

Williams College Department of Music



MIDWEEKMUSIC

Terry Riley (b. 1935)

In C

Terry Riley's *In C* is an aleatory ensemble piece, comprising 53 composed melodic patterns, to be played in sequence by an ensemble of performers of any size, playing on any combination of instruments, including vocalists using any vowel or consonant sounds. Although the tempo is determined by the ensemble, there is no fixed meter, and performers may decide for themselves how many times to repeat each pattern before moving on to the next. As a result, the patterns will overlap with one another in unpredictable ways, falling in and out of phase with one another. Consequently, every performance of *In C* is a unique, irreproducible event.

In his instructions for performance, Riley writes:

"One of the joys of *In C* is the interaction of the players in polyrhythmic combinations that spontaneously arise between patterns. Some quite fantastic shapes will arise and disintegrate as the group moves through the piece when it is properly played."

The work, which received its premiere on November 4th, 1964, at San Francisco's Tape Music Center, was a reaction to the rigidly controlled, serial-compositional style that dominated academic musical circles at the time, sparking an upsurge in minimalist and indeterminate musical experimentation in the years and decades that followed. Part of the work's success arose from the freedom it gave the players—classical musicians that had been used to having completely determined roles in a work—to improvise, to make decisions in response to the ensemble. Riley specifically encourages the musicians to pause every now and then to listen to the ensemble, to become aware of the piece as it emerges, and to react accordingly as they rejoin to become a part of the evolving texture.

**Wednesday, September 18, 2019
12:15 p.m.**

*Chapin Hall
Williamstown, Massachusetts*

*Please turn off cell phones.
No photography or recording is permitted.*

About **MIDWEEKMUSIC**

This popular lunchtime series takes place at 12:15pm on most Wednesdays. Though we do not actually serve lunch, we do encourage everyone to bring along something to eat while they enjoy the music. *MIDWEEKMUSIC* gives Williams music students and faculty a flexible venue that encourages performers of all experience levels to share what they are learning in lessons or class. Pieces that might not otherwise fit into other contexts also get a hearing, and you shouldn't be surprised if there is an occasional impromptu discussion. This forum is more informal than many of our concerts. Since you are too on your lunch break, we understand that you may not be able to stay for the entire performance. We do ask that you only enter or exit during applause. *Bon appétit!*