

CMS Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 11, 2018, 2:00 ▶ 3,807TH CONCERT

Alice Tully Hall, Starr Theater, Adrienne Arsht Stage
Home of The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Meet the Music! Four Harmonious Friends

BRUCE ADOLPHE, piano/narrator
KAORU WATANABE, flute
MIKE BLOCK, cello
STEVE WILSON, bass trombone
SHANE SHANAHAN, percussion

BRUCE ADOLPHE *Four Harmonious Friends for Narrator and Ensemble* (2017)
(b. 1955)

This concert is made possible, in part, by the **Aaron Copland Fund for Music** and **The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation**.

The Chamber Music Society acknowledges with sincere appreciation **Ms. Tali Mahanor's** generous long-term loan of the Hamburg Steinway & Sons model "D" concert grand piano.

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A NOTE FROM BRUCE ADOLPHE

Dear Listener,

If an elephant were to play a musical instrument, the trombone would be perfect!

The elephant could use its trunk to move the slide back and forth (for low and high notes) while blowing into the mouthpiece. Plus, the trombone can make some very elephant-like sounds, even though we use the word “trumpeting” to describe an elephant’s roar.

Birds, who are natural singers, don’t need to play an instrument to make music, but if one did choose an instrument, the flute would fit well. In fact, flutes are often used to imitate birdsong.

Rabbits are quiet creatures. They make soft clucking, purring, and humming sounds, and on very rare occasions, they can let out a screech. But one of the great sounds they make is tapping out rhythms with their feet! So the best instrument for a rabbit would be some sort of drum. They are natural drummers and thumpers, in fact.

Now monkeys...hmmm. What instrument would a monkey want to play? Well, monkeys are more like people than elephants, birds, or rabbits are. So perhaps the monkey should play the cello, which can play the whole range of human voices. A monkey could hold the bow and finger the notes on the strings, which most other animals could not do.

You may be wondering why I am writing about these animals and instruments. Today’s concert features a story about an elephant, monkey, rabbit, and bird who get into a huge argument over a tree.

The animals in our story are indeed represented by the instruments as I mentioned. But the flute is not the usual metal flute you would see in our concerts. Today, we have a Japanese flute called a shinobue, which is made of bamboo. The shinobue master Kaoru Watanabe joins us for our show!

And we have some unusual drums for the rabbit, especially a riq. The riq is an Arabic tambourine that has a special design and can play lots of surprising sounds. You will find out today when the brilliant percussionist Shane Shanahan plays his amazing riq solos for you!

Our monkey is Mike Block. Mike is actually a cellist but he doesn’t sit down to play like most other cellists. He invented a strap so he can dance around like a monkey while he plays. He could also play cello

in a marching band, should that become a necessity. But Mike is a wonderfully imaginative cellist who deserves the role of the monkey, as you will see!

Our elephant is portrayed on the bass trombone (a huge and very low trombone) by the fabulous Steve Wilson, who could bring the walls of Jericho down with his playing!

Oh, and there is also the part of the tree! That will be depicted by the beautiful grand piano on our stage. I will play the tree part and also tell the story, which is called *Four Harmonious Friends*. In Tibet, the ancient Buddhist story is named *Thuenpa Puen Zhi*.

So today is a concert of some unusual instruments getting together to tell a very old story that still means a lot because it is a story about friendship, cooperation, and sharing.

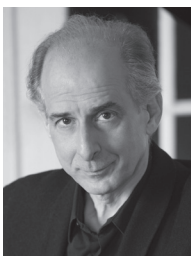
Bruce Adolphe



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MEET THE ARTISTS!

