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**STEVEN MACKEY: DREAMHOUSE**

TEXT BY RINDE ECKERT AND STEVEN MACKEY

**STEVEN MACKEY** (b. 1956)

## DREAMHOUSE

**TEXT BY RINDE ECKERT AND STEVEN MACKEY**

**RINDE ECKERT** The Architect

**SYNERGY VOCALS**

**CATCH ELECTRIC GUITAR QUARTET**

**BOSTON MODERN ORCHESTRA PROJECT**

GIL ROSE, CONDUCTOR

## **DREAMHOUSE** (2003)

**Part I** From Above/No Matter How Precisely

- [1] From Above 3:56
- [2] No Matter How Precisely 6:27

**Part II** Fragments, Flashbacks, and Episodes

- [3] Framing/Her Gaze 3:14
- [4] Stone Walk 1:10
- [5] Fireplace/By Any Measure 4:15
- [6] Groove/Roofmen/Her Gaze 4:57

**Part III** Dreamhouse

- [7] Dreamhouse 25:47

**TOTAL** 49:48



TOM BEARD, A MODEL COMMUNITY, 2009

### By Steven Mackey

*Dreamhouse* was commissioned for the Holland Festival in 2003. The music festival that year was focusing on the use of electric guitar in concert music and the stipulation of the commission was that I compose for an orchestra that included a section of electric guitars. The archetypal electric guitar for me has the searing tone and virtuoso flamboyance of Jimi Hendrix and beyond, but the first sound in my head when I heard “a section” of guitars was the '60s psychedelic rock band The Byrds and the texture of their tight vocal harmonies enveloped by a bright, twanging, arpeggiated guitar accompaniment. This is the best explanation I can think of for why I requested an amplified vocal ensemble to complement the guitars and to top the whole thing off with a singer/actor/frontman. Suddenly a commission celebrating the electric guitar had turned into vocal music.

My two favorite styles of vocal music are rock songs and 16th-century masses and motets. I rarely understand the words in either genre which doesn't hinder me from singing along. I prefer actual words to vocalise because they provide more variety than nonsense syllables, but I don't feel the need to understand every word. This way of hearing texted music is common in rock, but it goes against the grain of the art song and operatic traditions which hold intelligibility of text as a necessary virtue.

I would say that 16th-century composers were divided on this issue. There was much discussion back then as to whether the music was the mistress of the words or vice versa. Many composers of that time were reprimanded by the church for not foregrounding the liturgical function of the texts. Instead they *used* the words to create vocal symphonies.

In terms of my approach to “building” *Dreamhouse*, I rejected the classical paradigm of the composer reverentially setting an existing poetic masterpiece. I wanted the words and music to grow up together. For this reason my collaborator, Rinde Eckert, and I decided to co-write the libretto. He came up with the governing metaphor which could be described as “meditations on building a house.” I really like the fact that this provided us with the opportunity to use technical architectural language—crowns, turrets, mansard, etc. Like Latin, these are interesting words to sing, but they are not, for most people, loaded with psychological associations, and therefore allow the music to work in that arena. The action is in the interplay of the sound of the words and activities of the instruments, with the meaning of the occasionally understood phrase helping to clarify a referential metaphor for the music.

I don't mean to imply that the libretto is not important text with meaning. Its dramatic arc is the most important structuring element of the piece and knowing every word will deepen the experience of listening, which is why the libretto is included in these liner notes. I am particularly pleased, though, that these words function like music, opening more doors than they close, and suggesting images without nailing down a single truth (as with psychedelic songs of the '60s).

Rinde carved out the basic arc of the libretto and drafted many of the specifics. Our co-authorship allowed me to write whole verses within his template or substitute words and phrases in order to shape the singer's mouth in particular ways. The choice of the exact words thus becomes an *orchestrational* decision. Singing one word over another is like asking an oboe to play the note rather than the clarinet. The images of the words splash a particular color on the note and the meaning remains wrapped up with the entire sound.

The creative process was in some ways not unlike that of a singer/songwriter sitting on the edge of the bed, strumming chords and allowing words to rise out of the harmonic resonance. Rinde and I sat in my basement free associating lyrics to a melody that I played over and over again, until he finally sang, “I'll build you a dream house, where you can live,” ... and I added, ... “where you'll be safe.”

DREAMHOUSE was commissioned by the Dutch public broadcaster NPS in 2001 and completed in 2003. The work was premiered at the 2003 Holland Festival, featuring Rinde Eckert, Synergy Vocals, and Catch Electric Guitar Quartet, performing with the Netherlands Radio Symphony, conducted by Gil Rose. The work is scored for tenor/actor, amplified vocal ensemble, four electric guitars, and orchestra.

