

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC



NEXUS

BOB BECKER
BILL CAHN
RUSSELL HARTENBERGER
GARRY KVISTAD

Wednesday, September 20, 2023
Kilbourn Hall
7:30 PM

PROGRAM

Sculptured Sound 2

Created by NEXUS in celebration of the ensemble's 52nd year.

The 58-minute performance will be continuous and without intermission.

PROGRAM NOTES

On May 22, 1971, **NEXUS** presented its first formal concert at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. The concert had been arranged by Warren Benson, a member of Eastman's composition faculty and a mentor for the ensemble and its aesthetics. NEXUS - at that time Bob Becker, Bill Cahn, Robin Engelman and John Wyre - presented their experimental music by improvising on a stage filled with their collection of dozens of nonwestern percussion instruments on a program titled, *Sculptured Sound*.

Here was the situation:

- * The stage was filled with dozens of exotic percussion instruments that were completely unfamiliar to the audience.
- * The four percussionists were all experienced performers and graduates of major conservatories (Curtis, Eastman, Ithaca College), and they had never improvised together in a public performance.
- * Not only the audience, but the performers themselves had virtually no idea of what specifically was going to happen. Each player would be relying mainly on his own experimentation with the sounds of the instruments in his own personal collection of world percussion instruments.
- * The performers intended to approach the music with a "let's see what happens" mindset, rather than with a "see how well we have prepared the music" mindset.

The first half of the concert was an uninterrupted 52-minutes of freeform improvisation, followed by another 40-minutes of improvisation after an

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intermission. The next morning a review by Rochester's leading music critic, Theodore Price, appeared in the Rochester *Democrat & Chronicle*:

“After “Sculptured Sound”. . . one could say it was the most meditative, contemplative evening of music all season. But that's not right. One could, on the other hand, call it a highly stimulating and innovative evening. But that's not quite right either. For me, it was both. An idea, a [musical] comment would be made, as if one player wished to initiate musical conversation. Then another would respond, often molding a chip of the original block of sound. Gradually the players, in joint, let the piece take its own shape. . . . the force of powerful music without any J. Arthur Rank theatricalism, but with imaginative improvisation.” (May 23, 1971 - courtesy *Democrat & Chronicle*)

As a result, improvisation became a key aspect in the ensemble's performances over the next five decades.

Fortunately, the Sculptured Sound concert in 1971 was recorded, and after remaining completely out of the public sphere until the NEXUS concerts this week, the 1971 performance will be heard by audiences again as Bob Becker, Bill Cahn, Russell Hartenberger, and Garry Kvistad incorporate it into their new Sculptured Sound 2 - performed live and inspired in real time by the recorded performance of music that NEXUS created 52-years ago.

MEET THE ARTISTS

The first, entirely improvised **NEXUS** concert in 1971 formed a group that touches and entertains people worldwide. Bob Becker, Bill Cahn, Russell Hartenberger and Garry Kvistad are virtuosos alone and bring their knowledge and character to a distinct and powerful whole. NEXUS stands out in the contemporary music scene for innovation, program diversity, an impressive history of collaborations and commissions, their revival of 1920's novelty ragtime xylophone music, and influential improvisatory ideas.

NEXUS' widespread appeal has taken the group to Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Brazil, Scandinavia, Europe, and regularly to the USA and Canada. NEXUS was the first Western percussion group to perform in

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the People's Republic of China and have participated in 60 international music festivals world-wide. NEXUS has received the Banff Centre's National and the Toronto Arts Awards. NEXUS was inducted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame in 1999 and into the CBC *In Concert* Canadian Musician Hall of Fame in 2019.

In Summer 2022 NEXUS was the featured attraction for a ten-day residency at the Sound Symposium in St. John's NL, and performed in concert with Paul Winter and Henrique Eisenmann in New York. Upcoming events will find them in Rochester NY, Woodstock NY, and Toronto. The covid performing shutdown did not stop NEXUS but found the group continuing their output of new compositions, recordings, articles, podcast appearances and educational work via Zoom. NEXUS' newest album, *Steve Reich* (June 2021), features NEXUS with New York City's Sō Percussion. The two groups joined forces to make a historical video-recording by Four/Ten Media of Steve Reich's *Drumming* – a rare opportunity to gather up two of the world's best percussion groups to celebrate the iconic work's 50th Anniversary and Steve Reich's 85th year. The end result is both sonically and visually beautiful. NEXUS' 2019 album *Requiem* features Toronto's TorQ and vocalists Lindsay Kesselman and Cory Knight in an 8-movement composition by NEXUS' Russell Hartenberger.

