

Friday, January 29, 2016, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

St. Louis Symphony

David Robertson, *music director*

Timothy McAllister, *saxophone*

John ADAMS (b. 1947) Saxophone Concerto
Animato; Moderato— tranquillo, suave
Molto vivo (a hard driving pulse)

Timothy McAllister, *saxophone*

INTERMISSION

MAHLER (1860–1911) Symphony No. 5 in C-sharp minor
PART I

Trauermarsch: In gemessenem Schritt.
Streng. Wie ein Kondukt (Funeral
march: with measured pace, stern,
like a funeral procession)
Stürmisch bewegt, mit größter
Vehemenz (Stormy, with utmost
vehemence)

PART II

Scherzo: Kräftig, nicht zu schnell
(Strong, not too fast)

PART III

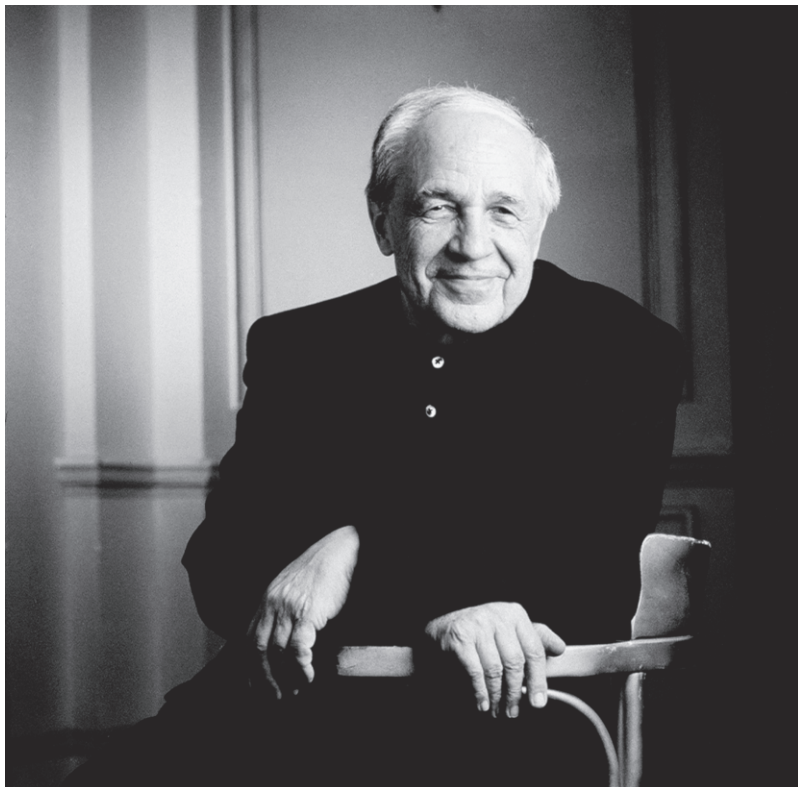
Adagietto: Sehr langsam (Very slow)
Rondo-Finale: Allegro

*This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts,
and by Patron Sponsors Gail and Dan Rubinfeld.*

Cal Performances' 2015–2016 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

PIERRE BOULEZ
March 26, 1925 – January 6, 2016

The performances on January 29 and 31 are dedicated to the memory of Pierre Boulez.



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Pierre Boulez, Chicago, 2006.

“Pierre Boulez was creative in the deepest sense of the word. His genius touched and continues to inspire a huge number of people. His engagement with the world of music altered its course. He is a singularity. His legacy will resonate through time.”

—David Robertson, Music Director, St. Louis Symphony

“As a conductor Boulez was a towering figure, beloved by musicians who played under him and quite possibly the most transformative master of the art since Mahler. In his chosen repertoire, which ranged from Berlioz, Wagner, and Mahler to Messiaen, Ligeti, and the younger generation of European modernists whose music he favored, he was inimitable, almost intimidating in his abilities. In his later years when his earlier cool intellectualism gave way to a warmer, more generous approach, he became his own special sort of superstar.

As a teenager I already knew his early recordings. Most influential for me were his early performances of Stravinsky, Debussy, and Bartók, which opened up that music and made it breathe and pulsate like never before. Over the years he made a labor of love for the Second Viennese School—Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern—giving warmth and humanity to a body of work that until then had suffered unjustly from poor and misrepresenting performance practice.

His tastes were firmly grounded in his personal canon, which followed a rigorous view of the evolution of musical discourse. One of the paradoxes of his career was that he achieved some of his greatest work as a conductor in the United States—in New York, Los Angeles, Cleveland, and Chicago—yet he could find little of value in our own music, neither in our great experimental tradition, nor in our thriving, messy, constantly renewing popular voice. For years I was puzzled, even angered, that for all his vast erudition and for all the power accorded him in the music world, he would deplore what he deemed the simplicities of an *Einstein on the Beach* or a *Music for Eighteen Musicians*; that he dismissed John Cage as not serious; and that he appeared to share with Adorno a prudish discomfort with our jazz and popular music. But then, neither had he time for Shostakovich nor Britten. He held fast to his beliefs. It is the privilege of a great mind to have strong opinions, to have even blind spots. In the end, what he did—and that was a great deal—he did better than anyone, and we will miss him.”

—John Adams, Berkeley, January 2016

“We mourn the passing of a giant in music and in culture, a truly gentle man whose belief in the essential need for music of substance and music of beauty was manifest in everything he did, and in everything he touched. Now we begin to consider and celebrate a rare, inspirational, musical legacy.

Pierre Boulez was a futurist of music, perhaps the Strauss or Mahler, or both, of the latter part of the 20th century, and the work of his life forms a foundation for the music of today. For Boulez—composer, performer, advocate—everything, without compromise, had to have meaning; every gesture perfectly placed. With that extraordinary imposition on the discourse of a lifetime of music, we find the rare figure whose life was dedicated to the making of musical statements. Each of us, seated here in Zellerbach Hall, are the lucky inheritors of that art, intellect, and wisdom. Pierre Boulez opened doors to the music of today, and implored us to move forward, always.