## By Frank J. Oteri

### ENTERING STEVEN MACKEY'S HOUSE OF DREAMS

No matter what idiom Steven Mackey works in, he always manages to seamlessly weave the down-to-earth with the otherworldly. And over the past three decades he has explored a wide range of idioms—raucous electric guitar and percussion explorations, sensitive chamber works strewn with medieval and Renaissance counterpoint, off-beat orchestral pieces which often exhibit a bad-boy sense of humor, surreal monodramas created in collaboration with vocal pyrotechnician performance artist Rinde Eckert, etc. *Dreamhouse* somehow ties together all of these compositional strands and then some. But what exactly is *Dreamhouse*?

It owes its existence to a dream commission, literally. According to Mackey, Robert Nasveld—the Dutch composer, pianist, and radio programmer from NPS (the station which commissioned the work in 2001 for its radio symphony orchestra)—expressly said to him, “We want to realize your dream.” So Mackey created this somewhat unwieldy 50-minute epic which revels in its unwieldiness: part concerto grosso, for a quartet of electric guitars and orchestra with an extremely wide array of percussion instruments (over fifty); part dramatic secular cantata, for a quartet of singers plus an extremely wide-ranged chanteur—Eckert,

who else? *Dreamhouse*'s impracticalities call to mind other El Dorado-ish singularities in the contemporary orchestral repertoire—the Symphony No. 4 of Charles Ives with its quarter-tone pianos and chorus; David Del Tredici's *Final Alice* with its amplified soprano, theremin, and folk group; or Messiaen's *Turangalila-Symphonie*, a sprawling 10-movement, piano and ondes Martenot concertante. A rare live performance of one of these works is an ecstatic experience. Like these one-of-a-kind pieces, *Dreamhouse* is an adrenalin jolt for both the performers and the audience.

But the euphoria that *Dreamhouse* induces is somewhat tempered by extremely sinister undercurrents. Ostensibly the text for *Dreamhouse* is about the construction of an ideal suburban home—a “dream house” secure in its foundations and well-protected from the outside world, where its residents can feel free. But in the post-9/11 era, security, protection, and freedom have become ideals that are much more elusive and towards which many people in our society have become extremely ambivalent. Mackey cautions against reading messages herein too directly: “*Dreamhouse* is not political commentary per se but rather a journal of self-reflection about our place in a personal relationship with a political environment.” The words, which were co-written by Mackey and Rinde Eckert, are purposefully non-narrative; rather they are imagistic and open to a wide range of interpretations. Mackey's goal was for the verbal component of *Dreamhouse* “to be more like music in that it opened more doors than it closed.”

The music that Mackey created to accompany those words—with its subtle timbral interplay, quarter-tone bends, frequent metric shifts, and a compositional vocabulary that has thoroughly absorbed early music, psychedelia, and progressive rock as much as it has the standard symphonic canon—requires a deep level of commitment on the part of all of its participants. Mackey's vocal writing, in particular, offers some unique challenges. The quartet must have the technique of a Hilliard Ensemble as well as that of a Manhattan Transfer. And then there's the chanteur, who speaks, shouts, and whose sung vocal lines

can go from the highest countertenor range to low bass in a matter of seconds. Yet despite all this quirkiness, *Dreamhouse* is chock full of highly memorable melodies.

Cast in three movements, each is further subdivided into smaller units. Part I—“From Above/No Matter How Precisely”—is in two distinct sections. The text for the opening—“From Above”—is a description of a suburban town, seen aerially [1]. And the music begins appropriately with a big resonant chain of fifths played on muted open strings which seems to emerge *ex nihilo*. But this is immediately responded to with an ominous yelp from horns, contrabassoon, and percussion. A second string chord, this time consisting of eerie, otherworldly harmonics, is responded to by the electric guitar contingent in an equally unearthly fashion. Then the third and fourth string chords, which electric guitars and percussion again punctuate, usher in the opening line of sung text by the chanteur (the Architect) sung only to the accompaniment of his own finger cymbals: “Towns and houses as seen from above.” This leads to a call and response between him and the electric guitars. As other members of the orchestra gradually join in, the vocal quartet enters hocketing individual words of the Architect, turning them into mantras. If this first section is somewhat ethereal, the remainder of the movement—“No Matter How Precisely”—brings us closer to reality [2]. The text for this section explains the inevitability of flaws in buildings, and a series of musical “flaws” illustrate these declarations of vulnerability. At the onset, the members of the vocal quartet speak in rhythm individually against assorted syncopations, gradually coming together and singing extremely angular melodies. At first the Architect sings with them, but eventually he veers off into his own lines, often clashing with the quartet. Particularly effective is his incessant but irregular repetition of the word “and,” on a high B flat, which is supported by a distorted electric guitar tone cluster. At one point he reverts to arrhythmic speech as the music grows wilder. Eventually all five singers drop syntax all together and sing on nonsense syllables ultimately reduced to almost inaudible mutterings.

