

# Eastman Musica Nova with guests from Ensemble Signal

Brad Lubman,  
*music director*

Luke Poepfel and Peiwen Zou,  
*assistants*

Monday, October 28, 2024  
Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre  
7:30 PM



**EASTMAN**  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

~ PROGRAM ~

Eastman Musica Nova with guests from Ensemble Signal  
Brad Lubman, *music director*  
Luke Poepfel & Peiwen Zou, *assistants*

Double Sextet (2007)

1. Fast
2. Slow
3. Fast

Steve Reich  
(b. 1936)  
22'

~ INTERMISSION ~

Music for 18 Musicians (1976)

Steve Reich  
58'

**Ensemble Signal** is a NY-based ensemble dedicated to offering the broadest possible audience access to a diverse range of contemporary works through performance, commissioning, recording, and education. Signal was founded by Co-Artistic/Executive Director Lauren Radnofsky and Co-Artistic Director/Conductor Brad Lubman. Since its debut at the Bang on a Can Marathon in 2008, Signal has performed over 350 concerts, premiered numerous works, and co-produced over ten recordings. Signal has appeared at Lincoln Center Festival, the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Series at Walt Disney Concert Hall, BIG EARS Festival, Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall, Lincoln Center American Songbook, The Library of Congress, Washington Performing Arts, Cal Performances, Tanglewood Music Festival of Contemporary Music, Ojai Music Festival, the Guggenheim Museum (NY), NPR Tiny Desk Concerts and the Bang on a Can Marathon. They've regularly worked directly with nearly all the composers they perform in order to offer the most authentic interpretations, a list that includes Hans Abrahamsen, Unsuk Chin, Luca Francesconi, Michael Gordon, Georg Friedrich Haas, Oliver Knussen, Helmut Lachenmann, David Lang, George Lewis, Hilda Paredes, Augusta Read Thomas, Steve Reich, Kaija Saariaho and Julia Wolfe. Their recording of Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* released in May 2015 on harmonia mundi received a Diapason d'or and appeared on the Billboard Classical Crossover Charts. Recent highlights include the world premiere and 130 performances of Reich's *Reich/Richter* for large ensemble, with artwork and film by Gerhard Richter and Corinna Belz for the inaugural season of New York's The Shed, and the US premieres of Reich's *Runner* at venues across the US.

## ~ PROGRAM NOTES ~

### *Double Sextet*

There are two identical sextets in *Double Sextet*. Each one is comprised of flute, clarinet, vibraphone, piano, violin and cello. Doubling the instrumentation was done so that, as in so many of my earlier works, two identical instruments could interlock to produce one overall pattern. For example, in this piece you will hear the pianos and vibes interlocking in a highly rhythmic way to drive the rest of the ensemble.

The piece can be played in two ways; either with 12 musicians, or with six playing against a recording of themselves.

The idea of a single player playing against a recording of themselves goes all the way back to *Violin Phase* of 1967 and extends through *Vermont Counterpoint* (1982), *New York Counterpoint* (1985), *Electric Counterpoint* (1987) and *Cello Counterpoint* (2003). The expansion of this idea to an entire chamber ensemble playing against pre-recordings of themselves begins with *Different Trains* (1988) and continues with *Triple Quartet* (1999) and now to *Double Sextet*. By doubling an entire chamber ensemble one creates the possibility for multiple simultaneous contrapuntal webs of identical instruments. In *Different Trains* and *Triple Quartet* all instruments are strings to produce one large string fabric. In *Double Sextet* there is more timbral variety through the interlocking of six different pairs of percussion, string and wind instruments.

The piece is in three movements fast, slow, fast and within each movement there are four harmonic sections built around the keys of D, F, Ab and B or their relative minor keys b,d,f and g#. As in almost all my music, modulations from one key to the next are sudden, clearly setting off each new section.

*Double Sextet* is about 22 minutes long and was completed in October 2007. It was commissioned by eighth blackbird and received its world premiere by that group at the University of Richmond in Virginia on March 26, 2008.