IZU OHNITA



BRUCE ADOLPHE

► When he was a child Bruce Adolphe watched both Victor Borge and Leonard Bernstein on television, and after seeing them, he began “playing piano” on the breakfast table and cracking jokes with a Danish accent. Having no choice, his parents bought him a toy piano, at which Bruce pretended to be Schroeder of the *Peanuts* cartoons. Soon after the toy piano was pecked apart by the family parakeet, Bruce’s parents purchased a real piano and a larger bird. By age ten, Bruce was composing music, and no one has been able to stop him since. As a “tween,” Bruce studied piano, clarinet, guitar, bass, and—as a teen—the bassoon. All this time, he wrote music and improvised accompaniments to everything that happened around him, as if life were a movie in need of a score. His favorite summers were spent at the Kinhaven Music School and he loved his Saturdays at The Juilliard School’s Pre-College Division. Today, Bruce spends his time composing chamber music, playing the piano, and performing in concerts for people like you. He lives right around the corner on the Upper West Side with his wife, pianist Marija, his daughter Katja, and his opera-and-jazz-singing parrot PollyRhythm, the same bird he has had since he was ten years old. Bruce performs weekly on public radio’s *Performance Today*, playing his *Piano Puzzlers* (familiar tunes in the styles of the great masters) and you can catch that show on WQXR or on iTunes, or as a podcast from American Public Media. Many great musicians have performed Bruce’s music, including Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, the Brentano Quartet, and over 60 symphony orchestras around the world, and of course lots of amazing players right here at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, where Bruce has been making music since 1992. If you want to check out Bruce’s CDs and educational pieces for all ages, please visit the website of The Learning Maestros. You might enjoy his book *The Mind’s Ear: Exercises for Improving the Musical Imagination*, published by Oxford University Press.

RICHARD FRANK



MIKE BLOCK

► Mike Block started playing cello at the age of nine, and grew up in a family of classical musicians. His dad is an orchestra conductor, his mom plays French horn, his brother plays violin, and his sister plays violin. When Mike went to college to study music, he started to fall in love with other styles of music, like rock and pop music, as well as folk music from other cultures. Now that Mike is a professional musician, he loves playing with musicians from other cultures, and writing new music, which led him to play in the Silk Road Ensemble, led by his childhood hero Yo-Yo Ma. Even though most cello players play the instrument while sitting, Mike wanted to stand up when he plays cello so that he can move and dance and have more fun, so he invented a new cello strap that helps him play the cello standing.



SHANE SHANAHAN

► When Shane Shanahan was a young boy he annoyed his family to no end because he was always banging on the pots and pans in his kitchen! All that banging made it seem pretty clear that he had rhythm in his blood. Unfortunately, there were too many drummers in the school band, so Shane played trumpet for seven years. He did his best but he never fell in love with the trumpet. When his parents realized this, they very generously got him a drum set for his birthday. For a while, Shane's family

suffered through even LOUDER banging, but before too long, that banging turned into beautiful music. Now Shane travels all over the globe playing his drums for people of all ages in the biggest concert halls in the world!



KAORU WATANABE

► Kaoru Watanabe (COW-ROO) was a typical kid from St. Louis, Missouri who loved to skateboard and play music and eventually went to Manhattan School of Music to study jazz flute and saxophone. Kaoru decided he wanted to learn more about Japan, the country where his parents are originally from, so after graduation, he packed his bags and moved there for almost ten years! He ended up playing Japanese taiko drums and bamboo flutes for a famous Japanese taiko group called Kodo, who

are known for their massive 900-pound drum and energetic shows. The two-year-long training program he had to go through in order to join Kodo included learning Japanese folk dancing, singing and drumming, as well as farming, woodworking, tea ceremony, and running six miles a day every day for two years! After many years with Kodo, he decided to return to New York to focus more on his own music, which mixes Japanese music, improvisation, and other music from around the world. Besides performing and teaching, he does other fun things like making music for movies like *Shrek Forever After* and the upcoming Wes Anderson animation *Isle of Dogs*.



STEVE WILSON

► Steve Wilson comes from the border city of El Paso, Texas. He started playing the euphonium in the sixth grade but switched to the bass trombone in the ninth grade so he could play in his school's jazz band and orchestra. Steve has degrees in music from the University of Texas at El Paso and the University of Illinois and is now in charge of the Department of Music at his old school, the University of Texas at El Paso, where he has worked for 20 years. Steve has recorded two CDs and

performed in many countries including China, Brazil, Spain, Mexico, and Canada with his trombone quartet, the Continental Trombone Quartet. Steve is also active as a performer throughout the southwest playing in numerous ensembles including the out-of-this-world Roswell Symphony Orchestra. In addition to playing the bass trombone, Steve enjoys biking, running, and hiking in the beautiful El Paso desert, being a husband, and being a father to three awesome kids: Kiki, Ethan, and Conor.

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