The second part—“Fragments, Flashbacks, and Episodes”—is precisely that: a series of many interconnected vignettes, some only about a minute in duration. The opening—“Framing”—is a mock Bulgarian Women’s Chorus sung nasally but exuberantly by the quartet [3]. “Her Gaze” is a brief but gorgeous alto arioso, with a tessitura in the lowest range, accompanied mostly by high woodwinds and harp. This is in sharp contrast to the harsh “Stone Walk” where the Architect’s somewhat tortured words are all spoken to an accompaniment dominated by the electric guitars [4]. “Fireplace” begins with a range of bizarre orchestral effects—glissandos on harmonics in the strings, flutter-tonguing with mutes in the brass—plus more electric guitar distortion as well as wobbles [5]. The vocal quartet enters, like a group of back-up singers, on nonsense syllables. But the mood changes once again with the entrance of the Architect singing a tender almost lullaby-like melody. The lulling quality of his tune contrasts with his words which are precise descriptions of his architectural plans. But his melody is interrupted by a sequence of spoken-word utterances by the quartet, a series of anecdotes that never get completely told. “By Any Measure,” which follows without pause, is a viscerally exciting hocket between pairs of singers: soprano with tenor and alto with bass. They finally all come together on the words “I can’t hear,” which leads directly to the “Groove,” perhaps the most overtly pop-inflected material presented thus far: an ostinato on the electric bass punctuated by drum set with intrusions of electric organ [6]. But it’s a deception: the music quickly morphs into King Crimson-esque polytonal pandemonium against the shouts of the Architect. “Roofmen” immediately follows, with a firm, choral-like declaration from the vocal quartet, broken by the Architect’s operatic recitative which reverts to speech as the electric guitars and percussion drown out the rest of the orchestra. But the vocal quartet returns with music that sounds like it could have come from a Renaissance setting of the Mass, replete with the requisite text: “Sanctus dominus Deus sabaoth...Hosanna in excelsis.” What is this? What exactly is this house that is being built? We’re never told. Instead the Architect begins to describe

details of his plan once again, concluding with another brief alto arioso, also called “Her Gaze,” this time accompanied by strings. The guitars then ring out chime-like, the groove makes a brief reappearance, and everything comes to an abrupt and inconclusive ending.

But the final part—“Dreamhouse”—is anything but inconclusive [7]! It opens somewhat meditatively with a series of philosophical musings that are sung initially by only the men, an electric guitar drone triggered by an e-bow providing the only substantive, but ultimately unobtrusive accompaniment. The women join in, but the Architect soars above them in the highest notes of his falsetto range. For the first time the word “dreamhouse” is uttered, but it will be far from the last time: “Nature is the frame that holds your dreamhouse.” An instrumental interlude follows containing the first occurrence of a melody, played on the flute, which will eventually morph into a compulsive and relentless recursive loop, ultimately triggering an earworm the likes of which almost never occurs in a piece of contemporary music. But not yet. The voices return, eventually hinting at this melody as well as the words which will later repeat incessantly: “I’ll build you a dreamhouse where you can live, where you’ll be safe.” But another instrumental interlude intrudes, revealing that a dream can just as easily become a nightmare—a surreal lives meets Zappa romp which eventually dissipates as the Architect returns shouting out instructions to decorate, almost like a Fascist commando. Then the quartet sings a bona fide lullaby: “Sleep well tonight, your fence is strong.” The music briefly becomes introspective and uncertain. But that melody and its words of promise return, at first soothingly, then compulsively over and over and over again. It could have been reassuring in earlier times, but we now know there are no guarantees. The seemingly triumphant orchestral ending is drowned out by one final distorted electric guitar burst.

ASCAP Award-winning composer and music journalist Frank J. Oteri is the Composer Advocate at the American Music Center and the Founding Editor of its web magazine NewMusicBox ([www.newmusicbox.org](http://www.newmusicbox.org)).