- Steve Reich

### **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: violin, cello, two clarinets doubling bass clarinet, four women's voices, four pianos, three marimbas, two xylophones, and vibraphone (with no motor). All instruments are acoustic. The use of electronics is limited to microphones for the voices and some of the instruments.

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. This first pulsing chord is then maintained by two pianos and two marimbas. While this pulsing chord is held for about five minutes, a small piece is constructed on it. When this piece is completed, there is a sudden change to the second chord, and a second small piece or section is constructed. This means that each chord that might have taken 15 or 20 seconds to play in the opening section is then stretched out as the basic pulsing harmony for a five-minute piece—very much as a single note in a cantus firmus, or chant melody of 12th-century organum by Perotin, might be stretched out for several minutes as the harmonic center for a section of the organum. The opening 11-chord cycle of *Music for 18 Musicians* is a kind of pulsing cantus for the entire piece.

On each pulsing chord, one (or, on the third chord, two) small pieces are built. These pieces or sections are basically either in the form of an arch (ABCDCBA), or in the form of a musical process (like that of substituting beats for rests), working itself out from beginning to end. Elements appearing in one section will appear in another but surrounded by different harmony and instrumentation. For instance, the pulse in pianos and marimbas in sections I and II changes to marimbas and xylophone in section IIIA, and to xylophones and maracas in sections VI and VII. The low piano pulsing harmonies of section IIIA reappear in section VI, supporting a different melody played by different instruments. The process of building up a canon, or phase relation, between two xylophones and two pianos—which first occurs in section II—occurs again in section IX but building up to another overall pattern in different harmonic context. The relationship between the different sections is thus best understood in terms of resemblances between members of a family. Certain characteristics will be shared but others will be unique.

One of the basic means of change or development in many sections of this piece is to be found in the rhythmic relationship of harmony to melody. Specifically, a melodic pattern may be repeated over and over again, but by introducing a two- or four-chord cadence underneath it—first beginning on one beat of the pattern, and then beginning on a different beat—a sense of changing accent in the melody will be heard. This play of changing harmonic rhythm against constant melodic pattern is one of the basic techniques of this piece, and one I have never used before. Its effect, by change of accent, is to vary that which is in fact unchanging.

Changes from one section to the next, as well as changes within each section, are cued by the vibraphone whose patterns are played once only to call for movements to the next bar—much as in a Balinese Gamelan, a drummer will audibly call for changes of pattern, or as the master drummer will call for changes of pattern in West African music. This is in contrast to the visual nods of the head used in earlier pieces of mine to call for changes and in contrast also to the general Western practice of having a non-performing conductor for large ensembles. Audible cues become part of the music and allow the musicians to keep listening.

- Steve Reich

~ PERSONNEL ~  
Eastman Musica Nova  
*with guests from*  
Ensemble Signal\*

*Double Sextet*

**Flute**

Alex Lehmann  
Katherine Marx

**Clarinet**

Adrian Sándi\*  
Eric Butler

**Vibraphone**

Doug Perkins\*  
John Dawson

**Piano**

David Friend\*  
Wenbo Xing

**Violin**

Lauren Cauley\*  
Jingxuan Hu

**Violoncello**

Lauren Radnofsky\*  
Aaron Lieberman

*Music for 18 Musicians*

Adrian Sándi\*, *clarinet/bass clarinet 1*  
Eric Butler, *clarinet/bass clarinet 2*  
Sammy DeAngelis, *marimba 1*  
Andrew Lauler, *marimba 2*  
Brandon Berlanga, *marimba 3 (player 1)*  
John Dawson, *marimba 3 (player 2)*  
Remy Thomas, *marimba 3 (player 3), maracas*  
Jake Kundu, *xylophone 1*  
Ben Landon, *xylophone 2*  
Doug Perkins\*, *vibraphone, piano 4 (player 2)*  
David Friend\*, *piano 1*  
Aiden Hughes, *piano 2*  
Michael Lee-Smith, *piano 3*  
Luke Poeppel, *piano 4*  
Ciara McGuire, *violin*  
Aaron Lieberman, *violoncello*  
Anna Bjerken, *voice 1*  
Emma Wilansky, *voice 2*  
Mary Mowers, *voice 3*  
Emily Kondrat, *voice 4*



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