



HOPKINS CENTER  
FOR THE ARTS

presents

Music Department Residency

**PHILL NIBLOCK**

***THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE WORKING***

with

Neil Leonard *saxophone*

Berklee Interdisciplinary Arts Institute guitar quintet

featuring

James Forrest, Pamela Hersch Gonzalez,

Jason Hwa Jia Lim, Jonas Margraf, Jake Moskow

**Post-Performance Discussion**

You are invited to remain in the chapel immediately following the performance for an informal discussion with the artists.

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Funded in part by the Kenneth 1952 & Elle Roman Fund in Support of the Hopkins Center Visiting Performing Artists Program and the Nathan W. Pearson 1932 and Sons Fund.

**Thursday, February 27, 2014 | 7 pm**

Rollins Chapel | Dartmouth College

# PROGRAM

*This program is presented without an intermission.*

Films: China86 and China87  
from the series *The Movement of People Working*

Phill Niblock

Sax Mix (2005)  
Neil Leonard *saxophone*

Phill Niblock, recorded samples by Ulrich Krieger

Baobab (2011)

Phill Niblock, recorded by the Zinc and Copper Works (2014)

Vlada BC (2013)

Phill Niblock, recorded samples by Elisabeth Smalt

Guitar too, for four (1995)

Phill Niblock

Berklee Interdisciplinary Arts Institute guitar quintet

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Notes on the Music

Phill Niblock's music is the emancipation of the drone, the splitting into atomic parts of dozens of flailing, beating frequencies singing out loudly in close acoustical proximity to each other. His works are broad oceans of sound, where very little really "happens" but where there is a great deal to be heard, felt and pondered. He has remained steadfastly with the consequences of a musical epiphany that he experienced in the mid-1960s: riding his motorbike up a mountain pass he was fascinated by the wild interaction of his engine sound against that of the truck up ahead, their two frequencies nearly "in tune" but not quite. He has produced an enormous body of work lasting, by my calculations, well over twenty-four hours in total. Almost all that work involves building a multitrack schema (initially with tape, later by computer) from acoustical sound sources recorded over the years by several generations of musicians, playing every instrument under the sun from flute, bass clarinet, saxophone, trombone, and

didgeridoo, to electric guitar, bowed piano, cello, organ, hurdy-gurdy and much more. Recordings of single held tones were layered into textures rich in micro-nuance, building into imposing, complex soundscapes. These works are complete as "tape pieces," but they can also, as Niblock prefers, be presented in concert in combination with a live player (or players), who function not as soloists but simply as other voices in the texture.

One thing that Niblock's orchestral scores don't actually tell you, but which you'd notice in any Phill Niblock concert: Niblock's music is most authentically presented together with his films. Most often Niblock tends to show material from a series of films called *The Movement of People Working*, which he filmed between 1973 and 1991 in rural environments in countries and regions that include Brazil, China (footage from which is included in the present concert), Japan, Portugal, Lesotho, Puerto Rico, Hong Kong, the Arctic, Mexico, Hungary, Peru, the Adirondacks, and

# PROGRAM NOTES CONTINUED

other places. He recommenced the series in 2009, in Japan. The films look at everyday work—frequently agrarian or marine labor. They are stunningly beautiful, and remarkable for their realistic quality and absence of artifice, as well as for their use of long takes in high resolution, their apparently endless collection of compelling images in vivid colors. The scenes of manual labor are treated abstractly, without ramming explicit anthropological or sociological meanings down our throats. As in the music, a surface slowness is countered by an active, varied texture of rhythm and form of body motion within the frame: this is what Niblock himself considers the ultimate subject matter of his films. The music is not synchronized with the films in any way, they both simply pursue their own independent course. They also don't need to end "neatly"; in concert Niblock tends to switch the films off when he thinks we've had enough, generally after the music has already stopped.

*Bob Gilmore*

## **Niblock's Ritual: Notes on the Films**

When I first encountered the work of Phill Niblock, I was twenty-one years old and hadn't started making films yet. Watching *The Movement of People Working* (DVD Extreme) for the first time was a revelation. For the first time in my life I encountered music that was also visual: Phill Niblock's image and sound were inseparable, essentially one matter, and that's still true today.

Niblock was the first true audiovisual artist who, by using his skills as a filmmaker and musician, merged both to create something higher. He broke all the structures that I as a filmmaker was taught to hold dear: narration, editing, melody, rhythm and synchronicity. His was the first truly open audio-visual work, the first truly spatial sonic experience, the first real audio-visual travel I had encountered. Intermedia, cross-media, whatever you want to call it, Phill

Niblock's work requires concentration, attention, patience, and finally, the ability to let yourself go. His work is a continuous progression, an unpredictable, ever-changing experience that serves as a guide for internal liberation.

