

Press Release

## **Norwegian Composer Bjorn Bolstad Skjelbred to tour US with his new accordion+cello work**

Composer Bjorn Bolstad Skjelbred will be flying in from Oslo, Norway to attend the first 7 performances of his newest work “ConVergEnce for accordion and cello”. Concerts are scheduled in New York, New Jersey, Vermont, and Massachusetts.

Together with “ConVergEnce”, the concert will also include Skjelbred’s classical guitar solo, “Moves”, Magnar Am’s “On the Banks of the Eternal Second”, and Wolfgang Plagge’s “Fractals”.

In April 2013, Norwegian Composers Fund awarded Mr. Skjelbred a 60,000 kroner commissioning grant to write “ConVergEnce”. Mr. Skjelbred’s travel and lodging expenses are covered by generous grants from the Norwegian Association of Composers and Music Norway.

The world premiere is scheduled at Everett Theater in Bennington, VT with cellist Michael Gilbert Ronstadt and accordionist Rocco Anthony Jerry. Cellists Jared Shapiro and Dr. David Bebe will be performing with Mr. Jerry for the later concerts in the tour. Classical guitarist Eric Despard will be performing Skjelbred’s “Moves” at all the venues.

### **IN THE COMPOSER’S OWN WORDS:**

”ConVergEnce” (2013) is the fourth in a series of pieces that are inspired by language philosophy (Wittgenstein) and theory of communication (Habermas), combined with a wish to incorporate elements from the theatre in music. This could be specific positioning of the musicians on the stage, incorporating choreography and movement in the performance and/or using spoken language as part of the musical expression.

In these pieces I see the musicians as representatives of human characters, playing roles, but contrary to actors, their language is music. The two instruments are given two very different kinds of musical material, as if they were two people speaking different languages. Instead of trying to blend these two very different instruments I work with them as two separate characters playing simultaneously – creating a listening environment where

the listener hears two "persons" talking at the same time, in two separate languages. Then the listener can choose whether to listen to one at a time or both as a totality. As the music unfolds, like a conversation, the two persons are trying to understand each other, sometimes listening to the other, sometimes arguing, sometimes they agree, sometimes they don't. The overall form of the piece is formed from the meaning of convergence in the mathematical sense according to the "law of large numbers" as a metaphor of human behavior: "the average of the results obtained from a large number of trials should be close to the expected value, and will tend to become closer as more trials are performed". One can come close to understanding each other, but it is not possible to fully understand another human being. Nevertheless, in the end one should learn to accept the differences instead of treating them as grounds for conflict.

Another inspiration for "ConVergEnce" is the work of the painter Jackson Pollock, who also has entitled one of his works "Convergence".

"ConVergEnce" is commissioned by Rocco Anthony Jerry and Jared Shapiro, with funding from "The Norwegian Composers Fund".

In "Moves" (1992) for solo guitar, the main idea is to juxtapose several contrasting musical situations and exploring the difference between them, such as the difference between music that moves and music that represents a standstill. Can "slow" music give you a stronger impression of movement than "fast" music and what happens if two different musical situations borrow parts of each other's characteristics? When do pure sounds turn into music, and what can make a chaotic order of events appear as logical?

Bjørn Bolstad Skjelbred - 2014

## **Performance Schedule:**

Wednesday March 26, 2014, NOON followed by a reception. Everett Theatre, Southern Vermont College, 982 Mansion Drive, Bennington, Vermont 05201-6002 (world premiere)

Wednesday March 26, 2014, 4 PM, Deane Carriage Barn, Bennington College, One College Drive; Bennington, Vermont 05201

Thursday March 27, 2014, 11-12 “Meet and Greet” with Bjorn Skjelbred, 12:30 PM concert, Eleanor Furst Roberts Auditorium, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, 375 Church Street, North Adams, Massachusetts 01247

Friday March 28, 2014 12:30 PM concert, Picotte Recital Hall, Massry Center for the Arts, The College of Saint Rose, 432 Western Avenue, Albany, New York 12203

Friday March 28, 2014 4PM concert, Our Lady of Grace Church, 73 Midline Road, Ballston Lake, New York 12019

Saturday March 29, 2014 3PM Masterclass; Grand Ballroom, Mid-Atlantic Music Teachers Guild Festival and American Accordion Musicological Festival, Hanover Marriott, 1401 Route 10E, Whippany, New Jersey 07981

Saturday March 29, 2014 7:30PM concert, Grand Ballroom, Mid-Atlantic Music Teachers Guild Festival and American Accordion Musicological Festival, Hanover Marriott, 1401 Route 10E, Whippany, New Jersey 07981



Norwegian composer **Bjørn Bolstad Skjelbred** (b.1970 - Norway) has a varied and broadly spectered musical background. He is active as a composer, arranger, improviser and teacher, with experience from several genres and musical environments. Skjelbred´s list of works contains more

than 50 titles, where music for other arts and music for young musicians are largely present. Skjelbreds music has been performed in several european countries, USA and Canada in addition to the nordic countries.

