

Sunday, November 5, 2017, 7pm
Hertz Hall

Anthony de Mare, *piano*
Re-Imagining Sondheim from the Piano

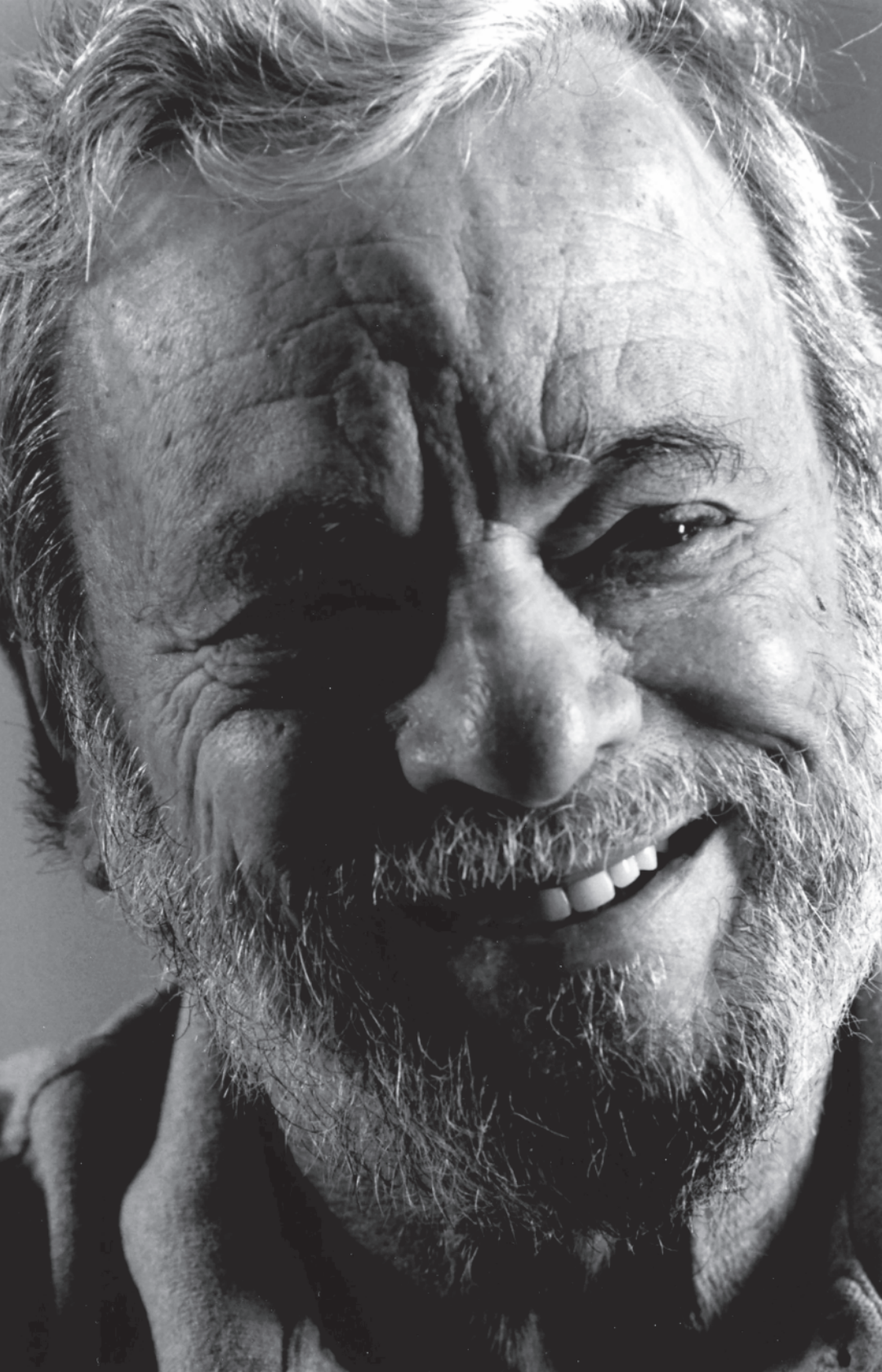
PROGRAM

(All works based on material by Stephen Sondheim)