In 2018 NEXUS and Sō Percussion honored Steve Reich in a special event at Princeton University and in 2019 the *NEXUS & Friends* concert was celebrated at the Rochester Fringe Festival with guests John H. Beck, Michael Burrirt, Conrad Alexander, Ruth Cahn, Ray Dillard, Gordon Stout and Brian Stotz. Both events were sold-out.

Previous albums include *Home*, celebrating ecological sustainability, and *The City Wears A Slouch Hat*, rediscovering once-lost works by John Cage that were resurrected and premiered by NEXUS for The John Cage Trust. NEXUS' album *Persian Songs* features beloved Iranian vocalist and setar performer, Sepideh Raissadat, following on the NEXUS solo CD *Wings* and Juno-nominated *Drumtalker*.

Especially renowned for improvisational skill, NEXUS created the music for the National Film Board's award-winning *Inside Time*, and the chilling score for the Academy Award-winning feature-length documentary *The Man Who Skied Down Everest*. NEXUS' high-profile collaborations include

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the Kronos Quartet and clarinetist Richard Stoltzman, and commissions from Pulitzer Prize winning composer Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, Grammy winner Libby Larsen, Peter Schickele, and many others, including the co-commissioning of Steve Reich for his *Mallet Quartet*. Toru Takemitsu, a great friend to NEXUS, composed their signature piece *From me flows what you call Time...* written with each member's personality in mind. It was premiered for Carnegie Hall's 1990 centennial conducted by Seiji Ozawa with the Boston Symphony (recorded on Sony Classical with the Pacific Symphony).

NEXUS wishes to thank Pearl/Adams and The Canada Council for the Arts for their ongoing support.

Bob Becker's performing experience spans nearly all of the musical disciplines where percussion is found. As an artist with the Malletch company he has created signature instruments, mallets and drumsticks, and published over 50 compositions and arrangements. An endorser and designer for the Sabian cymbal company, he was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005. In 2006 he was recognized as a "Master Drummer" by the International Association of Traditional Drummers. Naming his one of the Top 30 Professionals of the Year in 2017, *Musical America* said: "As a composer, arranger, and founding member of the NEXUS percussion ensemble, Bob Becker has influenced virtually every aspect of percussion performance and repertoire in the profession."

Bill Cahn has been a member of the NEXUS, the Toronto-based percussion group since 1971 performing with renowned symphony orchestras and in solo concerts worldwide. From 2005 to 2015 he was Associate Professor of Percussion at the Eastman School of Music and a visiting artist in residence at the Showa Academy of Music in Kawasaki, Japan. Bill was the principal percussionist in the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra from 1968 to 1995. He has served on the RPO Education Committee since 1972, and he is a life member of the orchestra's Honorary Board of Directors.

Bill has performed with conductors, composers, ensembles, and artists representing many musical styles, including Chet Atkins, John Cage, Aaron Copland, Sir Andrew Davis, Chuck Mangione, Mitch Miller, Seiji

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Ozawa, Doc Severinsen, Leopold Stokowski, Igor Stravinsky, Edgar Varese, and Paul Winter. His book, *Creative Music Making* (2005), on freeform improvisation is published by Routledge Books. Bill's workshops and residencies include community hand drumming, freeform improvisation, careers in music, and the business of music.

Bill has received the Rochester Philharmonic League's Fanfare Award (1988) for a "significant contribution to music education in Rochester," Mu Phi Epsilon's Musician of the Year Award (1993), and with NEXUS, the Toronto Arts Award in music (1989), the Banff Centre for the Arts National Award (1997), and induction into the Percussive Arts Society's Hall of Fame (1999). In 2005 he received the Sabian Lifetime Achievement Award, and in 2015 the Arts and Cultural Council of Greater Rochester Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2006 Bill received a Grammy Award with the Paul Winter Consort.

Russell Hartenberger is Professor Emeritus and former Dean of the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto. He has been a member of both Nexus and Steve Reich & Musicians since 1971. He is author of *Performance Practice in the Music of Steve Reich*, editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Percussion*, and co-editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Rhythm*. He was inducted into the PAS Hall of Fame with Nexus in 1999 and was presented with the Leonardo da Vinci World Award of Arts in 2017. In 2020, he was given the PAS Lifetime Achievement Award in Education.

