

The Colorado College Music Department

presents

Strings and Serpents

featuring

Crystal Magnets

Andy Milne, *piano* and Benoît Delbecq, *piano*

TsuguKaji-KOTO

Tsugumi Yamamoto, *koto* and Ai Kajigano, *koto*

October 28, 2014

7:00 PM

Packard Hall

Plying rhythmic forms and sonic colors in a shared language of improvisation, jazz pianists Andy Milne and Benoît Delbecq partner with the Japanese koto duo TsuguKaji-KOTO, amid the swirling washes of Saki Murotani's projected animation. Conceived and composed by Milne—founder of Dapp Theory and noted veteran of New York's downtown jazz scene—the 75-minute epic draws on the myth of the Rainbow Serpent as it opens new multilayered dialogues between East and West, sight and sound. As the piano duo Crystal Magnets, Milne and Delbecq are known for fluid melodies and percussive prepared-piano textures, while the twosome of Ai Kajigano and Tsugumi Yamamoto explore the vivid tones of the koto in original repertoire that connects the traditional with the contemporary.

Biographies

Crystal Magnets is a piano duo from two masters of contemporary improvisation, Canadian **Andy Milne** and Frenchman **Benoît Delbecq**. In 2007, they received The French-America Jazz Exchange commission from Chamber Music America to develop and record "*Where is Pannonica?*" [Songlines – 2009]. Using the sonic landscape of the 5.0 surround sound format for inspiration, the music was composed in part to exploit the unique potential for placing specific compositional elements in distinct regions of the mix. **The New York Times** lauded the recording as a "*strangely beautiful new album*" from two "*resourcefully contemporary pianists, both drawn to quixotic interrogations of harmony and timbre.*" Both Milne and Delbecq are recipients of the prestigious **Civitella Fellowship** and, individually, lead and compose for

numerous projects, tour extensively throughout the world, and are highly regarded within the jazz and creative music communities of New York and Paris respectfully.

Andy Milne is considered one of the most respected voices in jazz today, composing for multiple projects spanning everything from contrapuntal, odd-metered grooves and free improvisation, to multi-form structures, orchestral works and film scores and interdisciplinary collaborations. Milne has toured and recorded with Ravi Coltrane, Ralph Alessi, Carlos Ward and Carla Cook and has collaborated with a range of artists including William Shatner, Sekou Sundiata, Avery Brooks, Bruce Cockburn, Geri Allen, Archie Shepp, Joe Lovano, Dave Douglas and Dianne Reeves. During the 1990s, Milne was at the core of saxophonist Steve Coleman's groups, as well as those of fellow M-BASE associates, Cassandra Wilson and Greg Osby. Milne is currently composing an orchestral work for The American Composers Orchestra. A recipient of the prestigious Civitella Rainieri fellowship, Milne is the recipient of numerous commissions and awards. In 2014, Milne's group Dapp Theory released their new CD, "*Forward in All Directions*" [Contrology/Whirlwind], produced by Grammy winner Jimmy Haslip.

Benoît Delbecq figures today among the innovators of the international contemporary jazz scene. The Parisian pianist's reputation and influence have been growing steadily since the early 90's. The New York Times describes him as "*an original and unconventional pianist.*" An inspired adventurer, a goldsmith of prepared piano and a visionary poet in the art of electronically recycling his own statements, he actively participates in the new aesthetic breakthroughs of today. He performs solo piano and solo electronics, leads or co-leads a number of bands from duos to quintets, and is involved in many multi-disciplinary productions of theater, dance, the visual arts, cinema etc. His music features mesmerizing grooves that shake out flashing, lunar melodies - an invitation to a voyage into a magic land. His 2013 Songlines release, "*Fun House*", featuring his double trio with pianist Fred Hersch, was highly acclaimed, appearing on the Best of 2013 lists for New York City Jazz Record and JazzMan Magazine.