Berkeley and Bay Area communities had the chance to traverse the Boulez vision in Cal Performances’ celebrations of his 90th birthday year in 2015. First, last March, the complete works for piano solo, performed exquisitely by Pierre Laurent Aimard and Tamara Stefanovich; then in June the ethereal journey of the multi-media *A Pierre Dream*, with Steven Schick, the International Contemporary Ensemble, and a group of collaborators supremely dedicated to his music; and again this past November with Matthias Pintscher conducting Boulez’s own Ensemble Intercontemporain, visiting from Paris. That last performance featured one of Boulez’s greatest compositions, *Sur Incises*, a propulsive, beautiful work, summarizing that perfect blend of rigor and freedom so characteristic of his music. This was not a bookend, but a mirror—on music, his own and that of contemporaries, approaching the span of a century, and most likely a metaphor for his drive, and his need for great art to always be looking forward.”

—Matías Tarnopolsky, Director, Cal Performances

Saxophone Concerto

JOHN ADAMS

Born: February 15, 1947, Worcester, Massachusetts**Now Resides:** Berkeley, California*Composed in 2013**Première on August 22, 2013 by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the composer with Timothy McAllister as soloist***Scoring:** solo alto saxophone, 2 flutes, piccolo, 3 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 3 horns, 2 trumpets, piano, celeste, harp, strings**Performance Time:** approximately 29 minutes

John Adams is one of today's most acclaimed composers. Audiences have responded enthusiastically to his music, and he enjoys a success not seen by an American composer since the zenith of Aaron Copland's career. A recent survey of major orchestras conducted by the League of American Orchestras found Adams to be the most frequently performed living American composer. He received the University of Louisville's distinguished Grawemeyer Award in 1995 for his Violin Concerto, and was the focus in 1997 of the New York Philharmonic's Composer Week. Also in 1997 he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and named "Composer of the Year" by *Musical America* magazine. He has been made a Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture. In 1999, Nonesuch released *The John Adams Earbox*, a critically acclaimed ten-CD collection of his work; and in 2003, he received the Pulitzer Prize for *On the Transmigration of Souls*, written for the New York Philharmonic in commemoration of the first anniversary of the World Trade Center attacks. Also in 2003 Adams was recognized by New York's Lincoln Center with a two-month retrospective of his work titled "John Adams: An American Master," the most extensive festival devoted to

a living composer ever mounted at Lincoln Center. From 2003 to 2007, Adams held the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall. In 2004, he was awarded the Centennial Medal of Harvard University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences "for contributions to society," and he became the first-ever recipient of the Nemmers Prize in Music Composition, which included residencies and teaching at Northwestern University. He was a 2009 recipient of the NEA Opera Award, and has been granted honorary doctorates from the Royal Academy of Music (London), Juilliard School, and Cambridge, Harvard, Yale and Northwestern universities, honorary membership in Phi Beta Kappa, and the California Governor's Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts.

John Adams was born into a musical family in Worcester, Massachusetts, on February 15, 1947. As a boy, he lived in Woodstock, Vermont, and in New Hampshire. From his father, he learned the clarinet and went on to become an accomplished performer on that instrument, playing with the New Hampshire Philharmonic and Sarah Caldwell's Boston Opera Orchestra, and appearing as soloist in the first performances of Walter Piston's Clarinet Concerto in Boston, New York, and Washington. (Adams first met Piston as a neighbor of his family in Woodstock, and received encouragement, advice, and understanding from the older composer, one of this country's most respected artists.) Adams' professional focus shifted from the clarinet to composition during his undergraduate study at Harvard, where his principal teacher was Leon Kirchner.

Rather than following the expected route for a budding composer, which led through Europe, Adams chose to stay in America. In 1972, he settled in California to join the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where his duties included directing the New Music Ensemble, leading the student orchestra, teaching composition, and administering a graduate program in analysis and history. In 1978, he became associated with

the San Francisco Symphony and conductor Edo de Waart in an evaluation of that ensemble's involvement with contemporary music. Two years later he helped institute the Symphony's "New and Unusual Music" series, which subsequently served as the model for the "Meet the Composer" program, sponsored by the Exxon Corporation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts, which placed composers-in-residence with several major American orchestras. Adams served as resident composer with the San Francisco Symphony from 1979 to 1985. He began his tenure as Creative Chair with the Los Angeles Philharmonic with the première of his symphonic work *City Noir* on October 8, 2009.

In his compositions through the early 1990s, Adams was closely allied with the style known as Minimalism, which utilizes repetitive melodic patterns, consonant harmonies, motoric rhythms, and a deliberate striving for aural beauty. Unlike some other Minimalist music, however, which can be static and intentionally uneventful, the best of Adams' early works (*Grand Pianola Music*, *Shaker Loops*, *Harmonium*, the brilliant *Harmonielehre*, the acclaimed operas *Nixon in China* [1987] and *The Death of Klinghoffer* [1991]) are marked by a sense of determined forward motion and inexorable formal growth, and by frequent allusions to a wide range of 20th-century idioms, both popular and serious. His links with traditional music are further strengthened by consistent use of conventional instruments and

predominantly consonant harmony, this latter technique producing what he calls "sustained resonance," the quality possessed by the acoustical overtone series of common chords to reinforce and amplify each other to create an enveloping mass of sound. Adams' recent compositions incorporate more aggressive harmonic idioms and more elaborate contrapuntal textures to create an idiom he distinguishes from that of his earlier music as "more dangerous, but also more fertile, more capable of expressive depth and emotional flexibility." Among Adams' commissions are *On the Transmigration of Souls* (New York Philharmonic; winner of the 2003 Pulitzer Prize and the 2005 Grammy Award as Best Contemporary Classical Composition Recording), *My Father Knew Charles Ives* (San Francisco Symphony), and *The Dharma at Big Sur* (composed for Los Angeles Philharmonic for the opening of Disney Hall in October 2003). *Dr. Atomic*, based on the life of atomic scientist Robert Oppenheimer, was premièred by the San Francisco Opera in October 2005. In May 2012 the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Los Angeles Master Chorale conducted by Gustavo Dudamel premièred *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*, an "oratorio in two acts"; *Scheherazade.2*, a "dramatic symphony for violin and orchestra," was introduced in March 2015 by the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Alan Gilbert, and violinist Leila Josefowicz.

