



**Jan Williams
75th Birthday Celebration**

Peter & Elizabeth C. Tower Auditorium
Burchfield Penney Art Center at SUNY Buffalo State

July 16, 2014

PROGRAM

Jan Williams, conductor

Reich: *Clapping Music* (1972)

Blackearth Percussion Group: Garry Kvistad and Allen Otte

Earle Brown: c. 1970 (from *Folio II*)

Jonathan Golove, Don Metz, Amy Williams, Michael Colquhoun, Ross Aftel,
Jon Nelson

Morton Feldman: *The King of Denmark* (1964)

Tom Kolor

John Cage: *Amores* - movement 1 (1943)

Allen Otte: *Interlude-for Jan* at 75 (2014) [dedicated to Jan Williams]

Cage: *Amores* - movement 4

Allen Otte

Lukas Foss: Percussion Quartet (1983) - movements 1 and 2

Maelstrom: Robert Accurso, Bradley Amidon, John Bacon, Gary Rutkowski

INTERMISSION

Elliott Carter: *March* (from *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani*) (1950, 1966)

Matthew Bassett

Morton Feldman: *A Very Short Trumpet Piece* (1984)

Jon Nelson

Elliott Carter: *Saeta*

Christopher Swist

John Cage: *Composed Improvisation* (1987)

Michael Lipsey and Tom Kolor

Elliott Carter: *Adagio* [dedicated to Jan Williams]

Bruce Penner

John Cage: *A Room/She is Asleep* (1943)

Amy Williams

Maelstrom: Robert Accurso, Bradley Amidon, John Bacon, Gary Rutkowski

Elliott Carter: *Canto* [dedicated to Jan Williams]

Bradley Amidon

Edgard Varèse: *Ionisation* (1931)

Michael Rosen (1), Tom Furminger (2), Kay Stonefelt (3), Bradley Fuster (4),
Christopher Swist (5), Bruce Penner (6), Matthew Bassett (7), Michael Lipsey
(8), Mark Hodges (9), John Bacon (10), Garry Kvistad (11), Tiffany Nicely (12),
Amy Williams (13), Allen Otte (13)

After graduating from Oberlin in the spring of 1971, I spent the following school year as a Creative Associate upon the invitation of Jan Williams and Lukas Foss. It was an amazing year of performing new and exciting works. Sometime in the spring of 1972, Jan showed me a pile of percussion quartets that were the result of a composition contest held by his Buffalo percussion group. The group disbanded before any of them were performed and Jan offered them to me when I told him my dream was to start a quartet. Like a fool, I turned down an offer to stay in Buffalo another year and planned to move to a farm near Blackearth, Wisconsin and rehearse in an unheated barn with my brother Rick, Mike Udow and Allen Otte. Luckily before that happened, Tom Siwe heard of the creation of the Blackearth Percussion Group and offered us a residency at the University of Illinois. We played several of Jan's quartets on our first concert at the University of Illinois in the fall of 1972. We went on to play those pieces as well as our signature piece by Frederic Rzewski, *les Moutons de Panurge*, possibly over 100 times. The Rzewski work was a result of having played that piece with the Creative Associates and Frederic. My point here is that the Blackearth Percussion Group probably would not have existed without Jan's encouragement and generosity. If the Blackearth Percussion Group hadn't existed, there probably would not be a Percussion Group - Cincinnati either. Perhaps even my current job of making Woodstock Chimes, as well as playing with NEXUS and Steve Reich and Musicians, would not have been in my future. I hope it doesn't go to Jan's head that he had such a profound impact on my life. Allen Otte and I will play Clapping Music and the applause will be directed towards Jan with great admiration and appreciation.

—Garry Kvistad

Allen Otte: 24.VI.14, interlude for the two prepared piano movements of *Amores*
(Cage, Feldman, Feldman/Williams, Wm C. Williams, Homer/Oswald, Rilke, Salter)

like thousands of water birds Flaring and settling
in thOse fields where the rain runs down
cushions the coloRs of matisse
obJects glistening like
ezra pound on a seAt next to the
different color of the dye aNd the light
must by necessity ask questions which Were previously
apricot, rouge, tan, rugs whIch, though worn, seemed to drink the sun
in times of war beauty stiLl exists between
a choir of birds lost in a bLossoming glen of jasmine
only to have done nothIng can make perfect
in combinAtion the erotic and the tranquil
to get away from the Model
meanwhile Spring approaching for several pages
to find a hiStorical
wEak spot
in Vacuo has the power of confusion
which is also its strEngth
as iN
monet's laTer paintings
whY patterns make a lady out of the
reFractiOn of his sound
has us look Into the sun
slips From our ears
blows their ghosTs to the ground
and the spring breatHes new leaf into the woods

—Jan Williams

At the forefront of music of the past 100+ years is the transformation of instrumental sound through the ascendancy of the role of percussion instruments and at the forefront of this transformation is Jan Williams. When Stravinsky composed *L'histoire du soldat*, Cage his *Constructions* or Carter his timpani pieces, they were not only imagining a new world of sound, a new configuration of the hierarchy of instruments, but also of a new kind of performer, one who understood that percussion uniquely bridged the supposed divide between “noise” and “music.” Because percussion instruments blur the line between definite and indefinite pitch, they also can evoke a new sense of the flow of time by creating an environment of sound in which older differentiations of foreground and background are diminished. To bring the myriad instruments of wood, skin, metal, glass, paper (!) into an integrated sound world however requires a musician of great sensitivity both to timbre and time. What Jan does when he plays is to make us aware that a “noise” is a “note” and a “note” is a “noise” and in so doing enlarging our definition of music, engaging us in the totality of sound. Jan has been an inspiration for countless composers. Lukas Foss, John Cage, Elliott Carter, Morton Feldman are but a very few who have written for Jan or found their ideal performer in him. Through his teaching he has shown hundreds of students what it takes and what it means to be devoted to music. Jan, we all say “thank you!” Music is a larger and richer world because of you.

—Nils Vigeland

Jan Williams was born July 17, 1939 in Utica, New York. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in music at Manhattan School of Music where he studied percussion with Paul Price and he was a member of the American Symphony Orchestra 1962-1964 under conductor Leopold Stokowski. Williams was selected as one of the first class of Creative Associates for the Center of the Creative and Performing Arts in 1964 at the University at Buffalo. He remained at the University at Buffalo where he created the University at Buffalo Percussion Ensemble in 1964, was appointed to the Music Faculty in 1967, served as Chair of the Music Department 1981-1984, and retired in 1996. He also served as artistic director of the Center of the Creative and Performing Arts 1974-1979 and as its resident conductor 1976-1980. He co-directed the North American New Music Festival with Yvar Mikhashoff 1983-1991.

Jan Williams has performed as solo percussionist with orchestras in Paris, Berlin, Israel, Detroit, New York, and Copenhagen. He has appeared as percussionist, conductor, and instructor throughout the United States and internationally. Composers who have written works for him include John Cage, Elliott Carter, Joel Chadabe, Luis De Pablo, Gustavo Matamoros, Frederic Rzewski, Iannis Xenakis, Morton Feldman, Orlando Garcia, Nils Vigeland, and Lukas Foss. His playing and conducting has been captured on at least three dozen commercial recordings and hundreds of archival recordings.



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