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## PART I From Above/No Matter How Precisely

### [1] From Above

Towns and houses as seen from above.  
 Houses and gardens a quilt from above.  
 A vast static grid of houses.  
 Short houses, squat houses, houses of brown clay.  
 Thin houses, fat houses, red brick houses.  
 Tall houses, deep houses with veneers of gold oak, silver ash.  
 Green houses, bright yellow painted houses.  
 Rooftops with rustic chimneys, weather proofed remedial drainage crickets,  
 Copper flashing, vinyl lined aluminum downspout gutters.  
 Shingles, shingles, shakes and tile, conventional shingles, shingles,  
 Mostly tile occasional wooden shingles.  
 Shingles, shingles staggered shingles.  
 Shingles, shingles staggered shingles.  
 Shingles, shingles staggered shingles,  
 Shingles, shingles above.  
 When viewed from high above.  
 A bird’s eye view above.

### [2] No Matter How Precisely

No matter how precisely strings are laid  
 There will be foundation flaws.  
 There will be flaws.  
 No matter how attentive to the pour,  
 The concrete men cannot insure the uniformity of the wall.  
  
 The House will rise to a degree of strangeness in the eaves  
 And above show up as staggered shingles



DREAMHOUSE PERFORMANCE MAY 2007. PHOTO: LIZ LINDER

On the slightly skewed crowns and saddles  
Of the cockeyed dormers and turrets.  
Even the noble Mansard will pitch and warp  
No matter how precisely strings are laid  
No matter how attentive to the pour.  
No matter how straight strings are laid  
There will be flaws.

And the architect fumbles his blue prints.  
He fumbles his plans.  
They float down from the crooked widow's walk  
To the graveled drainage ditch below.

## **PART II** Fragments, Flashbacks, and Episodes

### **[3] Framing**

Just how long will the framing take?  
The carpenters with nail guns putting up the  
Framework with pneumatic hammers...  
In just a day, in just one day  
No more than one day  
They can frame the whole house.  
In one day, in just one day.  
Wall the house with plywood sheets.  
Sheath it in black treated paper.  
Stapled up, then skin it all with cedar shakes  
And fir clapboards, lapped like frozen waves.

### **Her Gaze**

She smoothes her hair.  
She looks out the window.  
"See the pool, so still so serene."  
It seems her gaze might induce a ripple.  
"No I can't go on."

[4] **Stone Walk**

Stone walk,  
Door  
Fieldstone walk  
Front door  
Mottled gray fieldstone walk  
Thick oak front door  
I am leaving you, she says  
She says she is leaving  
I...

[5] **Fireplace**

This room is next to that, and that sits by the other  
All entered from the hall, all square.  
All painted different whites, the living room a pearl.  
A chandelier burned there.  
Light would dance about in the mirror pane,  
Hung just above the mantel where the fireplace was.  
I can't think.

A problem in design the fire wasn't breathing,  
Although the flu was open wide.  
Unless the door is cracked the fire doesn't draw,  
The smoke just hangs inside.  
Smoke would billow out to the living room.  
Hang just above the mantel where the fireplace was.  
I can't see.

The fireplace was moved years ago  
Masons took it apart: big mauls, sledgehammers, iron pikes.  
The dust thick as fog  
The stonemasons, ghostly, mad, hammers flying

I was by the broken window looking in,  
Covering my nose and mouth with a damp rag.  
Then I turned away.

**By Any Measure**

By any measure you choose,  
No matter how straight the rule,  
There will be error equal to half the unit of measure.  
I can't hear.

[6] **Groove**

*(into a cell phone):* ...yeah...no...no invitation, I just did.  
What can she do?  
I already said...it's right there.  
No. That's not my problem.  
...look we all agreed.  
No, I'm in the middle of something.  
Try the other number.  
Look, that's not on the table!

**Roofmen**

Roofmen come the roofmen.  
Protect us. Save us from heaven's raining fury, heaven's fury.  
Darkness, dark clouds predicted, tomorrow.  
Late today tomorrow,  
The roofmen come the roofmen come.  
The roofmen come  
The roofmen  
No fooling, all business, these guys  
The weather is coming...today...tomorrow  
Heavy rain they say...flash floods.  
So the roof guys are not wasting any time  
They aren't playing games

The weather is coming,  
Today, tomorrow,  
Rain

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus  
Dominus Deus Sabaoth  
Pleni sunt coeli et terra  
Gloria tua  
Hosanna in excelsis

### **Her Gaze**

The windows on the south side look out on a park  
Where shade trees protect a small pool.  
I insisted, I said "the windows on the south side  
should look down on a small pool protected by shade trees."  
How lovely: the windows look down on a shaded pool.

