

FACULTY RECITAL

Steve Reich's
Music for 18 Musicians
David Cossin (BM '94), percussion

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10TH, 2026 | 7:30 PM
ALAN M. AND JOAN TAUB ADES PERFORMANCE SPACE

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PROGRAM

STEVE REICH
(b. 1936)

Music for 18 Musicians (1976)

Yue Chen (MM '23)*, voice

Amber Dai, voice

Erin Reppenhagen (MM '19)*, voice

Piper Weldon, voice

Ethan Burke, clarinet

Mariana Clavijo Ledesma, clarinet

Joe DeAngelo, violin

Clara Cho (BM '21, MM '23, PS '24), cello

Carter Bryan*, piano

Ruben Hogh* (MM '25), piano

Tiffany Leard, piano

Zheng Liu, piano

Mihail Babus, percussion

Grace Goss, percussion

Talujon:

Caitlin Cawley (MM '18), percussion

David Cossin (BM '94), percussion

Matthew Gold, percussion

Matt Ward (BM '98), percussion

* *Guest Performer*

PROGRAM NOTES

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.

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. 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

ABOUT TALUJON

Described by the *New York Times* as possessing an “edgy, unflagging energy”, Talujon has committed itself to the growth of contemporary percussion music through diverse performance, commissioning, educational, and outreach activities. Talujon is composed of percussionists Ian Antonio, Caitlin Cawley, David Cossin, Matthew Gold, Tom Kolor, Michael Lipsey, and Matt Ward. Highlights of Talujon’s recent engagements include appearances at the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s Next Wave Festival, Bang on a Can’s Marathon and Long Play Festivals, Carnegie Hall, ISSUE Project Room, Roulette, Miller Theatre, and New York Historical Society. International performances include Taipei’s Lantern Festival and Italy’s Sound Res Festival. In addition to its diverse performance schedule, Talujon has conducted residencies, clinics, and master classes at institutions across the US. Collaborators include Dewa Alit, Nick Brooke, Victoria Cheah, Chien Yin Chen, Alvin Lucier, Paula Matthusen, Eric Moe, Mathew Rosenblum, Ralph Shapey, Henry Threadgill, Ushio Torikai, Amy Williams, Julia Wolfe, and Christian Wolff.

Talujon partners with New York City Public Schools and the Midori and Friends organization to produce educational programming across New York City’s five boroughs. The ensemble’s playing can be heard on the Cantaloupe, Tzadik, Unseen Worlds, Another Timbre, New World, Bridge, Albany, and Capstone record labels. Talujon’s concert season is made possible with support from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University.

Caitlin Cawley (MM ’18)

Caitlin Cawley is a percussionist, composer and educator based in Brooklyn, NY. She has played, sang, danced and yelled in concert halls, garages, bars, living rooms, kitchens, streets, forests, art galleries, streets, and rooftops – using megaphones, triangles, gongs, drums, balloons, lamps, speaker drivers, vibraphones, EMT pipes, plastic buckets, tin cans, wine glasses, styrofoam, power tools, and paper airplanes – with newts, birds, elephants, Talujon, Mantra Percussion, Talea Ensemble, Novus NY, Chamberqueer, Heartbeat Opera, Bang on a Can All-Stars, The Walter Thompson Orchestra, Slavic Soul Party!, Brass Queens, Gamelan Yowana Sari, Brian Adler’s Human Time Machine, Danse Theatre Surreality, Bash The Trash, Eve Beglarian, I Dewa Ketut Alit and Paul Pinto. She studied with David Cossin, Jeff Milarsky, John Ferrari, Tim Genis and Sam Solomon.

David Cossin (BM '94), percussion

David Cossin was born and raised in Queens, NY, and studied classical percussion at the Manhattan School of Music. His interest in classical percussion, drum set, non-western hand drumming, composition, and improvisation has led to performances across a broad spectrum of musical and artistic forms. David has recorded and performed internationally with Steve Reich and Musicians, Philip Glass, Yo-Yo Ma, Meredith Monk, Tan Dun, Cecil Taylor, Talujon Percussion Quartet, and the trio Real Quiet, as well as with Sting on his Symphonicity world tour. Theater work includes Blue Man Group, Mabou Mines, and projects with the director Peter Sellars. David was featured as the solo percussionist in Tan Dun's award-winning score to the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. As a soloist, he has performed with orchestras throughout the world including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orchestra Radio France, and more. His sonic installations have been presented in New York, Italy and Germany, and he is also an active producer, composer, and instrument inventor, expanding the limits of traditional percussion.

David teaches percussion at the Aaron Copland School of Music and the Manhattan School of Music's Contemporary Performance Program.

Matthew Gold, percussion

Percussionist Matthew Gold is a performer, ensemble director, and educator committed to presenting innovative and adventurous programs featuring new voices. He is a member of the Talea Ensemble, with whom he has performed across the U.S. and at international festivals, and of the percussion group Talujon. Mr. Gold is an Artist in Residence in Percussion and Contemporary Music Performance at Williams College where he directs the Williams Percussion Ensemble and I/O New Music Ensemble, and is the Artistic Director of the annual I/O Festival of New Music. He serves on the faculty of the Composers Conference and Contemporary Performance Institute and has been a frequent Artist in Residence at the Walden School's Creative Musicians Retreat. He is the Music Programs Director at PS21: Center for Contemporary Performance in Chatham, NY.

Matt Ward (BM '98), percussion

Matt Ward is a dedicated educator, percussionist and administrator who specializes in performing and conducting contemporary chamber music and has been cited by the *New York Times* as “a fine soloist.” He is a principal member with American Modern Ensemble, Talujon, Argento Chamber Ensemble, and Ensemble IPSE, and the Manager of Percussion and Co-Chair and Co-Artistic Advisor of Contemporary Performance at the Manhattan School of Music with Erin Rogers. Dr. Ward also performs regularly with groups such as Classical Tahoe, Talea Ensemble, The Orchestra of the League of Composers, Riverside Symphony and has played on numerous Broadway shows including *Light in the Piazza*, and *An American in Paris*. He has worked as guest conductor with ICE, Wet Ink, Ensemble IPSE, DaCapo, NYNME and Camerata Nova. Dr. Ward holds a BM degree from the Manhattan School of Music and a MM and DMA degree from SUNY Stony Brook. He is on faculty at Queens College, The Aaron Copland School of Music and Brooklyn College and is the Percussion Director for the Mostly Modern Festival. In his free time, Matt is an avid gardener and enjoys hikes with his dog Arlo and anyone that can keep up.

ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its 1,025 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from 54 countries and nearly all 50 states; its innovative curricula and world-renowned artist-teacher faculty that includes musicians from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Orchestra, and the top ranks of the jazz and Broadway communities; and a distinguished community of accomplished, award-winning alumni working at the highest levels of the musical, educational, cultural, and professional worlds.

The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege Division is a professionally oriented Saturday music program dedicated to the musical and personal growth of talented young musicians ages 5 to 18. The School also serves some 2,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed Distance Learning Program.

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Land Acknowledgment

We want to acknowledge that we gather as Manhattan School of Music on the traditional land of the Lenape and Wappinger past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit as well.



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