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A NOTE BY THE COMPOSER

My Saxophone Concerto was composed in early 2013, the first work to follow the huge, three-hour oratorio, *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*. One would normally be hard put to draw lines between two such disparate creations. One deals with such matters as crucifixion, raising the dead, and the trials of battered women. The other has as its source my life-long exposure to the great jazz saxophonists, from the swing era through the likes of Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, and Wayne Shorter. Nonetheless there are peculiar affinities shared by both works, particularly in the use of modal scales and the way they color the emotional atmosphere of the music. Both works are launched by a series of ascending scales that energetically bounce back and forth among various modal harmonies.

American audiences know the saxophone almost exclusively via its use in jazz, soul, and pop music. The instances of the saxophone in the classical repertory are rare, and the most famous appearances amount to only a handful of solos in works by Ravel (his *Bolero* and his orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*), by Prokofiev (*Lieutenant Kijé Suite* and *Romeo and Juliet*), Milhaud (*La Création du Monde*), and of course the "Jet Song" solo in Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*, probably one of the most immediately recognizable five-note mottos in all of music. Beyond that, the saxophone appears to be an instrument that classical composers employ at best occasionally and usually only for "special" effect. It is hard to believe that an instrument that originated in such straight-laced circumstances—it was designed in the mid-19th century principally for use in military bands in France and Belgium, and was intended to be an extension of the brass family—should have ended up as *the* transformative vehicle for vernacular music (jazz, rock, blues, and funk) in the twentieth century. Nonetheless, its integration into the world of classical music has been a slow and begrudged one.

Having grown up hearing the sound of the saxophone virtually every day—my father had played alto in swing bands during the 1930s and our family record collection was well stocked with albums by the great jazz masters—I never considered the saxophone an alien instrument. My 1987 opera *Nixon in China* is almost immediately recognizable by its sax quartet, which gives the orchestration its special timbre. I followed *Nixon* with another work, *Fearful Symmetries*, that also features a sax quartet in an even more salient role. In 2010 I composed *City Noir*, a jazz-inflected symphony that featured a fiendishly difficult solo part for alto sax, a trope indebted to the wild and skittish styles of the great bebop and post-bop artists such as Charlie Parker, Lennie Tristano, and Eric Dolphy. Finding a sax soloist who could play in this style but who was sufficiently trained to be able to sit in the middle of a modern symphony orchestra was a difficult assignment. But fortunately I met Tim McAllister, who is quite likely the reigning master of the classical saxophone, an artist who while rigorously trained is also aware of the jazz tradition.

When one evening during a dinner conversation Tim mentioned that during high school he had been a champion stunt bicycle rider, I knew that I must compose a concerto for this fearless musician and risk-taker. His exceptional musical personality had been the key ingredient in performances and recordings of *City Noir*, and I felt that I'd only begun to scratch the surface of his capacities with that work. A composer writing a violin or piano concerto can access a gigantic repository of past models for reference, inspiration, or even cautionary models. But there are precious few worthy concertos for saxophone, and the extant ones did not especially speak to me. But I knew many great recordings from the jazz past that could form a basis for my compositional thinking, among them *Focus*, a 1961 album by Stan Getz for tenor sax and an orchestra of harp and strings arranged by Eddie

Sauter. Although clearly a “studio” creation, this album featured writing for the strings that referred to Stravinsky, Bartók, and Ravel. Another album, *Charlie Parker and Strings*, from 1950, although more conventional in format, nonetheless helped to set a scenario in my mind for the way an alto sax could float and soar above an orchestra. Another album that I’d known since I was a teenager, *New Bottle Old Wine*, with Cannonball Adderley and that greatest of all jazz arrangers, Gil Evans, remained in mind throughout the composing of the new concerto as a model to aspire to.

Classical saxophonists are normally taught a “French” style of producing a sound with a fast vibrato, very much at odds with the looser, grittier style of a jazz player. Needless to say, my preference is for the latter “jazz” style playing, and in the discussions we had during the creation of the piece, I returned over and over to the idea of an “American” sound for Tim to use as his model. Such a change is no small thing for a virtuoso schooled in an entirely

different style of playing. It would be like asking a singer used to singing Bach cantatas to cover a Billy Holiday song.

While the concerto is not meant to sound jazzy per se, its jazz influences lie only slightly below the surface. I make constant use of the instrument’s vaunted agility as well as its capacity for a lyrical utterance that is only a short step away from the human voice. The form of the concerto is a familiar one for those who know my orchestral pieces, as I’ve used it in my Violin Concerto, in *City Noir*, and in my piano concerto *Century Rolls*. It begins with one long first part combining a fast movement with a slow, lyrical one. This is followed by a shorter second part, a species of funk-rondo with a fast, driving pulse.

The concerto lasts roughly thirty-two minutes, making it an unusually expansive statement for an instrument that is still looking for its rightful place in the symphonic repertoire.

—John Adams, July 2013

Symphony No. 5 in C-sharp minor
GUSTAV MAHLER

Born: July 7, 1860, Kalište, Bohemia

Died: May 18, 1911, Vienna

Composed in 1902; much revised through 1911

Première on October 18, 1904 in Cologne, conducted by the composer

Scoring: 4 flutes, 4 piccolos, 3 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, harp, percussion, strings

Performance Time: approximately 68 minutes

“Oh, heavens! What are they to make of this chaos, of which new worlds are forever being engendered, only to crumble in ruin a minute later? What are they to say to this primeval music, this foaming, roaring, raging sea of sound, to these dancing stars, to these breathtaking, iridescent and flashing breakers?” So Gustav Mahler wrote during the rehearsals in 1904 for the premiere of his Fifth Symphony in Cologne to his wife, Alma, in Vienna. He was concerned that this new work, so different in style and aesthetic from his earlier symphonies, would confuse critics and audiences just when his music was beginning to receive wide notice. Musicologist Deryck Cooke noted the ways in which this symphony and its two successors differ from the Symphonies No. 1 through No. 4. “Gone are the folk inspiration, the explicit programmes, the fairytale elements, the song materials, the voices,” Cooke wrote. “Instead we have a triptych of ‘pure’ orchestral works, more realistically rooted in human life, more stern and forthright in utterance, more tautly symphonic, with a new granite-like hardness of orchestration.”