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| Andy AKIHO | Into the Woods (2013)
<i>(Into the Woods)</i> |
| William BOLCOM | A Little Night Fughetta (2010)
(after “Anyone Can Whistle”
& “Send in the Clowns”) |
| Ricky Ian GORDON | Every Day A Little Death (2008/2010)
<i>(A Little Night Music)</i> |
| Annie GOSFIELD | A Bowler Hat (2011)
<i>(Pacific Overtures)</i> |
| Mason BATES | Very Put Together (2012)
(after “Putting it Together”
from <i>Sunday in the Park with George</i>) |
| Steve REICH | Finishing the Hat – Two Pianos (2010)
<i>(Sunday in the Park with George)</i> |
| Gabriel KAHANE | Being Alive (2011)
<i>(Company)</i> |
| Ethan IVERSON | Send in the Clowns (2011)
<i>(A Little Night Music)</i> |
| Wynton MARSALIS | That Old Piano Roll (2014)
<i>(Follies)</i> |
| Thomas NEWMAN | Not While I’m Around (2012)
<i>(Sweeney Todd)</i> |
| Duncan SHEIK | Johanna in Space (2014)
(after “Johanna” from <i>Sweeney Todd</i>) |
| Jake HEGGIE | I’m Excited. No You’re Not. (2010)
(after “A Weekend in the Country”
from <i>A Little Night Music</i>) |

*All pieces were commissioned expressly for The Liaisons Project,
Rachel Colbert and Anthony de Mare, producers.*

Cal Performances’ 2017–18 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.



Like many of us, I have long held in highest esteem the work of Stephen Sondheim, whose fearless eclecticism has emboldened many a musical risk-taker. Over the years, I often found myself imagining how the familiar and beloved songs of the Sondheim canon would sound if transformed into piano works along the lines of what Art Tatum and Earl Wild did for George Gershwin and Cole Porter, or what Liszt did for Verdi, Schubert, and so many others.

In 2007, after many years of working with talented composers from across the musical spectrum, I decided to pursue a formal commissioning and concert project. With a generous spark of enthusiasm from Sondheim (including some wonderful suggestions for composers to invite), *Liaisons: Re-Imagining Sondheim from the Piano* was born.

Liaisons now features the work of 36 composers ranging in age from 30 to nearly 80, representing seven different countries and 44 Pulitzer, Grammy, Tony, Emmy, and Academy awards. Taken as a whole, they demonstrate the way Sondheim's influence has extended far beyond the musical theater to reach into the realms of classical, jazz, pop, theater, and film. The entire collection now stands as a celebration of Sondheim and the composers who rose to the challenge of adding their voices to his, a creative alchemy that affirms that his work is as much at home in a concert hall as on a Broadway stage.

A project this ambitious in scope is by definition a team effort. Producer Rachel Colbert joins me in thanking all the donors, designers, scholars, skeptics, presenters, partners, and friends who helped us make *Liaisons* a reality. We would also like to thank ECM Records, one of the recording industry's greatest supporters of musical innovation, for giving *Liaisons* such a welcome and fitting home. In addition, we add a special thanks to Matias Tarnopolsky, Rob Bailis, and the staff here at Cal Performances for the opportunity to present *Liaisons* this evening.

Thank you for being a part of this journey. To add further context I've asked each of the composers to write something about their piece; the following are their comments—a true testament to the diversity of talents represented by the project, and to the singular impact Sondheim's music has had on us all.

—Anthony de Mare

COMPOSER COMMENTS

Andy Akiho: “The first time I listened to it I loved the concept of *Into the Woods*—being lost in and confused by the woods, and the consistent and driving rhythms of the opening prologue. I was also intrigued by Sondheim's innovative and witty use of spoken narrative against his catchy melodies, particularly during each character's introduction. My goal in re-imagining this prologue was to orchestrate each character's personality with the use of prepared piano—for example, dimes on the strings for the cow scenes, poster tack on the strings for door knocks and narrated phrases, and credit card string-clusters for the wicked witch. My goal was to portray each character's story and mystical journey using exotic piano timbres in place of text.”

