



KEEP OFF

THE CORE-TET PROJECT

All music improvised by

Evelyn Glennie, Percussion • Jon Hemmersam, Guitar
Szilárd Mezei, Viola • Michael Jefry Stevens, Piano

OFF
EARTH
SWITCH
ON

MOVE
BEFORE
DOING
ANYTHING

The Core-tet Project

Improvisations by Evelyn Glennie, Jon Hemmersam, Szilárd Mezei and Michael Jefry Stevens

The history of Western classical music is filled with a rich legacy of great improvisers. The list is long and profound: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Chopin, Liszt, Debussy, Handel and many more.

Before the ubiquitous 'Jazz' music shorthand there existed the 'figured bass' shorthand, which allowed organists and accompanists to perform complex harmonic structures using a numerical language to express specific chords and inversions.

Master percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie adds to this improvising tradition with her new and bold international quartet ensemble. The group brings together musical traditions from four varied cultures (Scotland, Serbia, the United States and Denmark) but with a common goal: to create spontaneous music of great beauty and power which utilises the basic formal elements of musical composition – melody, harmony, rhythm and form.

Each improvised concert is a new and spontaneous work of art, much like the organ duels of the Baroque period and the great cadenzas of the Romantic composers and performers.

The members of The Core-tet Project have a long history between them. Guitarist Jon Hemmersam and pianist Michael Jefry Stevens have been performing and recording together for 25 years. Stevens met violist and composer Szilárd Mezei in 2007 when they both performed at a festival in Kanjiža, Serbia. Jon Hemmersam and Evelyn Glennie recorded their duo CD *Sound Spirits* in 2012. Mezei, Hemmersam and Stevens recorded their improvised trio CD *Upcast* in 2009. Mezei and Hemmersam have recorded several CDs together over the past seven years. Upon hearing *Upcast*, Glennie became determined to join the trio in an improvised quartet recording. This recording took place in November 2016 (eight years after the initial idea). The meeting of these four distinct musical voices was more powerful and profound than anyone expected. The result of that recording is The Core-tet Project.

Michael Jefry Stevens

1 Steel-Ribbed Dance

We come together as the Core-tet for the first time, depicting tangled skeletons striving to break free within a sea of frenetic rhythms and discord, reaching out for a strand of harmonic unity. Do we?

2 The Calling

The repetitive calling from Michael on piano resounds majestically yet pleadingly. Filigree gestures interject on my Array mbira which is a huge kalimba type instrument. This not so common sound produces a type of resonance which is almost an extension to the piano. Jon and Szilárd reach out through their myriad of sound colours that never cease to amaze me. Every sound-gesture they make is dazzlingly clear.

3 Grotesque Fantasy

Mad, twisted, frenetic, schizophrenic – we indulge in the mid and high frequency range, pushing with such frenzy that there seems little relief until the last few seconds making us feel this warped music box has finally wound down.

4 Walk of Intensity

There is intensity and purpose in our improvisation, also impatience. We're striving for something, relentlessly looking in all directions, turning everything over to see what may be revealed. We each wait our turn to add to the turmoil until eventually we walk the path of intensity.

5 Iron Stars

Szilárd is a master of sound colour on his viola. His extraordinary skill complements the glistening bell-like directness of Michael's tone and together they create the vision of *Iron Stars*.

6 Flutter Gaze

Our 'sound lashes' are fluttering like mad with insect-like frenzies on a myriad of small drums on top of a timpani head alongside the prongs of my waterphone. Michael and Jon create such longing which halts the nervous energy but together they direct our gaze into the sound horizon. Szilárd reverses that gaze inwards with his dark *glissando*-like tones; now we're face to face with our internal landscape.

7 Silver Shore

We all sat there ready to play. Michael began followed by Szilárd and then... the beautiful line and emotion that so effortlessly flowed from their imagination signalled for Jon and myself to simply sit there and be completely immersed in the most captivating moment that left the whole studio silent for several minutes after.

