

# STEVE REICH: The Desert Music

NOTUS Contemporary Vocal Ensemble  
Chamber Orchestra

Dominick DiOrio, *conductor*



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Indiana University Bloomington

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# Spring Celebration

Spring Ballet



**MAR. 22, 23 | 7:30 PM**

**MAR. 23 | 2 PM**

Musical Arts Center



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# JACOBS SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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*Six Hundred Thirty-Sixth Program of the 2018-19 Season*



Contemporary Vocal Ensemble

## Chamber Orchestra

Dominick DiOrio, *Director & Conductor*

Hana J. Cai, *Associate Conductor*

Jono Palmer, *Assistant Conductor*

Musica celestis (1991) . . . . . Aaron Jay Kernis  
(born 1960)

The Desert Music (1982-83) . . . . . Steve Reich  
(born 1936)

Auer Concert Hall  
Thursday Evening  
March Seventh  
Eight O'Clock

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and streaming of live performances. Please silence all electronic devices.*

# The Desert Music

by Steve Reich

*The Desert Music* was begun September 1982 and completed in December 1983. It was commissioned by The West German Radio, Cologne and The Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York. It is a setting of parts of poems by the American poet William Carlos Williams. The duration is 46 minutes.

The title is taken from Williams' book of collected poems, *The Desert Music*. From this collection I chose parts of "The Orchestra" and "Theocritus: Idyl I – A version from the Greek." From another collection I chose a small part of "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower." There are no complete poems used and the arrangement of parts is my own. This arrangement was my first compositional activity and the form of the piece into a large arch follows the text, presented below:

## I. fast

"Begin, my friend  
for you cannot,  
you may be sure,  
take your song,  
which drives all things out of mind,  
with you to the other world."

From "Theocritus: Idyl I – A version from the Greek"

## II. moderate

"Well, shall we  
think or listen? Is there a sound addressed  
not wholly to the ear?  
We half close  
our eyes. We do not  
hear it through our eyes.  
It is not  
a flute note either, it is the relation  
of a flute note  
to a drum. I am wide  
awake. The mind  
is listening."

From "The Orchestra"

## III A. slow

"Say to them:

Man has survived hitherto because he was too ignorant to know how to realize his wishes.  
Now that he can realize them, he must either change them or perish."

From "The Orchestra"

### III B. moderate

“it is a principle of music  
to repeat the theme. Repeat  
and repeat again,  
as the pace mounts. The  
theme is difficult  
but no more difficult  
than the facts to be  
resolved.”

From “The Orchestra”

### III C. slow

“Say to them:

Man has survived hitherto because he was too ignorant to know how to realize his wishes.  
Now that he can realize them, he must either change them or perish.”

From “The Orchestra”

### IV. moderate

“Well, shall we  
think or listen? Is there a sound addressed  
not wholly to the ear  
We half close  
our eyes. We do not  
hear it through our eyes.  
It is not  
a flute note either, it is the relation  
of a flute note  
to a drum. I am wide  
awake. The mind  
is listening.”

From “The Orchestra”

### V. fast

“Inseparable from the fire  
its light  
takes precedence over it.  
Who most shall advance the light –  
call it what you may!”

From “Asphodel, That Greeny Flower”

Excerpts from “Theocrats: Idyl I” and “The Orchestra” from *The Desert Music*; and “Asphodel, That Greeny Flower” from *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems* by William Carlos Williams (copyright 1954, 1955, 1962 by William Carlos Williams); used by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

As indicated above, there are five movements forming a large arch, A-B-C-B-A. The first and fifth movements are fast and use the same harmonic cycle. The second and fourth are at a moderate tempo, share the identical text (“Well, shall we/ think or listen?...”), and also share a common harmonic cycle, which is different than the one used in the first and fifth movements. The third, middle, movement is the longest (17 minutes) and is itself an arch form A-B-A where the A sections are slow and the B section moves up to the moderate tempo of the second and fourth movements. The third movement has its own harmonic cycle. There are no pauses between movements, and the piece is played *attacca* from beginning to end. The changes of tempo between movements are made suddenly by metric modulation, always using the 3:2 relationship to either get slower (dotted quarter equals quarter) or faster (eighth note triplet equals eighth note).

