

# 2008/2009 Press Kit



“WHAT WE WANT TO DO IS TO SHOW PEOPLE THAT ‘CLASSICAL’ MUSIC IS A LIVING, VIBRANT TRADITION THAT IS FAR FROM BEING THE MUSEUM ART OF DEAD MEN PLAYED INCREDIBLY FORMALLY BY PEOPLE DRESSED VERY UNCOMFORTABLY.”

ARMANDO BAYOLO

FOUNDER & CONDUCTOR  
GREAT NOISE ENSEMBLE

# ICONS OLD AND NEW

## GREAT NOISE ENSEMBLE: SEASON FOUR

Great Noise Ensemble continues its fight to win hearts and minds for new music with a season highlighting the acclaimed masters of modern music as well as its newest rising stars. From classic and famous works like John Cage's *4'33"* and Rzewski's *Coming Together* and *Attica* to brand new works by Steven Strunk and Daniel Felsenfeld,

**DARKNESS IN NO MAN'S LAND** 09.19.2008  
8:00 PM WARD HALL, THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Darkness comes in many forms: some are enlightening, some are peaceful, others are terrifying. Great Noise Ensemble presents a program exploring the darkneses of the human experience from loneliness to rejection to incarceration to dreams with works by Ryan Brown, JacobTV, James Leatherbarrow and Frederic Rzewski.

**AUTUMNAL SONGS** 10.24.2008  
8:00 PM THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SILVER SPRING

Great Noise Ensemble continues its fourth season with *Autumnal Songs*, a program highlighting the seasons and cycles of the human experience, from the shape of thoughts to the cycles of nature to the reflections, mirrors, and gray areas of the human life span.

**TACIT DANCES** 12.07.2008  
7:30 PM WARD HALL, THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Great Noise Ensemble's season continues with a concert highlighting two of the most famous pieces in new music history—John Cage's *4'33"* and Zappa's *The Black Page*, performed in an all new staging concept by GNE bassist Joel Ciaccio, then shifts the spotlight to new master Jonathan Russell's *Duo Bass Clarinet Concerto*, performed by the bass clarinet duo Squonk, as well as the world premiere of CUA faculty member Steven Strunk's *References*.

**MACHINES, LOVE AND EVOLUTION** 02.13.2009  
8:00 PM WARD HALL, THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

The intersections and contrasts of man and machine are the subject of the fourth concert in Great Noise Ensemble's season of *Icons Old And New*, from the mechanistic construction of Don Freund's *Hard Cells* and Marc Mellits's *Five Machines* to D.J. Sparr's *Carnal Node* and Derek Bermel's *Natural Selection*.

**TIFFANY WINDOWS** 03.27.2009  
8:00 PM WARD HALL, THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

The subject of Great Noise Ensemble's fifth concert of the season is as simple as it sounds: the stained glass windows in a church and what goes on behind them. David Dzubay's *Vision* and Arlene Sierra's *Tiffany Windows* take as their inspiration the colors and shapes and subjects of the Tiffany windows of the churches in Troy, New York, and Libby Larsen's *Holy Roller* springs from the emotions and rhythms of a revival sermon.

**FRESH CURRENTS** 05.30.2009  
8:00 PM TERRACE THEATER, THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Great Noise Ensemble finishes out its fourth season with its debut at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, made possible through a generous cooperative program with The Congressional Chorus, and featuring the world premiere of Daniel Felsenfeld's *Revolutions of Ruin*.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [WWW.GREATNOISEENSEMBLE.COM](http://WWW.GREATNOISEENSEMBLE.COM)



## about great noise ensemble

With over nineteen world premieres and counting, Great Noise Ensemble is a working embodiment of its mission to fight for the performance of new works and to promote emerging talent in contemporary music.

Great Noise Ensemble was born in 2005 through a listing placed on Craigslist.org by composer and conductor Armando Bayolo. Seven area musicians united by their passion for new music answered, and from this core group the ensemble has grown into the twenty instrumentalists and two singers which now comprise its core membership.

Since its first concert in January 2006, Great Noise Ensemble has become one of the most important ensembles in the District of Columbia's burgeoning new music scene, winning The Washington Area Music Association's 2007 "WAMMIE" Award for Best Chamber Ensemble. In its short three-year history, the group has presented concerts in venues ranging from intimate community concert spaces like the Patricia M. Sitar Center to prestigious locales such as the National Gallery of Art and the Hirshhorn Museum.

In its 2008-2009 season, Great Noise Ensemble will be the Ensemble in Residence at the Catholic University of America's Benjamin T. Rome School of Music, presenting four concerts at the University's Ward Hall and working with School of Music composition students to help bring their works to life through coachings and reading sessions. This season also marks the group's debut at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in cooperation with The Congressional Chorus, presenting their co-commission, the world premiere of Daniel Felsenfeld's *Revolutions of Ruin*.