What brought about the radical change in Mahler’s symphonism in 1902? Heinrich Kralik’s comments typify the apparent bafflement among scholars: “Nothing is known of

any outward experiences or inner transformations during that period which could account for the new mode of expression. There was no outward struggle that could have threatened the composer’s career [which also included directing the Vienna Opera] and shattered his peace of mind. Mahler’s music provides us with the only indication that his inner life underwent a change at that time.” With a rare unanimity, commentators have ignored the central biographical event in Mahler’s life during the time immediately preceding the composition of the Fifth Symphony — he fell in love, a condition not unknown to alter a person’s life.

In November 1901, Mahler met Alma Schindler, daughter of the painter Emil Jacob Schindler. She was then 22 and regarded as one of the most beautiful women in Vienna. Mahler was 41. Romance blossomed. They were married in March and were parents by November. Their first summer together, in 1902, was spent at Maiernigg, Mahler’s country retreat on the Wörthersee in Carinthia, in southern Austria. It was at that time that the Fifth Symphony was composed, incorporating some sketches from the previous summer. He thought of this work as “their” music, the first artistic fruit of his married life with Alma. But more than that, he may also have wanted to create music that would be worthy of the new circle of friends that Alma, the daughter of one of Austria’s finest artists and most distinguished families, had opened to him — Gustav Klimt, Alfred Roller (who became Mahler’s stage designer at the Court Opera), architect Josef Hoffmann, and the rest of the cream of cultural Vienna. In the Fifth Symphony, Mahler seems to have taken inordinate care to demonstrate the mature quality of his thought (he was, after all, nearly twice Alma’s age) and to justify his lofty position in Viennese artistic life. Since neither Mahler nor Alma explained the great change of compositional style of 1902, the question can never be securely answered. Mahler’s renewed musical language seems too close in time to the vast extension of his social life engendered

by his marriage, however, to have been unaffected by it. In an 1897 letter to the conductor Anton Seidl, Mahler himself confirmed the symbiotic relationship of his music and his life: “Only when I experience do I compose — only when I compose do I experience.”

The musical style that Mahler initiated with the Fifth Symphony is at once more abstract yet more powerfully expressive than that of his earlier music. In his study of the composer, Egon Gartenberg noted that the essential quality differentiating the later music from the earlier was a “volcanic change to modern polyphony,” a technique of concentrated contrapuntal development that Mahler had derived from an intense study of the music of Bach. “You can’t imagine how hard I am finding it, and how endless it seems because of the obstacles and problems I am faced with,” Mahler confided to his friend Natalie Bauer-Lechner while struggling with the Symphony’s third movement. Free of his duties at the Opera between seasons, he labored throughout the summer of 1902 on the piece at his little composing hut in the woods, several minutes walk from the main house at Maiernigg. So delicate was the process of creation that he ordered Alma not to play the piano while he was working, lest the sound, though distant, should disturb him (she was a talented musician and budding composer until her husband forbade her to practice those skills after their wedding); and he even complained that the birds bothered him because they sang in the wrong keys (!). Every few days he brought his rough sketches to Alma, who copied them over and filled in some of the orchestral lines according to his instructions.

The composition was largely completed by early autumn, when the Mahlers returned to Vienna, but Gustav continued to revise the orchestration throughout the winter, daily stealing a few early-morning minutes to work on it before he raced to the Opera House. The tinkering went on until a tryout rehearsal with the Vienna Philharmonic early in 1904. Alma, listening from the balcony, reported with alarm,

“I heard each theme in my head while copying the score, but now I could not hear them at all! Mahler had overscored the kettledrums and percussion so madly and persistently that little beyond the rhythm was recognized.” Major changes were in order, Alma advised. Mahler agreed, immediately crossed out most of the percussion parts, and spent seemingly endless hours during the next seven years further altering the orchestration so that it would clearly reveal the complex musical textures. Hardly any two performances of the work during his lifetime were alike. The première in Cologne brought mixed responses from audience and critics. Even Bruno Walter, Mahler’s protégé and assistant at the Vienna Opera and himself a master conductor and interpreter of his mentor’s music, lamented of the first performance, “It was the first time and, I think, the only time that a performance of a Mahler work under his own baton left me unsatisfied. The instrumentation did not succeed in bringing out clearly the complicated contrapuntal fabric of the parts.” It was not until one of his last letters, in February 1911, that Mahler could finally say, “The Fifth is finished. I have been forced to re-orchestrate it completely. I fail to comprehend how at that time [1902] I could have blundered so like a greenhorn. Obviously the routine I had acquired in my first four symphonies completely deserted me. It is as if my totally new musical message demanded a new technique.” Mahler had indeed solved the problems of the work with its final revision, according to Bruno Walter. “In the Fifth Symphony,” Walter wrote, “the world now has a masterpiece which shows its creator at the summit of his life, of his power, and of his ability.”

Though there have been attempts to attribute extra-musical dimensions to Mahler’s Fifth Symphony (one, a 23-page analysis of the work’s musico-metaphysical aspects by Ernst Otto Nodnagel of Darmstadt — “What an eccentric!” Alma noted of him — appeared soon after the première), this is “pure” music. “Nothing in any of my conversations with Mahler and not a single note point to the

influence of extra-musical thoughts or emotions upon the composition of the Fifth,” wrote Bruno Walter. “It is music — passionate, wild, pathetic, buoyant, solemn, tender, full of all the sentiments of which the human heart is capable — but still ‘only’ music, and no meta-physical questioning, not even from very far off, interferes with its purely musical course.” For his part, Mahler, who once thundered across a dinner-party table, “Pereant die Programme!” (“Perish all programs!”), did not create any written description of the Symphony, as he had for his earlier works, but determined to let the music speak unaided for itself. He insisted that the audience have no program notes for the première or for later performances in Dresden and Berlin. The only quasi-programmatic indication in the score is the title of the first movement — *Trauermarsch* (“Funeral March”) — but even this is only an indication of mood and not a description of events. It is with this work that Mahler left behind the mysticism, mystery, and symbolism of Romanticism and entered the modern era. It stands, wrote Michael Kennedy, “like a mighty arch at the gateway to 20th-century music.”

Mahler grouped the five movements of the Fifth Symphony into three parts, a technique for creating large structural paragraphs that he had first used in the Third Symphony. Thus, the opening *Trauermarsch* takes on the character of an enormous introduction to the second movement. The two are further joined in their sharing of some thematic material.