Following the arrangement of the text, three cycles of harmonies were composed to serve as the basis for the individual movements. I chose to present these cycles as a series of pulsing chords, similar in rhythm to the pulses in my earlier *Music for 18 Musicians*, but more chromatic and “darker” in harmony than the earlier piece to suit the text of *The Desert Music*. The harmonic cycle of the first and fifth movements cadences, though with some ambiguity, on a D dorian minor center. This ambiguity resides in the fact that a prominent A altered dominant chord follows the D, but an F altered dominant proceeds it. The cycle of the second and fourth movements does not clearly cadence on any center, though it too contains a prominent altered A dominant chord. The cycle for the large third movement is the most ambiguous of all since all the chords are altered dominants with their root moving in major and minor thirds making a cadence impossible. Thus the overall harmonic movement of *The Desert Music* is from the possibility of a D dorian minor center to more and more ambiguity, until in the third movement, where the text would seem to suggest it, there is no clear harmonic center at all. This ambiguity more or less remains until well into the fifth movement when, just before the chorus enters, there is a large orchestral cadence—albeit coming from that F altered dominant. This chord is then used to move from one movement to the other at each change of tempo. The piece ends with the women’s voices, violins, and mallet instruments pulsing the notes (reading up) G, C, F, A, which are the common tones to both the A altered dominant and the D dorian minor. The piece therefore ends with a certain harmonic ambiguity, partially, but not fully, resolved.

In the orchestration of *The Desert Music*, I wanted to use all the orchestral instruments to play the repeating interlocking melodic patterns found in much of my earlier music. The strings begin this kind of polyrhythmic interlocking shortly after the opening pulses of the first movement just before the chorus enters singing, “Begin, my friend...” To give the strings the extra “snap” needed in this kind of rhythmic interplay they are doubled by the woodwinds. The chorus, throughout the piece, is doubled for support either by the woodwinds or by the muted brass. This of course, is an old technique, but one that here helps create that mixture of vocal and instrumental sound I have been working with since my composition *Drumming* in 1971. To further enhance this mix of vocal-instrumental sound, both the chorus and woodwinds are amplified and mixed together. The percussion is omnipresent, usually playing mallet instruments to supply the ongoing pulses. Here and there one will also hear maracas, clicking sticks, bass drums, timpani, and large tam-tam.

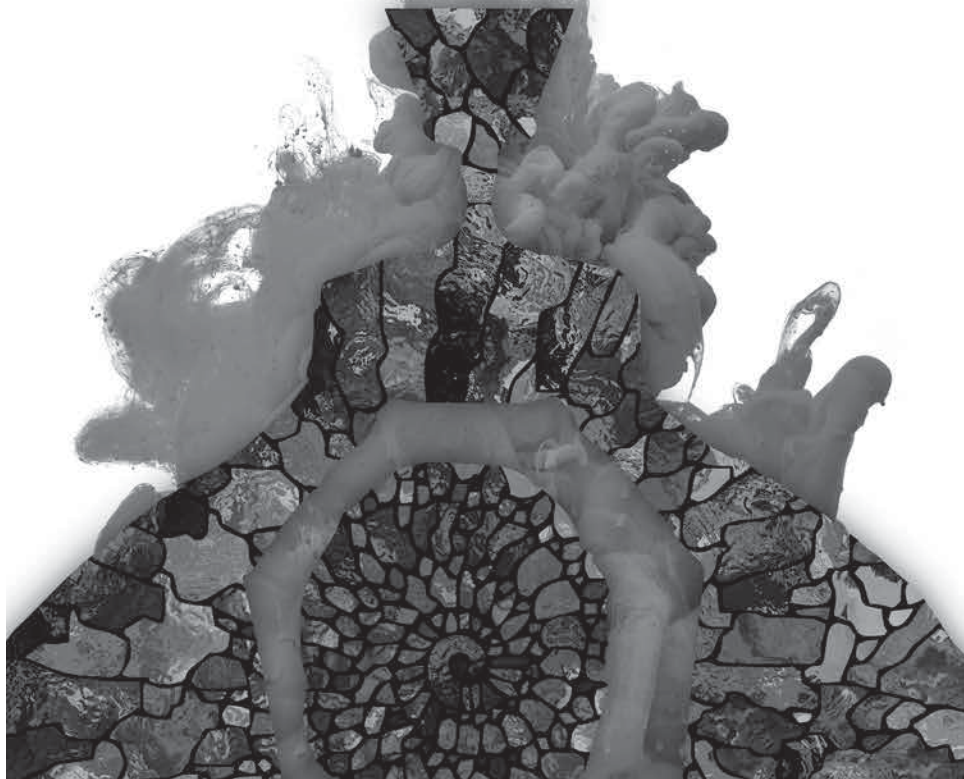
The pulse that begins and ends *The Desert Music* and recurs throughout it is significant both musically and as a kind of wordless response to and commentary on the text itself. Musically it presents the harmonic cycles of the movements as a kind of pulsing chorale.



