Room Tone Acoustic
Brant and the Legacy of “Spatial Music”
Friday, April 18, 8 PM at Greenwall

PLEASE SIT/STAND ANYWHERE

Nine Bells: I
Tom Johnson
Haran Steed, performer

Unanswered Question
Charles Ives
Kyle Gordon, Bruce Williamson, flutes; Heather Rodgers, Kelli Horton, clarinets;
Sean Gordon, trumpet; Seamus Carey, Rainjana Haynes, violins; Karl Brosch, viola;
Sarah Jack, cello; Chris Giannitti, double bass; Alex Diaz, Susan Kennedy, conductors

Other Worlds Revealed (Shing-Ways)
Meredith Monk
Explorer’s Junctures

Panda Chant II
Chris Beatley, Ze’eva Berman, Katie Colbert, Liam Dailey, Alex Diaz, Brendan Hickey, Maria Jacobson,
Arthur Jongebloed, Kate McCann, Emily Vaias, Sara Wilson, voices; Tom Bogdan, organizer

On the Nature of Things: A Spatial Tone Poem
Henry Brant
Michael Finckel, conductor; Paul Jenkins, flute; Heather Gardner, oboe; Heather Rodgers, clarinet;
Gerald Lanoue, bassoon; Tiku Majumber, French horn; Amy Reichardt, glockenspiel; Susan Abrams,
Janet Betlejeski, Noriko Korduda, François Secordel, Susie Reiss, Celia Murray violins; Karl Brosch,
Gail Smith, violas; Bill Peck, cello; Chris Giannitti, double bass

Aura
Anna Thorvaldsdottir

WiPE (Williams Percussion Ensemble):
Gabriella Kallas, Casey McLellan, Jay Sager, percussion

Notes in the Air (Kyle Gordon/Alison Cho)--Marcha Tanguera (Cho)--
From Different Places (Singer Joy)--Um Tom (Caetano Veloso)--
How Beautiful Could A Being Be (Veloso)

Bennington Experimental Marching Band:
Kyle Gordon, flute; Abby Mahler, clarinets; Young Eun Cho, trumpet; Singer Joy, alto sax; Bruce
Williamson, tenor sax; Jeremy Stewart, baritone sax; Sonja Einem, electric bass, accordion; Julian Parr,
bass drum; Susie Ibarra, snare drum

Nine Bells: V
Tom Johnson
Haran Steed, performer

Sonata Piano e Forte
Giovanni Gabrieli
Singer Morra, Philip Kamilar-Britt, Bruce Williamson, Jeremy Stewart, saxes
Thom Loubet, Roi Karlinsky, Joe Makuch, Sam Clement, electric guitar
The works tonight are inspired by the spatial work of Henry Brant, a composer who taught at Bennington for 23 years. Brant spent his life (and time) in Greenwall, experimenting with the spatial placement of performers—often dozens of players, or multiple orchestras, above and around the audience—to create unheard-of mixes of timbre and texture. To find out more about Brant’s work, check out the exhibit at roomtone.bennington.edu

The Unanswered Question (composed 1908; revised 1930-5)

The Unanswered Question juxtaposes three groups of players, seemingly oblivious to each other’s pace and volume. In his preface to the piece, Ives calls the quiet strings, placed offstage, the “silence of the druids”, whereas a solo trumpet repeatedly poses the “perennial question of existence.” A woodwind quartet of “fighting answerers” grows more dissonant and unresolved as the piece goes on. The title may derive from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s poem The Sphinx: “Thou art the unanswered question...Always it asketh, asketh/And each answer is a lie”. Henry Brant often cited The Unanswered Question as the watershed work that opened his ears up to the possibilities of “spatial music.”

Other Worlds Revealed (Shing-Ways)  
Explorer’s Junctures  
Panda Chant II  

Other Worlds Revealed and Explorers’ Junctures were composed as part of The Ringing Place, an uncompleted a capella work by Monk that eventually turned into the final act of Monk’s opera Atlas. These work explore how the spatial positioning of performers in lines and circles can bend our acoustic perception. Constructed mostly as short, fast canons, these works contain hockets and bell-ringing patterns that create an aural trompe l’oreille, which the eye can only resolve through watching the performers.

