

BANG ON A CAN

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Bang on a Can presents
The 2019 People's Commissioning Fund (PCF) Concert
Part of the Ecstatic Music Festival at Kaufman Music Center's Merkin Hall

World Premieres by Nicole Lizée, Trevor Weston, Josué Collado Fregoso, and Henry Threadgill Plus Works by Glenn Branca, Annie Gosfield, and Arnold Dreyblatt



Photo by Lisa Bauso available in high resolution at www.jensenartists.com/bang-on-a-can

Wednesday, March 6, 2019 at 7:30pm
Merkin Hall at Kaufman Music Center | 129 W. 67th St. | NYC
Tickets: \$25 at 212.501.3330 or www.ecstaticmusicfestival.com

"Merkin Hall was a mob scene on Thursday night. At five minutes to 8, the line of ticket buyers snaked out the door. Inside the lobby, the crowd ranged from elderly couples to bearded twentysomethings."

- The New York Times

Bang on a Can: www.bangonacan.org

New York, NY — On **Wednesday, March 6, 2019 at 7:30pm**, **Bang on a Can** will present the 2019 Bang on a Can **People's Commissioning Fund (PCF)** concert, one of the most anticipated and reliable launching pads for composers in New York and beyond. The performance is presented as part of **Kaufman Music Center's Ecstatic Music Festival at Merkin Hall** (Kaufman Music Center, 129 W. 67th St.) and a *New Sounds Live* co-presentation with host John Schaefer, streamed live at www.newsounds.org.

This year, Bang on a Can's PCF invites all of North America to dance, with world premieres by four composers from Canada, Mexico and the United States – **Nicole Lizée, Josué Collado Fregoso, Henry Threadgill, and Trevor Weston**. Each composer was asked to make his or her own idiosyncratic form of dance music, to redefine what it means to create music for dancing. The second half of the concert features three classics from Bang on a Can history by **Annie Gosfield, Arnold Dreyblatt, and Glenn**

Branca, with a rare performance of Branca's massive "three dimensional" *Movement Within*, written specifically for the Bang on a Can All-Stars, in his unique tuning system and on his own original instruments.

Nicole Lizée explains of her new work, *Dancist (Season 1: Episode 1)*, "In the spirit David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, *Rabbits* or the *Black Mirror* series, the work is constructed as a quasi documentary or an episode of a fictional TV drama where a scene is set up and subsequently enhanced and manipulated by the performers. This episode tells a story of one person's quest to learn about dance music, with unexpected results."

Of the genesis of *Joie de Vivre*, **Josué Collado Fregoso** notes, "When I was contacted to write this piece for the Bang on a Can All Stars, it was some of the best news I've received in my career, followed by the worst news I've received in my life: two weeks later my mom was diagnosed with cancer. The commission proposed dance as the central concept for the piece. I inherited the passion for dance from my mother side of the family, and always associated it with joy, cheerfulness and light-heartedness. Each of the characteristics that I admire from my mom. I decided then to write a piece dedicated to her. When I was writing *Joie de Vivre*, the piece became a personal symbol for resilience and hope in adverse conditions."

Hailing from Plainfield, New Jersey, the same hometown as Parliament Funkadelic, **Trevor Weston** recalls, "Growing up in NJ in the 1970's, dance music meant Funk Music. We would not have Disco or Hip Hop without Funk. It is the fundamental genre of dance music in America after the 1960s. *Dig It* will distill essential elements of Funk Music in a contemporary context."

As a composer and improviser, **Henry Threadgill** sees artistic process and product as inseparable, the essence of jazz. The unpredictable results are jazz's "sound of surprise" updated for the 21st century. Threadgill was named a 2016 Pulitzer Prize Laureate for *In For A Penny, In For A Pound*, the latest album by Zooid, his unconventional sextet (reeds, acoustic guitar, cello, tuba, bass guitar, drums). Other honors and awards include the 2016 Doris Duke Artist Award; 2015 Doris Duke Impact Award; 2008 United States Artist Fellowship; 2003 Guggenheim Fellowship; and a Copland House Residency Award.

The last time Bang on a Can co-founder Michael Gordon heard **Glenn Branca's** music was at the 2015 Bang on Can Marathon, where the performance was so loud that the merchants at the Winter Garden complained. In a tribute Gordon wrote for *New Music Box* in 2018, he recalls, "We've been there for ten years, and they've never complained. Branca is too much. We get kicked out of the venue for good. Branca was the last act we did there." Gordon further reflects, "Are we going to hear this music again? I thought that then, that night in 2015, and I think that now. The Symphonies were created, and sometimes recorded, in a process that isn't easily recreatable. Many of the musicians were taught by rote. Were scores left? Is anyone going to take this on? Even if they do, can anyone channel the energy that Branca summoned during a performance? Are these like great buildings, designed, built, destroyed? Is all we have left a picture?"

