

# Coastal Symphony of Georgia 2020-21 Concert Series

Michelle Merrill, Music Director

## *Variations on a Season*

Sunday, April 11, 2021

3:00 p.m.

Neptune Park – St. Simons Island

### *Vibes and Keys: Classical Meets Jazz*

Aaron Lehrian – Keyboard

Steve Merrill – Vibraphone

Most people today are unaware that many of the great composers of classical music such as Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, were also accomplished improvisers who would often create new music spontaneously in the moment during performance. While this tradition has largely been lost in classical music, improvisation remains the defining characteristic of another great musical genre - Jazz. In this concert, pianist Aaron Lehrian and vibraphonist Steve Merrill will perform classical pieces by composers such as Ravel, Gershwin, and Piazzolla, and use the structure and harmony of those pieces to improvise in a jazz style. The resulting sound will be a mixture of both the classical and jazz traditions which celebrates their shared connection to spontaneous creation.

**Steve Merrill** is the H. William Emde Principal Percussion Chair of the Coastal Symphony of Georgia and the Principal Percussionist of the Jacksonville Symphony. Steve has performed as a percussionist and timpanist with groups around the country such as the Dallas Symphony, Fort Worth Symphony, Naples Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, National Symphony, and Detroit Symphony and has performed at summer festivals such as Festival Mozaic, the Lyrique-en-mer Opera Festival, and Tanglewood. He earned a B.M. degree from Southern Methodist University and a M.M. degree from the New England Conservatory of Music where his teachers included Will Hudgins, Ed Stephan, and Doug Howard. Merrill has also performed traditional and modern Indonesian music with Gamelan Galak Tika, Classical Indian music as a tabla player with various duos and trios, and jazz music as a vibraphone and drum set player. In his spare time, Steve enjoys running and spending time with his wife, Michelle (who happens to be Music Director of the Coastal Symphony of Georgia) and their 3-year old son, Davis.

Pianist, **Aaron Lehrian** is well-versed in both the classical and jazz repertoires, and has experience composing and arranging in both idioms. He performs with the Jacksonville Symphony and The Coastal Symphony of Georgia and is a jazz performance major at the University of North Florida. Aaron enjoys working on creative projects that combine eclectic influences.