## **PART III Dreamhouse**

### **[7] Dreamhouse**

Design entwined with nature, the way one landscapes the grounds, what one grows.  
Design entwined with nature, the way one transforms a bare construction site into a paradise.  
Art entwined with nature, the way one arranges shade trees by a pool.  
Design entwined with nature, the way one transforms a bare construction site into a paradise.  
Nature is the frame that holds your dreamhouse.  
Nature is the frame that holds your dreamhouse.  
Trees planted close together form a shield  
From the wind.  
Against the sun.  
You must see the balance in the floor plan.  
You must agree that the design works.  
You've got to admit it's a great house.

I'll build you a dreamhouse,  
Where you can live,  
Where you'll be safe.

As any one with any sense can see.  
The classical ideals are all in place.  
Anyone with any sense can see.  
It's well worth paying for.  
Got to pay for what you want  
Got to want to pay to keep.  
Got to pay to want to get  
Got to want to get to pay.  
See how open all these rooms feel,  
How we manage the airflow.

You have room  
Even in the closets we manage an economy.  
Even in the closets we've given you some room.  
Even in the closets we've given you some space.  
You've got to admit it's a fine house.

Still you're free, no one can tell you,  
No one can say what paint to use.  
Choose any color, but not too loud.  
You can paint it any color you like.  
I'll build you a showplace.  
I'll build a dream,  
You can call home.

It faces south, the house faces south.  
You'll have morning sun.

I'll give you this promise  
On my honor when I finish  
You will be happy when I'm done  
You'll see I'm right

You'll see just what an architect can do for you  
You will have to thank me for my efforts.  
Wait 'til you see the finished product.  
You'll want to thank me when I'm finished for insisting.  
You'll see my reasons.  
You'll see what lies behind my reasons.  
The complicated pattern of this structure.  
You'll see the light.

I'll build you a dream place  
Where you can stay  
Where you'll be safe.

I'll build you a dream  
Build you a showplace  
Where you can sleep  
Where you'll be fine

I'll build you a dream house where you can sleep  
And we'll put up the fence for nothing.

And the cost...everything was done to bring it down. The schedule...  
The way we timed the work; the plumbers first while all the walls were open,  
While everything could be gotten at...then run the wires.  
Run the power to the fixtures and appliances.  
Connect the service to the power grid.  
You see, within the limit of the wall, the blood of the house.  
The circulation — pipe and wire  
Flow of the river, water, juice.  
Limits within limits  
Houses within fences.  
Walls within houses,  
Pipes within walls,  
Water within pipes,  
Power within wire.  
This! ...you do not need to think about.

Hang the pictures. Hang the pictures.  
Decorate! She...she...she.

Close your eyes sleep well tonight.  
Your fence is strong, your locks hold tight.  
So draw your blinds, sleep.

Don't ask  
Please don't ask.

I'll build you a dreamhouse  
Where you can live  
Where you'll be safe.



JANE RICHEY

**Steven Mackey** was born in 1956 to American parents stationed in Frankfurt, Germany. His first musical passion was playing the electric guitar in rock bands based in northern California. He later discovered concert music and has composed for orchestras, chamber ensembles, dance, and opera. He regularly performs his own work, including two electric guitar concertos and numerous solo and chamber works, and is also active as an improvising musician.

In 2010, Mackey was involved in performing a music theater piece called *SLIDE* with eighth blackbird and Rinde Eckert, recording a CD with his band Big Farm, and basking in the glow from the premiere of a new work for So Percussion at Carnegie Hall called *It is Time*. Other projects include a piano concerto for Orli Shaham commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, a new work for the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, and a work for solo guitar, video, and dancer in collaboration with filmmaker/choreographer Mark DeChiazza and dancer Elyssa Dole.

As a composer, Mackey has been honored by numerous awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, two awards from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Elise L. Stoeger Prize for Chamber Music. In 2000, the Miami Performing Arts Center acknowledged Mackey's contributions to orchestral music with a special career achievement award. His *Indigenous Instruments* was selected to represent the US at the 1990 International Rostrum of Composers in Paris. Mackey has been the composer in residence at numerous festivals, including the Tanglewood and Aspen music festivals, and

he was featured at the 2000 American Mavericks Festival and the 2003 Holland Festival in Amsterdam.