Bursar billing and group sales available!

Leonard Bernstein's

# M A S S



**APR. 5, 6, 12, 13 | 7:30 PM**

**APR. 7 | 2 PM**

Musical Arts Center



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The pulse is also developed in the second and fourth movements from a simple eighth note pulsing in all voices and instruments to interlocking groups of two and three beats each forming overall polyrhythmic pulses. This grows out of the two- and three-beat groupings found in my *Tehillim* (1981). In terms of the text, the vocalise syllables are a kind of wordless response to, “Well, shall we/ think or listen? . . .,” in the second and fourth movements. That constant flickering of attention between what words mean and how they sound when set to music is one main focus of *The Desert Music*.

As to the meaning of the text and music, I hope that it speaks for itself. I have loved Williams’ poetry since I was 16 years old and picked up a copy of his long poem *Patterson* just because I was fascinated by the symmetry of his name: William Carlos Williams. I have continued reading his work to the present. I find Williams’ finest work to be his late poetry written between 1954 and his death in 1963 at age 80. It is from this period in the poet’s work that I have selected the texts for *The Desert Music*—a period after the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Williams was acutely aware of the bomb, and his words about it, in a poem about music entitled “The Orchestra,” struck me as to the point: “Say to them:/ Man has survived hitherto because he was too ignorant/ to know how to realize his wishes. Now that he can realize/ them, he must either change them or perish.” When I began work on *The Desert Music* I thought those words were too grave to set and thought I would use a tape of Williams reading them instead. When the time came to compose the third movement in the summer of 1983, I did know how to set them because the character of the harmonies in the third seemed to generate just the right setting. I was very glad now I did not resort to using a tape. In the center of the piece is the text, also from “The Orchestra,” which says, “it is a principle of music/ to repeat the theme. Repeat/ and repeat again,/ as the pace mounts. The/ theme is difficult/ but no more difficult/ than the facts to be/ resolved.” Those at all familiar with my music will know how apt those words are for me and particularly for this piece. which, among other things, addresses that basic ambiguity between what the text says and its pure sensuous sounds.

– Steve Reich







JACOBS SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
JAZZ STUDIES

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**VINCE MENDOZA**

*conductor | composer | arranger*



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**Dominick DiOrio** is an innovative composer and conductor who has won widespread acclaim for his contributions to American music. As a composer, DiOrio has been hailed for a keenly intelligent, evocative style, which shows “a *tour de force* of inventive thinking and unique colour” (*Gramophone*). In 2014, DiOrio won the American Prize in Composition with the judges praising “his depth of vision, mastery of compositional

