

April 1, 2010. 8pm. Conrad Prebys Concert Hall.

# brian archinal percussion

with:  
Eliot Gattegno  
William Fried  
Ben Hackbarth

## program:

**Kontakte (1958-1960)**.....Karlheinz Stockhausen

William Fried - Piano  
Ben Hackbarth - Sound Projection

**Open End (2007)**.....Ben Hackbarth

Ben Hackbarth - Electronics, Sound Projection

## intermission

**New York/Lexington Counterpoint (1985)**.....Steve Reich

**Islands from 'Archipelago': II. Autumn Island (1986)**.....Roger Reynolds

**Dmaathen (1976)**.....Iannis Xenakis

Eliot Gattegno - Saxophone

Musical score for 'Open End' by Ben Hackbarth. The score includes a Vibes part with measures 16 and 17 circled, and a Click Track. Below the Vibes part are sections for Beating, Internal, and Surround, each with corresponding musical notation and dynamics like *mp*, *mf*, and *f*. The Surround section includes a 'Surround Position' waveform.

Musical score for 'Dmaathen' by Iannis Xenakis. The score is dense with notation, including saxophone parts and electronic elements. It features various dynamics such as *pp*, *f*, and *mf*, and includes performance instructions like 'lento' and '3/2'. The score is presented in a complex, multi-stemmed format.

**Kontakte** can be seen as a summation of many techniques **Karlheinz Stockhausen** was working with in the late 1950's. Beginning in 1955 with the nearly half-hour work for piano, *Klavierstück X*, **Stockhausen** developed his unique, gestural vocabulary for the keyboard. Much of this language also appears in the piano writing for **Kontakte**. An absolutely graceful and athletic display, *Klavierstück X* aptly primes a pianist for the writing in **Kontakte**. Similarly, *Zyklus*, for one percussionist, was written in 1959 during the composing of **Kontakte**, and helped establish the percussionist as a major force in Western instrumental performance. A first of its kind, *Zyklus* proposed unique challenges for its original and subsequent generations of performers. The set of instruments in *Zyklus* mirrors those of **Kontakte**, with some small additions and subtractions. Both performers tonight have performed and recorded these respective works. With these two instrumental pieces, **Stockhausen** utilized the language he created to combine it with breakthroughs in the beginnings of electronic music. **Stockhausen** was a pioneer in electronic music, not only for his compositions, but also for the approach he created. Electronic music was particularly attractive to him because of its possibilities for total control and seemingly infinite sonic material. He sought in electronic music what he could not find in instrumental acoustic performance. He moved from merely from combining recorded sounds on magnetic tape, to creating a formal structure and trajectory for the creation of electronic music, instead of the acousmatic *concrète* music which dominated early experiments in magnetic tape music. The electronic music to **Kontakte** was written first, but written with the idea of synchronizing (in all that this entails, i.e. blend, anticipation, reaction, etc.) the instrumentalists precisely with moments in the electronics. A first of its kind, **Kontakte** stands alone in its scale and complexity amongst electronic works. However, it is not just a memorization or reproduction of synchronicity with electronics- the instrumentalists follow the electronic sound but communicate in a traditional chamber music manner, making **Kontakte** a marvelously raw aural experience, with a dauntingly true test of musical ability. The point being, through the creation of these pieces, **Stockhausen** combined his instrumental techniques with his new electronic means to create one of the most remarkable, and challenging works of the 20th century. A landmark in musical achievement, **Kontakte** remains one of **Stockhausen's** most well known and performed works.

In a seemingly opposite nature, **Ben Hackbarth's** *Open End* sits as a contrasting use of electronic and acoustic sound. Ben writes: "Open end is one in a series of pieces that I have written addressing intimate relationships between electronic and acoustic sound. Relationships which, I hope, evoke our knowledge and experience of an instrument, bringing its acoustic identity into focus by engaging restrained pallets of sound and gesture. Many of the electronic gestures unfold gradually to gain the trust of the listener — so that the believe might exist, if only temporarily, that the sounds coming from the speakers are acutely indebted to the mechanics of the instrument which spawns them. Open End uses speakers which are placed underneath the vibraphone to create explicit patterns of 'beating' between the acoustic and electronic signals. This beating gradually permeates into other aspects of sound-experience; gestural, timbral and spatial." The piece becomes more than a sonic extension of instrument, it surmises a communication between worlds of physical affect and aural percept. This communication is extended in a pragmatic sense between the sound projectionist and performer. Sounds are triggered from a computer and released into the resonance of the vibraphone. The relationship of performer to composition is is not by any means trivial, instead, a diverse and meditative network of connections.