TsuguKaji-KOTO was formed in 2001 by the talented koto performers **Tsugumi Yamamoto** and **Ai Kajigano**. Using 13, 17 and 25-string kotos with matchless skill, they freely express repertoire that bridges the traditional with the contemporary. Their original compositions blend koto with their singing and narrative voices, producing a unique range of textures. Well received throughout Japan and overseas, TsuguKaji-KOTO perform every year at the Festival of Japanese Sound. Their collaborations with contemporary Japanese composers, including Keizo Mizoiri and Kumiko Takahashi, have received critical acclaim. In 2008, TsuguKaji-KOTO released their debut CD, "*Katari, Uta, Koto*", and in 2010, with support from The Japan Foundation, the duo made its U.S. debut.

Ai Kajigano first learned Koto at the age of 3, under the tutelage of her mother, Ryorei Kajigano, and later studied with Tadao Sawai and Kazue Sawai. After graduating from the NHK Academy for Japanese Traditional Music in 1997, she was selected for the Agency for Cultural

Affairs Internship Program in 2000. She has performed internationally in 18 countries in Asia, Europe, Australia, and North America. In addition to various TV and radio appearances, Kajigano participated in the sound track recording of the annual NHK national broadcast historical drama. She has given three notable solo recitals, the first of which took place in her home prefecture of Kagoshima in 2000. The second, also in Kagoshima, was in honor of her winning both the Kagoshima New Talent Competition and the Kagoshima Bank Foundation Award in 2002, and the third in Tokyo in 2005. Kajigano is a registered artist under the Vitalization Program for Public Auditoriums and a lecturer at the Sawai Koto Academy and the Kagoshima International University.

Tsugumi Yamamoto began her koto studies under Ayako Kariya, Katsuhiko Yoshizaki, and Keiko Nosaka. Graduating from the NHK Academy for Japanese Traditional Music in 1993, she won the Copper Award at the National Koto Competition in 1996, and passed the NHK Japanese Traditional Music audition in 1997 and 1998. Yamamoto's first recital took place in her home city of Kobe in 1999 and in 2002, she was selected as the Progressive Artist Research Student by the Japanese Agency of Cultural Affairs. Since that time, Yamamoto has built her career as a recitalist presenting a live concert series "Tsugumi", collaborating with a wide range of artists even beyond the genres of traditional music. Since the success of her recital on the 25-stringed koto in Tokyo in 2003, Yamamoto frequently performs concerts for 25-stringed and 17-stringed koto as part of the Tokyo Summer Music Festival. In addition to TsuguKaji-KOTO, Yamamoto also leads the traditional music ensemble "Ho" with whom she has premiered several new compositions. She is a member of both the Hogakusha and Shingensha schools of koto and performs with the Ikuta Koto School Shingensha Ensemble. In 2013 Yamamoto was asked by the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network in Osaka to organize and conduct a workshop on Japanese traditional music and GAGAKU (ancient court music), entitled "Gift from Old Times". The program transports students into ancient Japanese culture through local culture, nature and traditional music. Yamamoto is currently, producing a concert/lecture featuring voice, piano, and koto in Ibaragi-prefecture, entitled "Hand to hand, precious gift for children". The project is a benefit for the Post-Great East Japan Earthquake Reconstruction Support Project.

Animation:

Animator **Saki Murotani** brings stories to life with her "eye candy graphics" and animation. Originally from Asahikawa, Hokkaido in Japan, she now lives in Canada, working as a Motion Graphics Designer. In 2008, Murotani collaborated with Andy Milne & Benoît Delbecq when she worked in the Film & Media department at The Banff Centre (Banff, AB) as an Animator/Interactive Designer (2008-2010). Driven by her passion to create visually engaging art in motion to tell stories, she has collaborated with other animators, filmmakers, musicians, designers, artists and academics. Her short films have been screened at film festivals in Canada, nationally and internationally.

Strings and Serpents is brought to you by the Colorado College Music Department, and the following organizations:



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