The giant *Scherzo* stands at the center point of the Symphony, the only movement not linked with another. Balancing the opening movements are the *Adagietto* and the *Rondo-Finale* of Part III, which have the quality of preface and summation.

The structures of the individual movements of the Symphony No. 5 are large and complex, bearing allegiance to the classical models, but expanded and reshaped, with continuous development and intertwining of themes. The *Trauermarsch* is sectional in design, alternating between music based on the opening trumpet summons and an intensely sad threnody presented by the strings. The following movement (“Stormily moving, with great vehemence”) resembles sonata form, with a soaring chorale climaxing the development section only to be cut short by the return of the stormy music of the recapitulation. The *Scherzo* juxtaposes a whirling waltz/*ländler* with trios more gentle in nature. The serene *Adagietto*, perhaps the most famous (and most often detached) single movement among Mahler’s symphonies, serves as a calm interlude between the gigantic movements surrounding it. The closing movement (*Rondo-Finale*) begins as a rondo, but interweaves the principal themes with those of the episodes as it unfolds in a blazing display of contrapuntal craft. The triumphant chorale that was snuffed out in the second movement is here returned to bring the Symphony to an exalted close.

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Sunday, January 31, 2016, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

Berkeley RADICAL: The Natural World

St. Louis Symphony

David Robertson, *music director*

Peter Henderson, *piano*

Roger Kaza, *horn*

William James, *xylorimba*

Thomas Stubbs, *glockenspiel*

Deborah O'Grady, *production director and photographer*

Seth Reiser, *set and lighting designer*

MESSIAEN (1908–1992) *Des Canyons aux Étoiles... (From the
Canyons to the Stars...) (1971–74)*

An Introduction with David Robertson
and the St. Louis Symphony

INTERMISSION

MESSIAEN (1908–1992) *Des Canyons aux Étoiles... (From the
Canyons to the Stars...) (1971–74)*

PART ONE

Le Désert (The Desert)

Les Orioles (The Orioles)

Ce qui est écrit sur les étoiles... (What is Written in the Stars...)

Le Cossyphé d'Heuglin (The White-Browed Robin) (piano solo)

Cedar Breaks et le Don de Crainte (Cedar

Breaks and the Gift of Awe)

(Continued)

PART TWO

Appel interstellaire (Interstellar Call) (horn solo)

Bryce Canyon et les rochers rouge-orange (Bryce Canyon and the Red-Orange Rocks)

PART THREE

Les Ressuscités et le chant de l'étoile

Aldébaran (The Resurrected and the Song of the Star Aldebaran)

Le Moqueur polyglotte (The Mockingbird) (piano solo)

La Grive des bois (The Wood Thrush)

Omao, Leiothrix, Elepaio, Shama (Hawaiian Thrush, Old World Babbler, Monarch Flycatcher,
Magpie-Robin)

Zion Park et la Cité céleste (Zion Park and the Celestial City)

Jon Else, *cinematography and time lapse photography*

Adam Larsen, *video design consultant*

Cath Brittan, *production manager*

*Production co-commissioned by Cal Performances, St. Louis Symphony,
Los Angeles Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and Washington Performing Arts.*

*This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts,
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Des Canyons aux Étoiles... (From the Canyons to the Stars...) for Piano, Horn, and Orchestra
OLIVIER MESSIAEN

Born: December 10, 1908, Avignon

Died: April 27, 1992, Paris

Composed in 1971–74

Premièred on November 20, 1974, at Alice Tully Hall in New York City; Frederic Waldman conducting the Aeterna Orchestra, with Yvonne Loriod as piano soloist and Sharon Moe as horn soloist

Scoring: solo piano, solo horn, solo xyloimba, solo glockenspiel, 2 flutes, alto flute, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, piccolo trumpet, 3 trombones, percussion, strings

Performance Time: Approximately 92 minutes

Olivier Messiaen, one of towering figures of modern French music, was born in 1908 in the ancient southern town of Avignon to Pierre Messiaen, a professor of literature noted for his translations of Shakespeare, and the poet Cécile Sauvage. Olivier entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 11 to study with composer Paul Dukas, organist Marcel Dupré, and others of that school's distinguished faculty; he won several prizes for harmony, organ, improvisation, and composition before graduating in 1930. The following year he was appointed

chief organist at the Trinité in Paris. In 1936 Messiaen joined with André Jolivet, Yves Baudrier, and Daniel Lesur to form La Jeune France, a group of young French composers pledged to returning substance and sincerity to the nation's music, which they felt had become trivialized and cynical. Messiaen was appointed to the faculties of the Schola Cantorum and the École-Normale that same year. Called up for military service at the outbreak of hostilities in 1939, he was captured the following summer and imprisoned at Stalag VIII-A in Görlitz, Silesia. There he wrote his *Quartet for the End of Time* for the musical instruments available among his fellow musician-prisoners (clarinet, violin, cello, and piano); the work's extraordinary première was given at the camp in 1941. He was repatriated later that year, resuming his position at the Trinité and joining the staff of the Conservatoire as professor of harmony, where his students came to include such important musicians as Boulez, Stockhausen, and Xenakis. In addition to his teaching duties in Paris, Messiaen gave special classes in Budapest, Darmstadt, Saarbruck, and Tanglewood. He was a member of the French Institute, the Academy of Beaux Arts de Bavière of Berlin, the Santa Cecilia Academy of Rome, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He died in Paris in 1992.

Almost like a musical monk from a Medieval time, Messiaen's life, works, and religion are indivisible. "The foremost idea I wanted to express in music, the one that's the most important because it stands above everything else," he wrote, "is the existence of the

truths of the Catholic faith. I have the good luck to be a Catholic; I was born a believer and so it happens that the Scriptures have always made a deep impression on me since childhood. A number of my works are therefore intended to illuminate the theological truths of the Catholic belief. That is the first aspect of my work, the noblest, probably the most useful, the most valid, and the only one perhaps that I shall not regret at the hour of my death." Few of his compositions, however, are specifically liturgical, Messiaen having chosen rather to address the widest possible audience in the concert hall (and, with his huge music drama *Saint-François d'Assise* of 1983, the opera house) in the most varied and colorful style devised by any mid-20th-century composer. Messiaen explained: "God being present in all things, music dealing with theological subjects can and must be extremely varied.... I have therefore...tried to produce a music that touches all things without ceasing to touch God."

