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SWITCHBOARD MUSIC FESTIVAL 2011

*8 Hours of Non-Stop, Genre-Defying Music
From the Bay Area's Most Innovative Artists*



Causing a Tiger
photo by Kamron Hinatsu

Sunday, April 3, 2:00-10:00 PM
Brava Theater (*new venue!*)
2718 24th Street, San Francisco

“...a capacious home for all sorts of unpredictable musical goings-on.”
- *San Francisco Chronicle*

SAN FRANCISCO: The fourth annual Switchboard Music Festival is an 8-hour, non-stop music spectacle presenting composers and musicians who push the boundaries of their respective genres. No other Bay Area music festival or concert series offers such an eclectic, genre-crossing, convention-breaking, bastardizing group of experimentalists, innovators, and musical omnivores in a single event. Due to last years sold out attendance the festival will be moving to the Brava Theater, a larger venue known for its fantastic sound and remarkably renovated interior.

The Switchboard Music Festival will feature some of the Bay Area's most original performers, including **Causing a Tiger**, an all-star group featuring **Carla Kihlstedt (Tin Hat Trio)**, and up-and-coming indie band **Birds & Batteries**. Other performers include **Erik Jekabson and the Bay Area Composers Big Band**, **The Genie**, **Gojogo**, **Telepathy**, and **Wiener Kids**.

The festival will also present living composers whose work challenges traditional ideas of notated music, including **Dan Becker**, **William Brittelle**, **Ryan Brown**, and **Jonathan Russell**. In addition, sound artist **Loren Chasse** will be creating a work specifically for the unique environment of Brava Theater.

The Switchboard Music Festival was founded by local composers and performers Jeff Anderle, Ryan Brown, and Jonathan Russell with the goal of bringing together many of the unique musicians working in the Bay Area. Their goal is to highlight musicians and composers who float effortlessly between genres, challenging and re-defining the music scene in the Bay Area and beyond.

Unique songwriting is hard to come by these days, but **Birds & Batteries** pulls it off. Birds & Batteries delivers songwriter Mike Sempert's simple yet surprising works, bolstered by adventurous arrangements and production. Their brand new full-length, "Panorama," is satisfying fans and winning over new ones as the band continues to tour the US. Birds & Batteries are on a steady rise with consistently sold out shows in San Francisco, a new record, a Daytrotter session and more national touring ahead. "Panorama" is the third full-length from Birds & Batteries and their finest work to date (Spune/ Velvet Blue Music). The new album is a rare mix of organic and electronic, pop and experimental and an effortless play of surprising elements. (www.birdsandbatteries.com)

Causing A Tiger (featuring **Carla Kihlstedt**) is at its very core, awkward. Like the touretic guest, or the sibling who knows too much, all is revealed, nothing is sacred. The band never rehearses, but plays a rigorous and improvised set that sometimes sounds like a devotional meditation, other times like a travelogue written while dreaming, and still other times like it might have been ripped from the pages of the American Songbook. For each live show, they set parameters that allow them to test the boundaries of patience, expression and logic, often evoking a puzzling sense of familiarity. (www.carlakihlstedt.com/)

Dan Becker loves to compose music (current commissions include a work for Kronos), study music (he received his DMA from Yale), teach music (by way of the SF Conservatory of Music), organize music (as founder of the Common Sense Composers' Collective), and serve the cause of new music (he's done time on the Boards of such organizations as the American Music Center). (www.danbecker.org)

William Brittle has spent the majority of his artistic life attempting to bridge the gap between pop music and NYC's revitalized downtown classical scene. In 2006, Brittle received an emerging composer grant from the American Composers Forum with funds provided by the Jerome Foundation for the creation of Mohair Time Warp, a full-length art-music concept album featuring live musicians and lip-synched vocals. Brittle has since been featured on All Things Considered, in The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, Time Out NY, on WYNC's Soundcheck (CD pick of the month) and New Sounds. In addition to his composing and performing schedule, Brittle is co-director of New Amsterdam Records and a passionate promoter, presenter, and producer of new and adventurous music in New York City. (www.adoveonfire.com)