William Bolcom: “The main theme for ‘A Little Night Fughetta’ is taken from *Anyone Can Whistle*, a melody that struck me as a fugue subject—with a countersubject of ‘Send in the Clowns.’ I thought Steve would be amused at a fugue-like, and mercifully short, piece—thus a fughetta and not a fugue.”

Ricky Ian Gordon: “In 1973, when Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* was running on Broadway, I was 17 years old and I was obsessed with it. I saw it six times. There was one song, though, that I couldn't wait to hear at every show—‘Every Day A Little Death.’ So when I began this piece for Tony, I didn't even look at the music—I just started riffing on what I myself might like to play, as if I were playing that song for someone, introducing its delicate intricacies, its stunning melody, and the counter melody of the duet. I took some things out of their original time and meter... I guess you could say I sort of made love to it, with gratitude for all the pleasure it has given me over the years.”

Annie Gosfield: “I was honored to be invited to re-imagine one of Stephen Sondheim's works for Anthony de Mare. I chose ‘A Bowler Hat’ because of its unusual theme both musically and in terms of narrative. It is from *Pacific Overtures*, and features a repeated theme that is beautifully constructed, very catchy, and a little melancholy. The subject of the musical is the difficult Western-

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ization of Japan, told from the point of view of the Japanese. I was intrigued by this unusual song, and as a former milliner, the reference to the bowler hat made it a perfect match for me.”

Mason Bates: “The manic energy of Sondheim’s ‘Putting It Together’—which showcases the collision of art and schmoozing at a spectacular art opening—seemed an intriguing challenge to compress into a piano solo. The two primary themes of the scene are, well, put together here—smashed together, actually—in a quicksilver showpiece for one of the most gifted and inventive pianists, Anthony de Mare.”

Steve Reich: “‘Finishing the Hat – Two Pianos,’ for Stephen Sondheim, is a rather faithful re-working of one of Sondheim’s favorite songs from *Sunday in the Park with George*, and incidentally the title of his recent book. Harmonically very close to the original, and melodically adding only occasional variations, my only real change is in the rhythm of constantly changing meters. This gives my two-piano version a rhythmic character more in line with my own music and, hopefully, another perspective with which to appreciate Sondheim’s brilliant original.” For this performance, Anthony de Mare accompanies himself with his own recording of the Piano 2 part.

Gabriel Kahane: “‘Being Alive’ begins as a scherzo of sorts, taking Sondheim’s ‘doorbell’ motif and contorting it into various humorous guises before the appearance of the tune in a fractured chorale,

followed by a series of reharmonizations. The doorbell motif re-appears as a transition to the bridge of the original song, which I’ve re-imagined here as an homage to Ligeti’s first piano étude, *Désordre*. Finally, the main tune returns triumphantly in bi-tonal guise, giving way to an emotionally ambiguous coda.”

Ethan Iverson: “Some songs we never tire of, no matter how many times we hear them. My reasonably straightforward arrangement of ‘Send in the Clowns’ can be played on a concert grand but might be even better on a barroom upright. The original melody at the beginning recurs and interferes, eventually provoking a humiliating outburst in G Major (instead of the correct G minor).”

Wynton Marsalis: “Stephen Sondheim employs many syncopated and expressive devices in ‘That Old Piano Roll.’ My arrangement uses these concepts to evoke the styles of three great jazz pianists. The basic stride style of James P. Johnson is answered by the jagged, obtuse style of Thelonious Monk. Both find resolution in the ragtime-swing style of New Orleans pianist Jelly Roll Morton. The parlor piano elegance of the second theme, with its tresillo rhythm, is juxtaposed to a 4/4 New Orleans ragtime stomp. In the 1920s, a heated debate swirled around jazz as polite society music or red-hot dance music. Now, we happily play it all.”