Though he wrote works for solo piano, voices, and chamber ensembles, most of Messiaen's output is for organ or orchestra, whose vast resources of sonority are integral to his compositional style. Equally varied is the enormous range of influences that helped shape his music. Carla Huston Bell listed the following dizzying spectrum of inspirations in her 1984 study of the composer: his family (notably the refined literary tastes of his parents and the mystical Catholicism of his mother); the solid technical foundation of his early training; his interest in the rhythmic systems of ancient Greek and Asian Indian music; Gregorian plainchant; 14th-century isorhythm; Debussy; Stravinsky, and Russian music; nature and birdsong; total serialization; and the symbiotic artistic interchange with his colleagues and his students.

Sonority and structure are indivisible in Messiaen's compositions. Short blocks of music, built in *From the Canyons to the Stars*... almost entirely from the melodies and implicit harmonies of birdsong, are forged from precise, sharply contrasted sounds of stained-glass brilliance, from single strands of melody (the Interstellar Call must certainly be the longest passage for unaccompanied horn ever included in an orchestral work) to huge, dazzling, monolithic chord streams of gleaming instrumental alloys. These blocks are then assembled — jux-

taped, recalled, intercut, but seldom varied — in a kind of musical mosaic that Messiaen spoke of in terms of "strophe" and "anti-strophe" and "epode" (an ancient Greek poetic form of alternating long and short verses). With his mystical religiosity and his embrace of the world, his meticulous craftsmanship and his emotional sincerity, his modernity and his timelessness, Messiaen created, in the words of his student Karlheinz Stockhausen, "fantastic music of the stars."

* * *

From the Canyons to the Stars..., composed between 1971 and 1974 on a commission from Miss Alice Tully in observance of the American Bicentennial, was premiered at Alice Tully Hall on November 20, 1974 by the Musica Aeterna Orchestra, conducted by Frederic Waldman. The pianist was the composer's wife, Yvonne Loriod (who wore a gown based on the colors of Bryce Canyon created specially for the occasion by Pierre Cardin), and the horn soloist was Sharon Moe. The work's scoring — piano, 13 solo strings, percussion, and a full complement of winds — was dictated by the stage capacity of Alice Tully Hall, and its subject determined by its association with America. Messiaen immediately dismissed anything to do with "those skyscrapers I cannot stand," and instead turned for inspiration to his large library of geographic books, where he found pictures of Bryce Canyon in Utah — "the most beautiful thing in the United States," he said — in a volume titled *Les Merveilles du Monde*. He spent several weeks at Bryce, Zion, and Cedar Breaks with his wife during the spring of 1972 ("a good time to hear bird songs"), and drew from his experience of the fantastic colors and shapes and otherworldliness of those landscapes the spiritual context of *From the Canyons to the Stars*.... The work is one of Messiaen's most powerful expressions of his synesthesia — the characteristic of having one sense triggered by another. "Colors are very important to me because I have a gift," he said. "It's not my fault, it's just how I am — whenever I hear music, or even if I read music, I see colors. They correspond to the sounds — rapid colors that turn, mix, combine and move with the sounds. They are always changing, but they are marvelous and



they reproduce themselves each time one repeats the same sound complex.”

Guy Lelong, the French writer with a particular interest in the interrelations of various art forms, prepared the following discussion of *From the Canyons to the Stars...* in collaboration with the composer:

The canyons of Utah are the starting point for this monumental fresco in 12 movements, and the music rises to the stars, encountering during this ascension several birdsongs dear to the composer. This is a geological work whose mission is to celebrate the landscape and birds found in America, yet it is also astronomical, and, as Messiaen's music often is, frankly religious. This pursuit of the grandiose takes place within highly developed writing. A work of “sound-color,” *Des canyons aux étoiles...* innovates first of all with its orchestration. Written for only 44 instruments, including a very complex percussion section that includes a wind machine and a geophone (a percussion instrument that Messiaen invented for this work), the piece produces incredible sound images due to its instrumental assembly. The solo piano either acts alone (in two of the 12 movements), alternates with, or is superimposed on the orchestra. Its mainly timbral treatment manages to achieve a complexity of sound that emulates the entire orchestra. From a formal point of view, in the same sense as in visual art, this work reflects a ‘refusal of composition.’ In other words, all the

moments of musical progress appear equally important, and none of them demands attention at the expense of others.

Part I: Le Désert (The Desert) The desert is a symbol of the void of the soul that allows one to hear the inner call of the Spirit. That is, for Messiaen, the best way to begin this gradual journey to the stars. The theme played on the horn evokes a peaceful state; birds and desert wind (performed on the wind machine) define the vast silence of Creation.

Les Orioles (The Orioles) First of the five movements consisting solely of birdsong. These are American orioles from the western United States. Most of these birds have an orange-and-black coat, and all of them are excellent singers. Birds are the perfect link between nature and music, between earth and sky.

Ce qui est écrit sur les étoiles... (What Is Written in the Stars...): Mene (“measured”), **tekél** (“weighed”), **upharsin** (“divided”) At the Biblical feast of Belshazzar, King of Babylon, who refused to recognize the existence of God, these words appeared in letters of fire inscribed on the wall of his palace. For Messiaen these words describe the order of the placement and movement of the stars in the universe. These words also have a musical equivalence since the letters that comprise them are here translated into notes.



Le Cossyphé d'Heuglin (The White-Browed Robin) For solo piano, the second of five movements consisting solely of birdsong. Here, it is a South African bird that sings.

Cedar Breaks et le don de crainte (Cedar Breaks and the Gift of Awe) In his preface to the score, Messiaen refers to Cedar Breaks as “a vast amphitheatre, sliding down towards a deep abyss,” evoking a sense of awe at the overwhelming beauty in unspoiled nature and a symbol of the Divine Presence.

Part II: Appel interstellaire (Interstellar Call) Messiaen originally wrote this movement for solo horn as a memorial to the young French composer, and a student of his, Jean-Pierre Guézec. It became one of the main inspirations for *Des canyons aux étoiles*.... In his notes to this movement, the composer quotes from the Bible: “It is he that heals hearts and binds up their wounds; it is he that numbered the stars, calling each by name” (Book of Psalms); “O earth, cover not thou blood, and let my cry have no place” (Book of Job).