Collaborations with musicians, ensembles and artists are very important to Skjelbred, and many of his works are results from these collaborations.

Among his collaborators are Norwegian percussionist Eirik Raude, the Swedish ensemble The Pearls before Swine Experience, The London Schubert Players, the Norwegian vocal group Nordic Voices and the Danish flutist Marianne Leth. Collaborations with Norwegian groups of actors like "The chosen Ones", "FaktaMorgana" and "Fabula Rasa" have resulted in several productions for the stage, which have been shown in several of the scandinavian countries. He is also involved in the jazz/pop/rock music scene as an arranger, songwriter and musician, and released the CD 'urban songs' with the quartet Urban Visions in 2005. Skjelbred finished his Diploma (Masters degree) in Composition at the Norwegian State Academy of Music in 2006, with composers Asbjørn Schaathun and Bjørn H Kruse as his tutors. He has also taken private lessons with the Italian composer Luca

Francesconi. Selected works:

Echoes of Times Lost ( 12 Instruments 2010)

The Persistence of Memory (Symphonic Band 2010)

Shadows of an Anthem (Orchestra 2005)

Playing Habermas, Communication in Action ( 2 saxophones 2010)

Crystals (Clarinet, piano, violin, cello 2008)

Wave-Chains (Sinfonietta 2005)

Winter Music (7 instruments 1998)

Lines in Motion, Entwined (Flute, guitar, vibraphone 2004)

Movements (viola, marimba 2001)

Waves and Interruptions (marimba 2002)

Coherent opposites (flute, piano violin, cello 2000)



### **ERIC DESPARD**

Heralded as a “talented classical guitarist” by the Times of Trenton, guitarist Eric Despard performs extensively throughout North America as a soloist and with various chamber ensembles. His dynamic solo concert programs include “The Latin Guitar” featuring Spanish, Latin and South American guitar composers and “World Guitar” featuring music and transcriptions of composers from around the world.

In addition to solo classical guitar concerts, Eric regularly performs with various jazz, blues, and rock groups throughout the Northeast.

His passion for accessible community music and arts education led to a five year position as the Executive Director of the Bennington Music School. Eric holds an undergraduate degree from the Hartt School of Music and a graduate degree from the Yale School of Music. At Hartt he studied with Alan Spiestersbach and Richard Provost and at Yale he studied with Benjamin Verdery. Eric has performed in master classes for Sharon Isbin, Elliot Fisk, Eduardo Fernandez, and David Russell. He has taught guitar at the Turtle Bay Music School, Rutgers Community Music Program, the Westminster Conservatory, the Bennington Music School, and the Community College of Vermont.

Eric is currently an Affiliate Artist at Middlebury College and an Instructor of Guitar at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. He also serves on the faculty and is the Music Director at Southern Vermont College where he teaches music history, music theory, concert jazz band, choir, and related performance classes. Students from his private studio have been accepted to the Boston Conservatory, Crane School of Music, SUNY Fredonia, Ithaca College, William Patterson University, the University of Vermont, and the Berkeley College of Music.



For two decades, **Michael G. Ronstadt** has entertained audiences throughout North America on cello, guitar and voice. An exceptional musician-composer conversant with a wide range of styles, he not only executes captivating solo performances, but participates regularly in duo and trio situations with a diverse camp of young, innovative musician-songwriters including Lisa Biales and David Trotta. His versatile talents have been tapped for concert and studio work by such artists as David Bromberg, Linda Ronstadt, Muriel Anderson and Craig Bickhardt. As a core member of Ronstadt Generations, Michael G. displays genre-blending explorations on cello and guitar in complement to thought-provoking lyrics. To say his originals are unusual is an understatement. They set the bar at Olympian heights in their depth and breadth. In addition to his solo recordings as well as those with Ronstadt Generations, Michael G. is a much sought-after studio musician, who has appeared on more than fifty albums in the last dozen years. Dan Buckley writing for The Tucson Citizen noted his “amazing command of the typical and exotic sounds of the cello, a true virtuoso and a man of instinctive musicality.” Michael holds both a Master and Bachelor of Music in Cello Performance and studied under esteemed pedagogues Yehuda Hanani, Nancy Green and Dr. Gordon Epperson.



