

SŌ PERCUSSION

Sunday, April 6, 2025

Eric Cha-Beach
Josh Quillen
Adam Sliwinski
Jason Treuting



4+9 (2017)

Eric Cha-Beach

Forbidden Love* (2019)

Julia Wolfe

Sense (2024)

Jason Treuting

Stay On It (1973)

Julius Eastman (1940–1990)

with Rodney Clark,
Maddy Dethloff,
Nora Graf,
Tony Kirk,
João Melo,
Juan Diego,
Mora Rubio, &
Jaelyn Quilizapa, percussion
Beth Meyers, voice

**Forbidden Love was co-commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association,
the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and Carnegie Hall.
The World Premiere was given by Sō Percussion at Walt Disney Concert Hall in
Los Angeles on June 1, 2019.*



NOTE FROM THE CURATOR

I am proud to say that I brought Sō Percussion to the Gardner Museum, at the invitation of Scott Nickrenz, back in 2005. So it is an extra pleasure to bring them back for their Calderwood Hall debut. They are extending our fall celebration of the music of minimalist composer Julius Eastman, and they are introducing the Museum to Julia Wolfe's very unconventional string quartet. Welcome back!

—George Steel, *Abrams Curator of Music*



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

For 25 years and counting, Sō Percussion has redefined chamber music for the 21st century through an “exhilarating blend of precision and anarchy, rigor and bedlam” (*New Yorker*).

Sō's commitment to the creation and amplification of new work, and their extraordinary powers of perception and communication, have made them a trusted partner for composers, allowing the writing of music that expands the style and capacity of brilliant voices of our time. Sō's collaborative composition partners include Caroline Shaw, David Lang, Julia Wolfe, Nathalie Joachim, Dan Trueman, Kendall K. Williams, Angélica Negrón,

Shodekeh Talifero, Claire Rousay, Leilehua Lanzilotti, Bora Yoon, Olivier Tarpaga, Bobby Previte, Matmos, and many others.

The current season hears Sō and Caroline Shaw perform a program highlighting their newest album, *Rectangles and Circumstance*, at the Barbican in London, the BOZAR in Brussels, Saffron Hall in Essex, and at 92NY in New York City. Recent Sō highlights have included performances at Carnegie Hall, the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Big Ears, Cal Performances, the Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Penn Live Arts in Philadelphia, the Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa, the Oklahoma City Philharmonic, the Library of Congress, touring Benin and Burkina Faso with Olivier Tarpaga, and more.

In addition to *Rectangles and Circumstance*, their recent albums with Caroline Shaw include *Let the Soil Play its Simple Part*, and the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Narrow Sea* with Dawn Upshaw and Gilbert Kalish, all on Nonesuch Records. Other recent albums include an acclaimed version of Julius Eastman's *Stay On It* and Darian Donovan Thomas's *Individuate*. This adds to a catalog of more than 25 albums featuring landmark recordings of works by Steve Reich, Steven Mackey, David Lang, and many others.

In fall 2024, Sō Percussion began their 11th year as the Edward T. Cone performers-in-residence at Princeton University. Rooted in the belief that music is an elemental form of human communication, and galvanized by forces for social change, Sō enthusiastically pursues a range of social and community outreach through their nonprofit umbrella, 2

including partnerships with local ensembles such as Brooklyn's Pan in Motion; their Sō Laboratories concert series; a studio residency program in Brooklyn; fundraising for the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen; and the Sō Percussion Summer Institute, an intensive two-week chamber music seminar for percussionists and composers.

Sō is: Eric Cha-Beach, Josh Quillen, Adam Sliwinski, and Jason Treuting.

Sō Percussion's 2024–25 season is supported in part by awards from:

- The National Endowment for the Arts. To find out more about how National Endowment for the Arts grants impact individuals and communities, visit www.arts.gov
- The New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature
- The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council
- The Aaron Copland Fund for Music
- The Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University
- The Amphion Foundation
- The Brookby Foundation
- The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation
- The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation
- The Howard Gilman Foundation
- The Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation

Sō Percussion uses:

Pearl/Adams Instruments
Vic Firth Drumsticks and Mallets
Zildjian Cymbals
Black Swamp Accessories
Remo Drumheads
Estey Organs
Kyle Dunleavy Steel Pans
MalletMan Steel Drum Mallets



NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

4+9 was written for the Sō Percussion Summer Institute 2017. The piece explores all of the ways that a bar of 9/4 can be subdivided: There are 36 sixteenth notes in the bar (nine beats x four 16th notes per beat), and 36 can be divided evenly by 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, and 18. The various combinations of different overlapping divisions in the bar make the underlying groupings of 16th notes constantly sound different. I used this basic idea in a piece for Sō Percussion's project "A Gun Show" in 2016, but *4+9* explores simply the pure process of hearing each possible combination in turn.