Glenn Branca came to world attention with his massive symphonies written for re-tuned electric guitars. He developed a unique sound palette, and with it a unique tuning theory based on the natural harmonic series up to the 128th partial. In order to play his music, Branca built a series of guitar and keyboard instruments with these special tunings. *Movement Within* (1998) features six of these instruments, three keyboards and three guitars. Bang on a Can All-Stars are the first ensemble other than Branca's own to perform his microtonal music on his original instruments.

Of her work *The Manufacture of Tangled Ivory* (1995), **Annie Gosfield** says, "In my compositions, I generally start with the keyboard first. Then I often do improvisational work with percussionist Christine Bard and guitarist Roger Kleier, and parts of this piece were developed in our trio. As to the title, *The Manufacture of Tangled Ivory*, refers to the keys of the piano. And *tangled* was a way of describing the detuned and altered piano sounds that I've been exploring for a long time. The notes are actually displaced on the keyboard. In this piece, I tried to increase the density and layers of these sounds and see what kind of contrast I could bring out. In the beginning solo keyboard part, some parts are rubato and others sound like a player piano, fast and mechanical. In fact, the piece incorporates metallic, factory sounds, like some of the music of the Russian avant garde composers from the early part of this century. That's where *manufacture* comes from. I was also thinking somewhat about my grandmother. She moved from Poland to the lower east side in New York at about the same time these composers were working in Russia. And she worked in sweatshops and factories. I've been in New York for three years, and I'm about in the same neighborhood. But the differences between her experience and mine are so vast.

Arnold Dreyblatt notes, "This performance of *Escalator* (1995) for the Bang in a Can All-Stars is one of the few occasions where my music has been played by an ensemble other than my own. The piece had its beginnings in a duet performance piece with percussionist Pierre Berthet in Belgium in 1988, and it has been performed in various transformation by The Orchestra of Excited Strings over the years. In 1986-87 I began working on a "digital dynamic processing system" for a commission at "Ars Electronica" in Linz in 1987 and further developed this in a residency at STEIM in Amsterdam in 1989. This system was triggered with recorded machine tracks and interacts with acoustic instruments. It's basis are recordings of the rhythms produced by a number of malfunctioning escalators on the Blvd. Ansbach in Brussels which I made in 1987. In this version of "Escalator", composed in 1995, I notated repetitive rhythmic patterns found in these recordings and scored them for cimbalom, prepared

electric guitar and cello, later adding layers of percussion, saxophone and prepared "excited strings" bass in collaboration with the musicians.

About the People's Commissioning Fund (PCF): Created in 1997, PCF is a radical partnership between artists and audiences to commission works from adventurous composers and is one of the first pre-social media, crowd-sourcing art-creating platforms. The fund began when Bang on a Can co-founders Michael Gordon, David Lang and Julia Wolfe recognized a need to go beyond the usual sources of support to create new, groundbreaking music. Each year, Bang on a Can pools together the contributions of hundreds of individuals to fund the commissions. Donations range from \$5 to \$5,000. To date, over 50 new pieces have been created through PCF, and over \$300,000 has been raised. The pieces often become part the Bang on a Can All-Stars' permanent repertoire, and these works go on to make debuts across the U.S. and throughout Europe and Asia. Past commissions have gone to composers including Nik Bärtsch, Eve Beglarian, Oscar Bettison, Nick Brooke, Jeffrey Brooks, Jace Clayton, Anna Clyne, Dan Deacon, Bryce Dessner, Sussan Deyhim, James Fei, Ben Frost, Yoav Gal, Annie Gosfield, Erdem Helvacioğlu, John Hollenbeck, Cynthia Hopkins, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Karsh Kale, Carla Kihlstedt, John King, Glenn Kotche, Lukas Ligeti, Annea Lockwood, David Longstreth, Alvin Lucier, Rene Lussier, Keeril Makan, Ingram Marshall, Miya Masaoka, Paula Matthusen, Marc Mellits, Kate Moore, Thurston Moore, Virgil Moorefield, Richard Reed Parry, Joshua Penman, Tristan Perich, Dan Plonsey, Ed Ruchalski, Caroline Shaw, Matthew Shipp, Gabriella Smith, Christine Southworth, Lok Yin Tang, Jim Thirwell, Ken Thomson, Toby Twining, Stefan Weisman, Daniel Wohl, Zhang Shouwang, and Pamela Z.

About the Bang on a Can All-Stars: The Bang on a Can All-Stars are Ashley Bathgate, cello; Robert Black, bass; Vicky Chow, piano and keyboards; David Cossin, percussion; Mark Stewart, electric guitar; and Ken Thomson, clarinets. Known worldwide as some of the best contemporary musicians, the Bang on a Can All-Stars formed in 1992 and are recognized for their ultra-dynamic live performances and recordings of today's most innovative music. Freely crossing the boundaries between classical, jazz, rock, world and experimental music, this six-member amplified ensemble has consistently forged a distinct category-defying identity. With a massive repertoire of works written specifically for the group's distinctive instrumentation and style of performance, the All-Stars have become a genre in their own right.