Bryce Canyon et les rochers rouge-orange (Bryce Canyon and the Red-Orange Rocks) This is the central movement of the work. Bryce Canyon is a gigantic circus of fantastic formations of red, orange and violet rocks. This movement attempts to reproduce all of these colors as well as those

of the Steller's Jay (blue and black) while it flies over the canyon.

Part III: Les Ressuscités et le chant de l'étoile Aldebaran (The Resurrected and the Song of the Aldebaran Star) Again, the Book of Job furnished the inspiration: “the stars sing”— they possess their own natural sonority. The stars sing and the resurrected revolve around the stars.

Le Moqueur polyglotte (The Mockingbird) The second movement for piano solo and the third of five movements consisting solely of birdsong. The sound suggests a large landscape, and through some inexplicable sleight-of-hand implies something that is only realized at its departure. The mockingbird launches forth and dazzles with its tricks and imitations, accumulating momentum and bursting into a blaze of hot light.

La Grive de bois (The Wood-Thrush) The fourth of the five movements consisting solely of birdsong. The song of the wood-thrush is a major arpeggio with a clear timbre. It is usually preceded by a pickup note and followed by a lower rustling. This birdsong symbolizes the archetype that God wanted, one that we realize in heavenly life.

Omao, Leiothrix, Elepaio, Shama (Hawaiian Thrush, Old World Babbler, Monarch Flycatcher, Magpie-Robin) The

final movement consisting solely of bird-song. These birds from the Hawaiian islands, China, and India form the nucleus of this “long symphony of birds.”

Zion Park et la Cité celeste (Zion Park and the Celestial City) Nature and the divine fuse in this vision of paradise. Those who discover the walls, trees, and limpid river of Zion Park see it as a symbol of Paradise, and it provides the ultimate opportunity, in this work, to observe heaven on Earth.

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Photographs by Deborah O’Grady

A NOTE BY THE PHOTOGRAPHER

When asked by the conductor David Robertson to create a work of photographic art to be viewed simultaneously with symphonic performances of this landmark musical composition, I accepted the commission with joy. What better assignment for a landscape photographer trained in music composition, than to meld together the visual and aural worlds inspired by the deserts and magnificent National Parks of the southwestern United States. It was a two-year journey for me to create a visual work of art structured on the musical score of *Des Canyons*. Responding to the scope and complexity of the music was a process of constant discovery and challenge.

Messiaen’s journey took place in 1972. Describing the enviable solitude of his time in Bryce Canyon, he says “For me, the good time is when I hear bird songs, which is to say the spring, a season that also makes it possible to avoid throngs of tourists. So we set off alone, my wife and I, in the canyon. It was marvelous, grandiose; we were immersed in total silence—not the slightest noise except for the bird songs.”*

Because Messiaen traveled to Bryce and Zion Canyons and Cedar Breaks National Monument in April, I chose that month for my most intensive work there. But the parks I visited in 2014 and 2015 provided a radical departure from Messiaen’s experiences.

Crowded trails, gridlocked roads, hikers with boomboxes playing music into the canyons, and National Parks being marketed as grandiose amusement parks have altered the nature experience from one of solitude to one of necessary patient tolerance. Although there seem to be no humans in Messiaen’s vision and experience of these canyons, my explorations were filled with human encounters and all that those encounters imply.

This situation, coupled with a growing awareness of the ways in which human activity alters our environment, led me to a somewhat different interpretation of the movements of *Des Canyons*. Each movement is introduced in the score with a textual prologue, either Biblical or descriptive of the birdsong and compositional technique of the music. My interpretation aims to incorporate the recognition of the ecological crisis we face and the reality of human pressures on the environment, with my awe for the sheer beauty and magnificence of nature, from rocks and rivers to clouds and, of course, birds. Messiaen’s vision of nature and the cosmos in *Des Canyons* is entirely optimistic. Even interpreting the writing on the wall of Belshazzar’s feast, “mene, teqel, parsin,” was seen by Messiaen as ultimately, or at least possibly, optimistic. For me, the writing on the wall IS the evidence of the ecological challenges we face, and this recognition emerges in my work.

This production brings together imagery, both sacred and profane, from my travels, following Messiaen’s path, absorbing his assigned meanings, assembled to work with the music organically. Seth Reiser’s beautiful set and lighting design acknowledge Messiaen’s synaesthetic color sensitivity, bringing the musicians of the orchestra into the stage picture. As Messiaen did on his travels to these magnificent places, look—but also listen. Let the music and images speak in concert, and take you from the canyons to the stars!

—Deborah O’Grady, January 2016

*Conversation between Messiaen and Claude Samuel in *Messiaen and Color*.



SCOTT FERGUSON

Founded in 1880, the **St. Louis Symphony** is the second oldest orchestra in the United States and is widely considered one of the world's finest. In September 2005 internationally acclaimed conductor David Robertson became the 12th Music Director and second American-born conductor in the orchestra's history. In its 136th season, the St. Louis Symphony continues to strive for artistic excellence, fiscal responsibility, and community connection. In addition to its regular concert performances at Powell Hall, the Symphony is an integral part of the St. Louis community, presenting free education and community programs throughout the region each year.

In February 2015 the St. Louis Symphony received a Grammy award for Best Orchestral Performance for its recording of John Adams' *City Noir* and Saxophone Concerto on Nonesuch Records. This was the Symphony's sixth Grammy, as well as its 57th nomination.

The *City Noir* recording follows the 2009 Nonesuch release of the Symphony's performances of Adams' *Doctor Atomic* Symphony and *Guide to Strange Places*, which reached No. 2 on the *Billboard* rankings for classical music, and was named Best CD of the Decade by *The Times* of London.

In 2013–14 David Robertson led the St. Louis Symphony in a Carnegie Hall performance of Britten's *Peter Grimes* on the Britten centennial, which Anthony Tommasini, in the *New York Times*, selected as one of the most memorable concerts of the year. Recent tours have included

the St. Louis Symphony's first European tour with Music Director David Robertson, in 2012, with performances at the BBC Proms, the Lucerne Festival, Paris's Salle Pleyel, and Musikfest Berlin. In 2013 the Symphony completed its second successful California tour with Robertson, which included a three-day residency at the University of California, Davis.



