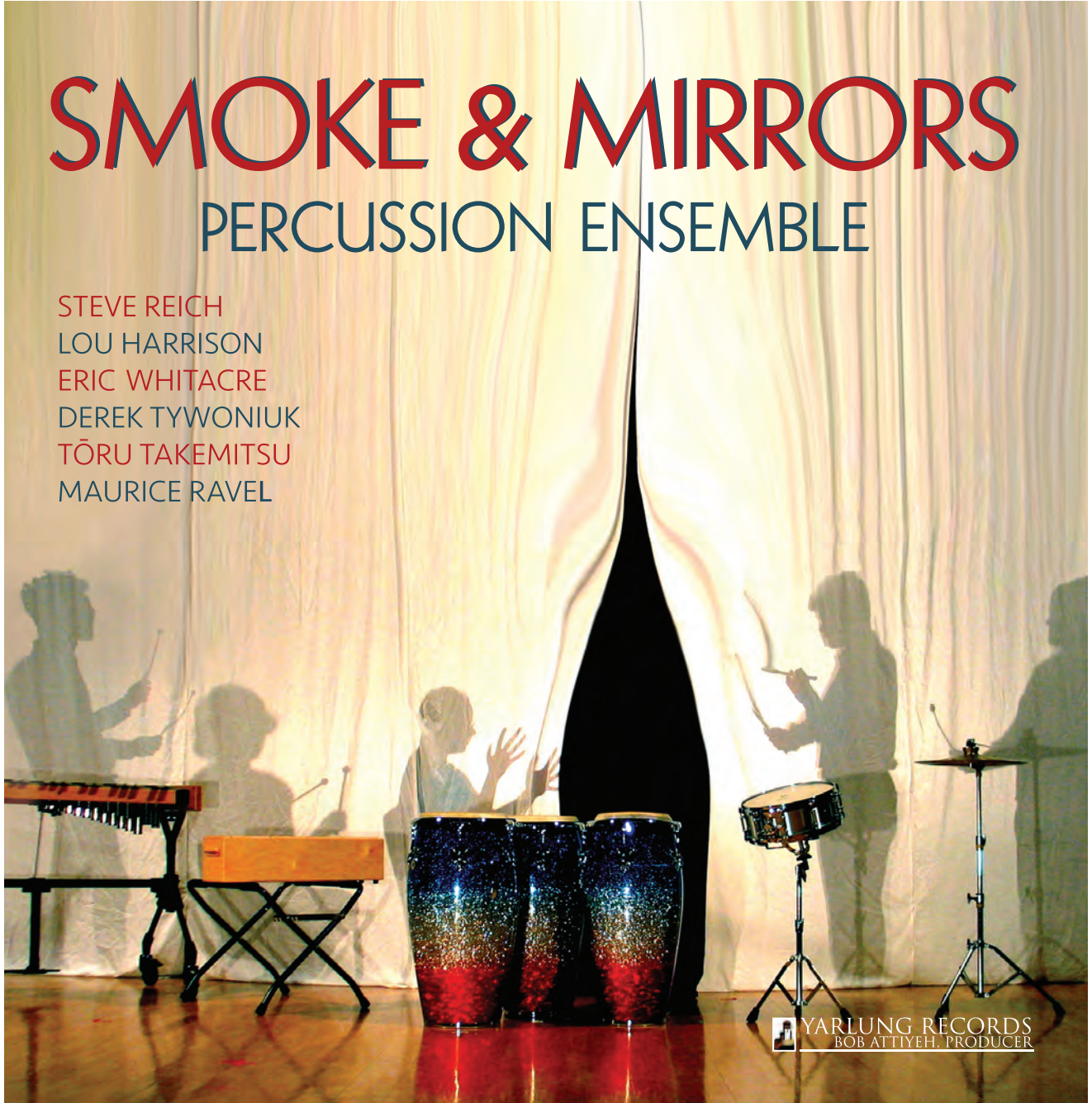


SMOKE & MIRRORS

PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

STEVE REICH
LOU HARRISON
ERIC WHITACRE
DEREK TYWONIUK
TÖRU TAKEMITSU
MAURICE RAVEL



YARLUNG RECORDS
BOB ATTIYEH, PRODUCER

1	<i>Nagoya Marimbas</i> Steve Reich	4:41
2	<i>Music for Pieces of Wood</i> Steve Reich	11:12
3	<i>Canticle No. 3</i> Lou Harrison	15:27
4	<i>Sleep</i> Eric Whitacre, Arr. Edward Hong	5:27
5-8	<i>Happenstance</i> Derek Tywoniuk	12:24
	Introduction	2:45
	Hymn	2:36
	Meditation	4:15
	On the Road	2:48
9	<i>Rain Tree</i> Tōru Takemitsu	12:04
10-12	<i>Sonatine</i> Maurice Ravel, Arr. Derek Tywoniuk	11:07
	Modéré	4:03
	Mouvement de menuet	2:55
	Animé	4:09