Available discs of Mackey's work include *Lost and Found*: Mackey performing his own solo electric guitar music (Bridge Records, 1996); *Tuck and Roll*: Michael Tilson Thomas conducting orchestral music by Mackey (BMG-RCA Red Seal, 2001); *String Theory*: the Brentano String Quartet playing string quartets with the addition of other instruments (Albany Records, 2003); *Heavy Light*: Mosaic playing mixed chamber ensemble music (New World Records, 2004); *Banana/Dump Truck*: featuring Mackey on guitar, cello soloist Fred Sherry, and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (Albany Records, 2005); *Interior Design*: music for violin with Curtis Macomber (Bridge Records, 2006); and *Speak Like the People, Write Like the King*: string quartets and octets for the Borromeo and Brentano Quartets (Bridge Records, 2008). *Tuck and Roll* and *Lost and Found* both made *The New York Times* year-end top ten list, along with similar lists in several other publications. Individual works by Mackey are included on numerous collections on Nonesuch, BMG/Catalyst, CRI, Newport Classics, and many other labels.

Mackey is Chair of the Department of Music at Princeton University, where he has been a member of the faculty since 1985. Helping to shape the next generation of composers and musicians, he teaches composition, theory, 20th-century music, improvisation, and a variety of special topics. As co-director of the Composers Ensemble at Princeton, he coaches and conducts new work by student composers, as well as 20th-century classics. He was the recipient of Princeton University's first Distinguished Teaching Award.

Mackey lives in Princeton, New Jersey with his wife, composer Sarah Kirkland Snider, and their son Jasper.



**Rinde Eckert**, the 2009 recipient of The Alpert Award in the Arts for Theatre and finalist for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Drama, is a writer, composer, performer, and director. A classically trained singer celebrated for his remarkably flexible and inventive singing voice combined with an electric physical presence, Mr. Eckert's Opera/New Music Theatre productions tour throughout America and to major festivals in Europe and Asia. A multi-instrumentalist, he has performed in his own multi-media theater pieces and with the Paul Dresher Ensemble and the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company, among others.

In the last ten years, Rinde Eckert has written and composed four new music/theater plays, three of which successfully ran off-Broadway, winning numerous awards and Drama Desk nominations: *And God Created Great Whales* (Foundry Theater in New York), *Highway Ulysses* (American Repertory Theater in Cambridge), *Horizon* for a consortium of University Arts Centers (New York Theatre Workshop), and *Orpheus X* (ART, Theatre for a New Audience). Writing and directing projects with new music ensembles include *SLIDE* with composer/guitarist Steven Mackey and eighth blackbird; *Imaginary City* with So Percussion; and *The Schick Machine* with virtuoso percussionist Steven Schick in a solo-theater work composed and produced by Paul Dresher. His one-act play *An Idiot Divine* received rave reviews from the New York press following a Zankel Hall performance. Mr. Eckert wrote the text for and sang in Steve Mackey's oratorio *Dreamhouse* and wrote the libretto for Jerry Granelli's recording *Sandhills Reunion*. Rinde Eckert received the American Academy of Arts and Letters 2005 Marc Blitzstein Award and was a 2007 Guggenheim Fellow. He lives in New York.

**Synergy Vocals** is a unique pool of voices covering a broad spectrum of musical genres and working primarily on microphone. Highly respected for its seamless vocal blend, rhythmic precision, and dynamic performances, the team collaborates regularly with Steve Reich and Musicians, Ensemble Modern, London Sinfonietta, Askol|Schönberg ensemble, and Ictus, and



is closely associated with composers Steve Reich, Louis Andriessen, Steven Mackey, and the late Luciano Berio.

Synergy has performed live with many outstanding orchestras and ensembles, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble InterContemporain, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Netherlands Radio Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, Nexus, the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, and Tempo Reale. They have also performed in collaboration with The Royal Ballet, Mark Baldwin Dance Company (UK), and Rosas dance ensemble (Belgium). Recently, Synergy performed the world premiere of Andriessen's video opera *La Commedia*, and the UK premiere of Nono's monumental *Prometeo* on London's South Bank.

The group has undertaken educational and outreach projects (for the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague, Princeton University, Eastman School of Music, Oberlin College, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), both coaching vocalists and working with composers in the creation of new works involving amplified singers.

The group's recordings include Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* with Ensemble Modern, *Three Tales* with Steve Reich and Musicians, *Tehillim* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Andriessen's *De Staat* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Karl Jenkins's *Imagined Oceans*. Synergy Vocals is also featured on several television advertisements and film soundtracks including *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, *Nanny McPhee*, *Brothers Grimm*, *V for Vendetta*, *Severance*, *Mutant Chronicles*, *Igor*, *Secret of Moonacre*, *Agora*, and *Triangle*.



