

**The Nature of Music: The Canary Project**  
**featuring Alvin Curran**  
**Presented by Other Minds and the David Brower Center**



**Sunday, November 20, 2016 7:00pm**  
**Goldman Theater, David Brower Center, Berkeley, CA**

## In Conversation with Alvin Curran and Charles Amirkhanian

Alvin's in the house! It's good to welcome back an old friend who has been a leader in so many areas of experimental music since the Sixties. And in keeping with our theme THE NATURE OF MUSIC, we've asked the composer to screen some of his private videos of the major environmental performance works he's created.

As a pioneer in this genre, also practiced by John Cage, R. Murray Schafer, Charlie Morrow, Pauline Oliveros and later John Luther Adams, among many others, Curran's work is distinguished by a heightened sensitivity to overall formal construction but without reference to mathematics or music theory. You might say his reference, rather, is burlesque. Curran is an entertainer, open to any and all content and adept at its employment. His genius is in the evolution of his pieces in time, holding back surprises til just the right moment, or building shattering climaxes that can rival Fluxus happenings. His tool chest runs the gamut from minimalism to music hall. And his aesthetic displays a rollicking sense of humor one minute, a profound-- sorrow the next. Anything is possible, and anything *will* happen in a Curran event. Fasten your seatbelt seatbelt and enjoy the ride.

-Charles Amirkhanian

Democratic, irreverent and traditionally experimental, Alvin Curran (b. December 13, 1938, Providence, Rhode Island) travels in a computerized covered wagon between the Golden Gate and the Tiber River, and makes music for every occasion with any sounding phenomena -- a volatile mix of lyricism and chaos, structure and indeterminacy, fog horns, fiddles and fiddle heads. He is dedicated to the restoration of dignity to the profession of making non-commercial music as part of a personal search for future social, political and spiritual forms.

Curran's music-making embraces all the contradictions (composed/improvised, tonal/atonal, maximal/minimal...) in a serene dialectical encounter. His more than 200 works feature taped/sampled natural sounds, piano, synthesizers, computers, violin, percussion, shofar, ship horns, accordion and chorus. Whether in the intimate form of his well-known solo performances, or pure chamber music, experimental radio works or large-scale site-specific sound environments and installations, all forge a very personal language from all the languages through dedicated research and recombinant invention.

With a fortuitous bang, he begins his musical journey as co-founder of the radical music collective Musica Elettronica Viva, as a solo performer, and as a composer for Rome's avant-garde theater scene. In the 70's, he creates a poetic series of solo works for synthesizer, voice, taped sounds and found objects. Seeking to develop new musical spaces, and now considered one of the leading figures in making music outside of the concert halls - he develops a series of concerts for lakes, ports, parks, buildings, quarries and caves - his natural laboratories. In the 1980's, he extends the ideas of musical geography by creating simultaneous radio concerts for three, then six large ensembles performing together from many European Capitals. By connecting digital samplers to MIDI Grands (Disklavier) and computers, since 1987, he produces an enriched body of solo performance works - an ideal synthesis between the concert hall and all sounding phenomena in the world. He creates a visually striking series of sound installations, some of them in collaboration with visual artists including Paul Klerr, Melissa Gould, Kristin Jones, Pietro Fortuna, Umberto Bignardi, Uli Sigg. Throughout these years he continues to write numerous pieces for radio and for acoustic instruments.

# The Nature of Music

From the music of Haydn, Dvořák and Messiaen, classical composers have long been using the sounds of the natural world as source material. With the advent of reel-to-reel tape recorders that inspired composers of the *musique concrete* movement, we could hear sounds slowed down or speeded up to bring new ears to common everyday sources. Along the way John Cage proposed in 1952, with *4'33"*, a silent piece for piano, that a listener could create their own concert by simply listening to ambient sounds without altering them, recognizing that they too have form and content. With the advent of personal recording equipment like the cassette recorder, environmental sounds have been recorded, sampled and integrated into composed and improvised music. In 1970, Charles Amirkhanian and Richard Friedman launched the World Ear Project at KPFA in Berkeley. They invited people from around the world to record continuous sound for 15 minutes or longer without alteration. The result was a long-running program in which listeners driving over the Bay Bridge would be mystified by long segments of sounds of a street market in India or frogs and crickets at night in Cayucos, California. The David Brower Center and Other Minds will present complementary concerts for each visual art show in the Hazel Wolf Gallery.

**Other Minds**, is dedicated to the encouragement and propagation of contemporary music in all its forms through concerts, workshops and conferences that bring together artists and audiences of diverse traditions, generations and cultural backgrounds. By fostering cross-cultural exchange and creative dialogue, and by encouraging exploration of areas in new music seldom touched upon by mainstream music institutions, Other Minds is committed to expanding and reshaping the definition of what constitutes "serious music."

**The David Brower Center** provides a home for the environmental movement by advocating for the beauty, diversity and ecological integrity of Earth. The Brower Center accomplishes this mission through a distinctive combination of permanent infrastructure and ongoing programs in a unique civic institution that informs the public about the environmental challenges we face and the bold actions we must take if ours is to remain a living planet; inspires people to recognize their own power and responsibility to act on behalf of the Earth; and connects individuals and organizations dedicated to social equity and ecological sustainability.

## Upcoming Other Minds Events

**February 18, 2017, Saturday, 7:30pm** - Other Minds Festival 22 - Pacific Rim Centennials: The Music of Lou Harrison & Isang Yun, featuring Dennis Russell Davies, conductor & pianist, Mission Dolores Basilica, San Francisco, CA

**February 19, 2017, Sunday, 4:15pm** - OM 22 - Two films: "In Between - The Composer Isang Yun in North and South Korea" (2015); "Lou Harrison--Cherish, Conserve, Consider, Create" (1983), in cooperation with the Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA

**May 20, 2017, Saturday, 7:30pm** - OM 22 - Lou Harrison Gamelan Masterpieces: featuring Nicole Paiement, conductor, William Winant Percussion Group



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