Producer's Notes:

I am listening to Smoke & Mirrors Percussion Ensemble and their recording of Steve Reich's *Music for Pieces of Wood* as I write these words. I remember the recording session well: we experimented with three or four microphone and musician placements and captured several different complete takes of this piece. The take we chose for this album (track two on this recording) mirrors the way Smoke & Mirrors likes to perform this piece live in concert. Rather than sitting on orchestra chairs on the stage of a brightly lighted concert hall, the ensemble sits cross-legged on the maple floor for this take, as if surrounding a camp fire. We turn off the lights, and use only a lighted round ball in the center, part summer camping trip and part mystical experience. There are no flickering flames from the fire but rather an eerie glow from the central light source, casting shadows and creating ghost images that complement the sounds of each strike of wood on wood as the sound travels around the hall. Our musicians emulate the flickering of the flames in their music. Each of our five musicians holds two smooth wooden sticks, a little over an inch round and about seven inches long. The sticks vary in diameter and length to create the different pitches.



Smoke & Mirrors performs *Music for Pieces of Wood* by Steve Reich

Joe Beribak, sitting in the center of the semicircle, begins the first pattern. Joe will maintain this pattern, unflinchingly, for the entire duration of the piece. Joe submerges himself into a musical trance as he plays, aware only of his own rhythm with one part of his brain, and completely aware of the entire composition with another part. Katy, Jessica, Derek and Eddie contribute all of the sinuous and minimalist variation which they weave into filaments of sound and rhythm as if all five musicians were one person. One does not need hallucinogens to enjoy a trip of sorts when listening to this music. I am reminded of mind-altering musical experiences such as friends have described while listening to Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* in the 1970s.

Smoke & Mirrors takes us on many different "trips" as we journey through this album. These are refreshingly fully-developed works, each very different from the others, each with its own story. Yet as a whole, this selection of music illustrates the breadth of contemporary classical music written for percussionists, as well as the flexibility and virtuosity of Smoke & Mirrors. World class and sophisticated as this ensemble is, these musicians retain and communicate the sheer joy I experienced when banging pots and pans as a two- and three-year old. Do you remember your own pleasure making a racket as a kid? Smoke & Mirrors: Katalin La Favre, Jessica Cameron, Joe Beribak, Edward Hong and Derek Tywoniuk have never forgotten it. To keep in touch with the members of Smoke & Mirrors Ensemble, please visit their website at www.smokeandmirrorsensemble.com. All five musicians play on every track in this recording, except as otherwise noted below.

Our album opens with **Steve Reich's** already classic *Nagoya Marimbas*, written in 1994 and premiered in December of that year in Shirakawa Hall in Nagoya, Japan. Steve writes that the work is "similar to my pieces from the 1960s and '70s in that there are repeating patterns played on both marimbas, one or more beats out of phase, creating a series of two part unison canons. However, these patterns are more melodically developed, change frequently and each is usually repeated no more than three times, similar to my more recent work. The piece is also considerably more difficult to play than my earlier ones and requires two virtuosic performers." Our two virtuosos are Joe Beribak on the left and Katy La Favre on the right.

Soon follows **Lou Harrison's** *Canticle No. 3*, written in 1940/1941, and premiered in 1942. Essentially a concerto for ocarina and percussion ensemble, *Canticle No. 3* uses the haunting primitive sound of the ocarina (a Mexican terra-cotta flute which looks a little like a knobby sweet potato or cuddly sea creature) and a steel string guitar, both a strong contrast with Harrison's creative assortment of percussion instruments. Joe Beribak plays ocarina and Derek Tywoniuk plays guitar.

We experimented with our musicians in many different locations for this recording, since we used one stereo AKG C-24 microphone and no mixer for all of our takes on this album. As Joe reminisced, "some instruments (like tom toms and snare drums) were designed for use with a modern orchestra, while other instruments (like the ocarina and teponaztli) are ethnic instruments designed to be played in intimate settings. So we adjusted our setup to create the balance and tone quality we wanted. We brought the ocarina closer to center, and we actually rotated the toms 90 degrees counter-clockwise in order to balance these two voices properly on the recording. As a result we needed to modify the way we cued each other, since our relative positions were radically different from the way we stand when we perform this piece live. As with everything we did in this Yarlung recording, each challenge gave us a new perspective that enriched the musical experience and made it even more fun."