**David Bebe** is an Assistant Professor of Music at the College of Saint Rose (Albany, NY) where he serves as the director of the Saint Rose String Program, cello instructor, and director of the Saint Rose Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra. An active

performer, Dr. Bebe appeared as a soloist with orchestra at Lincoln Center's Avery Fischer Hall as part of their Distinguished Concerts International New York series. He was also a soloist with the Miami Bach Society Orchestra, a founding member of Project Copernicus, and gave the Florida premiere of Steve Reich's "Cello Counterpoint" with the composer present.

Dr. Bebe is currently a member of the Saint Rose Camerata chamber music ensemble and has been a featured artist as part of Festival Miami and the National Foundation for the Advancement of Arts, premiering new and commissioned works written for himself and his wife Jamecyn Morey, violin (The Copernicus Duo). He has performed with Albany Pro Musica, Glens Falls Symphony, Albany Symphony, New World Symphony, Artosphere Festival Orchestra, and served as principal cellist of the Waukesha Symphony Orchestra. Dr. Bebe received his B.M. and M.M. at Indiana University and his D.M.A in Instrumental Performance from the University of Miami.

As a string pedagogue, Dr. Bebe has been on the faculties of the Indiana University String Academy, the String Academy of Wisconsin, Young Musicians and Artists Camp (OR), the Gem State String Boot Camp (ID), and he has served as the Cello Teaching Assistant to both Mimi Zweig and Ross Harbaugh. In Albany, he teaches String Technique courses for the College of Saint Rose, co-founded the Academy for Strings and coaches string sectionals for the Empire State Youth Orchestra.

As a conductor, he is a frequent guest conductor and clinician for youth orchestra throughout NY. In addition to directing the Saint Rose Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra, he has served as Associate Conductor for the Frost Symphony Orchestra, Director of the Clarke Chamber Players, and the Broward Symphony Orchestra.



**Jared Shapiro** holds a BA in Music and an MFA in Cello and Composition from Bennington College. He studied composition with Henry Brant, Vivian Fine, Allen Shawn, and Louis Calabro and improvisation with Milford Graves. As a member of the Bennington Cello Quartet he premiered works by Tina Davidson, Allen Shawn, and John Hendricks. His interest in world music has led to ongoing collaborations and performances with musicians from diverse music cultures. He has been playing in the eclectic trio Natural History since 1973. He is an active freelancer and teacher, teaching at Green

Mountain College, The Community College of Vermont, and Castleton State College. He is the cello teacher on the faculty of the Manchester Music Festival's Michael Rudiakov Music Academy and maintains a teaching studio in East Dorset, Vermont.



**Rocco Anthony Jerry** is captivated by the use of the accordion by contemporary classical composers, and has focused his energy in working with composers on new works for the instrument. Mr. Jerry performs on a bayan with a range of over 7 octaves on each manual. He has given solo concerts throughout the US including New York City, Washington D.C., and Philadelphia, at venues including the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian Institute, the National City Christian Church (Washington D.C.), and other churches and halls in the US. He has performed with several chamber music groups including the Downtown Ensemble and the Flexible Orchestra. He has premiered new works by Daniel Goode, Conrad Kehn, Peter Machajdik, Robert Young McMahan, Arthur B. Rubinstein, Max Simoncic, and Christian Wolff, and has given the US premieres of many other pieces. He is currently preparing four new chamber works, that were recently written for him by composer Max Simoncic. In 2012, he gave the US premiere of Bjorn Bolstad Skjelbred's "The Verge of Understanding: Playing Wittgenstein", commissioned with a grant from the Norwegian Composers Fund. In 2009, Mr. Jerry premiered Conrad Kehn's multi-media work "Maximinimal" for Accordion, Electronics, and Video. In May-June 2004, Mr. Jerry worked closely with Hollywood film composer, Arthur B. Rubinstein, and performed accordion in the premiere run of Rubinstein's new musical "He Who Gets Slapped", with the next run scheduled for the Mark Taper Auditorium in Los Angeles. In 2007, Mr. Jerry began the Accordion Ensemble Project, which was awarded an SOS Grant from the New York Foundation for the Arts in 2008. In this ongoing project, Mr. Jerry is recording all parts of accordion ensemble works, so that they may be performed as a solo, accompanied by his recording of the remaining parts. To date, he has performed the accordion ensemble works of Bjorn Bolstad Skjelbred, Peter Machajdik, Magnar Am, Kjell Perder, Jacob ter Veldhuis, and Yuji Takahashi, with more works added each year.