**Steve Reich's** series of counterpoint pieces (and much of his recent chamber music) all function the same way: a soloist records any number of other instrumental parts and plays a live part over top of these recordings in performance. I originally had the idea to transcribe *New York Counterpoint* for vibraphone in 2003. I experimented over the following years with a way to create the performance tracks for the performance. To record completely perfect rhythms, as to not create any kind of rhythmic distortion, has been the most problematic detail regarding the construction of the performance track. With percussion, there is no room for error— one small rhythmic misplacement is multiplied exponentially once 11 other tracks of vibraphones share the same issues. I spent basically all of my musical career chasing a performance of this piece, so when I first performed it in Geneva, Switzerland last November, a great sense of satisfaction and joy surrounded the premier, regardless of its competitive context. I added the title *Lexington Counterpoint* because Lexington, KY is where I first created a working, albeit, troubled, performance track. I then re-recorded the parts in San Diego with considerably better equipment and experience to create the version presented here today. The piece functions in a typical Reich "Counterpoint" fashion: 3 movements, the outer two fast, and the middle slow. In the original version, 11 clarinets and bass clarinets are pre-recorded, and a final 'live' part is played during performance. It is also possible, according to Reich, that the piece be played as a clarinet ensemble, with all parts performed live. All counterpoint pieces explore simple harmonic progressions and classic Reich build-ups' and 'break-downs' of rhythmic patterns. As far as I know, this is the American premier of the keyboard percussion version.

Without a doubt, *Autumn Island* is a critical piece in the development of modern marimba performance. A strangely undeveloped and homogenous instrument, **Roger Reynolds** has, unintentionally, created a voice for an otherwise stagnant instrument. The concept of this voice can be explained rather simply; 4 themes present themselves at various times within the frame of a performance, and are distributed in the score according to an external apparatus; an algorithm. How the algorithm works, the relationship between the thematic materials, and the necessary steps towards an interpretation are different matters left up to the performer, composer, analyst, and possibly, the savvy audience member. It is true that a knowledge of these materials is not necessary to have any kind of affective experience. But one thing is for sure: the only way to listen is with complete intention. The ear develops over the course of the performance and jumps at thematic familiarities, however brief, as well as the beauty of materials. It is necessary to hear these themes? Is it necessary to hear the form of Beethoven's third symphony? Can we instead be affected by even the grace and beauty of performance? I think a dedicated listening and observing, while a challenging feat, is sure to evoke the sense of musical experience that is unrequited in other marimba music. For the performer, *Autumn Island* poses very challenging interpretational issues. For one, the scale and dimension of this piece are unique to marimba music. To make sense of the material, a performer must create some kind of attachment to the four themes. In my personal approach, gesture, unique to my own devices, is shaped by the 'intention' of the musical texture. Another performer could share a similar approach, but apprehend a different set of meanings from different material. However, the most pressing challenge for the performer and audience alike is the material of silence. To create a sense of "dimensionality," **Reynolds** creates silent spaces between the entries of the thematic material. It serves as a chance for the complex musical material to be processed, and the scope of the frame expanded.

Originally written for oboe and percussion soloists, tonight's performance of *Dmaathen* has been transcribed for soprano Saxophone by Eliot Gattegno. Much of the music made on the saxophone comes from harmonics, multiphonics, and various pitch bending techniques. Since the music was written for a different instrument, great care and struggle have created a sound that takes *Dmaathen* to new boundaries that the oboe simply cannot reach (or *vice-versa* depending on who you talk to). Marked by various textures, **Iannis Xenakis** utilizes a large combination of percussion instruments, most notably, the use of vibraphone and marimba simultaneously. In order for a percussionist to keep track of the musical material, the instruments' keys are placed on top of each other in a "stacked" setup, in order to see all notes in the same peripheral sightline. A critical technique in *Dmaathen*, is the idea of 'extension' of the performer. The use of extreme multiphonics in the saxophone evokes an illusion of more than one player by its separation of harmonics, making several tones perceptible at once. Similarly, the use of two or more percussion instruments at a time extends the sonic space into a virtuosic display of multi-tasking.