Edward Hong brought **Eric Whitacre's *Sleep*** to this album after Eric graciously gave Eddie permission to transcribe this beautiful choral work. Eddie uses five musicians playing two marimbas. *Sleep* was commissioned by Julia Armstrong in 1999, and the choral version premiered in Austin, Texas in October of 2000. Mr. Whitacre originally set the words of Robert Frost's *Stopping By Woods on a Snowy*



Smoke & Mirrors I to r: Jessica Cameron, Derek Tywoniuk, Katalin La Favre, Edward Hong, Joe Beribak

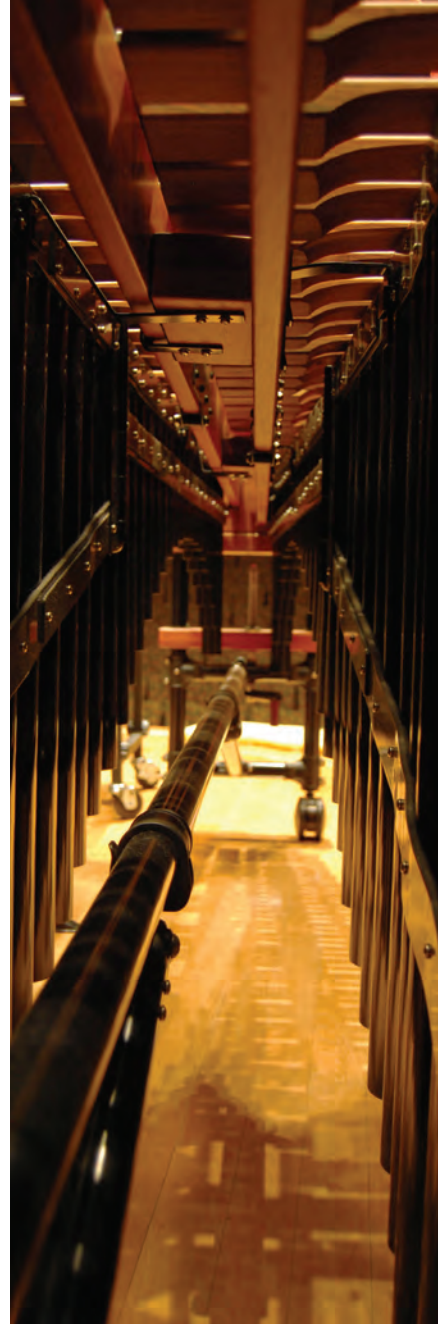
Evening, but later commissioned his friend the poet Tony Silvestri to write a new text for the work, entitled *Sleep*.

Derek Tywoniuk's *Happenstance*, commissioned by Yarlung Artists with generous underwriting from **Raulee Marcus**, represents the emotional core of this album. Derek confessed "I started the writing process over several times and each time the instrumentation shrank, until I finally settled on two marimbas with two players each. I enjoyed the simplicity of this instrumentation and I wanted to explore it through textures that I felt were underrepresented in our repertoire."

Derek told me "The name of the piece came relatively late in the composition process, in fact, after we had already started rehearsing the first three movements. I had been writing one movement about each of us, and as we started to rehearse the piece, I began to think about how Eddie, Joe, Katy and I first met, and how writing this piece for Smoke & Mirrors and for this recording is a result of four long chains of happenstance intersecting happily in the same place at the same time." Smoke and Mirrors first performed *Happenstance* in its entirety for our live concert recording session in Zipper Hall on June 9th, 2011.

Tōru Takemitsu wrote *Rain Tree* in 1982 as part of his "Waterscape" collection, which also includes *Toward the Sea*, *Rain Coming*, *riverrun* and *I Hear the Water Dreaming*, which he wrote between 1981 and 1987. As Takemitsu himself writes in his *Rain Coming* score, he wanted to "create a series of works, which like their subject, pass through various metamorphoses, culminating in a sea of tonality." Katy remembers a workshop with the legendary Japanese percussionist Eriko Daimo, who struggled successfully to communicate her interpretation of the work and the enormous size yet smoothness of the sound, which nevertheless remains quiet, meditational and constrained throughout. Musicians for *Rain Tree*: Katalin La Favre, Joe Beribak and Derek Tywoniuk.

Maurice Ravel's *Sonatine*, for solo piano, premiered in Lyon in 1906 with Paule de Lestang at the keyboard. Ravel often omitted the third movement when he performed this work in concert because of its difficulty. Naturally, a work like this presents a welcome challenge to a group of musicians as virtuosic as the members of Smoke & Mirrors. Derek Tywoniuk transcribed *Sonatine* for percussion ensemble and shares his thoughts with us. "Percussionists, who are faced with solo and chamber repertoire less than a century old, often transcribe works written originally for other instruments in order to explore a wide range of musical periods and styles. Johann Sebastian Bach's music, for example, has long attracted percussionists. But later composers have become more popular for





transcriptions in recent years.”

