MARIMBA

Friday, February 18, 2022
Hatch Recital Hall
7:30 PM



UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

Eastman
School of Music

100 YEARS | 1921-2021

PROGRAM

Time For Marimba (1968)

Minoru Miki
(1930-2011)

**Mini Suite from Cello Suite No. 3
in C Major, BWV 1009**

Prelude
Sarabande
Allemande

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Houdini's Last Trick (2016)

Leigh Howard Stevens
(b. 1953)

Once a Drummer... (2021)

Leigh Howard Stevens

World Premiere

Use of photographic, video or sound recording is prohibited. Mr. Stevens performs on a Malletch marimba of his own design and uses Malletch mallets exclusively.

PROGRAM NOTES

Time for Marimba (1968)

Minoru Miki

There are very few venues where I would dare to begin a marimba recital with a serial composition. But this is the Eastman School of Music (!) and this is an historically important work in the history of the marimba in an historic year in ESM history. Besides that, I had lunch with Minoru Miki one time in the 1980s! I love this music, and it begins and ends very clearly “in C.” That last fact alone might justify this otherwise risky programming decision. Let’s see if anyone else experiences what I do when the “C of Time” transitions into the “C of Bach.” —*L.H. Stevens*

The following notes are taken from the Minoru Miki website:

Minoru Miki composed this piece during the summer of 1968 for Keiko Abe's first marimba recital. Critics have said that these events were the crucial starting points in modern marimba history. Before that year, Miki had listened to many marimba performances, but the pieces which he heard were arrangements of famous Western instrumental pieces.

A six tone series consisting of C,B,Eb,G,E,Ab, along with variable quintuplet rhythm constructions are very important to this composition. However, the general atmosphere through the work should be very free, almost like an improvisation. During the 1960's, the marimba had a limited range of just four octaves. If the modern performer wants to play tones in lower octaves, the performer should do so carefully and avoid overuse.

**Mini Suite from Cello Suite No. 3
in C Major, BWV 1009**

Johann Sebastian Bach

In my somewhat prejudiced opinion, the marimba is a superb instrument for the performance of polyphonic baroque music. Imagine a piano with moveable hammers -- one that allows the performer to adjust where the hammer strikes the string. Imagine further that the performer could change hammer hardness and materials at will -- perhaps even control which types of hammers play each voice. Now remove that mechanical contraption that separates the player's hand from the piano's hammers and put the player directly in control, by actually holding the striking implements. Make one last "minor adjustment" to the piano by substituting rosewood bars and resonating tubes for the strings. Our "improved" piano is, of course, a marimba.

Due to Bach's entirely different method of creating multiple voices in the Cello Suites as compared with his keyboard works, there is less basis for using “mixed timbres” of mallets in the Cello Suites, and indeed, I use matched sets of four in these three movements. —*L.H. Stevens*

PROGRAM NOTES

Houdini's Last Trick (2016)

Leigh Howard Stevens

The work has only a few kernels of harmonic and melodic material. One of them, used throughout the work, is a kind of “musical illusion” - something I call “faux motion.” It is achieved by passing accents through a sustained chord, producing a false sense of movement and activity, despite the static nature of the harmony and a slow-moving tune. In the initial presentation of the main material, accents are passed through the harmony every group of nine pitches. Later, similar material is treated with what falsely appears to be greater energy and speed by contracting the accent pattern to every seven notes, then five, and finally, late in the work, every three pitches. While Houdini was tragically killed “by a trick gone wrong,” (there is more to that over-simplified myth), I hope you don't feel like *Houdini's Last Trick* ends badly.

—L.H. Stevens

Once a Drummer . . . (2021)

Leigh Howard Stevens

This new work is dedicated to a much better drummer than I ever was, Michael Burritt. It is my hope that he likes it and plays it for many years . . . so I don't have to. There is very limited musical material in the work, but as every trained musician knows, simplicity lends itself to development. After a brief introduction, the work is primarily organized by time signature: A section in 7/8 is followed by one in 6/8 and then in 5/8. After reaching a climax, a truncated recapitulation takes the listener back through those rhythmic modulations a second time. When I wrote my first “serious” marimba piece in the mid-1980s - *Rhythmic Caprice* - I introduced some new sounds and had fun with my students naming those techniques: “marimshots,” stick clicks and splash-clusters. In “OaD” I found some new sounds on the insides and top edges of the decorative “dummy” tubes between each A#-C# and D#-F#, plus a different type of “stick click.” Instead of striking the top outer edges of the bars as in *Rhythmic Caprice*, OaD requires the player to hold the mallet from the “wrong” end and strike the top / normal surface of the bar. This type of stick click allows for more nuance. While these techniques may have been used by other composers previously in a more ad hoc way, in this composition they rise to the level of suggesting an additional “voice.” Since I have barely managed to compose the piece (and learned to play it - after a fashion), these techniques have remained unnamed. Eastman percussion students are hereby offered a free set of mallets of their choice if their suggestions are adopted.