Ryan Brown's music has been performed by many excellent groups, performers, and presenters, including the Brooklyn Philharmonic, pianist Lisa Moore, California E.A.R. Unit, Paul Drescher Ensemble, Carlsbad Festival, Gaudeamus Festival (Amsterdam), and MATA Festival. Ryan has received an Emerging Composer Award from the Gerbode and Hewlett Foundations, and a Morton Gould Young Composer Award from ASCAP. Upcoming premieres and commissions include music for Redshift, TRANSIT, and TwoSense, a cello and piano duo with Lisa Moore and Bang on a Can cellist Ashley Bathgate. (www.ryanbrownmusic.com)

Loren Chasse began experimenting with sound in 1992 with the group idBattery. He continued as a solo artist (under his own name and the moniker Of) and as a member of The Blithe Sons, Thuja, Coelacanth, the Child Readers and Chresmologues. He has released 12 solo recordings, the most recent being The Footpath on the label Naturestrip. Loren has performed at festivals and museums in Chicago, Scotland, England, Italy, Spain, New Zealand and Australia as well as at the Berkeley Museum of Art and the De Young Museum of Art in San Francisco. (www.23five.org/lchasse/)

The Genie is an avant-garde guitarist, performer, and musical pioneer best known to audiences for his 'scratch guitar' shows, a unique performance involving live looping, slide guitar, beatboxing, unconventional syncopation, and various original techniques which he has crafted. His music ranges various genres and his broad range of musical interpretation has made fans of every generation and cultural background. In 2007 he was profiled in Guitar Player Magazine (June) and was featured on Current TV in a piece entitled "What is Scratch Guitar", which was voted number 1 and aired on national TV in the US and UK.

Gojogo is an unusual quartet that combines the Western sounds of classical and jazz with the rhythmic traditions of India. The acoustic instrumentation includes violin, bass, guitar, and dholki, a double-headed drum from Northern India. Some songs also feature electronic samples and loops. Gojogo performs original music composed collaboratively by the four performers, each drawing upon a different musical tradition and training. Compositions feature improvisation over structured forms, creating space for spontaneity and a medium to present each unique instrument. Gojogo challenges itself to create repertoire that incorporates the eccentricities of its various instruments and musical styles. The result is a sound that defies the borders of any specific genre. (www.gojogo.com)

Erik Jekabson is a freelance trumpet player, composer and educator who has recorded or performed with Illinois Jacquet, the Woody Herman Big Band, John Mayer, Galactic, Mark Turner, Brian Blade, and Nicholas Payton, among others. He has two solo albums: "Intersection", which was released in 2003 on the Fresh Sound/New Talent label, and "Crescent Boulevard", which was released in 2010 in on his own Jekab's Music label. (www.erikjekabson.com) **The Bay Area Composers Big Band**, made up of composers from different backgrounds and experiences, draws on the influences of jazz, funk, latin music, hip-hop, electronica, classical and avant-garde music to create a diverse array of styles.

Composer and clarinetist **Jonathan Russell** is active in a wide variety of music, from classical to experimental to klezmer to church music. His work stretches the boundaries of contemporary classical music, opening it up to the sounds and attitudes of the other musical traditions surrounding it. He has received commissions from ensembles including the San Francisco Symphony, Empyrean Ensemble, ADORNO Ensemble, Woodstock Chamber Orchestra, Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, and Imani Winds, and has collaborated with choreographers Janice Garrett and Charles Moulton. (www.jonrussellmusic.com)

Patrick Cress' **Telepathy** is an original jazz quartet that creates unique compositions and highly energized improvised music. Its unusual instrumentation (baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, acoustic bass, and drums) and openness to unconventional time signatures bring new ideas that push past the traditional sounds of jazz. Together since March of 2002 Telepathy has recorded four albums, toured both nationally and internationally, and carried the torch for the Bay Area's original jazz scene. (www.telepathicmusic.net)

Brain child of drummer/composer Jordan Glenn, **Wiener Kids** is inspired by small dogs, old bikes, muppets, cheap Halloween decorations, babies with glasses and other wiener kids. It draws as much from Jan Svankmajer and Hans Bellmer as Peewee Herman and Jim Hensen. It's music made by ex/current weaklings for everyone!