Performing throughout the U.S. and internationally, the Bang on a Can All-Stars have shattered the definition of what concert music is today. The group's celebrated projects include their landmark recording of Brian Eno's ambient classic *Music for Airports* and Terry Riley's *In C*, as well as live performances with Philip Glass, Meredith Monk, Don Byron, Iva Bittova, Thurston Moore, and others. Recent project highlights include *Road Trip*, an immersive and visually stunning concert collaboratively-composed by Michael Gordon, David Lang, and Julia Wolfe to commemorate the 30+ year journey of Bang on a Can; the premiere performances and recording of Julia Wolfe's Pulitzer Prize winning *Anthracite Fields including their recent sold out performance at Carnegie Hall*; *Field Recordings*, a major multi-media project featuring over 30 commissioned works by Tyondai Braxton, Mira Calix, Anna Clyne, Bryce Dessner, Michael Gordon, Jóhann Jóhannsson, David Lang, Christian Marclay, Steve Reich, Caroline Shaw, Julia Wolfe; the world premiere and album release of *Cloud River Mountain*, a collaboration featuring Chinese superstar singer Gong Linna; and more. The All-Stars record on Cantaloupe Music and have released past recordings on Sony, Universal, and Nonesuch.

About Bang on a Can: Bang on a Can is dedicated to making music new. Since its first Marathon concert in 1987, Bang on a Can has been creating an international community dedicated to innovative music, wherever it is found. With adventurous programs, it commissions new composers, performs, presents, and records new work, develops new audiences, and educates the musicians of the future. Bang on a Can is building a world in which powerful new musical ideas flow freely across all genres and borders. Bang on a Can plays "a central role in fostering a new kind of audience that doesn't concern itself with boundaries. If music is made with originality and integrity, these listeners will come." (*The New York Times*)

Bang on a Can has grown from a one-day New York-based Marathon concert (on Mother's Day in 1987 in a SoHo art gallery) to a multi-faceted performing arts organization with a broad range of year-round international activities. "When we started Bang on a Can, we never imagined that our 12-hour marathon festival of mostly unknown music would morph into a giant international organization dedicated to the support of experimental music, wherever we would find it," write Bang on a Can Co-Founders Michael Gordon, David Lang and Julia Wolfe. "But it has, and we are so gratified to be still hard at work, all these years later. The reason is really clear to us – we started this organization because we believed that making new music is a utopian act – that people needed to hear this music and they needed to hear it presented in the most persuasive way, with the best players, with the best programs, for the best listeners, in the best context. Our commitment to changing the environment for this music has kept us busy and growing, and we are not done yet."

Current projects include the annual **Bang on a Can Marathon**; **The People's Commissioning Fund**, a membership program to commission emerging composers; the **Bang on a Can All-Stars**, who tour to major festivals and concert venues around the world every year; recording projects; the **Bang on a Can Summer Music Festival at MASS MoCA** - a professional development program for young composers and performers led by today's pioneers of experimental music; **Asphalt Orchestra**, Bang on a Can's extreme street band that offers mobile performances re-contextualizing unusual music; **Found Sound Nation**, a

new technology-based musical outreach program now partnering with the State Department of the United States of America to create **OneBeat**, a revolutionary, post-political residency program that uses music to bridge the gulf between young American musicians and young musicians from developing countries; cross-disciplinary collaborations and projects with DJs, visual artists, choreographers, filmmakers and more. Each new program has evolved to answer specific challenges faced by today's musicians, composers and audiences, in order to make innovative music widely accessible and wildly received. Bang on a Can's inventive and aggressive approach to programming and presentation has created a large and vibrant international audience made up of people of all ages who are rediscovering the value of contemporary music.

About Kaufman Music Center

Transforming Lives Through Music – See a Concert, Take a Class, Connect with Music

Kaufman Music Center is where music lovers, from curious fans to renowned performers, come together to explore their musical passions. Founded in 1952 as a community school for pre-conservatory music training, today's Kaufman Music Center is home to Merkin Hall; Lucy Moses School, New York's largest community arts school; Special Music School, a K-12 public school that teaches music as a core subject; and the acclaimed youth new music ensemble Face the Music.

www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org

About the Ecstatic Music Festival

“No series has better instincts in fomenting post-genre alchemy than the Ecstatic Music Festival,” writes Steve Smith in *The New Yorker*. Kaufman Music Center's Ecstatic Music Festival brings together composers and performers from different musical background for audacious, one-night-only presentations of surprising musical collaborations. Hailed as “a who's who of the current musical scene” (*WQXR*), the EMF is curated by composer and New Amsterdam Records Co-Director Judd Greenstein with Merkin Hall Director Amy Roberts Frawley. www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org/mch/series/ecstatic-music-festival

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