Thomas Newman: “*Sweeney Todd* always lifts me into the dusty attic of my youth and a time of pro-

The Liaisons Project features the following composers:

Andy Akiho	Annie Gosfield	Thomas Newman
Mason Bates	Jake Heggie	David Rakowski
Eve Beglarian	Fred Hersch	Steve Reich
Derek Bermel	Ethan Iverson	Eric Rockwell
Jherik Bischoff	Gabriel Kahane	Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR)
William Bolcom	Phil Kline	Frederic Rzewski
Jason Robert Brown	Tania Leon	Rodney Sharman
Kenji Bunch	Ricardo Lorenz	Duncan Sheik
Mary Ellen Childs	Wynton Marsalis	David Shire
Michael Daugherty	Paul Moravec	Bernadette Speach
Peter Golub	Nico Muhly	Mark-Anthony Turnage
Ricky Ian Gordon	John Musto	Nils Vigeland

found musical questioning. And if I asked...? Steve's answers to me were never obvious, always thoughtful, and uniquely observed. Beyond his enduring talents and imagination, he was always the most natural and gifted teacher. Brilliantly refined, verbally expressive. But what focus! And how generous! This version of 'Not While I'm Around' is another dialogue, I suppose, another attempt at creative engagement. This time, though, in simple, poignant harmony and shared phrase."

Duncan Sheik: "By some happy twist of circumstance, my mother took me to see the original Broadway production of *Sweeney Todd* when I was nine years old. I remember a shocking amount of blood. Returning to see the show in John Doyle's 2006 production, I more fully appreciated the neat trick of how 'Johanna' morphs from a plaintive, hopeful declaration of love into

the pathos and pathology of love completely lost. Two opposite ends of the human condition oscillating back and forth. Not being a virtuoso pianist myself, I wanted to simplify the actual piano part to its most basic components—the Satie version of 'Johanna,' if you will. But I also wanted to have the atmosphere of Johanna's celestial beauty and the idea that, like a shooting star, she is out of reach. To this end I employed a technique of layering dozens of takes of guitar improvisation through a tape echo, thus creating a blanket of sound for the piano to linger within. So, 'Johanna in Space,' a piece for piano and tape echo.

Jake Heggie: "'I'm Excited. No, You're Not' is my take on Stephen Sondheim's amazing ensemble 'A Weekend in the Country.' I tried to capture the energy and the momentum, as well as a few bumps in the road, in creating a big, fun, splashy tour-de-force for Tony de Mare."

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Anthony de Mare (*piano*) is one of the world's foremost champions of contemporary music. Praised by the *New York Times* for his "muscularly virtuosic, remarkably uninhibited performance [and] impressive talents," his versatility has inspired the creation of over 60 new works by some of today's most distinguished artists, especially in the speaking-singing pianist genre, which he pioneered over 25 years ago with the premiere of Frederic Rzewski's groundbreaking *De Profundis*.

Liaisons: Re-Imagining Sondheim from the Piano is a landmark commissioning and concert project that perfectly expresses de Mare's vision to expand both the repertoire and the audience for contemporary music. The *Chicago Sun-Times* recently declared "that de Mare's passion and vision almost radiate from the stage... he causes all involved—composers, performer, and audience members—to think about how music is made and how we listen to it."

As creator, performer, and co-producer of *The Liaisons Project*, de Mare has brought together many of today's most highly regarded emerging and established composers—spanning the classical, contemporary, jazz, film, theater, and indie worlds—to bring the work of Stephen Sondheim into the concert hall, adding another 27 com-

posers to the list of those he has commissioned, and another 36 compositions to the contemporary piano repertoire.

The full three-CD box-set recording of the project, produced by Judith Sherman, was released on ECM Records in September 2015. The recording was named on 12 "2015 Best Of" lists, including in the *New York Times*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *Washington Post*, and NPR and won a 2016 Grammy Award for Classical Producer of the Year.

Sold-out houses and rave reviews in the *New York Times* greeted all three of the New York premiere concerts of *The Liaisons Project* at Symphony Space. De Mare was featured on NPR's *All Things Considered* and was invited to perform on Lincoln Center's *American Songbook* series event "Reich and Sondheim: In Conversation" and again at Symphony Space in 2017 for "Steve Reich's 80th Birthday Marathon." Recent performances have included the Australian premiere of *Liaisons* in Melbourne and Sydney, Virginia Tech Center for the Arts, SF Jazz, Ravinia Festival, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, Schubert Club in Minneapolis, Mondavi Center at UC Davis, Rockport Music Festival, Cliburn Series in Fort Worth, and Music at Meyer in San Francisco.