8 The Wake

With the skill of Michael, Jon and Szilárd it's hard to know which instrument is actually being played as they are so adept at being sound colourists; they treat their respective instruments as an orchestra within itself. The percussive repetitive stabs are almost torture-like, a sound-drug that transcends us into a disillusioned wake.

9 Unseen Fires

The expansive pitch intervals from Szilárd give the feeling of flames rising and falling, sometimes ghost-like. Jon and I almost give a slow-motion feel to these flames with the deliberate crackle from Jon's guitar and the resonance of my vibraphone.

10 Crystal Splash

The four of us are literally like children with big fat crayons and paint galore splashing sound colours all over the walls, not knowing what the end result will be! But a hint of discipline is ignited as Jon pulls us together; does he succeed in us still wanting to break from the rules?

11 Breath of Validation

There's an assured sense of acceptance in what we play on this track. Every phrase inhales and exhales with validation.

12 Black Box Thinking

As soon as Szilárd picks up his viola he is a magician! He definitely thinks outside of the box which of course impacted greatly on what and how I played. Together we built sound bridges to become one big instrument. I wonder whether Szilárd would allow me to strike his viola next time?

13 Scissor Shower

Knowing the tremendous speed that Szilárd can pluck on his viola allowed me to explore the high short metallic sounds of my percussion so that everything would merge together. Jon also plays at lightning speed which creates the feel of literally being showered by sharp, jagged scissors!

14 Rusty Locks

There is an unusual creaky, rusty feel to this track. The marimbula, bongo cajon and a small metal log-type drum gives this 'unoiled' feel. It merges into a kind of peg-leg quasi-Latin American rhythm which strangely is rather infectious. It was definitely time for a cup of tea after this.

Evelyn Glennie



Photos: Jake Jackson

Evelyn Glennie



Photo: Philipp Rathmer

Evelyn Glennie is the first person in history to successfully create and sustain a full-time career as a solo percussionist, performing worldwide with the greatest conductors, orchestras, and artists. She fondly recalls having played the first percussion concerto in the history of the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall in 1992, which paved the way for orchestras around the world to feature percussion concertos. She had the honour of a leading role in the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games. Glennie regularly provides masterclasses and consultations designed to guide the next generation. With over 90 international awards to date, including the Polar Music Prize and the Companion of Honour, Glennie is also a leading commissioner of new works for solo percussion, with more than 200 pieces to her name from many of the world's most eminent composers. The film *Touch the Sound* and her enlightening TED speech remain key testimonies to her approach to sound-creation. To this day, Glennie continues to invest in realising her vision – to Teach the World to Listen – while looking to open a centre that embodies her mission: 'to improve communication and social cohesion by encouraging everyone to discover new ways of listening. We want to inspire, to create, to engage and to empower.'

www.evelyn.co.uk

Jon Hemmersam



Photo: Hung Tien Vu

Jon Hemmersam is a world-renowned guitarist, musician, composer and improviser. Born and based in Denmark. His credits include albums with some of the greatest musicians in modern jazz: saxophonist David Liebman (Miles Davis, Elvin Jones, Wayne Shorter, John McLaughlin), drummer Bob Moses (Pat Metheny, Jaco Pastorius, Herbie Hancock, Charles Mingus), and guitarist Dom Minasi, among many others. David Liebman has compared the talent of Jon Hemmersam with that of Miles Davis, stating that 'Jon is a free music pro, meaning he knows what he wants from the musicians in the textural arena, setting the stage in such a way that the musicians are pulled in a unified direction – much like Miles could.' Hemmersam has recorded three albums with David Liebman, *Remembering the Future* (2008), *Duende* (2010) and *Singing Red* (2013). In 2007 Jon Hemmersam received a pre-draft GRAMMY® nomination for the *Jon Hemmersam/Dom Minasi Quartet* album. This album was chosen as one of the best CDs of 2008 in the American magazine *Down Beat*, in addition to receiving a 4-star review. Hemmersam has also released two books of his compositions with the Danish music publishing company GUF: *12 Compositions* for small ensembles, and *Danza e Spiritu* for larger ensembles. www.jonhemmersam.dk