## just the facts, man.

- Formed through an ad on craigslist.com.
- Performed nineteen world premieres of new works in the four years since it was founded.
- Composed of a core group of twenty instrumentalists and two vocalists.
- Resident New Music Ensemble at The Catholic University of America's Benjamin T. Rome School of Music for 2008-2009 and Ensemble in Residence for the American Composers Forum, D.C. Chapter in 2006-2007.
- Winners of Washington Area Music Association Best Chamber Ensemble (Wammie) in 2007.





### Great Noise Ensemble

Stephen Brookes, The Washington Post

MAY 20, 2008-- How can you not love a music group so cheerfully unstuffy that it calls itself Great Noise Ensemble? Composer/conductor Armando Bayolo put the band together a few years ago from young musicians gathered via Craigslist, and since then has been waging a crusade to "fight for the performance of new American music" in the D.C. area.

And to judge by Sunday's well-attended performance at the National Gallery of Art, the fight is going pretty well. The evening opened with Barbara White's "Learning to See," six spare and precisely calibrated miniatures inspired by artists. Often lovely and atmospheric, they were almost too ephemeral to make an impact and received a tepid audience response. But Evan Chambers's melancholy "Rothko-Tobey Continuum" for violin and tape was a dark, gripping gem, played with an elegant sense of restrained yearning by Heather Figi.

Blair Goins's "Quintet" abounded in lighthearted melodies and would have felt at home in the Paris of 50 years ago, though the odd instrumentation -- a tangled collision between a wind quintet and a string quintet -- led to some mushy sonorities and undercut its charm.

More successful (and substantial) was Bayolo's own "Chamber Symphony." Full of lush ideas and a kind of fierce grandeur, it unfolded with subtle, driving power -- a work worth hearing again.

But the high point of the evening was the world premiere of Andrew Rudin's Concerto for Piano and Small Orchestra. Rudin has a gift for the kind of gesture that grabs you by the ears and won't let go, the music building in power as its inherent possibilities unfold. Extroverted, engaging and driven by an almost heroic sense of drama, it received a bravura performance from pianist Marcantonio Barone.

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## Carnal Node

Brett Abelman, Washington City Paper

**JULY 24, 2008-- They say:** "Sex, love, and lies in the internet age: what is it about technology that simultaneously brings us together and drives us apart? Where can lonely souls find love in this age? Great Noise Ensemble explores these ideas through the works of D.J. Sparr, Mark Mellits, and Ryan Brown."

**Brett's take:** Reading the blurb, you're forgiven for not realizing this is primarily a musical performance. It consists of three pieces, of which the one entitled "Carnal Node" is the second. That titular piece is an operatic miniature, the story of a lonely man engaging in an Internet romance, sung by a soprano who "fills the dual roles of narrator and protagonist." The first piece, "Thick Skin" is in an avant-garde jazz vein, while the final section, "Five Machines," comprises a quintet of 'musical machines' (more on that in a moment).

Here is a sampling of the notes I jotted down during the performance, when I wasn't too enraptured to do so: "Oddly triumphant," "powerful," "mashup artists," "never lose grasp of a hook, head or melody even when way off-kilter," "Beatles (Abbey Road) drum solo?," "old woman in audience plugged ears," "unpredictable," "[Gastr del Sol](#)," "surprisingly down-to-earth humor," "Tubular Bells."

This is modern composed music at its best; nimble, expressive, ear-turning and strange in an accessible way, highly virtuosic (7/4 time, anyone?) but never pretentious. "Thick Skin" is a good choice for an opener because it works in the most familiar forms: despite the odd time signatures and musical use of clothes hangers (yes, clothes hangers), the three movements recall jazz ballad, film score, march, even rock n' roll (that Ringo Starr-on-bebop drum solo I noted). It's fun, it's beautiful.

The horn-dominant ensemble that plays "Thick Skin" switches for strings, percussion, piano, flute, and oboe for "Carnal Node." Alternating between lyrical arias of email text and more plainspoken (and often hilariously pert) narration, soprano Kamala Sankaram takes the audience on an operatic journey that at once exalts one of the most common dramas of these modern times and almost explodes it to parody. (Note that the complete words to the piece are provided in the program.)

Finally, we get "Five Machines," which, as the program describes, is constructed like a machine, in that "all the musicians fit together very closely... the parts themselves do not reveal [the] overall musical structure; only when combined does the musical architecture come forth." Imagine a guitar strum followed by a piano key followed by a xylophone strike adding together to make a melody; or simultaneous single notes on bass, cello and baritone sax combining to form a chord. In my nascent understanding of the joys of avant-garde music, "Five Machines" recalls Steve Reich; but regardless of comparison, it is pulsing, surprising, at times evoking a delicate automaton, and at times something closer to a pounding war machine.

If the idea of avant-garde music (referred to by the Ensemble simply as 'contemporary music'), or even 7/4 time, frighten you, consider this a chance to dip your toes in; you might find that it can match pop music for emotiveness, ambient techno for fragility, R&B for sheer fun. Even the performers are a joy to watch; the young ensemble is focused and clearly enjoying themselves.



## contact information

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