On The Nature of Things

One of Brant’s most frequently performed works, On The Nature of Things was also his personal favorite, and Brant reorchestrated the piece three times. The work is based on Lucretius philosophy in verse, “De Rerum Natura”, which Brant copies out in elegant cursive in the score: “For time changes the nature of the whole universe, and one state of things must pass into another, and nothing remains as it was.” The work mixes gently insistent clusters from the winds, with lyrical lines played by strings in unison. Tempo and cueing, as with much of Brant’s spatial work, are left open, with players noodling until aural or visual cues push them onwards. Brant fiddled with orchestration constantly. In this version, Michael Finckel who worked with Brant, recreates Brant’s doubling of the strings in the low piano and bass.
Nine Bells

Tom Johnson’s Nine Bells was performed in the early 1970s, at MoMA, just as music minimalism was taking root in NYC. Johnson’s work, often densely mathematical, explores patterns created as the performer walks throughout the space. In each of the 9 movements, the bell-player walks a different ambitus: cloverleaf, 6-pointed star, zig-zag. Melodies result through permutations and additive processes. The fifth movement explores metrical 5s (the feet providing a constant beat throughout), and five-bar phrases which constantly metamorphose.

Aura (2011)

Subtitled “three sides of the same being”, Aura was written for the NorthArc Percussion Group, and is played with the audience surrounding the percussionists. Anna Thorvaldsdottir (b. 1977) is an Icelandic composer who works with sustained sound materials and large sonic structures, based on what she calls an “imaginative listening to landscapes and nature”.

Bennington Experimental Marching Band.

BEMB was formed in 2014 under the baton of Bruce Williamson and Susie Ibarra. This is a drumline with no sports team. So where are they marching, and why do they play? BEMB tramples over the influences of Second Line, Carnivale in Rio, and Schonbeck’s marching instrumentariums: Onward!

Sonata Piano e Forte (1597)

Gabrieli’s Sonata Piano e Forte, for two antiphonal quartets, is the most frequently played work of the Venetian polychoral style of the late Renaissance. Originally, each quartet would be placed across the balconies at St. Mark’s Basilica in Venice, and the piece was written for brass (or brass-like instruments such as the cornetto). “Sonata” is a piece for instruments, but the “piano e forte” designation was more peculiar: This work is a study in dynamic contrasts, a sign of the emerging expressive style of the early Baroque. The piece concludes with a virtuosic, dense stretto, where each of the voices enter in canon a half beat apart. Antiphonal works by Gabrieli, were a large influence on Brant, who created his own arrangements of this Sonata.
Other Room Tone events:

Friday, April 18 | 4PM | Fireplace Room (Carriage Barn)
Composer Lisa Bielawa talks about her work and her Airfield Broadcasts.

"Field Day" Saturday, April 19 | 1-3 PM | Meet at Carriage Barn
Installations, performances, and soundwalks, including work from Michelle Nagai's Room Tone class, pieces by Randy Neal, Miles Driscoll, and Jeremy Stewart, and 3 classic sound art pieces after Neuhaus, Lucier and Young. Map online at roomtone.bennington.edu

Saturday, April 19 | 3PM | Fireplace Room (Carriage Barn)
Curator/Philosopher Christoph Cox talks about "Sonic Flux: A Prehistory of Sound Art"

Sunday, April 20 (Easter) | 3PM | The Lens
Sing-in: Easter Chants and Medieval spaces, led by faculty member Stephen Higa

Monday, April 21 | 8PM | Carriage Barn
Inaugural concert of the Carriage Barn's new 5.1 Surround Sound system. New electroacoustic music from Bennington and abroad.

Digital Sanctuaries
The installation of Digital Sanctuaries, by Susie Ibarra/Roberto J. Rodriguez, is complete! Download the app on your mobile device at digitalsanctuaries.com, and follow the map to listen to the piece.

Exhibit
"Henry Brant and Spatial Music", ongoing online.