PUBLIC EVENT LISTINGS:

WHEN: Sunday, April 3, 2:00-10:00 p.m.

WHAT: Switchboard Music Festival

WHERE: Brava Theater (*new venue!*)
2718 24th Street
San Francisco, CA
(between York and Hampshire)
Food and drink available for purchase.



Birds & Batteries
photo by Su-Yin Mah

PROGRAM: Non-stop, 8-hour marathon concert with performances by **Birds & Batteries**, **Causing a Tiger** (featuring Carla Kihlstedt), **Loren Chasse**, **The Genie**, **Gojogo**, **Erik Jekabson** and the Bay Area Composers Big Band, **Telepathy**, and **Wiener Kids**; and music composed by **Dan Becker**, **William Britelle**, **Ryan Brown**, and **Jonathan Russell**.

TICKET INFO: \$15-40 sliding scale, come and go as you please. For tickets, full schedule, and audio/video clips, visit www.switchboardmusic.com.

PHOTOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.

San Francisco Chronicle

THE LARGEST DAILY CIRCULATION IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Music review: Switchboard Music Festival

Joshua Kosman, Chronicle Music Critic

Tuesday, March 31, 2009



If a new-music jamboree is a fine thing - and there's no doubt that it is - then why not spread the bounty across an entire afternoon and evening? That would seem to be the thinking behind the Switchboard Music Festival, which took up most of an exuberant Sunday at the Dance Mission Theater in the Mission District.

Curated by composer-performers Jeff Anderle, Ryan Brown and Jonathan Russell under the umbrella of New Music Bay Area, this eight-hour marathon provided a capacious home for all sorts of unpredictable musical goings-on. The offerings ranged from rock-tinged improv to traditionally scored concert pieces, and from traditional Chinese instruments to the klezmer-polka-tango mashup of the band Japonize Elephants.

Along the way, the lineup of performers included a few Bay Area new-music luminaries - among them the vocal-electronics diva Pamela Z and the composers and instrument inventors Paul Dresner and Joel Davel - as well as host of younger artists clearly intent on blurring the boundaries between styles and genres.

Naturally, no one was expected to sit politely in their seats throughout the festivities. The ethos for Switchboard Music, now in its second year, involves plenty of in-and-out privileges, so that audiences can sample what they want for as long as they want, coming and going as they please.

Attendance on Sunday peaked at around 100 late in the afternoon, dwindling to perhaps half that number as the festival reached the finish line. When Anderle, introducing the final set of the schedule, asked whether anyone had stuck it out for all eight hours, a few doughty souls raised their hands and were suitably applauded for their stamina.

The DNA for this project goes back to Opus 415, a similar marathon presented periodically during the 1990s by San Francisco composers Dan Becker and Belinda Reynolds, and before that to the 24-hour marathons in New York a decade earlier that launched the seminal contemporary-music festival Bang on a Can.

Issues of logistics are almost as central to the success of these undertakings - and every bit as tricky - as artistic considerations, and in that respect the curators of Switchboard Music were largely on their game.

Most impressive, perhaps, was the simple fact that careful planning and swift set changes allowed the festival to stick to its timetable. Few things gladden the heart of a coming-and-going

music listener like returning to the scene at a specific time and finding events moving along exactly as promised.

Conversely, the floor plan of the Dance Mission Theater - where patrons can only enter and exit by traipsing conspicuously between the stage and the front of the audience - tended to inhibit people's ability to move freely, and led to awkward pileups near the entrance. Nothing to be done about that, I suppose.

The musical wares on display during a day's worth of intermittent visiting fully lived up to the promise of the event. I was particularly struck by Brown's "Same Mistake Twice," a jumpy, vivid fugue-like entertainment for two electric guitars and electric bass, and by Ken Thomson's brief "Throw Back," for a chamber ensemble supplemented by several stick-wielding percussionists.

"Many Thousands of Airplanes," a catchy, surprising and often witty chamber piece by Damon Waitkus, got a vivacious performance under Russell's musical leadership; the piece builds surely to the final movement, a jazzy strut that suddenly gets stuck in a groove and has to be rescued and restarted.