I asked Derek to elaborate on Ravel’s abilities as an orchestrator. Derek responded: “In my opinion, there is no more appropriate composer to transcribe for percussion instruments than Maurice Ravel. Not only did Ravel write brilliantly and innovatively for percussion in his own orchestral compositions (as heard in works like *Daphnis and Chloë*) but he was also a master of orchestrating piano works both by himself and by other musicians, and he used percussion in creative ways in these transcriptions. Modest Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*, comes to mind. Indeed it is Ravel’s orchestration of this work which most people know today.”

Derek continues “I chose his three-movement piano piece *Sonatine* for several reasons. Some of my motivations were practical: the piece is rhythmic in nature, the range required is within the range of keyboard percussion instruments (save for a few notes), and the setup of percussion instruments for which this piece is suitable is fairly similar to other works in our ensemble’s repertoire. However, the main reason is that I love *Sonatine*, and not being a serious pianist, I would otherwise never have the opportunity to play it. In the end, this arrangement challenges us technically, but we think it produces a truly magical result that is in the true spirit of Ravel’s music.” Musicians for *Sonatine*: Katalin La Favre, Joe Beribak and Derek Tywoniuk.

We recorded this debut album for Smoke & Mirrors in Zipper Hall at The Colburn School in downtown Los Angeles. This album could not have happened without the support and talents of Richard Beene, Dean of the Colburn Conservatory of Music, and our friends Lisa Palley, Mark Fabulich and Victor Peneda, who make working at Colburn such a pleasure. Even with a great deal of pro-bono help, making audiophile recordings costs more money than many recordings today can generate in sales. We are therefore doubly grateful to the people and corporations who believe whole-heartedly in our mission and who underwrite our 501(c)3 nonprofit with generous contributions.

We would especially like to thank

Carol Sharer
Elliot Midwood
Salesforce.com
The Colburn School
KUSC-FM

for sponsoring this recording,
and **Raulee Marcus**, for underwriting the commission of **Derek Tywoniuk's *Happenstance***.

Yarlung Artists would also like to thank Marcia & Mark Smith, Linda May & Jack Suzar, Wes & Nancy Hicks, Don & Dale Franzen, Jon Fisher of Gearworks Pro Audio, Jan Freiburgs, Gary & Sandi Larsen, Linda Attiyeh, Rajeev Talwani, Jerry Fecher, Bill & Suzanne Lawrence and Milo Talwani.



With the help of Robert Gupta, who so successfully used Kickstarter to help fund his album *Suryodaya*, Smoke & Mirrors ensemble used Kickstarter to support this recording as well. We are grateful to the many people who came generously to our aid, especially Gerry Tywoniuk, Jeffrey La Favre and Agnes Lew, as well as Brenda Barnes, Lin Beribak, Ron & Mary Beribak, Laureen Primmer, Rachel Primmer, Michael Ptacin and Al & Suzanne Tywoniuk. Many thanks to all of you for making this album possible. This is an analog recording, captured with a single AKG C-24 stereo microphone in the glorious acoustics of Zipper Hall at The Colburn School. We recorded each piece in its entirety, live to tape with no editing, to create the most lifelike performance possible. Rather than worry about how the ensemble would perform without the benefit of edits to camouflage mistakes, the members of Smoke & Mirrors loved the idea, embracing our concept that this recording represent a live concert experience. To amplify the signal from the C-24, which was graciously provided by Jon Fisher at Gearworks Pro Audio, we used microphone amplification equipment designed for us by Elliot Midwood of Acoustic Image. We recorded directly to two tracks on RMGI 468 Analog tape from The Netherlands, using analog tape recording electronics designed by Len Horowitz. Music aficionados today sometimes lament the current trend in digital recording that allows or even encourages tens or hundreds of edits per movement, such that the resulting albums sound “perfect” but a little sterile. You can take heart in Smoke & Mirrors, who actually play this way (and this well) in real life.

Bob Attiyeh, producer

Photography: Jeffrey La Favre and Yarlung Records

Graphic Design: Eron Muckleroy





SMOKE & MIRRORS

1 *Nagoya Marimbas*

Steve Reich

2 *Music for Pieces of Wood*

Steve Reich

3 *Canticle No. 3*

Lou Harrison

4 *Sleep*

Eric Whitacre, Arr. Edward Hong

5-8 *Happenstance*

Derek Tywoniuk

9 *Rain Tree*

Tōru Takemitsu

10-12 *Sonatine*

Maurice Ravel, Arr. Derek Tywoniuk

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KUSC-FM

Underwriting for the commission of *Happenstance*:

Raulee Marcus

Recorded in Zipper Hall, Los Angeles, June 7-10, 2011

Producer and Recording Engineer: Bob Attiyeh

Assistant Producer and Recording Engineer: Jacob Horowitz

Mastering Engineers: Steve Hoffman & Bob Attiyeh

Monitoring Equipment: Elliot Midwood

AKG tube microphone: Gearworks Pro Audio

Analog tape technician: Len Horowitz



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