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C L A S S I C A L  
**CONVERGENCE**

ANTHONY de MARE

**LIAISONS**

RE-IMAGING SONDHEIM FROM THE PIANO

APRIL 17, 7:30 P.M.



the LINCOLN center

Colorado State University  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE AND DANCE

# TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

## **ANTHONY DE MARE / LIAISONS: RE-IMAGINING SONDHEIM FROM THE PIANO**

(ALL WORKS BASED ON MATERIAL BY STEPHEN SONDHEIM)

***Into the Woods* (2013)**

*(Into the Woods)*

**Andy Akiho**

***The Ladies Who Lunch* (2010)**

*(Company)*

**David Rakowski**

***Color and Light* (2012)**

*(Sunday in the Park with George)*

**Nico Muhly**

***Finishing the Hat –Two Pianos* (2010)**

*(Sunday in the Park with George)*

**Steve Reich**

***I Think About You* (2010)**

*(after "Losing My Mind" – Follies)*

**Paul Moravec**

***That Old Piano Roll* (2014)**

*(Follies)*

**Wynton Marsalis**

***Johanna in Space* (2014)**

*(after "Johanna" – Sweeney Todd)*

**Duncan Sheik**

***The Demon Barber* (2010)**

*(A Fantasia on "The Ballad of Sweeney Todd")*

**Kenji Bunch**

***No One Is Alone* (2010)**

*(Into the Woods)*

**Fred Hersch**

***I'm Excited. No You're Not.* (2010)**

*(after "A Weekend in the Country" – A Little Night Music)*

**Jake Heggie**

## FROM THE ARTIST

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 Mr. 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, indie & 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 Jack Rogers and the staff at The Lincoln Center of Fort Collins and Colorado State University 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, and 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."

**DAVID RAKOWSKI:** "Like all of the composers in *The Liaisons Project*, I was presented with the problem of reframing a song that is already perfect—and in my case, my favorite Sondheim song, *The Ladies Who Lunch*. My solution was, to the best of my ability, to concentrate on the character's deep sadness, thereby eschewing the song's big finish for a slow, introspective one."

**NICO MUHLY:** "The light-suffused chords that open *Sunday in the Park with George* are some of the best-spaced chords ever. I used to obsessively study them and play them and dream about ways to steal them. What is particularly astonishing about *Sunday*, too, is the way in which the "mechanical" music that drives the score gives way to an emotional immediacy with the characters instantly: it's the best tension between the motor and the heart. This is clearest, I think, in *Color and Light*, a multi-part duet between George and Dot and, indeed, the orchestra. My homage to this piece tries to accentuate the angular music, making it somewhat dangerously unhinged, while always returning to the more supple landscape of the love story."

**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.

**PAUL MORAVEC:** "*I Think About You* takes its title from the second — and oft-repeated line of 'Losing My Mind' from *Follies*. In my re-imagining for piano solo, the eponymous musical phrase repeats maniacally to the point of 'losing its mind.' The piece is a musical meditation on obsession, heartbreak, and, finally, the timeless need to love and be loved."

**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."

**DUNCAN SHEIK:** “By some happy twist of circumstance my mother took me to see the original Broadway production of *Sweeney Todd* when I was 9 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 a piece for piano and tape echo, *Johanna in Space*.”

**KENJI BUNCH:** “My first exposure to *Sweeney Todd* came as a 10-year old watching a PBS broadcast of the Broadway production. I was both terrified and fascinated, and have felt the work’s and Sondheim’s influence ever since. For *The Demon Barber*—an homage to the seething, menacing introductory song, “The Ballad of Sweeney Todd,” I highlighted the original song’s oblique references to the Dies Irae Gregorian melody into a persistent, ominous chant that surfaces throughout. I also wanted to amplify the work’s horror-show qualities with low register rumblings, shrieking high clusters, and insistent rhythmic ostinato patterns.”

**FRED HERSCH:** “*No One Is Alone* (from *Into the Woods*) appealed to me because its diatonic melody (like many of the great tunes by Richard Rodgers) enabled me to make subtle changes in the harmony that reflect my jazz sensibility. I could make the arrangement sound lush and pianistic—and just let the melody sing. And I love what the lyric says—it is a very relevant song.”

**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.”

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

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

Anthony de Mare is represented by Bernstein Artists, Inc.  
[www.bernsarts.com](http://www.bernsarts.com)

Visit [www.liasonsproject.com](http://www.liasonsproject.com) to learn more or get in touch.

## 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

**ANTHONY DE MARE** 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 his 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*, he 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 composers to the list of those he has commissioned, and another 36 compositions to the contemporary piano repertoire.

The 3-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 the *New York Times*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *Washington Post* and NPR and was included as a winner of the 2016 Grammy Award for Classical Producer of the Year.

Sold-out houses and raves in the *New York Times* greeted all three of the New York premiere concerts of *The Liaisons Project* at Symphony Space. Mr. 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, Cal Performances, Virginia Tech Center for the Arts, SF Jazz, The Ravinia Festival and the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, Schubert Club in Minneapolis, Mondavi Center at UC Davis, Rockport Music Festival, and the Cliburn Series in

Fort Worth. An excerpt from *The Liaisons Project* was also featured in the HBO documentary "Six by Sondheim". Last season, he gave the U.K. premiere of *Liaisons* in a tour sponsored by SERIOUS Events, Ltd. that included the London Jazz Festival at the Barbican.

Mr. 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 Mobberley, Meredith Monk, Jerome Kitke, 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, his 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 gave 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 multi-media 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*. Mr. 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.

Mr. de Mare has over twenty recordings in his discography. He currently is Professor of Piano at Manhattan School of Music and New York University and serves as new music curator for The Sheen Center of Thought and Culture in NYC.

**Mr. de Mare is a Steinway Artist. / [www.anthonymare.com](http://www.anthonymare.com)**

**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 films and television, he composed the scores of *Stavisky* (1974) and *Reds* (1981) and songs for *Dick Tracy* (1990) and "Evening Primrose" (1966). Mr. 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.

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