—L.H. Stevens

MEET THE ARTIST

Hailed by Time magazine in 1990 as “the world’s greatest classical marimbist,” **Leigh Howard Stevens**’ repertoire ranges from Renaissance music and the Preludes and Fugues of J. S. Bach, to original marimba works written by contemporary composers expressly for him. Much of this unaccompanied literature was considered technically and musically impossible by one player until the development of Mr. Stevens’ new system of four-mallet technique. Percussionists and marimbists worldwide have adopted his revolutionary approach and his book on the subject of four-mallet marimba technique, *Method of Movement*, has been translated into five languages.

It is difficult to find an aspect of marimba technique, repertoire, or design that has not been profoundly changed by the work of Leigh Howard Stevens. From “Stevens Grip” to the types and names of the motions and strokes used to play the instrument; from the length and material of the mallet handles, to the wrapping and stitching of the heads; from the first height-adjustable all wooden marimba frame in the 1980s to the first fully-tunable resonators in the 1990s; from one-handed rolls and baroque ornaments to the use of diverse and contrasting sustaining techniques; from the early polyphonic Helble Preludes to the works of John Serry, David Maslanka and Joseph Schwantner, to his own original compositions and transcriptions.

While considered “revolutionary” at the time, many of these concepts and developments are now used routinely by players and teachers around the world, and in fact, have become synonymous with contemporary marimba playing.

This fresh approach to music making on the marimba has led to a series of more than thirty world premiere performances by Mr. Stevens. The first performance of Raymond Helble’s *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra* by Leigh Howard Stevens and the Denver Symphony in 1980 was a milestone in the development of marimba literature. His digitally recorded all-Bach album has been greeted with rave reviews for its artistry by magazines as diverse as *Stereophile* and *Billboard*.

Devoted marimba lovers have sprung up all over the world – both players and general public - converted by Leigh Howard Stevens’ solo recitals, hundreds of college campus appearances, concertos with symphony orchestra, European concert tours, masterclasses and radio and television appearances both here and abroad. He has been featured in *Time Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and appeared on National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered*, and *Voice of America*’s internationally broadcast, *New York, New York*. His performances have inspired critical acclaim and standing ovations in forty-eight of the United States and 18 other countries. Mr. Stevens introduced the modern marimba to The People’s Republic of China in a televised performance that reportedly reached an audience of 80 million viewers.

Mr. Stevens served as Professor of Marimba at the Royal Academy of Music, London, from 1997-2004. He has been awarded eleven U. S. Patents for marimba design. Stevens was elected to the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame in 2006.

Mr. Stevens can be heard on past releases of the Delos, Musical Heritage Society, Musicmasters and CRI record labels, as well as current releases on Resonator Records.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT EASTMAN

Sunday, February 20, 2022

FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

Russell Miller, piano

Kathleen Roland-Silverstein, soprano

Kilbourn Hall, 3:00 PM

Free admission

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

Yoojin Jang, violin

Alexander Kobrin, piano

Hatch Recital Hall, 7:30 PM

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Eastman School Symphony Orchestra

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theater, 7:30 PM

Free admission

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

AWS/OSSIA

Kilbourn Hall, 7:30 PM

Free admission

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the “Great Hill People” and “Keepers of the Western Door” of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people on whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.

Information about upcoming Eastman concerts and events can be found at:

www.rochester.edu/Eastman/calendar

 www.facebook.com/ConcertsAtEastman

Hatch Recital Hall fire exits are located at the right and left rear of the hall. In the event of an emergency, you will be notified by the stage manager. If notified, please move in a calm and orderly fashion to the nearest exit.

Please note: The use of unauthorized photographic and recording equipment is not allowed in this building. We reserve the right to ask anyone disrupting a performance to leave the hall.

Restrooms are located in the Wolk Atrium near the rear doors of Hatch Recital Hall. Fully-accessible restrooms are available on the first floor of the Eastman School. Our ushers will be happy to direct you to them.

Supporting the Eastman School of Music:

For Information on Eastman’s Centennial events and campaign, please visit

www.esm.rochester.edu/100