Phill's images for me are unconditionally bound to the music, they are sewn together naturally and asynchronously. Single 16mm, unedited long shots, carefully framed to compress single movements, shot in rural and urban peripheries around the world, in Japan, Brazil, China and elsewhere, capturing people in their working environments, men and women using their hands and bodies in an eternal working choreography that seems tuned to the microtonal universe of Niblock's music. All these images are timeless, they could have been shot today, in the 1960s or even earlier in the century. They are archetypes, metaphors of humans, they speak to all of us in a profound way, they convert us, transport us. All these images have perfect timing, perfect framing, captured not as a document but more as a choreographic gesture, as visual music. The images are raw, the colors are saturated and the sound seems to happen in your head, while Niblock's music enters your senses and the droning hypnosis begins, and you start drowning.

*The Movement of People Working* has had a great impact on our understanding of the audio-visual by expanding its definition. Niblock's works encourage us to reconsider our relationship to the world and to examine our inner selves. Phill Niblock's visual strategies have influenced new generations of filmmakers, like me, who have understood and taken his works as a manifesto, for their striking simplicity and purity, for their radical openness and epic quality. The magic and beauty of these images lie in their abstraction and focus, their ability to suspend time and transport you to a different physical state and temporal dimension.

# PROGRAM NOTES CONTINUED

The only quality I respect in an artist is the ability to transport you in time. Art, for me, is a matter of physical and mental time travel, and this is exactly what Phill Niblock's work does. His work is not ethnographic, it is not documentary, it is not

visual background. Rather, it is a compositional tool whose aim is to transport you, to change you. Phill Niblock's work is a ritual.

Carlos Casas

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Phill Niblock** is an intermedia artist using music, film, photography, video and computers. He makes thick, loud drones of music, filled with microtones of instrumental timbres which generate many other tones in the performance space. Simultaneously, he presents films/videos that look at the movement of people working, or computer-driven black-and-white abstract images floating through time. He was born in Indiana in 1933. Since the mid-60's he has been making music and intermedia performances that have been shown at numerous venues around the world including the Museum of Modern Art; the Wadsworth Atheneum; the Kitchen; the Paris Autumn Festival; Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels; Institute of Contemporary Art, London; Akademie der Künste, Berlin; ZKM; Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard; and World Music Institute at Merkin Hall NYC. Since 1985, he has been the director of the Experimental Intermedia Foundation in New York where he has been an artist/member since 1968. He is the producer of Music and Intermedia presentations at El since 1973 (about 1000 performances) and the curator of El's XI Records label. In 1993 he was part of the formation of an Experimental Intermedia organization in Ghent, Belgium—El v.z.w. Ghent—which supports an artist-in-residence house and installations there. Phill Niblock's music is available on the XI, Moikai, Mode and Touch labels. A previous DVD of films and music is available on the Extreme label. He has been awarded the 2014 John Cage award. This is Niblock's first engagement at the Hopkins Center.

**Neil Leonard saxophone** is a composer, saxophonist and interdisciplinary artist. His compositions and performances have been featured by Carnegie Hall, Havana Jazz Festival, International Computer Music Convention, Tel Aviv Biennial for New Music, Moscow Autumn, and Museo Reina Sofia. Leonard's *Dreaming of an Island*, (for orchestra, electronics and live video) was premiered by the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, and he has collaborated with artists Marshall Allen, Juan Blanco, Joanne Brackeen, Don Byron, Uri Caine, Robin Eubanks, Bill Frisell, Vijay Iyer, Phill Niblock, Rudresh Mahanthappa, Evan Ziporyn, and many others. Leonard's collaborations with Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons have included film/video, multi-media installation, and public intervention, and their work has been featured by the Museum of Modern Art, 49th/55th Venice Biennial, Havana Biennale, Guangzhou Triennial, and the Dak'art Biennale of Contemporary African Art. Leonard contributed sound to Tony Oursler's performance *Relatives* that was presented at the Whitney Biennial. Leonard's recent sound/video installation *True Bread* explores aspects of exile, censorship, global capitalism, and transformation of urban sound. Holland Cotter described the piece in the *The New York Times* as "a haunting, rhythmic, chant like score, secular spiritual music for a New World." Leonard is the Artistic Director of Berklee College of Music's Interdisciplinary Arts Institute. He is currently on the Fulbright Specialist Roster and is a Research Affiliate at MIT's program in Art, Culture and Technology.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS CONTINUED

**James Forrest *guitar*** is an American Dream-Wave recording artist, producer and composer. Forrest's sound is most associated with ambient electronica, chillwave, experimental dub and r&b. Previously, he was a co-founding member of world electronic group Machine 475. Forrest's work has been featured on Gizmodo, thedankles.com, Hazyacres.com, radioscotvoid.com/tapes, Secret Boston, and at the Peabody Essex Museum, Lab De Loops (Brooklyn), Lynn Museum and the Mass Art Film Society.