MICHAEL TAMMARO

A consummate musician, masterful programmer, and dynamic presence, American maestro, **David Robertson** has established himself as one of today's most sought-after conductors. A passionate and

compelling communicator with an extensive orchestral and operatic repertoire, he has forged close relationships with major orchestras around the world through his exhilarating music-making and stimulating ideas. In fall 2015 Mr. Robertson launched his 11th season as Music Director of the 136-year-old St. Louis Symphony. In January 2014 he assumed the post of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in Australia.

In 2014–15 Mr. Robertson led the St. Louis Symphony back to Carnegie Hall, performing Meredith Monk's *Weave* for Carnegie's celebration of the artist, as well as Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4. Zachary Woolfe of the *New*

York Times wrote: “Mr. Robertson led a ferociously focused performance of Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony, the phrasing taut but natural as breathing.”

Born in Santa Monica, California, Mr. Robertson was educated at London’s Royal Academy of Music, where he studied horn and composition before turning to orchestral conducting. Robertson is the recipient of numerous awards and honors.



Deborah O’Grady’s career in photography, spanning three decades, centers on the landscapes of the western United States. Many bodies of her work represent an exploration of the rural landscapes of northern California seen within the context of native mythology (Pomo and Lake Miwok traditional stories, collected in the early 20th century by anthropologists working at UC Berkeley) and the pioneer experiences of an early settler, Susanna Roberts Townsend.

Ms. O’Grady’s territory expands to include the Navajo Nation and the Four Corners area of Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico, for the creation of the video montage commissioned by the Phoenix Symphony for *Enemy Slayer: A Navajo Oratorio*, and for *Code Talker Stories*, a book of oral histories and portraits of the World War II Navajo Marines whose native language was used to create an unbreakable code that aided in the defeat of the Japanese at the close of the war.



Timothy McAllister is one of today’s premier soloists, a member of the renowned PRISM Quartet, and a champion of contemporary music credited with dozens of recordings and more than 150 pre-

mières of new compositions by eminent and emerging composers worldwide.

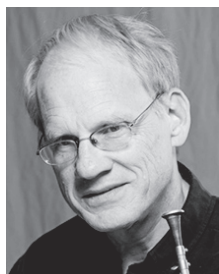
In August 2013 he gave the world première of John Adams’ *Saxophone Concerto*—described by the *Sydney Morning Herald* as “an astonishing performance”—with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under the baton of the composer in the Sydney Opera House. Subsequent United States premières and international performances throughout 2013 and 2014 occurred with Marin Alsop and the Baltimore and Sao Paulo State (Brazil) symphonies, along with a recording of the concerto and *City Noir* for Nonesuch Records with David Robertson and the St. Louis Symphony, which won the 2015 Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance. Other engagements with the concerto have included the BBC Proms with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, New World Symphony, and the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra.



A versatile pianist, **Peter Henderson** is active as a performer in solo, chamber, and orchestral settings. Since fall 2005, Mr. Henderson has served as Assistant Professor of Music at Maryville University.

He performs frequently as an ensemble keyboardist with the St. Louis Symphony, and made his first appearance as a subscription-concert soloist with the Symphony in January 2008. He often gives Pre-Concert Conversations from the Symphony’s Powell Hall stage prior to subscription concerts. Henderson has coached chamber music at the San Diego Chamber Music Workshop each summer since 2001, and was an orchestral and chamber keyboardist with the Sun Valley Summer Symphony during its 2004 and 2006–09 seasons. In 2003 he was a winner of the St. Louis-based Artist Presentation Society’s auditions.

Mr. Henderson holds a Doctor of Music degree from Indiana University-Bloomington (having studied piano there with Dr. Karen Shaw); before attending IU, he studied piano at the University of Idaho with Dr. Jay Mauchley.



Roger Kaza rejoined the St. Louis Symphony as Principal Horn in the fall of 2009, after 14 years with the Houston Symphony. He was previously a member of the St. Louis Symphony horn section from 1983–95,

and prior to that held positions in the Vancouver Symphony, Boston Symphony, and the Boston Pops, where he was solo horn under John Williams. A native of Portland, Oregon, Mr. Kaza attended Portland State University, studying with Christopher Leuba, and later transferred to the New England Conservatory in Boston, where he received a Bachelor of Music with Honors in 1977 under the tutelage of Thomas E. Newell, Jr.

Mr. Kaza has appeared as soloist with many orchestras, including the St. Louis, Vancouver, and Houston symphonies, and the Carlos Chavez Chamber Orchestra in Mexico City. A frequent chamber musician as well, he has performed at numerous summer venues, including the Bravo!Vail Festival, Chamber Music Northwest, Mainly Mozart, and the Aspen and Marrowstone Festivals.



William J. James is Principal Percussion of the St. Louis Symphony. He won the position at age 25 while a member of the New World Symphony in Miami Beach, Florida. He graduated from the New England

Conservatory in 2006 with a Master of Music

degree and was a student of Will Hudgins of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Mr. James received his Bachelor of Music degree from Northwestern University in 2004. While attending Northwestern, he studied with Michael Burritt, an active soloist and clinician throughout the country, and James Ross, a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. James is an active educator in the percussion community. His book *The Modern Concert Snare Drum Roll* has been met with critical acclaim as a much-needed resource for both teachers and students.



Thomas Stubbs graduated from Juilliard in 1970 and subsequently joined the St. Louis Symphony, where he is currently the Associate Principal Timpani/Percussionist (cymbal specialist). He teaches

at St. Louis University and, since 1989, at the Aspen Music Festival and School. He has also taught at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, University of Missouri-Columbia, and University of Indiana-Bloomington. He is also a clinician for the Zildjian cymbal company.

At Juilliard Stubbs was a student of Saul Goodman and a private student of Buster Bailey. Additional studies were with Morris Goldenberg at the National Orchestral Association, and with George Gaber, Roland Kohloff, Gary Weidersheim, and Rick Holmes at the Aspen Music Festival.

Mr. Stubbs continues this teaching legacy, with many of his former students now playing professionally around the world, including in the San Francisco Symphony, Seattle Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, North Carolina Symphony, Birmingham Symphony, Malaysian Philharmonic, and both the Army Band and Marine Band in Washington, D.C.

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