Later, the Adorno Ensemble gave a gorgeous performance of Mason Bates' "Red River," as well as a forceful but sometimes unsteady account of David Lang's "Cheating, Lying, Stealing" (dedicated, according to cellist Michael Graham, to Bernard Madoff).

Pamela Z delivered a handful of her solo numbers, ranging from intricate abstractions to a cover version of The Troggs' "Wild Thing," and Japonize Elephants put the seal on a long day with some up-tempo dance tunes. A fine time was had by all.

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<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/03/31/DD3Q16PDML.DTL>

PIEDMONT POST

A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER SERVING THE CITIZENS OF PIEDMONT

When classical musicians let their hair down

Music review by Adam Broner

Blurring genres, San Francisco's second annual Switchboard Music Festival entertained the serious, the curious and the jaded for eight hours on Sunday, with a sundry cast of Bay Area musicians who have broken away from established territories in their search for personal sound.

Organized by composer Ryan Brown and bass clarinetists Jeff Anderle and Jonathan Russell, 11 separate programs were held at the 24th St. Dance Mission Theater, from Pamela Z's exquisite solo looping to the 12 members of Neptune's Rogue Apothecary.

Instruments varied from orchestral to jazz and rock band, with some newly invented contenders. Paul Dresher and Joel Davel examined the boundaries of percussion and string instruments when they created their 15 foot long four-stringed "quadrachord." Occasionally they plucked and bowed, but then they got serious and did what percussionists always do--they beat on it! Davel worked a "marimba lumina," directing electronic effects and loops with careful slides of his mallets.

Apothecary's *Blossom* and *Faustina* abused chunks of color and contrasted them. Graham Connah's liquid keyboard blended with Jess Ivry on cello, then cranked up for blue-grass fiddle, played by the lightning-fingered beauty, Alisa Rose. Bass clarinetist Beth Custer, baritone sax Tom Griesser and Ben Goldberg on clarinet got down and demanding with unison figures and tight harmonies.

Melody of China was surprisingly tame for a trio known for covering contemporary music on traditional Chinese instruments. But such gorgeous tones--plaintive erhu, fiercely hammered dulcimer, droplets and waves of harp (guzheng)--reminded us of the polished satisfaction of tradition. And its limitations.

Bass clarinet quartet Edmund Welles already breaks a musical no-no (four of the same instrument, and that, a usually solitary one), so fusing classical with heavy metal may have been a walk in the park. *Agrippa's 3 Books*, by composer and member Cornelius Boots, brought rich chords whose thick overtones allowed unlikely harmonies. Boots was joined by Aaron Novick, along with Jonathan Russell and Jeff Anderle, festival organizers and members of the duo, Squonk.

Like "biggest loser" drop-outs, this group has bottom to spare. After a thick bass line, others layered over to construct compelling rhythms and complex sound. Froggy plops and jazz-club slides alternated with assured fifths and Balkan blues, sounding surprisingly natural.

The audience slipped in and out for refreshments, as did I during Moe! Staiano's snare performance. But when I saw him rush out of the theater to the sound of a fire alarm, I thought he had accidentally set it off. Hardly true--he brought his own alarm with him, a dubious member of the percussion family. Looking at scattered debris on the floor, I confided to a fellow audience member that Staiano was known for destroying a piano as part of a composition. "Oh, yes," he enthused. "Did you see it? I helped."

Four members of the high-profile Adorno Ensemble performed Mason Bates' Red River along with taped electronica. The live instruments became part of an electronic landscape with long slick patches and high keyboard runs (Kate Campbell) descending into dark muttering. Violinist and new music champion Graeme Jennings, formerly with the famed Arditti String Quartet, cellist Michael Graham, and clarinetist Anderle wove in and out of the electronic evocation of a river's journey, at times airy, then lyrical, and finally pure funk. They wound down with long sonorous chords, to the slap and echo of wet electronic footsteps.

The ensemble was enlarged with local percussion favorite Loren Mach abetted by Ryan Brown and Erika Johnson on brake drums--not a typical drum, but borrowed from a car! David Lang, founder of New York's Bang on a Can, wrote the minimalist *Cheating, Lying, Stealing* to showcase percussion, and the genre they blurred was instrumental: the cello's long bowed notes grew out of brake drum pitches, while staccato clarinet and piano were pure rhythm.