Szilárd Mezei



Photo: Tommaso Tuzj

A composer, violist and improviser, Szilárd Mezei was born in 1974 in Senta, Serbia (then Yugoslavia) as a member of the Hungarian minority in the multi-ethnic region of Vojvodina. He completed his violin studies in Senta and Subotica and studied composition for four years at the University of Arts (Music Academy) in Belgrade under professor Zoran Erić. His orchestra plays contemporary improvised music, mostly performing his own compositions. As a composer, Mezei is interested in exploring the relationship between improvisation and composition (similarly to Witold Lutosławski's aleatoric and Anthony Braxton's creative music methods), incorporating elements of jazz and authentic folk music. As a young musician he followed the paths of Béla Bartók and György Szabados. Mezei is also actively involved in composing scenic music (with Josef Nadj, among others).

More than 30 CDs and LPs of his music have been released on international labels such as Leo Records, Not Two, Creative Sources, Red Toucan, Ayler Records and Slam Productions. He has played with musicians/improvisers such as Matthias Schubert, Tamás Geröly, Róbert Benkő, György Szabados, Tim Hodgkinson, Albert Márkos, Peter Ole Jörgensen, Jens Balder, Joe Fonda, Michael Jefry Stevens, Joelle Leandre, Hamid Drake, Herb Robertson, Frank Gratkowski and Charles Gayle. Mezei has written almost 150 compositions for various ensembles. He is also active in theatre music and has twice won the prestigious Sterija Prize, and many more. His writings on music were published in many periodicals in the former Yugoslavia and in Hungary.

www.szilardmezei.net

Michael Jefry Stevens



Photo: Scott Friedlander

Pianist, composer and Steinway Artist, Michael Jefry Stevens performs extensively throughout Europe, Latin America and North America. He was recently voted Best Composer of 2016 by readers of the Mountain Xpress in Asheville, NC, and was the recipient of a 2017 Regional Project Grant through the North Carolina Arts Council. He has composed over 340 works for both large and small ensembles. He has been an active bandleader for over 30 years, and his current working musical ensembles include the Conference Call Quartet, the Fonda/Stevens Group, the Hungarian Eastern Boundary Quartet, the Generations Quartet featuring saxophonist Oliver Lake, and most recently The Core-tet Project. Stevens has released over 90 CDs and has performed and/or recorded extensively with many of the top names in Jazz, including Dave Liebman, Oliver Lake, Dave Douglas, Leo Smith, Matt Wilson, Han Bennink, Mark Feldman, Pheeroan akLaff, Gerry Hemingway, Charles Moffett Sr, Billy Martin, and many others. He was the Margaret Lee Crofts Fellow for 2000–01 at the MacDowell Colony, and was a Centrum Arts composer fellow (2004). Stevens was artist in residence at EMU Conservatory in La Plata, Argentina between 2005–10, and has taught at many educational institutions in Europe, Latin America and North America.

michaeljefrystevens.com

This premiere recording of master percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie's new international ensemble offers a programme of fourteen improvised pieces that push the boundaries of spontaneous music-making. The group brings together musical traditions from four varied cultures (Scotland, Serbia, the United States and Denmark) but with a common goal: to create spontaneous music of great beauty and power which utilises the basic formal elements of musical composition – melody, harmony, rhythm and form.

THE CORE-TET PROJECT

1	Steel-Ribbed Dance	7:40	8	The Wake	4:00
2	The Calling	8:46	9	Unseen Fires	5:43
3	Grotesque Fantasy	2:58	10	Crystal Splash	3:19
4	Walk of Intensity	8:16	11	Breath of Validation	5:11
5	Iron Stars	1:17	12	Black Box Thinking	5:18
6	Flutter Gaze	5:46	13	Scissor Shower	4:06
7	Silver Shore	4:08	14	Rusty Locks	4:58



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This recording was kindly supported by KODA, Denmark
Recorded: 28 and 29 November 2016 at Real World Studios, Box, Wiltshire, UK
Producers: Evelyn Glennie, Jon Hemmersam, Szilárd Mezei and Michael Jefry Stevens
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