

BANG ON A CAN

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Bang on a Can presents the 2020 People's Commissioning Fund (PCF) Concert Part of the Ecstatic Music Series at Kaufman Music Center's Merkin Hall

**World Premieres by Alvin Curran, Amanda Berlind, Hildur Guðnadóttir, and Qasim Naqvi
Plus Works by Phil Kline and Julius Eastman**



Photos available in high resolution upon request

**Tuesday, January 28, 2020 at 7:30pm
Merkin Hall at Kaufman Music Center | 129 W. 67th St. | NYC
Tickets: \$25 at 212.501.3330 or www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org**

"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 **Tuesday, January 28, 2020 at 7:30pm**, **Bang on a Can** presents the 2020 **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 part of **Kaufman Music Center's 10th annual Ecstatic Music Series** 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's composers are **Amanda Berlind**, **Alvin Curran**, **Hildur Guðnadóttir**, and **Qasim Naqvi**. As a continuation of last year's dance-themed PCF commissions, 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 New York composer **Phil Kline's** *Exquisite Corpses* (a 1998 PCF commission) and **Julius Eastman's** super-groove *Stay On It*.

Amanda Berlind says of her work, *Bird Chart*, "If a bird were to scream into a seashell— and this is something I would love to see— it would sound like my vision for this piece. I can't put it into words any better than that, and the birds wouldn't want me to. With this music, I hope to capture the absurd and beautiful choreography of one of my most favorite animals."

“I don’t dance, just love it,” says Alvin Curran. “Starting at the age 11 playing trombone in a Junior-High dance band, on to college playing piano in Dixieland and Modern Jazz Bands, my father’s Bar Mitzvah Band in Providence, Society Bands up and down the east coast and show bands in the Catskills and Las Vegas. In those analogue years, wherever anyone was dancing I was playing. During my composition studies in the late 50s/early 60s, ‘the beat’ was considered an infectious disease. But whatever I was writing, my music soon found its way into the world of downtown dance, primarily with Trisha Brown, Joan Jonas, Margie Jenkins, Merce Cunningham, Yoshiko Chuma, Molissa Fenley, Nancy Karp, The Ballet de Lyon, and many others.” For his new work for the Bang on a Can All-Stars, “I went straight to my AC FAKE BOOK looking for materials that could inspire a plate of one-note melodies gently grilled over dysfunctional harmonies in 4/4 to no/4 time. ‘*Missteps*’ is really about all of the above in my long history of composing unpopular music – all the while dancing on the keyboard to the popular kind.”

Hildur Guðnadóttir’s *Illimani* is “a document of the stream of notes in my head whilst moving.” Guðnadóttir explains, “I realized that since the only physical dancing I do these days, is with my son in the kitchen dancing to Justin Bieber, the closest thing to any other type of dance I experience nowadays is the constant stream of melodies that just go on and on and on in my head as soon as I start moving. Biking, walking, commuting, somewhat dancing – this is roughly what my head sounds like.”

According to Qasim Naqvi, “*Featureless* is inspired by some theories on black holes, in particular the transformation of the human form as it moves through a collapsed neutron star.”

The Bang on a Can All-Stars turn to the PCF archives to present Phil Kline’s *Exquisite Corpses*, commissioned in 1998. When his new work was premiered, Kline said, “‘Exquisite Corpses’ was a surrealist parlor game, where one person would draw a head, fold the paper and hand it to the next person, who would draw the torso, etc. The completed picture was the exquisite corpse – but I wasn’t really thinking about that when I originally conceived the piece. I used to have a real anti-technological attitude, but using a sequencer began to influence the way I work. It gave back as much as any other artistic process, without compromise or loss of intensity, and in this case it directly led to some of the structural elements in this piece. With the sequencer as note processor I was able to move things around, take them out, put them back in other places. I was connecting the knees to the neck, pulling out the head, so in the end I ended up playing ‘Exquisite Corpses’ after all.”

The All-Stars will also perform Julius Eastman’s *Stay On It* (arr. Ed RosenBerg III and Ken Thomson). David Lang, Pulitzer Prize winner and Bang on a Can co-founder says, “The definition of ‘ahead of his time,’ Julius Eastman was a pioneer of performance art, gay activism and civil rights advocacy. *Stay On It* is both a title and an instruction for how to make minimal music – find something simple and charming and beautiful to do, and stay on it.”

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."

In addition to the **People's Commissioning Fund**, current projects include its festivals **LOUD Weekend at MASS MoCA** and **LONG PLAY**; 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 widely 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 Series: "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 Series 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*), Ecstatic Music is curated by composer and New Amsterdam Records Co-Director Judd Greenstein.

www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org/mch/series/ecstatic-music-festival

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