For those of you who have yet to hear Pamela Z, her partly improvised pieces use electronic sampling and looping to construct surprising textures out of her wide vocal range and forest of techniques. Labial rolls looped for a bottom track, over which she laid soft cottony monotones. Her growls and grunts were so convincing that the operatic high notes were a delight. The set ended with *Birdvoice*, in which she slows and deconstructs a birdsong, then rebuilds it from her own voice, segueing to French Art Song on the voice of a bird.

Closing the evening was the high-energy Japonize Elephants, slewing merrily over convention with House Band/Gypsy/Jazz/Hillbilly sensibility (!). Mitch Marcus on tenor sax and Alisa Rose on violin added depth of feeling to guitarist Sylvain Carton's romps. And grounding the whole in a skewed dimension was accordionist Marie Abé and David Gantz, master of junk percussion.

The logo for San Francisco Classical Voice is displayed within a dark brown rectangular background. The words "SAN FRANCISCO" are written in a smaller, orange, serif font at the top, while "CLASSICAL VOICE" is written in a larger, white, serif font below it.

SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE

Switchboard Music Festival Returns

By Lisa Petrie

Anyone who enjoys their pears and Stilton or their ham-and-pineapple pizza appreciates the blending of complementary flavors. Why, then, not sample a few electronics along with your opera, or take in modern music played on traditional Chinese instruments? The second Switchboard Music Festival on March 29 promises to serve up exactly such an eclectic feast.

Building on the success of last year's inaugural festival, founders Ryan Brown, Jeff Anderle, and Jonathan Russell have programmed a "come-and-go-as-you-like," eight-hour marathon of what they term "genre-bending," innovative music.

The performers are musicians who play and compose outside the box, creating sounds and rhythms from world music, heavy metal, jazz, or klezmer on classical instruments. Some are classically trained virtuosos now making music on electric guitars, found objects, accordions, and even laptops.

According to cofounder Russell, a composer and bass clarinetist, little institutional support presently exists for this type of music. "This music typically happens in clubs and not in concert halls where the more academic form of 'new music' is given a place," says Russell. "We founded Switchboard in order to give a framework, a venue, and a recognition to highly creative music that isn't currently formalized." Anderle echoes that: "We also want to bring like-minded audiences together. They might enjoy other interesting groups that they would not be exposed to otherwise."

Part of Switchboard's mission is to highlight Bay Area talent, with a healthy mix of established musicians on the scene such as Paul Drescher, Pamela Z, and Adorno Ensemble, as well as emerging artists like the heavy-metal bass-clarinet quartet Edmund Welles and guitarist/composer Ryan Brown. Also on the bill are Zoyres, with an exciting new twist on Eastern European folk; dada percussionist Moe! Staiano; a "French circus meets Willie Nelson and Mingus" mishmash from Japonize Elephants; new sounds on Chinese instruments from Melody of China; Ted Brinkley and Neptune's Rogue Apothecary, the experimental jazz big-band; Classical Revolution; and music composed by Ken Thompson, Damon Waitkus, Max Stoffregen, and Jonathan Russell himself.

Think "Bang on a Can" in New York — an organization that has clearly contributed to a more hip and casual presentations of serious art music — and you have some idea of where Switchboard is going. In addition to the annual Switchboard Festival marathon, founders would

like to eventually present additional concerts, form an in-house ensemble, and even launch a record label. For now, this quirky show promises music that's anything but vanilla. This music will move you, surprise you, and satisfy a wide range of musical tastes.

Lisa Petrie earned a D.M.A. in flute performance from SUNY, Stony Brook. She has been a communications professional in the arts and education for 10 years, including work in Switzerland and Holland, as well as the Bay Area.

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SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE

San Francisco Classical Voice <http://sfcv.org/content/musical-marathon>

March 29, 2009

Musical Marathon

By Beeri Moalem

What are music stands and electric guitars doing on the same stage? Purple lights along with sheet music? T-shirts and blue jeans plus violins and violas? A better question might be: Why should this still come as a surprise? For the Switchboard Music Festival continues to combine various distinct musical genres, amassing them into a day of performances.