technique, and unique style.” His works have appeared at major venues around the world including the Sydney Opera House, Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall. DiOrio’s recent commissioning partners include the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, The Choral Arts Society of Washington, “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band, and the Universities of Michigan, Oregon, and Illinois. An equally accomplished conductor, DiOrio is associate professor of music on the conducting faculty at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. His duties include leading the select chamber chorus NOTUS, which champions the music of living composers. In September 2018, Innova Recordings released the ensemble’s debut album, *NOTUS: Of Radiance & Refraction*, featuring the world premiere recordings of five commissioned works. NOTUS is honored to be one of only 24 choirs in the world invited to perform at the 12<sup>th</sup> World Symposium on Choral Music in Auckland, New Zealand, in July 2020. DiOrio earned his D.M.A., M.M.A., and M.M. degrees in conducting from the Yale School of Music, and his B.M. in composition from Ithaca College. He has served on the board of directors for Chorus America, as president-elect and treasurer for the National Collegiate Choral Organization, and as chair of the Standing Committee on Composition Initiatives for the American Choral Directors Association.



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# NOTUS

## Contemporary Vocal Ensemble

Dominick DiOrio, *Director & Conductor*

Hana J. Cai, *Associate Conductor*

Jono Palmer, *Assistant Conductor*

### *Soprano Ia*

Denique Isaac  
Amane Machida  
Frances VanVuuren

### *Alto I (cont.)*

Mariam Osman  
Liz Culpepper  
Rebecca Luppe

### *Tenor II*

Mítia Ganade D'Acol  
Trevor Hofelich  
Rodney Long  
Benjamin St. John

### *Bass II (cont.)*

Eli Tash  
Varfolomei Upart

### *Soprano Ib*

Elise Hurwitz  
Kia Frank  
Grace LeRew

### *Alto II*

Deanna Pellerano  
Rebecca Powers  
Katherine Bodor  
Imara Miles  
Anna Peloso

### *Baritone/Bass I*

Matthew Crozier  
Caio Guimarães  
Luka Marinkovic  
Jono Palmer  
Jonathan Wheeler

### *Rehearsal Pianists*

Luka Marinkovic  
Jingqi Zhu

### *Soprano II*

Leigha Amick  
Chloe Boelter  
Jessica Bittner  
Jingqi Zhu

### *Tenor I*

John W. Griffith II  
Noah Klein  
Matthew Recio  
Charles Snell

### *Bass II*

Jamie Kunselman  
Joey LaPlant  
Jeff Sabol

### *Chorus Managers*

David Villanueva  
Hana Cai  
Jono Palmer

### *Alto I*

Hana Cai  
LeOui Rensburg

## Chamber Orchestra

### *Violin I*

Han Na Lee  
Jonathan Yi  
Yeonglee Kim  
Mengqi Hong  
Janani Sivakumar  
Ian Aegerter

### *Cello*

Shinae Ra  
Jaemin Lee  
Alex Lavine  
Sungmin Kim

### *Trumpet*

Ethan Mogilner  
Henry Drembus  
Leilani Spurlock  
Ellie Kopp

### *Percussion (cont.)*

Carl Tafoya  
Evan Lamberson  
Evan Kirschbaum  
Robert Darling

### *Violin II*

Bryson Karrer  
Yeajin Kim  
Miranda Werner  
Gee O Son  
Noa Sarid  
Minglun Liu

### *Double Bass*

Sam Rocklin  
John Bunck

### *Trombone*

Stefan Wiebe  
Natalie Shields  
William Clark, *Bass*

### *Keyboard*

Ryn Jorgensen  
Noah Sonderling  
Ching Nam Cheng  
Junhong Jiang

### *Viola*

Seido Karasaki  
Enoch Ng  
Quinn Robinson  
Jennifer Gaffney  
Álex Jimbo Viteri  
Wilfred Farquharson