—Eric Cha-Beach

Forbidden Love—all the things you aren't supposed to do to string instruments. My first year of college I wandered into a class called Creative Musicianship. One of the first assignments was to write a short piece using a musical instrument in an unusual, nontraditional way. I thought "What?" So when Sō asked me to write them a piece using the four instruments of the string quartet, it was the second time this challenge was posed. The beautiful thing about Sō is that they are so open, so collaborative, full of adventure and can-do attitude. Together we discovered and drew out beautiful ethereal and crunchy sounds from this iconic quartet of instruments. In the process I developed a very personal new language (boings, szhings, hammering, and more).

Forbidden Love is dedicated to Jane Heirich, that wonderful teacher who in that life-changing class first asked me to step outside the box.

—Julia Wolfe

"There is in America now serious music—so-called—there is a school of music which tries to bring the beat back into music."

—Julius Eastman, speaking before a performance of *Stay On It* in Glasgow, Scotland, 1974

Stay On It is the first Julius Eastman piece that Sō Percussion learned. When touring stopped abruptly in 2020, we decided to use the time to learn about music that we admired but had never performed. In many ways, this piece connects dots on how we view minimalism from the 1960s and 1970s. We have always wanted to "bring the beat back" into concert music, and better-known works by composers like Steve Reich and Terry Riley have been our vehicle for doing so.

Although the infectious and repetitious opening motive from *Stay On It* suggests a connection to those other works, Eastman's version is distinctive. In Matthew Mendez's chapter on *Stay On It* in the *Gay Guerilla* collection of essays, our percussionist colleague Jan Williams claims that "[Eastman] was influenced to a degree by the processes involved in these pieces, but that's about it."

Specifically, *Stay On It* is more forthright in playing with ideas from forms of American popular music like soul, R&B, jazz, and the newly burgeoning disco trend, as well as embracing more expansive styles of improvisation. In this sense, his minimalism 4



was maximal. Mendez details how Eastman's mentor Lukas Foss at the University of Buffalo would have encouraged this kind of ecumenical taste, and that Eastman didn't see the point of distinguishing between genres:

For Eastman, who once claimed in response to a song by Earth, Wind & Fire that he had 'completely lost [his] ability to discriminate between genres of music,' pulsed-based experimentalism and disco had simply become part of a single continuum.

—Mathew Mendez, "That Piece Does Not Exist without Julius," from *Gay Guerilla: Julius Eastman and His Music*

The work unfolds in three large sections: First, the "riff" anchors the ensemble as little variations are spun off; second, the riff gradually dissolves into noisy, chaotic improvisation; third, a mystical repeated cadence slowly morphs into solo improvisation and a lonely tambourine.

—Adam Sliwinski



UPCOMING PERFORMANCES:

STRING TRIO:

GENEVA LEWIS, VIOLIN |

YURA LEE, VIOLA |

JAY CAMPBELL, CELLO

Sunday, April 13

STERLING ELLIOTT, CELLO

WITH WYNONA WANG, PIANO

Sunday, April 27

Kindly turn off all electronic devices during the concert and refrain from any photography or filming in the hall. Also, please note the location of the emergency exit doors: across the hall from the doors through which you entered.

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum resides on the homelands of the Massachusetts Tribe, who belong to this place and continue to regard these lands and waters as sacred.

Music at the Gardner is supported by Nora McNeely Hurley / Manitou Fund. Hemenway & Barnes LLP is the lead corporate sponsor of the Weekend Concert Series. The Museum thanks its generous concert donors: The Coogan Concert in memory of Peter Weston Coogan; Fitzpatrick Family Concert; James Lawrence Memorial Concert; Alford P. Rudnick Memorial Concert; David Scudder in memory of his wife, Marie Louise Scudder; Wendy Shattuck Young Artist Concert; and Willona Sinclair Memorial Concert. The piano is dedicated as the Alex d'Arbeloff Steinway. The harpsichord was generously donated by Dr. Robert Barstow in memory of Marion Huse, and its care is endowed in memory of Dr. Barstow by The Barstow Fund. Music at the Gardner is also supported in part by the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts, New Music USA's Organization Fund, Nicie and Jay Panetta, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, which is supported by the state of Massachusetts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