Garry Kvistad joined NEXUS in the Fall of 2002 when John Wyre, one of the group's original members, retired. He has been performing and recording with NEXUS co-founders Bob Becker and Russell Hartenberger since joining Steve Reich and Musicians in 1979. Garry is one of 18 musicians to win a Grammy award for the 1998 recording of Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians*.

Garry attended the Interlochen Arts Academy where he studied with Jack McKenzie and Michael Ranta. He earned his BM from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music where he studied with Cloyd Duff and Richard Weiner and his MM from Northern Illinois University, where he studied music, art, and physics in the pursuit of musical instrument building. In

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1993 Northern Illinois University honored him with its Distinguished Alumnus Award.

In the 1970s, Garry worked with composer/conductor Lucas Foss as a Creative Associate in Buffalo, New York, after which he joined the faculties of Northern Illinois University and the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music. During that time, he co-founded the Blackearth Percussion Group which recorded and toured in the US, Canada, and Europe. Kvistad has served as the timpanist and percussionist with the Chicago Grant Park Symphony, was a summer Tanglewood Fellow, and a percussionist with the Cabrillo Music Festival Orchestra, California.

He has been featured in performances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic, as well as many others in North America and Europe. The Balinese Gong Kebyar Gamelan ensemble, Giri Mekar, which he formed in 1987, is currently in residence at Bard College where Garry serves as faculty advisor to the Conservatory of Music. Garry is the founder and retired CEO of Woodstock Percussion, Inc., makers of Woodstock Chimes® and musical instruments for children. He is a 1995 winner of *Ernst & Young/Inc. Magazine's* Entrepreneur of the Year Award for the Southern New England Region and served as a New York state delegate to the 1995 White House Conference on Small Business. In 2021 after 42 years and 35 million chimes produced, he and his wife sold their business.

Garry served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of The Woodstock Guild, Woodstock, NY until 2008; and as a member of the Board of Advisors of The Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, Arkville, NY. Garry was inducted into the Percussive Arts Society's Hall of Fame in 2020, joining percussion greats such as NEXUS, Ringo Star, Jack DeJohnette, and Evelyn Glennie.

Garry lives in beautiful upstate New York with his wife Diane, pets and lots of houseplants. They have two daughters, Tasa and Maya, both following artistic paths. And two wonderful grandchildren.

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the "Great Hill People" and "Keepers of the Western Door" of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC
of the University of Rochester

Walter Hendl, Director

KILBOURN HALL

Saturday Evening, May 22, 1971 at 8:15

The Department of Composition presents

"...Great drums and gongs
hung on spiked frames
sounding to perfect rule and rote
about the King's calm crescent moat.

Tone unto tone, of drum and gong.

About the King's calm crescent moat
the blind musicians beat lizard skin
as the tune weaves out and in."

from the Shih Ching

Robin Engleman Toronto
John Wyre

Robert Becker The Nexus
William Cahn

UPCOMING EASTMAN SERIES CONCERTS

Tickets for all series concerts can be purchased at EastmanTheatre.org

ROCHESTER FRINGE FESTIVAL

Dave Rivello Ensemble RED

Kilbourn Hall

Thursday, September 21, 2023 at 7:30 PM

What happens when the 13-member **Dave Rivello Ensemble** plugs in? *DRE | RED!* Sharp angles contrasted with smooth textures and combined with dynamic solos make for an evening of continuous color. From the beginning, this ensemble has blurred lines, and crossed genres—come get lost in *DRE | RED!*

ROCHESTER FRINGE FESTIVAL

Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon and More

Kilbourn Hall

Saturday, September 23, 2023 at 7:30 PM

The Institute for Popular Music concerts return post-Covid with a celebration of the 50th anniversary of Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*. The album will be performed live in its entirety (and more) by The League of Extraordinary Uncles, along with current students, staff, faculty and alumni of the University of Rochester.

UPCOMING STUDENT ENSEMBLE CONCERTS

All student performances are free unless otherwise noted.

Eastman Wind Orchestra

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre

Friday, September 22, 2023 at 7:30 PM

Music of Carolyn Bremer, Dwayne Milbourn, and Frank Ticheli

Musica Nova

Kilbourn Hall

Wednesday, October 4, 2023 at 7:30 PM

Music of Douglas Lowry, Philippe Manoury, and Wolfgang Rihm



For the most up to date information on Eastman concerts and events, scan this code to visit our online calendar.



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