### *Horn*

Emily Farmer  
Emma Lumsden  
Robert Levine  
Dana Reckard

### *Tuba*

John Powers

### *Timpani*

Matthew West  
Stephen Karukas

### *Percussion*

Cary Anderson  
Michael Crane  
Russell Wharton

### *Orchestra Manager*

Kathryn Chamberlain  
Quinn Robinson, *Asst.*

### *Orchestra Set-Up*

Quinn Robinson  
Bryson Karrer

### *Librarian*

Cynthia Stacy

# INDIANA UNIVERSITY JACOBS SCHOOL OF MUSIC

## Spring 2019 Choral Events

### February

- Sat 16 CONDUCTORS CHORUS**, 4pm Auer  
Hana J. Cai, conductor  
*"Salvation is Created"*  
Chesnokov: *Salvation is Created, Op. 25 No. 5 (1912)*  
F. Martin: *Mass for double choir (1926)*  
Runestad: *Come to the Woods (2015)*
- Tue 26 UNIVERSITY CHORALE AND CONDUCTORS ORCHESTRA**, 8pm Auer  
Joshua Harper, conductor; Vijay Venkatesh, piano soloist  
*"Our Life's Harmonies"*  
Beethoven: *Fantasia in C Minor for piano, chorus, and orchestra, Op. 80 ("Choral Fantasy")*  
J. Haydn: *Te Deum in C Major, Hob.XXIIIc:2 ("Empress Maria Therese")*  
C. Shaw: *Music in Common Time (2014)*

### March

- Thu 7 NOTUS CONTEMPORARY VOCAL ENSEMBLE AND CHAMBER ORCHESTRA**, 8pm Auer  
Dominick DiOrio, conductor  
Kernis: *Musica celestis for string orchestra (1991)*  
Reich: *The Desert Music for amplified voices and orchestra (1983)*

### April

- Tue 9 NOTUS CONTEMPORARY VOCAL ENSEMBLE**, 8pm Auer  
Dominick DiOrio, conductor; Julia Bentley, mezzo-soprano; Katherine Jolly, soprano; Linda Strommen, oboe  
*"Collaborations: Music with Friends"*  
Eben: *Prague Te Deum (1989)*  
Heredia: *Virginia (2015)*  
Hamilton: *Turing Believes Machines Think (2016)*  
DiOrio: *I Give You Peace (2018, world premiere commission)*  
Trumbore: *In the Middle (2016)*  
Thompson: *Caged Bird (2018)*  
Ešenvalds: *Only in Sleep (2010)*  
DiOrio: *When Did We See You? (2017)*  
Bodor: *Assurance (2018, world premiere)*  
Sabot: *Confiteor (2018, world premiere)*

### April (cont.)

- Sat 13 CONDUCTORS CHORUS**, 4pm Auer  
Grant L Farmer, Caio Guimarães, and Jingqi Zhu, conductors  
Lassus: *Salve regina misericordiae (1586)*  
Britten: *Jubilate Deo in C (1961)*  
Whitacre: *Five Hebrew Love Songs (1996)*  
Wolf: *Im stillen Friedhof (1876)*  
W. H. Harris: *Faire is the Heaven (1925)*  
J. MacMillan: *'Factus est repente' from "The Strathclyde Motets" (2005)*  
Casals: *O vos omnes (1932)*  
Pärt: *Selections from "Berliner Messe" (1991/2002)*  
Fauré: *Les djinns, Op. 12 (1875)*
- Wed 17 UNIVERSITY CHORALE AND CONDUCTORS ORCHESTRA**, 8pm Auer  
Sam Ritter, conductor  
Ravel: *Pavane pour une infante défunte (1899)*  
Ritter: *The Mourning Jewels (2018, premiere)*  
Borodin/Ritter: *'Polovtsian Dances' from "Prince Igor" (1887)*  
Britten: *Welcome Ode (1976)*  
Elgar: *'Nimrod' from "Variations on an Original Theme ("Enigma"), Op. 36 (1899)*
- Mon 22 ALL-CAMPUS CHORUS**, 7pm Recital Hall  
Joshua Harper, with Katie Gardiner, conductors
- Sat 27 SINGING HOOSIERS 69<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL SPRING CONCERT**, 8pm MAC  
Chris Albanese, director  
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