**Pamela Hersch Gonzalez *guitar*** was born in Mexico City in 1984. In 2003, she enrolled in Fermatta Academy of Music in Mexico City, where she majored in Contemporary Music Production. During her studies she joined a female rock band called Masfaldas, recorded an album, and toured around Mexico for five years. After finishing school, Hersch started working in a post-production company where she met movie producers and directors, and had the opportunity to score movies and short films. Hersch's interest in photography and video led to work in cinematography, video production and music for picture, resulting in *Cautivas*, her first documentary (2010). She is currently a student at Berklee College of Music focusing on film scoring and electronic production and design.

**Jason H. J. Lim *guitar*** is a composer/producer and multi-instrumentalist from Falkirk, Scotland. A graduate in music performance of Perth College UHI, Scotland, his guitar playing earned him a scholarship to Berklee College of Music, where he majored in electronic production and design with a minor in acoustics and electronics. Alongside

performing and producing, Lim developed skills in electrical design and computer programming, and has developed custom software and hardware for a variety of projects and collaborations ranging from quadraphonic interdisciplinary performance works to development of a custom multi-channel sound system in conjunction with Neil Leonard and Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons' installation for the 2013 Venice Biennale. Most recently Jason co-founded the electronic instrument company Qu-Bit Electronix with fellow Berklee alum Andrew Ikenberry. In early 2014 the duo unveiled their debut product: *Nebulæ*, an audio sample-based granular oscillator in the Eurorack modular synthesizer format. [www.jhylim.com](http://www.jhylim.com), [www.qubitelectronix.com](http://www.qubitelectronix.com)

**Jonas Margraf *guitar*** makes music, design sounds and creates live visuals. Margraf was born in 1991 in Marburg, Germany and studied guitar at Jazzschule Basel, Switzerland. In 2010 he moved to the United States to attend Berklee College of Music, where he is pursuing a degree in electronic production and design. His recent projects include an algorithmic text animation for *Swerve*, a dance piece by Richard Colton, and the development of a custom application for real-time visual performance.

**Jake Moskow *guitar*** is a producer, DJ and multi-instrumentalist. He started working in the music industry while attending high school. Moskow has performed as a DJ in The Shrine Nightclub at MGM Foxwoods and has produced music for Giant Bicycles and Giro Helmet commercials. He is presently interning with Qu-Bit Electronix and the Berklee Interdisciplinary Arts Institute.

## CONNECTING ARTISTS TO THE COMMUNITY

*While at Dartmouth, Phill Niblock visited Dartmouth Music classes, performed at the Collis Student Center, and participates in a post-performance discussion. For more information on Hop Outreach & Arts Education, call 603.646.2010 or visit [hop.dartmouth.edu/online/outreach](http://hop.dartmouth.edu/online/outreach).*



## MUSIC DEPARTMENT RESIDENCY **ARDITTI QUARTET**

WED | MAR 26 | 7 PM | SPAULDING AUDITORIUM

Few ensembles demonstrate as fierce a devotion to the music of today as the Arditti Quartet, and even fewer offer such illuminating and commanding interpretations. Through close collaboration with the composers whose works it plays, the quartet is uniquely able to communicate their visions. Its Hop program features three works the quartet has premiered—by Harrison Birtwistle, Jonathan Harvey and Dartmouth music professor Kui Dong—along with Igor Stravinsky's *3 Pieces* (1914) and Elliott Carter's *Elegy* (1946).



## **JAKOP AHLBOM COMPANY** **LEBENSRAUM (HABITAT)**

FRI & SAT | APR 4 & 5 | 8 PM | THE MOORE THEATER

Brilliant physical comedy and scenic design turn this simple tale into stylish and hilarious slapstick. Two obsessively neat and habit-driven men peacefully cohabit a Rube Goldbergian 1920s-era room until they bring in a “mechanical” maid to clean up. With a bow to silent film great Buster Keaton as well as the subversive feminine mayhem of Lucille Ball, this wordless hit of European theater wows with gasp-worthy stunts and unexpected developments, punctuated by live old-timey music by Dutch indie rock duo Alamo Race Track.

*Recommended for ages 12 and up.*

For tickets or more info call the Box Office at 603.646.2422 or visit [hop.dartmouth.edu](http://hop.dartmouth.edu). Sign up for weekly HopMail bulletins online or become a fan of “Hopkins Center, Dartmouth” on Facebook

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