**Catch Electric Guitar Quartet** is a product of nearly twenty years of crisscrossing paths and collaborations within the context of rock bands and free improvisation groups as well as contemporary ensembles. Recommended by his former New York guitar master, David Starobin, electric guitarist Wiek Hijmans received a request from Steve Mackey to assemble a quartet of three electric guitars and bass guitar for the *Dreamhouse* premiere at the

Holland Festival 2002. Excellent performers in the field of contemporary music, Seth Josel and Patricio Wang, who both lived and worked in Amsterdam as well as in Berlin and Paris, were the obvious choices. Mark Haanstra, a great talent on the electric bass with a broad musical scope completed the quartet. All four musicians had been working together in various settings over a long period of time, before being brought together by Mr. Hijmans for this occasion. Since the premiere of *Dreamhouse*, the quartet has been involved in further premiere performances (Christopher Fox, Peter Adriaansz, Huib Emmer), ensemble collaborations (Cappella Amsterdam), and has become the ensemble in residence at the Output Festival in Amsterdam. Catch was in residence at Princeton University in 2007 and premiered seven new works written especially for them. The group collaborated in the fall of 2007 with the Slagwerkgroep Den Haag, touring with them throughout Holland. In addition, the long-awaited US premiere of *Dreamhouse* was presented to critical acclaim in May 2007 with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project.



**Gil Rose** is recognized as an important conductor helping to shape the future of classical music. Critics all over the world have praised his dynamic performances and many recordings. In 1996 he founded the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), the foremost professional orchestra dedicated exclusively to performing and recording music of the 20th and 21st centuries. Under his leadership, BMOP's unique programming and high performance standards have attracted critical acclaim; the orchestra has earned eleven ASCAP awards for adventurous programming and is a two-time recipient of the John S. Edwards Award for Strongest

Commitment to New American Music. In 2007 Mr. Rose was awarded Columbia University's prestigious Ditson Award as well as an ASCAP Concert Music award for his exemplary commitment to new American music. Mr. Rose also serves as Artistic Director of Opera Boston, widely regarded as one of the most important and innovative companies in America. He has curated the Fromm concerts at Harvard University and served as the Artistic Director of the Ditson Festival of Contemporary Music at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art.

As a guest conductor, Mr. Rose made his Tanglewood debut in 2002 and in 2003 he debuted with the Netherlands Radio Symphony as part of the Holland Festival. He has led the American Composers Orchestra, the Warsaw Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra of the Ukraine, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, the National Orchestra of Porto, as well as the Boston Symphony Chamber Players.

From 2003–2006, he served as Artistic Director of the contemporary opera festival Opera Unlimited, during which time he led the world premiere of Elena Ruehr's *Toussaint Before the Spirits*, the New England premiere of Thomas Adès's *Powder Her Face*, as well as the revival of John Harbison's *Full Moon in March* with "skilled and committed direction," according to

*The Boston Globe*. In 2006 Opera Unlimited presented the North American premiere of Peter Eötvös's *Angels in America* to critical acclaim.

Recognized for his interpretation of standard operatic repertoire, Mr. Rose has been called "a Mozart conductor of energy and refinement" by *The Boston Phoenix*. His production of Verdi's *Luisa Miller* was praised as "the best Verdi production presented in Boston in the last 15 years" by *The Boston Globe*, and of the Boston premiere of Osvaldo Golijov's opera *Ainadamar* with Dawn Upshaw, *Opera News* raves, "Gil Rose and his musicians brought their usual excellence to the evening, creating fire and a stunning evocation." In the 2010–2011 season, Mr. Rose led the world premiere of *Death and the Powers*, a revolutionary new opera by Tod Machover integrating new performance technologies developed by the MIT Media Lab, in collaboration with the American Repertory Theater. Performances included the world premiere at the Grimaldi Forum in Monaco and the North American premiere in Boston with the American Repertory Theater.

Gil Rose's extensive discography includes world premiere recordings of music by Louis Andriessen, Arthur Berger, Derek Bermel, Lisa Bielawa, William Bolcom, Eric Chasalow, Shih-Hui Chen, Robert Erickson, Lukas Foss, Charles Fussell, Michael Gandolfi, John Harbison, Lee Hyla, David Lang, Tod Machover, Steven Mackey, William Thomas McKinley, Stephen Paulus, David Rakowski, Bernard Rands, George Rochberg, Elena Ruehr, Eric Sawyer, Gunther Schuller, Elliott Schwartz, Ken Ueno, Reza Vali, and Evan Ziporyn on such labels as Albany, Arsis, Cantaloupe, Chandos, ECM, Innova, Naxos, New World, and BMOP/sound, the Grammy Award-nominated label for which he serves as Executive Producer. His recordings have appeared on the year-end "Best of" lists of *The New York Times*, *Time Out New York*, *The Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *American Record Guide*, NPR, and *Downbeat Magazine*.