An excerpt from *The Liaisons Project* was also featured in the HBO documentary *Six by Sondheim*. In the 2016–17 season, de Mare gave the UK premiere performances of *Liaisons* in a tour sponsored by SERIOUS Events, Ltd. that included concerts in Southampton, Manchester, and at the London Jazz Festival at the Barbican Centre.

Anthony de Mare's performances over the years span five continents, allowing him to develop a growing fan base that extends far beyond the traditional contemporary music audience. In addition to the 36 pieces in *The Liaisons Project*, he has premiered works by Frederic Rzewski, James Moberley, Meredith Monk, Jerome Kitzke, and David Rakowski; Pulitzer Prize winners David Del Tredici, Aaron Jay Kernis, and Paul Moravec; jazz legend Fred Hersch; and the Tony Award-winning composer Jason Robert Brown, among others.

Since his debut with Young Concert Artists in 1986, Anthony de Mare's accolades and awards include First Prize and Audience Prize at the International Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition (The Netherlands) and the International Contemporary Piano Competition of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (France). He made his Carnegie Hall debut at Zankel Hall in 2005. Among his best-known performances are his national tour of *The American Piano* (with pianist Steven Mayer); *Playing With Myself*, a multimedia concert event that enjoyed a sold-out run at HERE Arts Center (New York, 2001); *Missing Peace*, an eclectic series of old and new works inspired by the exhibition *The Missing Peace: Artists Consider the Dalai Lama* at the Rubin Museum in NYC; *Cool—A Journey into the Influence of Jazz and Unities: Music of Pride and Celebration*. Anthony de Mare has also collaborated and performed with the Bang-On-A-Can All Stars, Meredith Monk/The House, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, among many others.

Anthony de Mare has nearly 20 recordings in his discography. In addition to the current release of *Liaisons* on ECM, his recording *SPEAK!—The Speaking-Singing Pianist* (Innova) is the first disc devoted completely to the genre

de Mare created over 20 years ago. He is currently a professor of piano at the Manhattan School of Music and New York University and serves as new-music curator for the Sheen Center of Thought and Culture in NYC.

Anthony de Mare is a Steinway Artist.

Stephen Sondheim wrote the music and lyrics for *Saturday Night* (1954), *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1962), *Anyone Can Whistle* (1964), *Company* (1970), *Follies* (1971), *A Little Night Music* (1973), *The Frogs* (1974), *Pacific Overtures* (1976), *Sweeney Todd* (1979), *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981), *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984), *Into the Woods* (1987), *Assassins* (1991), *Passion* (1994), and *Road Show* (2008); lyrics for *West Side Story* (1957), *Gypsy* (1959), and *Do I Hear A Waltz?* (1965); and additional lyrics for *Candide* (1973). Anthologies of his work include *Side by Side by Sondheim* (1976), *Marry Me A Little* (1981), *You're Gonna Love Tomorrow* (1983), *Putting It Together* (1993/99), and *Sondheim on Sondheim* (2010). For film and television, he composed the scores of *Stavisky* (1974) and *Reds* (1981) and songs for *Dick Tracy* (1990) and *Evening Primrose* (1966). Sondheim is on the Council of the Dramatists Guild, having served as its president from 1973 to 1981. His collected lyrics with attendant essays have been published in two volumes: *Finishing the Hat* (2010) and *Look, I Made A Hat* (2011). In 2010 the Broadway theater formerly known as Henry Miller's Theatre was renamed in his honor.

The Liaisons Project has been produced with the express permission of Stephen Sondheim.

Anthony de Mare is represented by Bernstein Artists, Inc.

Visit www.liaisonsproject.com to learn more or get in touch.

For more information on Anthony de Mare, visit the artist's website at www.anthonymare.com.