The common gripe against classical music is that it's stuffy, outdated, pretentious — with performers dressed as if for a funeral. Conversely, the gripe against a lot of rock and popular music is that it's rather simplistic, with musical decisions dictated more by marketability and commercialism than by in-depth, honest art.

Sunday's Switchboard Festival shattered these stereotypes. For example, Ryan Brown's *Same Mistake Twice*, for two electric guitars and electric bass, featured familiar rock-style riffs and grooves, yet ones arranged with the intricacies, nuance, and overall length of a classically composed piece of chamber music.

Jonathan Russell's String Quartet (played by Graeme Jennings and Jory Fankuchen on violin; Charith Premawardhana on viola, and Erin Wang on cello) uses that traditional ensemble for music influenced by the rhythms and harmonies of modern progressive rock. The piece had elements of minimalism, but not the mercilessly repetitive kind. Alongside the idiomatic minimalist gestures, things such as dramatic twists and turns, intricate phased rhythms, and a poignant cello solo to fade out at the end kept the piece engaging and unique.

Held at a hole-in-the-wall theater in the heart of San Francisco's Mission District, the festival employed many local musicians, including some neighbors both in venue and in ideology: the members of Classical Revolution. In addition to the string quartet, they provided musicians for Ken Thomson's *Throw Back*, a piece that alludes to Baroque conventions of moto perpetuo and concerto grosso but that sounds anything *but* Baroque, what with guitarist Brian Dowdy and violist Premawardhana rockin' the solos, supported by a small orchestra of strings and a six-member "stick" ensemble tapping out energetic rhythms on the floor.

What's enthusiastically named the Yes, Yes! Ensemble (Premawardhana on viola; Minna Choi on vocals, flute, and keyboards; and Michael Bello on tenor sax and percussion) played what was described as "a traditional railroad song" — what turned out to be a deeply beautiful and relaxing

arrangement featuring dreamy synths, plus jazzy improvisation.

Provocative New Instruments

An interesting highlight of the festival featured Paul Drescher and Joel Davel on newly invented instruments: an electronic synthesizer and sound processor controlled by mallets (named the “Marimba Lumina”) and a 14-foot metallic contraption deemed the “Quadrachord” (a cross between an electric guitar, a bowed double bass, and a percussion instrument). Plenty of otherworldly electronic sounds were generated, and thundering rhythms kept the piece throttling forward with excitement. At specific moments, a relentless beat machine took over for quite a long time, and after a certain point I wanted to hear more than indulgence in the gimmick of having new instruments.

A few offerings on the program, such as Damon Waitkus’ *Many Thousands of Airplanes* and Max Stroffregen’s *Outskirts of Bumtown*, provided something akin to what you’d hear at a classical new-music concert: works that are quite abstract, are notated on paper, and require a conductor. Still, the presence of saxophones, electric guitars, and a drum set gave the pieces that nonclassical atypical edge that characterizes everything at Switchboard.

Some of the most joyously boisterous sounds of the festival came from two wind ensembles: the Zoyres Eastern European Wild Ferment (Jonathan Russell, clarinet and bass clarinet; Mike Perlmutter, saxophones; Liam Stakawicz, trombone; Josh Sirotiak, tuba; and Eddi Pollard, drums) and a quartet of bass clarinets (Jeff Anderle, Cornelius Boots, Aaron Novik, and Russell). The latter group performed lengthy sets from memory, producing a heavy yet agile sound that only such an unlikely gathering of instruments is capable of.

It was difficult to unplug the Switchboard, as everything was sounding great and I didn’t want to miss anything, but it was also hard to stay for everything. My limit before I need an intermission is about an hour’s worth of music, especially in a dark, stuffy room on a glorious San Francisco day. But the great thing about an eight-hour concert is that you can make your intermission as long as you want and feel free to visit one of the Mission’s many excellent dining offerings, walk through the area’s colorful mural-decorated streets and parks, and still have time to return for a few more hours of exciting new music.

Beeri Moalem (www.beeri.org) is a violist, teacher, writer, and composer.