The **Boston Modern Orchestra Project** (BMOP) is widely recognized as the leading orchestra in the United States dedicated exclusively to performing new music, and its signature record label, BMOP/sound, is the nation's foremost label launched by an orchestra and solely devoted to new music recordings.

Founded in 1996 by Artistic Director Gil Rose, BMOP's mission is to illuminate the connections that exist naturally between contemporary music and contemporary society by reuniting composers and audiences in a shared concert experience. In its first twelve seasons, BMOP established a track record that includes more than 80 performances, over 70 world premieres (including 30 commissioned works), two Opera Unlimited festivals with Opera Boston, the inaugural Ditson Festival of Contemporary Music with the ICA/Boston, and 32 commercial recordings, including 12 CDs from BMOP/sound.

In March 2008, BMOP launched its signature record label, BMOP/sound, with John Harbison's ballet *Ulysses*. Its composer-centric releases focus on orchestral works that are otherwise unavailable in recorded form. The response to the label was immediate and celebratory; its five inaugural releases appeared on the "Best of 2008" lists of *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, National Public Radio, *Downbeat*, and *American Record Guide*, among others. BMOP/sound has received two Grammy Award nominations—in 2009 for its recording of Charles Fussell's *Wilde* Symphony for baritone and orchestra (Best Classical Vocal Performance), and in 2010 for its recording of Derek Bermel's *Voices* for solo clarinet and orchestra (Best Instrumental Soloist Performance with Orchestra). *The New York Times* proclaimed, "BMOP/sound is an example of everything done right." Additional BMOP recordings are available from Albany, Arsis, Cantaloupe, Centaur, Chandos, ECM, Innova, Naxos, New World, and Oxingale.

In Boston, BMOP performs at Boston's Jordan Hall and Symphony Hall, and the orchestra has also performed in New York at Miller Theater, the Winter Garden, Weill Recital Hall at



Carnegie Hall, and The Lyceum in Brooklyn. A perennial winner of the ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming of Orchestral Music and 2006 winner of the John S. Edwards Award for Strongest Commitment to New American Music, BMOP has appeared at the Celebrity Series (Boston, MA), Tanglewood, the Boston Cyberarts Festival, the Festival of New American Music (Sacramento, CA), and Music on the Edge (Pittsburgh, PA). In April 2008, BMOP headlined the 10th Annual MATA Festival in New York.

BMOP's greatest strength is the artistic distinction of its musicians and performances. Each season, Gil Rose, recipient of Columbia University's prestigious Ditson Conductor's Award as well as an ASCAP Concert Music award for his extraordinary contribution to new music, gathers together an outstanding orchestra of dynamic and talented young performers, and presents some of the world's top vocal and instrumental soloists. *The Boston Globe* claims, "Gil Rose is some kind of genius; his concerts are wildly entertaining, intellectually rigorous, and meaningful." Of BMOP performances, *The New York Times* says: "Mr. Rose and his team filled the music with rich, decisive ensemble colors and magnificent solos. These musicians were rapturous—superb instrumentalists at work and play."

## Steven Mackey

Dreamhouse

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Producer            | David Frost   |
| Recording engineers | Tom Lazarus, Dirk Sobotka, and Mark Donahue (assistant) |
| Editing             | David Frost, Steven Mackey, and Dirk Sobotka            |
| Mixing              | David Frost, Tom Lazarus, and Steven Mackey             |
| Mastering           | Silas Brown   |

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*Dreamhouse* was recorded on May 20-21, 2007 in Mechanics Hall (Worcester, MA).



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FOR THE ARTS

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"I want to thank my wonderful friend, ski buddy, and world's best collaborator, Rinde Eckert, for helping me turn meaningless chaos into meaningful chaos. Heartfelt thanks to Gil Rose, a wonderful conductor, a tireless champion of contemporary music, and a generous and reliable friend. Thanks to Micaela Haslam who gave me tremendous guidance in writing for her group Synergy Vocals. Thanks also to Wiek Hijmans who organized Catch. I am grateful to the Music Department at Princeton University and the University Committee on Research in the Humanities

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Cover photo: Daniel Grill

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